



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 25, 2015*

## **Confident Larsson is rising up Sabres' depth chart**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

September 24, 2015

Dan Bylsma wanted to get acquainted with his new team during the summer, so he called a few buddies in the coaching fraternity and asked about players. One of the guys who came up in the discussions was Johan Larsson.

The coaches had faced the Sabres late last season, right about the time Larsson started to excel. They praised the center's skills and style of play.

"They liked him a lot," Bylsma said Thursday. "They thought he played a hard, kind of a sandpaper, gritty game. They scouted him as such. That's what he's going to bring to the table. Hard to play against, and that's what he's got to bring for our team."

Bylsma says the summer scouting report on Larsson has been accurate and welcome.

"He's been excellent in practice for the first couple days," Bylsma said. "I've really liked him, and I liked his game a lot."

Larsson led all Buffalo forwards in playing time during the preseason opener, recording one assist and a plus-2 rating in 17:53 of ice time during a 3-2 win in Minnesota. Larsson will play his second exhibition game this weekend, either Friday night in Toronto or Saturday in Ottawa.

"I've felt good in this camp," Larsson said after practice in HarborCenter. "I can only take it day by day, but I feel comfortable here. I feel comfortable with the new staff and everything."

Larsson is confident he can carve out a niche in Buffalo after an impression finish to last season. He rose to the top line after trades and injuries thinned an already weak roster, and he took advantage. Larsson had five goals and 13 points in the final 17 games, impressive numbers considering he had just one goal and seven points in his 51 NHL games before that.

"I got the opportunity to play with good players, so that helped," said Larsson, who skated between Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis. "I got a little more ice time, and the confidence came. It was rolling."

"It helped me a lot, gave me a lot of confidence than I can play in this league at that level. It was kind of huge for me having that in my head."

The hard-driving effort that the opposing coaches liked has been on display whenever Larsson takes the ice. During Thursday's skate, his legs were churning at both ends of the rink as he skated between left wing Nicolas Deslauriers and right wing Marcus Foligno. David Legwand held that fourth-line role at the start of camp, but Larsson has since moved up the center depth chart.

"It's a competition for everybody with the new staff and new coach," Deslauriers said. "Nobody's safe. It's a longer training camp with more exhibition games, and basically you just prove yourself. Larsson's in that situation - I consider myself in that situation, too - and you've just got to be good every time. It's not just once. You have to be good even in practice. It's just working as hard as you can."

"He's a great player. He works hard."

The arrival of Bylsma gave every player a clean slate. Though Larsson and former coach Ted Nolan ended on a high note, they had an up-and-down relationship. After a midseason demotion to Rochester, Larsson questioned whether he had a future in Buffalo.

The ensuing spat with Nolan taught Larsson to just work hard and make the best of any situation. The lesson should benefit the 23-year-old this year. While he currently has a place in the Sabres' lineup, it could change with impressive showings by fellow centers Legwand and Tim Schaller or a return to health by Cody McCormick.

No matter what happens, Larsson says he'll maintain his focus and composure. After all, he knows he can have success in the NHL.

"You've got to keep your head up," Larsson said. "We've got a lot of depth here and a lot of competition. Even if you're not in the lineup you've got to keep working. There's going to be a chance."

## **Sabres notebook: Akeson to face the music after hard check**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

September 24, 2015

The referees didn't see anything wrong with Jason Akeson's big hit Wednesday. The NHL might.

NHL Player Safety has scheduled a Friday hearing with the Sabres forward to discuss a check that injured Ottawa's Colin Greening. Akeson caught Greening with his head down during their preseason game Wednesday, and the league will weigh if the hit fell under "charging/illegal check to the head."

Akeson had the Senators seeing red after he dropped the puck-carrying Greening midway through the third period. Akeson lunged into Greening's upper body, and the woozy Ottawa forward needed to be helped to the dressing room. Sens center Travis Ewanyk instigated a fight with Akeson, who was penalized only for the pugilism.

Buffalo signed Akeson to a one-year deal this summer. The 25-year-old spent his first four seasons in the Flyers' organization, playing 15 games with Philadelphia. The Ontario Hockey League named Akeson its Most Sportsmanlike Player in 2011.

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The Sabres will carry a short-handed hot streak into Friday's preseason game in Toronto. Buffalo has scored with a man in the box during each of its two exhibitions. Jack Eichel scored Monday in Minnesota, while Evander Kane found the net Wednesday.

Having stars on the ice during the penalty kill is something new for Dan Bylsma. During the coach's final four seasons in Pittsburgh, Sidney Crosby's short-handed ice time was about 30 seconds per game while Evgeni Malkin's average was two seconds.

It remains to be seen if the early success will lead Bylsma to change his penalty-killing philosophy.

"It really happened by circumstance in the first game," the coach said Thursday. "I had plans of possibly using Jack in the last 15, 20 seconds of the penalty kill, and we needed a right-shot draw. We weren't winning the draws with the guys that we had, so we used Jack for the draw. He won the draw and it turned into a short-handed situation.

