



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*February 24, 2016*

## Sabres-Ducks Preview

By Jeff Mezydlo

AP

February 24, 2016

The [Anaheim Ducks](#) of today hardly resemble the offensively challenged group that was blanked by the Buffalo Sabres a little more than two months ago.

One of the league's hottest clubs, the Ducks can avenge that defeat by matching a season high with their sixth consecutive victory Wednesday night against the visiting Sabres.

Following a 3-0 loss at Buffalo on Dec. 17, Anaheim coach Bruce Boudreau called out his team, particularly his top players for their effort in that contest and pretty much overall up to that point. The defeat opened a 1-2-1 trip for the Ducks, who were a Western Conference-worst 12-15-6 and averaging a league-low 1.9 goals when it ended.

Following a four-day break, Anaheim (31-19-8) beat Philadelphia 4-2 to begin its current 19-4-2 run. The Ducks have averaged 4.0 goals while winning 14 of the last 17 and have scored at least five in four straight games for the first time in club history. They're amid a 12-1-1 stretch while continuing to put heat on Pacific Division-leading Los Angeles.

"It's been fun," forward [Ryan Kesler](#) said. "Every night, we go into the game thinking - not thinking, but knowing - we're going to win, and going out there with that attitude."

Kesler had two goals with an assist as Anaheim returned from a 5-1-1 trip to defeat Calgary 5-2 on Sunday.

"We're playing good hockey and we're on a roll right now," defenseman [Kevin Bieksa](#) said. "We don't want to see it slide. We want to play the right way."

Bieksa had one of two power-play goals for the Ducks, who are 8 for 18 in the last five.

"They're one of the best teams in the league right now, there's no doubt about it," Flames defenseman [Mark Giordano](#) said. "Confidence is going a long way for them now."

Buffalo (24-29-7) resides near the bottom of the East but has blanked the Ducks seven times in 31 meetings, including [Chad Johnson's](#) 44-save effort in December, for its highest shutout-to-games ratio against any opponent. However, sweeping this season series could be tough without leading scorer Ryan O'Reilly.

The Sabres' 3-0-1 stretch ended with Sunday's 4-3 loss to Pittsburgh in their first game minus O'Reilly, who will miss three to four weeks with a lower body injury. Besides his team-high 49 points, O'Reilly leads the league in faceoffs won (848) and average ice time (21:51) among forwards.

"It's tough to replace him because you can't replace him," teammate [Sam Reinhart](#) told the Sabres' official website. "It's not going to be one or two guys; it's got to be everyone."

That now includes O'Reilly's brother, Cal, who was called up from Rochester of the AHL. Cal O'Reilly was third on that team with 28 points.

Buffalo, though, will be without defenseman [Mike Weber](#) after he was traded to Washington on Tuesday for a third-round pick in the 2017 draft. Weber had a goal and four assists and averaged almost 16 minutes a game for the Sabres.

[Evander Kane](#) scored against the Ducks in December and has two goals with two assists in his last three at Anaheim.

Ryan Getzlaf has six points in the Sabres' last two visits. He enters this matchup on an eight-game point streak during which he has four goals and nine assists.

Teammate Frederik Andersen has a 1.75 goals-against average during his four-game home winning streak. He is 3-0-0 with a 1.34 GAA against the Sabres but hasn't faced them since October 2014.

Johnson, who posted his only shutout of the season against Anaheim, is rumored to be on the trading block and has not played since Feb. 12. Robin Lehner has started the past four games, giving up a combined two goals in the first three before allowing four Sunday.

## **Capitals acquire Weber from Sabres for 2017 3rd-round pick**

AP

February 24, 2016

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — Looking to add depth for a playoff run, the Washington Capitals acquired defenseman Mike Weber from the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday for a third-round pick in the 2017 draft.

At 6-foot-2 and 217 pounds, the defensive-minded Weber gives the NHL-leading Capitals another left-handed shooting player and some insurance on the back end.

"Mike is a stay-at-home defenseman, who plays a physical game and is respected by his teammates," general manager Brian MacLellan said. "We felt it was important to add depth to our blue line by adding another quality veteran defenseman."

The 28-year-old Weber has a goal and four assists and has averaged almost 16 minutes a game for Buffalo this season. He has blocked 666 shots since entering the league in 2007-08.

Buffalo retained half of Weber's salary and his \$1.67 million cap hit as part of the deal.

"It's difficult to trade someone that has been a part of the organization for 10 years, but I think this is a good opportunity for the player and for our organization," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said.

Weber was a second-round pick of the Sabres in 2006 and has 53 points in 341 NHL games. He should be a third-pairing defenseman for Washington, which is first in the league by nine points over the Chicago Blackhawks.

Last week, Capitals coach Barry Trotz acknowledged that deadline trades can change players' roles but didn't seem worried about whether adding a player would disrupt team chemistry.

"Is it a part of the consideration? Yeah," Trotz said. "But if we find the right piece, we'll add it. If it can put us over the top and give us a huge advantage, we'll forgo the chemistry a little bit and go for it."