"Right now we're probably auditioning eight to 10 guys for penalty-killing roles, and Evander's got that opportunity. You can see when he is in the open ice, his speed and skill take over there."

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The Sabres' young players have two more games to prove themselves until the team really gets down to business. The Sabres, who also play Saturday in Ottawa, will still use lineups split between prospects and veterans during the back-to-back games.

"It's still a bit of a split squad for these next two, and the last three in the last part of our training camp will be the actual squad," Bylsma said in HarborCenter.

The Sabres will play seven exhibition games. They have two left in First Niagara Center, with Toronto coming to town Tuesday and Columbus visiting next Friday. Four of the five remaining games will feature 60-minute outings by goaltenders Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian will not play this weekend because of a lower-body injury. Patrick Kaleta also has a lower-body injury, but Bylsma hopes Kaleta will be able to dress. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen remains out with an upper-body injury.

"He is able to get on the ice and do some conditioning," Bylsma said. "He's still another probably five days away from getting in a game and practice."

Goalie prospect Linus Ullmark, who had surgery on both hips during the offseason, has begun on-ice activities. He's been working with goalie coach Andrew Allen.

"He's been doing really well in his sessions with Andrew," Bylsma said. "Hopefully, we'll see him progress to full time in practice."

## **Sabres introduce 8-song bracket for 'Goal Song'; Miers hates 'em all**

By Jeff Miers

Buffalo News

September 25, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres are holding an eight-song bracket challenge to allow for fan input as they choose their official goal song for the upcoming season. Half the bracket is composed of tunes chosen by the players themselves; the other half consists of songs tossed into the hat by Entercom stations in the area – Kiss 98.5, Alternative Buffalo 107.7, WGR 550, and Star 102.5.

The songs in the Sabres portion of the bracket are "Howl," by the Gaslight Anthem; "We Party (You Shout)," by Andrew W.K.; "Let Me Clear My Throat," by DJ Kool; and "Coming For You," by the Offspring.

Entercom flagged, for its portion of the bracket, "Swords of a Thousand Men," by Tenpole Tudor; "Krazy," by Pitbull; "Yeah Yeah Yeah," by New Politics; and "The Boys are Back," by Dropkick Murphys. (You can cast your vote, through Oct. 8, via [www.sabres.com/goalsong](http://www.sabres.com/goalsong). The winner will be revealed when the Sabres bury the biscuit for the first time at a home game this season.)

Most of the tunes in the bracket are pretty lame, as far as Gladiator-styled anthems go, but one of them – the Dropkick Murphys' Celtic-punk throw-down "The Boys Are Back," an Entercom pick that was employed in a very high-profile manner by arch-rivals the Boston Bruins when the team returned from the 2012-2013 season lockout – is just plain strange. Let's leave the Bean-town punk anthems to Boston sports fans, shall we?

Here's my take.

Of Sabres-flagged tunes in the bracket, the Gaslight Anthem's "Howl" is the best choice. It's rowdy and loud, and the band may or may not have been drunk when they recorded it. It's *exciting*, at least.

The Andrew W.K. tune is simply too meat-headed, even for a sporting event. It sounds like something Beavis and Butthead would jump around on the couch too.

"Let Me Clear My Throat," by DJ Kool, was already "un-Kool" by the end of its year of release, 1996, and by this point, is pretty much the equivalent of "Cotton-Eyed Joe." Meaning, it should be in its own bracket reading "Please, no, not now, not ever again."

The Offspring's "Coming for You" at least makes a little sense, but still – is this really the best we can do?

Geez. When Tony Lydman was still a Sabre, we at least might've gotten some obscure Nordic death-metal tune as a choice. Sigh.

The Entercom portion of the bracket basically comes down to advertising for the playlists of the respective stations. Is that gross, to you? Or is it just me? Maybe I'm reading too much into this. I tend to do that.

At any rate, the only tenable choice here is the Tenpole Tudor tune. For those of you not necessarily up on your punk rock trivia, Tenpole Tudor was/is a British punk band formed in 1977, best known for its appearance in the 1978 Sex Pistols film "The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle." "Swords of a Thousand Men" is a New Wave-tinged punk tune with one of those shout-along choruses favored with endless enthusiasm, apparently, by sports fans.

The New Politics' "Yeah Yeah Yeah" might work, since it sounds an awful lot like Blur's "Song 2," which has long been an NHL favorite.

"Krazy," by Pitbull, should only be played on yachts docked in Miami, where beautiful people drink champagne that costs more per bottle than I make per month, and gorgeous women pretend that Pitbull is someone they'd

favor with even a *first* glance if he wasn't rolling in music industry greenbacks. That tune is *horrible*. The threat of hearing it every time the Sabres score will leave me no choice but to hope they *never* score.