Weber isn't rocking the boat, but his presence means either Dmitry Orlov or Nate Schmidt could join Taylor Chorney in the press box. All three defensemen have impressed this season.

## **Sabres send Weber to Washington for third-round pick**

By Mike Harrington  
Buffalo News  
February 24, 2016

ANAHEIM – It's that time of year, and the first player out the door to a new address is the longest-standing member of the Buffalo Sabres organization.

Defenseman Mike Weber, one of five unrestricted free agents on the roster, was shipped to the Washington Capitals on Tuesday night in exchange for a third-round pick in the 2017 draft. Weber, who was drafted in the second round by the Sabres in 2006, instantly has a real chance at a Stanley Cup by getting moved to a Capitals club that has been atop the NHL's overall standing all season.

The trade, Buffalo's first of a pending UFA with the NHL trade deadline looming on Monday, was announced about 40 minutes after the team completed practice in Honda Center. The Sabres meet the Anaheim Ducks there Wednesday night to open their three-game Western road trip.

"It was a little surreal," Weber told Buffalo reporters at the team hotel after the trade was made. "Obviously I was just with the boys after practice and we were going to have some lunch. It's tough. It's something that's always talked about but until it happens to you, well, I don't even know the feeling I'm feeling right now."

An emotional Weber was red-eyed as he spoke at times about his tenure with the Sabres.

"I want to thank the organization, the management at the time and the management now for keeping me around this long," he said. "I can't express the life-changing thing the city of Buffalo and the organization has been able to provide me and my family. I really feel a part of the community. I tried to do everything I could when I put that sweater over my head to bring whatever I had. There's been a lot of great teammates I've had. ... I wish the organization and especially the boys in the locker room the very best going forward. Hopefully they get a chance to do something extremely special here in the future."

Weber said he had already received some welcome texts from Capitals players and is thrilled with the potential of playing on a Cup team even though he's likely to be a healthy scratch in the immediate future. Washington's next game is Wednesday night at home against Montreal, and the Caps host Minnesota on Friday before traveling to Chicago on Sunday afternoon for a nationally televised game that could be a Stanley Cup final preview. The Sabres do not meet the Caps again this season.

"I'm excited to get to Washington and have a chance myself to do something that's maybe only once in a lifetime," Weber said.

As for any connections to anyone in the Caps locker room, Weber joked, "Other than probably some bloody faces and some bumps and bruises along the way, no."

The Sabres retained half of Weber's salary to complete the trade. He carries a cap hit this season of \$1.67 million. General Manager Tim Murray is not on this road trip, preferring to work the phones from his office in First Niagara Center.

"It's difficult to trade someone that has been a part of the organization for 10 years, but I think this is a good opportunity for the player and for our organization," Murray said in a statement. "I would like to thank Mike for his time with the Sabres and wish him the best in Washington."

"We are pleased to welcome Mike to our organization." Capitals GM Brian MacLellan said in a statement. "Mike is a stay-at-home defenseman who plays a physical game and is respected by his teammates. We felt it was important to add depth to our blueline by adding another quality veteran."

Weber. 28, has one goal and four assists this season in 35 games for the Sabres. He has been having the best season of his career, as shown by his plus-3 rating – a major improvement from his minus-29 and minus-22 marks the last two seasons – and that clearly enhanced his value.

“I gave everything I had to give myself the best chance to prove to this Sabres organization and my teammates that I’m a solid player,” he said. “And to prove to the rest of the league that I can still do this.”

Weber said his favorite Sabres memory was the primary assist he earned on the team’s last playoff win, the 4-3 overtime victory in Game Five of the first round in Philadelphia in 2011.

Weber took a cross-ice pass from the late Steve Montador and unleashed a shot that was stopped by Flyers goaltender Michael Leighton, but Tyler Ennis slammed home the rebound to give the Sabres a 3-2 lead in the series. Buffalo, however, lost the next two games and has yet to return to the postseason.

“All I can think of was that it was in Philly and the fans were going nuts,” Weber said. “‘Enzo’ went flying up and gave me the biggest hug ever and then ‘Monty’ came in, gave me an even bigger hug. It was pretty special and we had a chance to go home and close out the series. Obviously it didn’t go the way we wanted it to but that’s one of my favorite memories here.”

Weber is certain to finally get back to the playoffs this spring. The Capitals beat Arizona, 3-2, Monday night – becoming the first team in NHL history to post 44 wins in the first 58 games of a season. After years spent trying to stop Washington superstar Alex Ovechkin, Weber said it will be a thrill to be teammates with the Great Eight.

“It will be nice to only be doing ‘PK’ against him in practice now so I can kind of give him a side to shoot on. I don’t have to be in front of it,” Weber joked. “You’re playing with a guy who has the potential to score 50 goals again this year, one of the most elite players in the game. It’s just exciting to go to a team that has a chance to make a big push for it.”

## **Sabres notebook: Scoring has started to heat up for Anaheim**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

February 24, 2016

ANAHEIM – When the Buffalo Sabres last saw the Anaheim Ducks just over two months ago in First Niagara Center, the visitors were a team in complete crisis. The edition of the Ducks they will see Wednesday night in Honda Center is the version many experts picked last fall to be a Stanley Cup contender.

Anaheim enters the game on a five-game winning streak and holding a 12-1-1 record in its last 14 games. The Ducks own the NHL's best record since Christmas, both overall (19-4-2) and on the road (10-1-2), and have compiled an NHL-best plus-29 goal differential in that period.

The Ducks have scored five goals or more for a franchise-record five straight games, a far cry from where they were prior to the holidays. Their 3-0 loss to the Sabres on Dec. 17 was the seventh time they had been shut out in their first 30 games and dropped their record to 11-14-5.

The Ducks were 1-7-2 over the season's first 10 games – scoring just 11 goals in those games and enduring five shutouts. After getting to Game Seven of last year's Western Conference final against Chicago, the job status of coach Bruce Boudreau was a daily topic during the season's first three months.

Not now. According to Sabres coach Dan Bylsma, it's no surprise how hot Anaheim has gotten.

"It's hard to believe the Ducks were in that spot to begin with," Bylsma said after practice Tuesday in Honda Center. "Remembering them coming to Buffalo and scouting the games, we were looking at Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry, Ryan Kesler, it was a team full of speed and talent. We thought they were scary on tape even though they weren't winning a lot of games back then. We felt that way playing against them.

"I think they're one of the better teams in the league. Now they're at that level. and it's no surprise. ... a team I wouldn't want to play come the playoffs."

Getzlaf leads NHL skaters in scoring since the All-Star break with 16 points in 11 games and has the top rating at plus-13. The Anaheim captain opened the season in an epic slump, with his only goal over the first 33 games being an empty netter. He still has only eight goals after seasons of 31 and 25, respectively, the last two years but has a team-high 39 assists.

"You didn't really understand what was going on at the beginning of the year," said Sabres winger Jamie McGinn, who regularly clashed with the Ducks during his days in San Jose. "They have the firepower and the leadership that can take them to the next level and that's what they're showing right now. They stuck with it and turned it around. It's a pretty amazing turnaround."

Chad Johnson blanked the Ducks in Buffalo, setting a Sabres franchise-record in a shutout by frustrating Anaheim with 44 saves.

"They've really found their game," Johnson said. "They're really hot as a group. You know with the amount of talent they had on that team that a guy like Getzlaf with the amount of skill that he has, he wasn't going scoreless all season.

"I think everybody knew they had a good 'D' corps, solid goaltending and offense. You go through ruts and maybe all the past playoffs they went through played a factor how they started."

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Defenseman Cody Franson returned to the Sabres Tuesday but skated in a red, non-contact sweater. He suffered a neck injury on a hard hit from Scott Hartnell Friday in Columbus and his status for this road trip is uncertain.

"He's dealing with probably maybe two injuries," Bylsma revealed. "So he's got some ways to go I think before he leaves the red jersey behind him."

With Tuesday's trade of Mike Weber, Carlo Colaiacovo is expected to get back in the lineup as Franson sits out.

All the Sabres were at practice Tuesday. Brian Gionta, Josh Gorges, Evander Kane and David Legwand sat out Monday in Buffalo on maintenance days but returned to the ice here and are expected to play Wednesday.

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Former Sabres forward Chris Stewart will not be in the Anaheim lineup, as he's missed the last five games with a broken jaw suffered during a fight with Columbus' Dalton Prout. Stewart is expected to miss at least another month.

## Sabres play Ducks in first game after trading Weber

By Sean McCullen  
NHL.com  
February 24, 2016

**SABRES (24-29-7) at DUCKS (31-19-8)**

**TV: 10:30 p.m. ET; BELL TV, MSG-B, FS-W, NHL.TV**

**Season series:** Chad Johnson made 44 saves in the Buffalo Sabres' 3-0 win against the Anaheim Ducks at First Niagara Center on Dec. 17, his fourth NHL shutout. Evander Kane, Jake McCabe and Jamie McGinn scored.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo traded defenseman Mike Weber to the Washington Capitals on Tuesday for a third-round pick in the 2017 NHL Draft. "It's difficult to trade someone that has been a part of the organization for 10 years, but I think this is a good opportunity for the player and for our organization," general manager Tim Murray said. Defenseman Cody Franson, who sat out a 4-3 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Sunday with an upper-body injury, practiced Tuesday in Anaheim wearing a no-contact jersey. The Sabres on Monday recalled 29-year-old center Cal O'Reilly from Rochester of the American Hockey League with brother Ryan O'Reilly expected to miss 3-4 weeks with a lower-body injury. The 25-year-old center's 32 assists and 49 points lead Buffalo. Cal O'Reilly has an assist in five games with the Sabres this season, and six goals and 22 assists in 44 games for Rochester.