None of these songs would get me particularly pumped whenever a Sabres puck finds the back of the net. But here are a few that might.

### **"Broken Beat and Scarred," by Metallica**

Let's face it, the best "Go team!" anthems are the ones featuring heavily distorted guitars and choruses sung in unison by angry white men who may or may not have drinking problems, but certainly have some issues they need to "focus on." This one is particularly ferocious, and it goes well with cold beer. Kinda like hockey itself.

### **"Thunderstruck," by AC/DC**

Yes, I know, this "marching off to war" anthem has been used at sporting events often in the past. That's because it's perfect. For the same reasons the Metallica song mentioned above is perfect. Why fix what ain't broke?

### **"Fight the Power," by Public Enemy**

We like to think that a goal for our team is somehow a blow against "the man," the evil empire or the Hockey Gods themselves, the very ones who thought "No goal!" was an occurrence in human history that should've been allowed to stand. For "sticking it to the man"-style emotions, I routinely turn to Public Enemy.

### **"The Boys Are Back in Town," by Thin Lizzy**

This one has been used before as well, but it's still a far better choice than the Dropkick Murphys tune, which owes it a clear debt.

### **"Money City Maniacs," by Sloan**

This has everything a great hockey anthem should – shout-along chorus, memorable riff and so forth. It also has the benefit of not having been beaten to death already. Oh, and Sloan is Canadian. Just like hockey.

And if all else fails, maybe we could hold a contest where local bands or artists compete for the chance to write the best hockey anthem for their hometown team?

Just a thought. I've heard that there is a pretty healthy music scene in this town.

## **Jack Eichel key part of Buffalo's rejuvenation project**

By Kevin McGran

Toronto Star

September 24, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y.—When practice is over, or the game is done, Jack Eichel can go home and be a kid.

Home is Matt Moulson's house, where the 18-year-old Eichel plays — ball hockey, tag, whatever — with Moulson's two children.

"I guess he's eldest son now," jokes Moulson, the veteran Sabre. "He's got a great heart off the ice. He was accepted into the family right away. My wife loves him, my kids love him."

It's good for Eichel not to have to cook, or clean, or do laundry, and to share a ride and to learn the basics of being a pro from Moulson, who once took in John Tavares when the two were teammates with the Islanders.

"It's been good, being about to go home and mess around," said Eichel. "He's got two kids. They're always doing something."

Eichel has enough work cut out for him at the rink.

He is the franchise — the centrepiece of a team that is on the rise, in a city where jobs and pride are returning in equal parts. By the time his career is done, the hockey-centric, \$200 million HarborCenter village that has popped up around the First Niagara Centre may well end up being called the House that Jack Built.

"Our team is taking a lot of pride in helping rejuvenate this city and rejuvenate this franchise," said Eichel. "This is the next chapter for us, the next chapter for our organization, personnel. We're headed in the right direction."

While destined to be a No. 1 centre through his career, Eichel is slated to be the No. 2 centre this season behind Ryan O'Reilly on a team that is expected to challenge for a playoff spot. Dan Bylsma, who won a Stanley Cup guiding the Penguins, is in as coach.

Ex-Leaf Cody Franson helps bolster the blue line and the Sabres are taking a chance with Evander Kane, who gets a new opportunity after being chased out of Winnipeg with the baggage of being selfish.

"Buffalo is the place to be right now," said Franson. "I'm really excited to be a part of it."

The years of losing in Buffalo appear to be over. The Sabres finished last overall and managed to miss out on the Connor McDavid lottery draft pick. But Eichel is far more than a consolation prize, performing through the exhibition season as well as advertised.

"You come in as a young kid, he's got a lot of things people say about him, pressure that he's been dealing with a long time," said Moulson. "He's got some skill that you don't see come around very often. His vision, his mind for the game, to go along with his skill and his skating.

"He's only going to get better the more he learns, the more he can figure out what he can do at this level. You see his confidence growing. He's going to be a big part of our success now and down the road."

## **New players, new coach give Buffalo Sabres sense of hope**

By Kevin McGran

Toronto Star

September 24, 2015

There's plenty to like about the Buffalo Sabres this coming season beyond rookie Jack Eichel. The years of this franchise losing appear destined to end, because the faces that have joined the Sabres give the team a new look and reason for hope.

### **Dan Bylsma**

**Age:** 45

**Coaching Record:** 252-116-32

**Awards:** Stanley Cup, Jack Adams

Bylsma, with his reputation for creativity, brings a strong, confident presence behind the bench with a history of dealing young budding superstars.

The Sabres pursued Mike Babcock until he chose to take over the Maple Leafs. Bylsma hasn't coached since 2013, when he was fired after years of playoff disappointment with the Pens, but his reputation remained intact as one of the league's top coaching free agents.

"He's a stabilizing force," Brian Gionta said of Bylsma. "He sets everything in motion."