**Ducks team scope:** Anaheim has won five games in a row and is 9-1-1 since returning from the NHL All-Star break Feb. 2, the best record in the NHL over that span. Center Ryan Getzlaf scored in a 5-2 win against the Calgary Flames on Sunday to extend his point streak to eight games (four goals, nine assists). Center Ryan Kesler has a five-game point streak (two goals, five assists), and center Rickard Rakell has at least a point in an NHL career-high four straight (two goals, three assists). Goalie John Gibson started the past two games and made saves on 41 of 45 shots. The Ducks hosted more than 16,000 elementary school students for practice at Honda Center on Tuesday. "It was a pretty wild scene there today," defenseman Cam Fowler said of the Ducks' 16th annual First Flight practice. "If you can just imagine basically a full arena of mainly kids who are on a field trip, so they're just crazy excited and there was a lot of energy and a lot screaming going on."

## **Generational talents McDavid, Eichel living up to hype**

By Mike G. Morreale

NHL.com

February 24, 2016

Rookie centers Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel will be compared for as long as they're in the NHL.

Each was considered a generational talent at the time they were selected with the first two picks of the 2015 NHL Draft and they have produced well despite the pressure of high expectations.

McDavid, selected No. 1 by the Edmonton Oilers, is the third-youngest (19 years, 41 days) in the NHL to play at least one game this season. Eichel, chosen No. 2 by the Buffalo Sabres, is the fifth-youngest (19 years, 118 days).

McDavid and Eichel are scheduled to play against each other for the first time this season March 1 at First Niagara Center in Buffalo. McDavid missed the Sabres-Oilers game Dec. 4 while recovering from a broken left clavicle. Eichel had one goal and four shots on goal in a 4-2 Oilers victory.

Oilers left wing Taylor Hall said it's only natural the media will want to create some buzz about the first regular-season NHL game between McDavid and Eichel.

"That's something [the media] make up," Hall said. "I don't think it's something Connor thinks about each night before he goes to bed. He's a competitive guy and wants to do well, but I'm sure it's not to beat Jack Eichel. It's to do well for his team and himself."

While there will be a lot of attention on that March 1 game, that level of hype could be ratcheted even higher if McDavid and Eichel are named to Team North America for the 2016 World Cup of Hockey.

"It's going to be a great thing for the game," Eichel told the Buffalo News when asked about the World Cup. "Our goal as a League should be to grow the game and this is something that can definitely help it. It's just going to be a great experience for everyone involved."

Playing together for Team North America could give McDavid and Eichel an opportunity to learn something new about the other, and as a result gain a greater respect for what each has gone through this season.

"If I had the opportunity to be part of it, it would be great for my family to be able to come see that. It's a great opportunity to play against the world's best," Eichel said.

McDavid recently was asked if responding to questions about Eichel ever gets old.

"[Eichel] is having a good year himself and he should be happy about that," McDavid said. "I wouldn't text him or anything like that but we'll have to become a little closer if we're on [Team North America] for the World Cup. I mean, I don't look at him as an enemy or rival or anything like that. He's a young guy in the League just like me and we're trying to help our teams."

McDavid has 27 points in 23 games. His average of 1.17 points per game is the highest by a rookie to play at least 20 games since Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (1.31) and Pittsburgh Penguins center Sidney Crosby (1.26) in 2005-06. McDavid also has a 20.8 shooting percentage while averaging 17:54 of ice time each game.

Ovechkin averaged 21:37 per game as a rookie and Crosby averaged 20:07.

Perhaps most impressive is McDavid's enhanced numbers at even strength. He ranks in the top three among rookies in 5-on-5 assists per 60 minutes (1.74) and 5-on-5 points per 60 minutes (3.29). The Oilers have a 51.7 shot-attempts percentage when McDavid is on the ice, and 45.0 when he's not.

McDavid had two goals and had three assists Feb. 11 against the Toronto Maple Leafs in his most productive game of the season. He also assisted on all three goals by right wing Jordan Eberle or his first NHL hat trick. McDavid, Eberle and linemate Benoit Pouliot combined for 13 points against Toronto.

"Chemistry, like I've said before, is a thing that doesn't just happen," Eberle said. "It's something that grows over time and we've only played a short stint of games here. We have lots of hockey left."

Since returning to the lineup after missing 37 games because of the broken clavicle, McDavid has five goals and 15 points in 10 games.

"You can have the speed and skill but you have to have the brain to match it," Oilers coach Todd McLellan said. "I've seen a lot of skaters who can skate 100 miles per hour, can stickhandle, and then I put them in a game and they're nowhere to be found."

"[Anaheim Ducks assistant coach] Paul MacLean used to call those players morning glory. You come out and watch these guys in the morning and you think, 'Wow.' Then you watch them at night and not even know they played."

Like McDavid, Eichel also is noticeable when on the ice. He has taken his game to another level since the December holiday break with eight goals, 17 assists, 11 power-play points and an 11.8 shooting percentage in the past 26 games.

Eichel is tied for first among rookies in power-play goals (six), and is second in assists (24) and points (41), fourth in goals (17), and third in primary assists (16). He is first with 173 shots on goal and ranks first in ice time (18:46) among rookie forwards.

He's scored nine of his goals on wrist shots, and at no time was that wicked wrist shot more evident than on his first-period goal in a 4-1 win against the Colorado Avalanche on Feb. 14. After collecting the puck in the neutral zone, Eichel circled back through the defensive zone and skated up the left wing boards and then buried a wrist shot that went through the legs of Avalanche defenseman Tyson Barrie and goaltender Semyon Varlamov.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said he would like to see Eichel shoot even more. The Sabres have a 51.6 shot-attempts percentage when Eichel is on the ice and 47.6 percent when he's not.

"He's had better opportunities to score on than that [against the Avalanche], but that's a great example of what he can do and attack on his speed there and being an aggressive shooter," Bylsma said. "It's not a great angle but he gets a shooting lane, goes five-hole on the defender and squeaks it through the goalie. It's a pretty vicious shot he's taking. The hard, heavy wrist shot."

Eichel is on pace for 24 goals on 236 shots. To provide some perspective, Chicago Blackhawks right wing Patrick Kane scored 21 goals on 191 shots as a rookie in 2007-08; Crosby had 39 goals on 278 shots in 2005-06; Ovechkin had 52 goals on 425 shots in 2005-06.

It's interesting to note that when Eichel has been on the ice this season the Sabres have 608 shots on goal. In Kane's rookie season the Blackhawks had 866 shots when he was on the ice. The Penguins had 991 shots with Crosby on the ice as a rookie.

## **Trade from Sabres gives Mike Weber special opportunity with Capitals**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 24, 2016

BUFFALO – At times over a rough two-year stretch, as Mike Weber accumulated the NHL's worst plus-minus rating, it appeared the ex-Sabres defenseman might never recapture his old form.

The passionate Weber, 28, often became the poster boy for the Sabres' struggles during their run as the NHL's laughingstock.

But Weber, not coincidentally, morphed back into his old self on the revamped Sabres this season.

Defensemen, especially reliable depth ones with Weber's grit and passion, are always in demand at this time of year.

Sure enough, the Sabres traded Weber, the club's longest-tenured player and a heart-and-soul-presence, to the Washington Capitals on Tuesday night for a third-round draft pick in 2017.

Instead of missing the playoffs for the fifth straight season, Weber's joining the NHL's best club, the powerhouse 44-10-4 Capitals.

"I'm obviously excited to get to Washington and maybe have a chance myself to do something that maybe is only once in a lifetime," Weber told the media, including WGR, in California, where the Sabres open a three-game road trip tonight against the Ducks.

Still, moving on from the organization that drafted him 57<sup>th</sup> overall in 2006 is "tough," he said.

"It's something that's always talked about, but until it happens to you, I don't know really the feeling I'm feeling right now," said Weber, an unrestricted free agent following the season.

The Sabres will retain half of Weber's \$1.67 million cap hit, according to Sportsnet.

Clearly, Weber's comeback season generated attention throughout the league.

"I came in with the mindset ... whether I went over the boards for 11 minutes or over the boards for 24 minutes ... to make sure I gave everything I had to give myself the best chance to prove (to the) Sabres organization and my teammates that I'm a solid player and to the rest of the league that I can still do this," he said.

Weber understood he would probably be traded prior to the Monday deadline. Before the Sabres flew to California two days ago, he spoke nostalgically about his long career, which began Oct. 26, 2007, and Buffalo.

"I can't express the life-changing thing the city of Buffalo and the organization has been able to provide for my family," he said Tuesday. "I've really felt part of the community and tried to do everything I could every time I put my sweater over my head."

What's Weber's favorite Sabres memory?

Tyler Ennis' overtime goal in Game 5 of the 2011 Eastern Conference semifinal in Philadelphia, the Sabres' last playoff win.

Weber explained the goal – he took a pass at the point from the late Steve Montador before Ennis potted his rebound – like it had just happened.

"Enzo came flying up and gave me the biggest hug ever," Weber said. "Then Monty came in and gave me an even bigger hug."

Weber played 341 games with the Sabres, compiling nine goals, 53 points and 341 penalty minutes. He had one goal, five points and 32 penalty minutes in 35 games this season. After accumulating a wretched minus-51 rating the last two seasons, he's a plus-3 this campaign.

"It's difficult to trade someone that has been a part of the organization for 10 years, but I think this is a good opportunity for the player and for our organization," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said in a statement. "I would like to thank Mike for his time with the Sabres and wish him the best in Washington."

## **Sabres deal Weber**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 24, 2016

Anaheim, CA (WGR 550) -- The Sabres have traded defenseman Mike Weber to the Caps for a third round pick.

I have confirmed that Buffalo will keep half his salary which matters more to Washington than it does Buffalo.

Weber was a second round pick in the 2006 draft and played 341 games as a Sabre.

In a release General Manager Tim Murray said, "It's difficult to trade someone that has been a part of the organization for 10 years, but I think this is a good opportunity for the player and for our organization," General Manager Tim Murray said. "I would like to thank Mike for his time with the Sabres and wish him the best in Washington."