### **Cody Franson**

**Age:** 28

**Vitals:** Six-foot-five, 219 pounds

**Stats:** 35 goals, 134 assists for 169 points in 400 games

He'll add a veteran, puck-moving presence playing alongside his good friend, Josh Gorges.

Franson blossomed the past two seasons on the Leaf blue line — the team tried to re-sign him but traded him because his demands were too high. He landed as a free agent in Buffalo after a stint in Nashville didn't go as well as he'd hoped.

"That's the nature of hockey," said Franson. "Toronto was a dream come true for me. I thoroughly enjoyed my four years there. Now I'm on to the next chapter of my life."

### **Evander Kane**

**Age:** 24

**Vitals:** Six-foot-two, 195 pounds

**Stats:** 109 goals, 113 assists for 222 points in 361 games

Kane was injured when he came to the Sabres in a trade last season so he has yet to appear in a regular-season game for Buffalo. He comes with a reputation as a bad-boy and of being a selfish player. But his skill with the puck cannot be denied, although he has yet to harness it in a consistent fashion.

"He's got a clean slate here," said captain Gionta.

"He's a good fit for us here," said Franson. "He's been great so far. I don't expect anything different from him. I played junior with him a bit. I've always enjoyed playing with him."

### **Ryan O'Reilly**

**Age:** 24

**Vitals:** Six foot, 200 pounds

Long-rumoured to be headed for the Leafs, the Sabres picked up O'Reilly in a summer trade with the Colorado Avalanche. O'Reilly gives the Sabres instant credibility at centre, and gives Eichel time to grow into the No. 1 role. O'Reilly led Colorado in faceoff wins (53.3 per cent) and time on ice among forwards (19:43).

"He's the definition of Steady Freddie," Franson said of O'Reilly. "He's very good in every part of the ice. He's strong, good down low and he's smart. And he can make skilled plays like high-end players do."

### **Sam Reinhart**

**Age:** 19

**Vitals:** Six-foot-one, 190 pounds

**Stats:** One assist in nine games last season

Reinhart, the second overall pick in the 2014 draft, is overshadowed in Buffalo by Eichel, the second overall pick in the 2015 draft. But both have game-breaking talent. Reinhart failed to stick with the Sabres after his first nine games last season; some were worried about his skating. He won gold for Canada at the world juniors as the first-line centre.

"Just that extra year alone in development and confidence, you saw what he could do at the world juniors," said Gionta. "He's matured. That one year has made a big difference for him."

## **Sabres' Marcus Foligno searching for consistency**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 24, 2015

TORONTO – Like the coaches before him, Dan Bylsma catches glimpses of Marcus Foligno's potential watching the 6-foot-3, 226-pound Buffalo Sabres winger on tape. But, Bylsma noted, "How often do you have to watch him?"

Coaches could examine weeks of video before finding a single Foligno highlight.

"You watch him skate and you see his size and you see what he can do on the ice," Bylsma said Thursday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's exhibition game against the Maple Leafs. "(If) he can play big and strong and consistent ... then he's going to be a big player every night, and that's really his challenge."

Foligno showcased little consistency in his first four seasons. His best NHL stretch is still his first prolonged stint as a rookie, a six-goal, 13-point run during 13 late-season games in 2011-12 that raised expectations Foligno, 24, could develop into a first-line power forward.

He has only 20 goals and 57 points in 178 games since that rollicking start, including eight goals and 20 points in 57 contests last season, a disappointing campaign in which he broke his hand in the midst of his hottest stretch.

This could be a make-or-break season for the Buffalo-born Foligno, a restricted free agent next summer.

"It's a big year for me, big year for the team," Foligno said inside HarborCenter. "I know if there's team success there'll be individual success."

Foligno's ready to stop talking about his consistency.

"I think consistency's over with," he said. "I think there's no excuse for consistency, you should be ready to play now. I'm old enough, experienced enough I know what I need from myself. It starts with preseason. I feel right now I'm in a good spot."

After shoulder surgery hampered him last summer, Foligno believes he started training camp in the best shape of his life.

"I think I just leaned out, I got more muscle mass than anything," he said. "I just feel more into my body, I feel more control."

Foligno's performance in Monday's exhibition opener, a 3-2 win in Minnesota, impressed Bylsma, who thought he "played big and strong and forechecked" beside center Johan Larsson and Nick Deslauriers.

"I think he led our team with seven or eight hits and was effective ... having some offensive zone shifts," Bylsma said. "You see him at the end of the game being big and strong and playing a tough game, that's what he's got to do every night. That's what he's got to bring for our team."

A fight during a test session of the new three-on-three overtime – "That was probably not what the NHL was thinking about three-on-three," Foligno joked – ended his night.

Foligno feels with Bylsma, his fourth NHL coach, he has a clean slate.

"It's something (like) when I first came into this team four years ago ... so I feel rejuvenated, feel positive and feel like I can get back to where I was," he said.