Weber was out to lunch with teammates after practice when he got the call. He said, "It's something that you know is a possible reality, it was a little surreal, I was out with the boys after practice and we were going to have some lunch, but it's tough. It's something that's always talked about, but until it happens to you, I don't really know the feeling I'm feeling right now."

"You're going to Washington and you have a chance to do something pretty special there, but I've been a part of this organization since 2006 and I want to thank the organization and the management for keeping me around this long and I can't express the life changing thing the city of Buffalo and the organization has been able to provide myself and my family. I've really felt like part of the community and I've tried to do everything I could every time I put that sweater over my head to bring whatever I had and to play hard."

When I asked Weber if he had a favorite memory he didn't hesitate, "The playoffs in Philly, Steve Montador made a D-to-D pass to myself, I went far pad of off Michael Leighton and Tyler Ennis picked up the empty netter basically off the side. All I can think of is it was in Philly and the fans were going nuts and Enzo came flying up and game me the biggest hug ever and then Monty came in and gave me an even bigger hug and it was pretty special."

The Caps next game is Wednesday at home against Montreal.

## **The Sabres are dealing with a month without O'Reilly**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 24, 2016

Anaheim, CA (WGR 550) -- The Sabres come out west for three games and life without Ryan O'Reilly has already begun. The first test didn't go too well as they lost at home to Pittsburgh.

O'Reilly will be out about a month with a broken foot and to start with, Sam Reinhart moved to center. The rookie has played very well on the wing this season netting 18 goals. He said, "I thought it was fine, I don't think we as a team had the puck as much as we'd like to the last game, I kind of thought we were chasing at times, but I thought the speed was there for sure and I think we'll be better next game."

The team was really bad on faceoffs winning only 42 percent without their leader. Reinhart finished at 36 percent and he said, "He's taking what, 30 plus draws a night and winning over half of them every night, so that's a lot of possession loss for sure and that's one area I need to step up and get better at."

Reinhart practices faceoffs, but he hasn't taken too many in games and he knows he has to get back used to it, "Yes, a lot of faceoffs is repetition, so it has been awhile in game situations that I've been taking draws like this so, I think that's something game in and game out I'll get better at and more used to."

Reinhart stays after every single practice to work with O'Reilly. He did the same thing without him on Monday, but he will miss him, "Anytime you miss a guy like that it means so much, day in day out, I mean it's tough to replace him because you can't replace him, especially on the road trip where guys will notice it much more, so it's going to be tough and we're going to need guys to step up."

O'Reilly plays almost 22 minutes per game and now Reinhart, Jack Eichel, Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons are youngsters who will take on bigger roles. Reinhart said, "For sure, anytime someone goes down, it's tough. We've got to be careful not to do too much, we've just got to show up and try to do the same things we've done and step up in some areas."

Johan Larsson agrees that this will give him more time, "Yes absolutely, I will play in key situations more, so yes."

"He's a leader for our team. He's good on faceoffs, he's good at everything, so I'm going to miss him of course, but we've got to deal with it."

Dan Bylsma knows what he's up against with O'Reilly out. He said, "You're talking about replacing over 21 minutes of ice time and really the guy you count on in all situations to be out there and that's not something you can replace, it's not something you can call up and put in your lineup in any way, shape or form. It's going to mean we have other people that are going to step into more expansive roles, different roles that have to fill that void with Ryan not there because it's a big one."

The Sabres needed to have an extra forward to come out west with so they brought Cal O'Reilly. Of course Ryan's older brother is happy to be here, but not under these circumstances, "It's too bad with my brother going down for who knows how long. It's a huge loss for these guys here with how good he's been."

It's a late practice for the team Tuesday in Anaheim scheduled for between 4:30 and 5:00 eastern time.

## **Another 'exciting' Sabres finish shaping up**

By Mike Schopp

WGR 550

February 24, 2016

Twenty-two games, at least half of which they'll play without Ryan O'Reilly. Five points up on last-place Toronto, with three games this March against the Leafs. Six days to the trade deadline, which probably will set several bottom-dwellers, somehow, back.

We're headed for another dramatic finish in the land of the Buffalo Sabres.

If it's excitement and drama you want from this team then this alternate reality will have to do. It's been five seasons since the playoffs, nine since a playoff-series win, and we're not talking about the Bills here. How we stay glued to this stuff deserves professional study.

A lot can be said -- and has been, believe me -- about rooting for losses. It's nobody's preference -- except, that is, when winning amounts to nothing but likely a poorer draft position. With that as the only upside, as I believe it is, taking interest in these games as competition and not exhibition leaves hardly a choice. If it's the Stanley Cup ultimately that you want, then losing wins.

Fans have offered up differing explanations for why being tank-inclined is not for them, at least anymore. There isn't a "McEichel" this year, or so we believe. There is only so much "dark side" rooting in me. The lottery format changed, making it less likely to benefit the worst teams.

Whatever.

For me there just isn't a choice.

We're now 60 games into the season and the Sabres have never really looked like a playoff contender. In the beginning, even without their number-one goalie, they showed much-improved possession stats, but never a good record. In time even the Corsi tailed off, and the only success the Sabres can claim is how they compare with last year's version. That's not nothing, but it doesn't grant you a spot in the tournament.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of spring hockey for me the last few years is watching Toronto flail around. For a while the Leafs lied to the mirror and told themselves they were good, when they weren't. Then came the inevitable realization, and the overhaul. Toronto winked and smiled, and on board came Mike Babcock and Lou Lamoriello to run the rebuild. In a short year the Leafs have shed, incredibly, the burdensome long-term contracts of David Clarkson, Phil Kessel and Dion Phaneuf.

The Leafs have found clean living. They've cut wings and beer from their diet. Now it's time to build the muscle, and so far they look committed.

This piece isn't about morals. I've never seen the place of morals on this topic. Losing is winning and that's simply the end of it.

Toronto seems serious and there may be others. The only reason to think the Pacific Division doesn't have four of the league's worst teams is those teams' games against each other. It's not that crazy to think the final bottom five teams in the standings will be Canadian. It won't be easy.

Game on.

## **Weber: Experience in Buffalo was 'Life-changing'**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 24, 2016

**AHAHEIM** – After 10 years with the Buffalo Sabres organization, defenseman Mike Weber was traded to the Washington Capitals on Tuesday afternoon in exchange for a third-round pick in the 2017 NHL Draft. He received the news on his way to lunch with teammates after their practice at Honda Center.

"I don't even really know the feeling I'm feeling right now," Weber said. "You're going to Washington, you have a chance to do something pretty special there but Buffalo, I've been a part of this organization since 2006 and I want to obviously thank the organization and the management at the time and the management now for keeping me around this long.

"I can't express the life-changing thing that the city of Buffalo and the organization has been able to provide myself, my family. I really feel a part of the community and I've tried to do everything I could every time I put that sweater over my head, to bring whatever I had and to play hard and to do what my skill provided me to do."

Weber, a second-round pick in 2006, recorded 53 points (9+44) and 409 penalty minutes in 341 games for the Sabres from 2007-2016. He's been a reliable face on defense for the team this season, accumulating five points (1+4) and a plus-3 rating in 35 games and has been an impact player on the penalty kill.

It's that steady play, perhaps, that made him an attractive asset to the NHL's top team this season in the Capitals.

"Every year I've tried to come in with consistency and focus," he said. "This season I came in with a mindset of making sure, whether I went over the boards for 11 minutes or over the boards for 24 minutes or whatever it was on any given night... I gave everything I had to prove to the Sabres organization and to my teammates that I'm a solid player and to the rest of the League that I can still do this."

Weber was the longest-tenured current Sabre, having made his team debut at 19 in 2007, and along with Tyler Ennis, was one of the last remaining connections to their last playoff run in 2010-11. The Sabres matched up with Philadelphia in the first round, and Weber earned the primary assist on Ennis' game-winning goal in overtime of Game 5.

Without hesitation, he described that goal as his favorite moment in blue and gold.

"All I can think of was it was in Philly and the fans were going nuts and [Ennis] came up to me and gave me the biggest hug ever and then [defenseman Steve Montador] came up to me and gave me an even bigger hug," he said. "It was pretty special."

Weber said that, other than some "bloody faces and bumps and bruises," he doesn't have many connections with his new Capitals teammates. But he's already received welcoming text messages and leaves knowing that he'll have a chance to succeed.

"I wish the organization and especially the guys in the locker room the very best going forward," he said. "Hopefully they get a chance to do something extremely special here in the future ... in the same breath I'm obviously excited to get to Washington and maybe have a chance myself to do something that's maybe only once in a lifetime. "

## Sabres face tough opponents – including red-hot Ducks – on California trip

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 24, 2016

**ANAHEIM** – Don't let the warm weather fool you. For as much sunshine as the Sabres will experience during their road trip in California, the upcoming week is anything but a vacation. They'll see the top three teams in the Pacific Division, beginning with a Ducks team that's hotter than the Anaheim air.

The Sabres have had success against these teams: They went 2-0-1 against the Ducks, Sharks and Kings in home games against each team this season, falling only to San Jose – who is tied for the most road points in the NHL this season – in overtime.

While the Kings and Sharks have maintained steady success since that time, the Ducks are a far cry from the team that lost 3-0 in Buffalo on Dec. 17. On that night, the Ducks fell to 11-14-5 on the season and were shutout for the seventh time.

Since then, they've been kept off the board only once. They're now 31-19-8 (8-1-1 in their last 10), just two points behind Los Angeles for the division lead and are seeing their star players return to form in front of All-Star goalie John Gibson.

"It's hard to believe the Ducks were in that spot to begin with," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said after practice Tuesday at Honda Center. "Remembering them coming to Buffalo and even scouting them the games before coming there, we were looking at [Ryan] Getzlaf, [Corey] Perry, [Ryan] Kesler and a team full of speed and talent.