Bylsma, Foligno said, is "an intense guy."

"He's positive, he's energetic," he said. "Just one game in Minnesota, behind the bench, his life was there. He's calling out plays, calling out demands while the game is going on. You know who's up right away. He's very detailed."

Foligno understands development can take years. His brother, Nick, Ottawa's 2007 first-round pick, had some solid and so-so seasons before a breakout 31-goal, 73-point All-Star campaign with Columbus in 2014-15.

"He's 27, he had his biggest (year)," Foligno said. "You have to stick with it in this league. There's a lot of good players that are 28, 29, 30 years old that are really hitting their peak right now. For a guy like me who just turned 24, every day you got to learn and grow. I feel that I can do that. I think having an older brother that's modeling you, it's easy to look up to him and learn from his abilities and his work ethic."

When the brothers, whose father, Mike, captained the Sabres from 1989-90, worked out together during the summer in Sudbury, Ont., Marcus tried to pick Nick's brain.

"You're getting advice from an All-Star that's your brother, it's pretty significant, whatever he tells you," he said. "It's not like he just goes with the flow. He works hard."

## **Former Sabres standout Derek Plante still reminded of famous goal**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 24, 2015

BUFFALO – At home in Duluth, Minn., no one knows or cares about *the goal*. But when Derek Plante occasionally visits here, where he played six seasons for the Sabres, he can't avoid talking about it.

"Everybody brings up the goal, of course," Plante said this morning about his Game 7 first-round overtime winner against the Ottawa Senators on April 29, 1997, one of the most famous goals in Sabres history.

Plante quietly enjoyed a strong Sabres career, scoring 20 goals three times, including 1996-97, when he compiled a career-high 27 goals and a team-high 53 points for the Northeast Division champs.

But Plante, 44, will forever be remembered in these parts for the slap shot Senators goalie Ron Tugnutt couldn't quite handle.

"It's fun to come back here and kind of reminisce, because that was a great time for me, personally," Plante said. "It was fun. Everybody kind of dreams of scoring the Game 7 overtime winner. It actually happened. It's hard to believe that. A great memory for me."

Plante, who's back at the First Niagara Center to coach a squad in tonight's All-American Prospects Game, sounded nostalgic talking about Buffalo.

"I come back to Buffalo with my memories of being here as a player," he said. "I can do nothing but smile. It was a lot of fun when I was here. When I come back here, people treat me really well. It's just fun, it's just exciting to come back here."

Plante's excited for Buffalo's future. The new downtown developments wowed him, especially HarborCenter, which stands on what used to be a parking lot. During his playing days, he wondered why the waterfront area was never developed.

"They never really took advantage of making it really nice, because anything that has water seems to take off," he said.

Plante, now a development coach with the Chicago Blackhawks, believes the Sabres could take off soon. The former center feels a buzz building around the team, which drafted mega-prospect Jack Eichel and overhauled the roster during the offseason.

"People are just talking about it, and it's not just here in Buffalo, which is really big, but it's other places they're talking about it, how Buffalo's doing a good job," he said. "You'll know in three or four years from now. It looks like they're in the right direction. It looks like people are excited."

## **Sabres' Jack Eichel likely out against Leafs; Rasmus Ristolainen progressing**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 24, 2015

BUFFALO – Rookie center Jack Eichel likely won't play in the Sabres' third preseason game Friday in Toronto against the Maple Leafs, coach Dan Bylsma said this morning.

Eichel, who had a goal and assist in his debut Monday, should play in Saturday's road tilt against the Ottawa Senators. The Sabres will essentially use split squads for the next two games, Bylsma said.

Bylsma wants his regular goalies, Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson, to play two full preseason games. So far, both have played 40 minutes. Bylsma wasn't sure if Friday's starter will go the distance.

In injury news, defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen (lower body) has been skating on his own and could start practicing in about five days, Bylsma said. Defenseman Zach Bogosian (lower body) won't skate for the next couple of days.

Meanwhile, winger Patrick Kaleta, a camp tryout, is day-to-day with a lower-body he suffered in a scrimmage. Bylsma said he hopes Kaleta can skate this weekend and wants him to play a game.

Goalie Linus Ullmark, who's recovering from hip surgery, has joined full workouts.

The Sabres also trimmed their training camp roster to 50 players today by loaning forward Colin Jacobs to the Rochester Americans, sending forward Eric Cornel back to junior and releasing defensemen Josh Chapman and Spiro Goulakos and goalies Keegan Asmundson and C.J. Motte from their tryouts.

**Update:** Sabres winger Jason Akeson, who's almost certainly bound for Rochester, will have a hearing with the NHL Department of Player Safety for hitting Ottawa's Colin Greening near the head 7:49 into the third period of Wednesday's 5-2 loss. Akeson wasn't penalized. Travis Ewanyk immediately fought him.

## **Sabres cut six players**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 24, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres are down to 50 players in training camp. Colin Jacobs has been sent to Rochester.