"We thought they were scary on tape even though they weren't winning a lot of hockey games back then, and we felt that way playing against them. I think they're one of the better teams in the League."

The offensive struggles of Getzlaf, a six time All-Star, stood out the most for the Ducks in the early going. He had just one goal, an empty-netter, when they faced the Sabres in December. He now has eight and leads the team with 47 points.

Chad Johnson, who was superb in making 44 saves to shutout Anaheim in their first meeting, knew after seeing them that it was only a matter of time before the Ducks righted the ship.

"Getzlaf is hot right now, the team's really hot as a group," Johnson said. "San Jose has been good all year, if I can remember it was a tough game when we played them there and lost in overtime back at home. And L.A. is L.A., they always find a way to slowly improve throughout the season and build for the playoffs so it's going to be a tough road trip for us.

"But again, we had success against these teams and we just want to keep that going and learn from what we did at home."

Adding to the difficulty of the trip for Buffalo is the unusual arrangement of the games. Staples Center, the Kings' home, is only an hour drive from the Ducks' rink at Honda Center. But rather than play the Kings and Ducks in a row, the Sabres will fly north to face the Sharks in-between.

"Yeah, it's a little different," forward Evander Kane said. "But we're here for pretty much the whole week so we have an opportunity to play three tough teams and come out, hopefully, with three wins."

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## **FRANSON WEARS RED**

Defenseman Cody Franson, out for one game with an upper-body injury, was back at practice on Tuesday morning, albeit in a red non-contact jersey. Franson was injured in the head and neck area on a hit into the boards in Columbus on Friday night.

"That's an indication of where he's at – a no-contact day for Cody," Bylsma said. "He's dealing with, probably, at least one or maybe two injuries so he's got some ways to go I think before he leaves the red jersey behind him."

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## **TUESDAY'S LINES**

9 Evander Kane – 23 Sam Reinhart – 56 Justin Bailey

28 Zemgus Girgensons – 15 Jack Eichel – 88 Jamie McGinn

82 Marcus Foligno – 22 Johan Larsson – 12 Brian Gionta

44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 17 David Legwand – 26 Matt Moulson/19 Cal O'Reilly

4 Josh Gorges – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

29 Jake McCabe – 47 Zach Bogosian

6 Mike Weber – 3 Mark Pysyk

25 Carlo Colaiacovo – 46 Cody Franson

40 Robin Lehner

31 Chad Johnson

## **Dunleavy: 'Who needs Batman? The Sabres have Robin!'**

By Dan Dunleavy

Sabres.com

February 24, 2016

When Robin Lehner first became a member of the Buffalo Sabres, it was fair to have questions. How good is he? How good can he be? And is he the one to lead this franchise to the promised land?

It wasn't very many minutes into his first start as a Sabre when those questions were left unanswered, due to a high-ankle sprain that would keep Lehner out of the line up until Jan. 15.

Behind the scenes, I would see Robin around the rink during that time, doing what he could to be around his teammates, making an effort to get to know them, as well getting himself ready to play as soon as nature and healing would allow.

When I share the aforementioned facts with those who know Robin much better than I do, I am told "That's Robin" followed by "You are going to love this guy."

Now it is easy to like a lot of the players you meet along the way within the sport of hockey. Some players make it much easier to get to know them, and to be honest, when I first met Robin, I was not sure he was going to be one of those guys.

At the Sabres' annual golf tournament back in September, I had the fortune of having Robin join our foursome and play a few holes. I welcomed him to Buffalo, shared with him that I was also a new kid on the block, just two years into my hopefully long stay with the organization. We exchanged small talk about his travel to Buffalo and getting settled and also about his love of exotic pets. But beyond that, there was not much back and forth.

Robin told me, "I am kind of a quiet guy."

I think he was trying to not let expectations get too high as to how far he was ready to let strangers into his circle of who he was/is. Now that I have learned a little bit more about the man, the goalie, he was likely saving the more in-depth conversations and lengthier banter for where – and with whom – it mattered most: in the locker room, on the ice with his teammates.

As the season has moved along, and as Robin has had his ups and downs since being back in the lineup, he has certainly let it be known that he is here to be a winner, a leader, a good teammate.

With every start Lehner seems to blend more and more into the role he was brought to Buffalo to fill, that of a No. 1 goaltender.

Rob Ray and I have spoken often during the games I have been calling this month of February about how wins were not the most important thing for Lehner right now.

Seems odd to say that about any athlete who I can guarantee you wants to win.

But when you step back and think of where Robin has been and where he wants to lead the Sabres to, perhaps his initial goals were to find a consistency and a rhythm in his game, along with building trust amongst his teammates.

It would seem to me Lehner is well on his way to accomplishing those first goals. This is a young man who doesn't mind talking to people on a gameday. He wants to be considered part of "the team" and not someone whose mental preparation is fragile if asked about the night's task ahead.

From my vantage point, I have seen more moments of what Lehner can be. To me, he does look like a player who can take the reins in Buffalo and be that next No. 1 goaltender the city has been waiting for.