2013 second round pick Eric Cornel has been sent back to junior while Josh Chapman, Spiro Goulakos, C.J. Motte and Keegan Asmundson have been released from their tryouts.

Both Motte and Chapman have two way AHL contracts between Rochester and Elmira.

Dan Bylsma said Pat Kaleta is out day-to-day with a lower body injury suffered in the scrimmages.

Rasmus Ristolainen is still maybe five days away from getting with his teammates, but is skating on his own.

Zach Bogosian is probably out at least through the weekend.

The NHL Department of Player Safety is having a hearing tomorrow afternoon with Jake Akeson for what they're calling an charging/illegal check to the head. on the Sens Colin Greening. I watched the replay several times and thought it was shoulder to shoulder.

As far as Friday and Saturday's lineups go Dan Bylsma is bringing a lot of players, "I don't think Jack's playing tomorrow. It's somewhat of a split squad, so we'll go up to Toronto with a team and then the team that's going to Ottawa will follow up and watch the game and then get on the plane and go with the team that plays, but most of them will come back home after the Toronto game."

"There will only be a few guys that carryover, but I don't think that Jack plays in Toronto."

We're getting close to the time where goalies will play the full game. So far the starters have gone two periods. Bylsma said, "The plan is to play Lehner and Johnson two full games, so somewhere they're going to have to get a whole game in pretty quickly. We have five left so you'll see certainly the last three, but I don't have it mentally in front of me right now."

There's going to come a time where he's going to have to start playing the guys that are going to be around here. Bylsma said it will be soon, "We're not going to get narrowing down towards the last eight or nine defensemen, then we're not narrowing down to the 15 or 16 forwards until then. (the final three games)"

Bylsma did mention Tim Schaller was injured for a day or two, but is ready and will play.

For the first time 2012 sixth round pick Linus Ullmark was on the ice practicing. The goaltender missed all of camp with double hip surgery.

## **Sabres prep for 'split-squad' road trip**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 25, 2015

Two practice sessions took place for the Buffalo Sabres at HARBORCENTER on Friday morning, where the team prepared for back-to-back games on Friday in Toronto and Saturday in Ottawa. Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma said that most of the players who play in Toronto will not play in Ottawa, but that the whole team will travel to the first game.

Jack Eichel, he said, is not expected to be in the lineup on Friday.

"It's somewhat of a split squad the next two nights," Bylsma said. "We'll go up to Toronto with the team and then the team that's going up to Ottawa will follow up and watch the game and the team that plays [on Friday], most of them will come back home after the Toronto game."

The plan remains the same in net for the Sabres, where the Buffalo goaltenders will continue to split time through the weekend. Bylsma reiterated on Thursday that he plans to get Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson, the top two goalies on the depth chart, one full game each towards the end of the preseason.

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### **TWO GAMES, TWO SHORTHANDED GOALS**

Being shorthanded is never an advantage, but it sure has worked out for the Sabres at the outset of the preseason. The team has two shorthanded goals in as many exhibition games thus far, the first off the stick of Jack Eichel to win the game in Minnesota on Monday and the second scored by Evander Kane against Ottawa on Wednesday.

As Bylsma alluded to following Friday's practice, some of that is circumstantial. Eichel, for example, came in the game on the penalty kill because Buffalo needed a right-shot draw; he won the faceoff and the play ended up resulting in his breakaway for the game-winning goal. The importance of the goals, however, lie in the fact that the Sabres coaches are still deciding who exactly will make up their penalty kill units in the regular season.

"Right now we're probably auditioning 8-10 guys for a penalty killing role," Bylsma said.

Kane, whose shorthanded goal came on a wrist shot from the top of the left circle, certainly didn't hurt his chances of earning one of those roles against the Senators.

"Evander got that opportunity last night and you could see, when he is in open ice, his speed and skill," Bylsma said.

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### **KALETA DAY-TO-DAY**

Patrick Kaleta did not participate in practice for the second-straight day on Friday. Bylsma announced afterwards that Kaleta's absence was caused by a lower-body injury that he sustained during one of the team's practice scrimmages.

Kaleta is on a professional tryout with the Sabres after signing a one-year deal to play in Rochester on Sept. 12. He did not play in either of Buffalo's two preseason games.

"Hoping to see him skate this weekend, I'd like to see him get in a game, but he's got to get back on the ice hopefully this weekend," Bylsma said.

In other injury news, Bylsma said that defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has been spending time on the ice doing

some puck work and conditioning, but that he expects it to be roughly another five days before he's ready to participate in practice or in games. Ristolainen sustained an upper-body prior to the start of Training Camp.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian, meanwhile, is still a couple of days away from skating with the team, according to Bylsma. The coach announced on Wednesday that Bogosian was day-to-day after sustaining a lower-body injury.

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### **LARSSON CONTINUING TO IMPRESS**

When Bylsma asked some fellow NHL coaches for their scouting report on his young forward Johan Larsson, their answers came back the same.

"They thought he played a hard, kind of a sandpaper gritty game," Bylsma said. "That's what he's got to bring for our team."

In his first preseason game on Monday in Minnesota, that's exactly what Larsson brought for the Sabres. Larsson was on the ice for two of Buffalo's goals, earning the assist on one after leading an offensive rush that resulted in a score by Nicolas Deslauriers. In the end, he led all Buffalo forwards with 17:53 on the ice.

"I really liked his game one," Bylsma said. "He's been excellent in practice through the first couple days, really liked him and I liked his game a lot."

After playing between Deslauriers and Marcus Foligno in Minnesota, Larsson has kept his spot on that line through the three days of practice since. At the outset of camp, Larsson was playing on a line with prospects William Carrier and Nicholas Baptiste.

"It was nice, we had a good goal there and I think we played pretty good," Larsson said. "We've got to play pretty hard and work hard and be physical, that's kind of our line so I think we played OK."

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### **AKESON FACES HEARING FOR HIT**

Sabres forward Jason Akeson will have a hearing Friday with the NHL Department of Player Safety for a hit on Ottawa Senators forward Colin Greening during a preseason game Wednesday.

Greening was hit by Akeson at approximately 7:49 of the third period. No penalty was assessed on the play. Greening left the game and did not return. Akeson received a five-minute fighting major for an altercation with Travis Ewanyk that occurred after the hit.

The following grounds are being considered for supplemental discipline: charging/illegal check to the head. However, the Department of Player Safety retains the right to make adjustments to the infraction upon review.

## **Bailey's Blog: A special debut**

By Justin Bailey

Sabres.com

September 25, 2015

I played in my first-ever preseason game in Minnesota on Monday night and it was all very cool. I'm not used to flying out to games obviously and the whole experience was awesome from the time we got there. We flew in, went through all the pregame routines and right to the puck drop, it was very special.

Having that experience gives me a little bit of extra motivation to make the team and want to play in the NHL. It's something that will continue to help push me. The whole lifestyle – the plane, the pregame skate, the meal, the fans – they treat you that way for a reason and you want to keep yourself there.

When gametime finally came around, surprisingly, I wasn't nervous. I think during my first couple of shifts, I was out there trying to kind of feel the game out to see what it would be like. As soon as I kind of figured that out, which came midway through the first period, I played my game and had some really good chances.

That's a little bit of a confidence booster, knowing that you can play at that high level, especially feeling good like I did. You just have to play hard and get on the forecheck. Doing that creates opportunities and I had a couple of good ones early. That helped me set the tone for the rest of my game.

That being said, there were learning moments, too. I realized that there are situations where you have to get the puck off your stick a little bit quicker and there are times when you have to make decisions faster. Obviously you're playing against bigger and faster guys. I just had to learn a little bit of that timing, but once I got it down I was fine.

I'll be looking to get off to a better start once I get my next opportunity.

I think I can be a little bit more poised. I think I had a little bit more time than I thought I did in certain spots. I was able to watch the video right after the game on the flight home and I saw some plays that I could've made where I kind of just rushed it.

Going into the next game, I think it's just about realizing how much time I have and creating plays off of that.

## **NCAA Preview**

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

September 25, 2015

Practices have begun on college campuses nationwide, and once again the Buffalo Sabres will have no fewer than 10 student athletes that have been drafted by the team skating at the NCAA level when action kicks off in October.

### **BIG TEN (B1G)**

Budding power forward **Hudson Fasching** enters his third season at the University of Minnesota, where he'll be relied upon as top line scorer, two-way worker and regular net-front presence.

Fasching, who scored 12 goals and 26 points in 38 games last season, will serve as one of the team's three alternate captains for the 2014-15 campaign. He underwent a successful off-season procedure to remove bone chips from his knee, setting the stage for what many think will be a big year for the kid dubbed "Thor" by his teammates.

While the Sabres likely tossed around the idea of luring Fasching to the pro ranks, the 6-foot-2, 207-pound winger remains on course to complete an academic program that will see him earn his bachelor's degree in three years, perhaps allowing him to forego his final year of NCAA eligibility if the opportunity presents itself.

For now, though, the mission is to win a national title. Fasching will undoubtedly play a major role in all situations as a puck possession workhorse if the Gophers are to achieve their goals.

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### **HOCKEY EAST**

**Anthony Florentino** (2013, fifth round) heads back to Providence College following an excellent sophomore campaign that ended with the Friars capturing the 2015 NCAA Championship, and him being named to the 2015 Frozen Four All-Tournament Team.

A mobile, hard-hitting rearguard, Florentino captured a career-best 15 points (3+12) last season. He is set to enjoy top-pair minutes for the defending champions while using his big shot on the first unit power play. Florentino has always envisioned himself as a "four-year player," meaning it's quite possible that the Sabres will need to wait until 2017 before officially adding him to the fold.

Sophomore **Cal Petersen** (2013, fifth round) is expected to maintain his position as Notre Dame's leading backstop when the puck drops for the regular season opener October 16 at Penn State. The Waterloo Blackhawks product quickly adapted to his settings as a freshman last season, posting a 13-16-3 record, including four shutouts, a 2.51 goals-against average and .919 save percentage en route to earning a spot on the Hockey East All-Rookie Team.

In March, Petersen set an NCAA record with 87 saves in 4-3 five overtime loss to Massachusetts in the first round of the playoffs. The game lasted 151:42 to go down as the longest game ever played in NCAA hockey history.

Notre Dame centerman **Connor Hurley** (2013, second round) will look to put his vision and playmaking instincts to good use towards a successful sophomore campaign in South Bend. Hurley's freshman year saw him endure a bit of a learning curve as he collected four goals and 14 points in 41 games for a young Fighting Irish team.

With added strength and confidence, Hurley is targeting a role this season as a top-six forward who will take the puck hard to the net more often while adding a spark to the power play.

**Christopher Brown** (2014, sixth round) carries on a family tradition as he settles in for his freshman season at Boston College. Son of a pair of Boston College graduates and nephew of current assistant coach Greg, Brown will skate for the club that was captained by his brother Patrick in 2013-14.

A prolific scorer at the Michigan high school level, Brown amassed 32 points (13+19) last season with Green Bay and Tri-City of the United States Hockey League, but projects to be a hard-working, two-way forward as he eases his way into his collegiate career.

Hard-shooting defenseman **Ivan Chukarov** (2015, seventh round) will immediately step into a key role as a 20-year-old freshman this season with the University of Massachusetts. Chukarov was lights out with the North American Hockey League champion Minnesota Wildnerness in 2014-15, collecting 43 points (12+31) to earn a spot on the All-NAHL Team.

UMass has been picked by many to finish at the bottom of the Hockey East standings, but expectations will be high with the big, puck-moving defenseman being one of just three NHL draft picks on the Minutemen roster.

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### **EASTERN COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE (ECAC)**

Fully healed from an offseason surgical procedure that kept him off the ice at Development Camp, Harvard University forward **Sean Malone** (2013, sixth round) has the potential to emerge as one of college hockey's most complete forwards entering his third season in Cambridge.

The West Seneca, N.Y. native was dogged by injury early in his sophomore campaign, but quickly emerged as an energetic force who could fill the net and make the most of his linemates to finish the year with eight goals and 18 points in just 21 appearances. Harvard is the early-season favorite to take the ECAC regular season title. Malone's no-quit attitude will be a key to making the prognostications become reality.

**Maxwell Willman** (2014, fifth round) enters his sophomore year at Brown University with an eye on making a significant impact following a year of adjusting to the pace and physicality at the collegiate level.

Willman kicked off his freshman year by appearing on the team's top forward unit, scoring Brown's first goal in their seasoning opening contest versus Army, but was unable to find the net the rest of the way to finish with three points in 30 appearances. Willman, who also served as a defenseman midway through the season, looked sharp at the Sabres Development Camp in July, making him one to watch for this season despite the paltry production in year one.

Acquired from Winnipeg last season via trade, **Jason Kasdorf** enters the year once again sitting atop the Rensselaer goaltending depth chart. Kasdorf, 23, considered leaving school last spring after posting an 11-19-2 record, 2.97 goals-against average and .902 save percentage, but opted to return for another year in pursuit of an NCAA title.

RPI may lack the offensive firepower to emerge as a top contender, but no one should discount Kasdorf's ability to steal a few games for the Engineers. He looked very poised in an all-around excellent Development Camp performance, leaving many to believe that a return to his 2012-13 form – when he was one of the top goaltender's in all of college hockey – is right around the corner.

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### **NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HOCKEY CONFERENCE (NCHC)**

A season removed from being named a Mr. Hockey finalist as one of top high school players in the state of Minnesota, defenseman William Borgen (2015, fourth round) will be expected to leverage his fluid puck rushing skills out of the gate as a true freshman when St. Cloud State kicks off their regular season schedule October 9 at Alaska-Fairbanks.

Borgen will serve as the youngest defenseman on the Huskies roster, but will get every opportunity to contribute early for a squad returning seven of their top 10 scorers from a season ago.

Sophomore forward Judd Peterson (2012, seventh round) returns to St. Cloud State a year removed from a four-goal, seven-point effort in 2014-15. Peterson, who like his teammate Borgen was a Mr. Hockey finalist in 2012, scored the game winning goal in overtime in St. Cloud's 3-2 win over Michigan Tech in the NCAA West Region semifinal.

The Huskies coaching staff is hoping that the star performance springboards the gritty shooter into second-year success for a team picked to finish sixth in the NCHC preseason poll.