



Buffalo Sabres

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Sharks-Sabres Preview

By Jeff Bartl

AP

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Overcoming a rough start to reach .500 could be viewed as quite an accomplishment for a rebuilding team that finished at the bottom of the NHL the previous two seasons.

That's not enough to satisfy the young Buffalo Sabres, though.

Surging Buffalo can earn its sixth victory in seven tries by winning a ninth straight meeting with the visiting San Jose Sharks on Saturday night.

The Sabres (8-8-0) are off to their best 16-game start since beginning 10-6-0 in 2011-12 and are at .500 for the first time since the end of the lockout-shortened 2013 season.

They've won five of six to hit that mark and extended their winning streak to three with Thursday's 3-2 victory at Florida. Buffalo already is more than a third of the way to reaching last year's win total of 23 and is on the verge of having more wins than losses for the first time since being 2-1-0 in 2012-13.

"We started the season 2-6, and 3-7 in our first 10," coach Dan Bylsma said. "We thought we were better than that."

Ryan O'Reilly, acquired in an offseason trade with Colorado, has a team high of nine assists and 13 points, and No. 2 overall pick Jack Eichel leads the club with six goals.

Both were held off the score sheet Thursday, though, as Brian Gionta, Cody Franson and Sam Reinhart scored. Rasmus Ristolainen finished with two assists to add to his three goals during a three-game point streak.

"We're going to attack and we're going to be fine in our zone," winger Marcus Foligno told the team's official website. "No days off around here, that's the biggest thing. We won (both games on the road trip), but it's no big deal. We're .500, not first in the league. That's our goal."

Gionta had two goals and an assist in a 4-1 win over San Jose in the previous meeting Nov. 18 - the Sabres' eighth straight victory in the series. The Sharks have lost on their last five trips to Buffalo since last winning there Dec. 2, 2005.

San Jose (8-8-0) looks to snap that drought after beginning a six-game trip with Friday's 3-2 win over Detroit. Joe Pavelski scored to give him five of his team-high nine goals on the road, while Matt Nieto and Melker Karlsson also scored.

The Sharks won't play at home until facing defending champion Chicago on Nov. 25.

"This is a tough road trip, so to start it with a good team win is great," said Pavelski, who has one assist in his last seven against Buffalo. "Now we can think about tomorrow. This is a lot of games on the road, so we can't start looking ahead."

Martin Jones made 27 saves, but it's unclear if he'll start both ends of the back-to-back. Alex Stalock, who has a 2.85 goals-against average in three starts and two relief efforts, could get his first start since beating Florida on Nov. 5.

Chad Johnson could be back in net for Buffalo after rookie Linus Ullmark had 36 saves to beat the Panthers. Johnson, who has never faced the Sharks, had 30 saves in a 4-1 win at Tampa Bay on Tuesday.

Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, who hasn't played since Nov. 7, had surgery Friday for a lower-body injury and is out indefinitely.

Bogosian moves closer to returning to Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

November 14, 2015

After finally getting the green light to practice with the Sabres, there was no way Zach Bogosian was going to be late for the noon workout.

"I was here at 8 o'clock," Bogosian said Friday in First Niagara Center. "I was a little excited."

It was obvious. The defenseman, who has yet to play this season because of a lower-body injury, was all over the ice. Bogosian took shots at the goaltenders and verbal jabs at his teammates. "Rambunctious" was how coach Dan Bylsma described him.

"It's nice to be around the guys," Bogosian said. "It's different when you're injured. You try to stay as positive as possible and try to help out the guys that are actually playing in the games. You feel like you're part of the team, but you're kind of on the outside looking in."

"To actually be out there with the guys mixing it up, laughing and joking around makes for a good time."

Bogosian is not expected to join his teammates Saturday night when they host the San Jose Sharks, but the full practice showed he's getting close. Bylsma anticipates getting Bogosian into a morning skate next week.

"I know you've heard me say it before, day-to-day, but I guess this time it's a little more serious," Bogosian said. "I'm feeling confident. It's something that when I was skating before I wasn't as confident with it, so I'm feeling good."

Bogosian didn't shed much light on the nearly eight-week ailment, other than to say it happened during the third day of training camp and didn't require surgery.

"I've played through injuries before, but this is one that if it wasn't taken care of right away it could be nagging for a while," he said. "I'm antsy along with everyone else to get back, but you have to be smart about it as well."

While the return of Bogosian boosted the excitement level, the Sabres' defensemen have already been riding a high. The blue-liners have combined for five goals and 10 points during Buffalo's three-game winning streak.

"We try and take pride to helping out in that category," defenseman Cody Franson said. "Luckily, the last couple games, we've been able to get a few points."

Franson has goals in two straight to boost his season totals to two goals and eight points. Rasmus Ristolainen has three goals and two assists during the wins, running his totals to four goals and 10 points. He's second on the team in scoring while Franson is fifth.

"Five days ago, we were talking about our team with our defensemen not being on the score sheet," Bylsma said. "I thought maybe that was more an indication of puck luck. We've had a ton of looks and a lot more shot opportunities for our defensemen that haven't gone in, and I'm not surprised to see them get on the score sheet."

Bylsma talked during training camp about having an aggressive defense corps, and it's worked out that way. Ristolainen (42) and Franson (31) have combined for 73 shots, an average of nearly five per game. Jake McCabe has two goals, while Carlo Colaiacovo, Josh Gorges, Mark Pysyk and Mike Weber all have assists.

"We had a lot of new faces, a lot of new bodies, new coach, new systems," Franson said. "Sometimes it takes a little bit to become fluent with everything. It takes a little bit of time for things to become a reaction rather than reading and trying to think about what you're doing on the ice. We're to that point now."

"We're starting to create a little more in the offensive zone with our cycles. Guys are understanding how they play with certain guys and things like that. I think it's a work in progress, but I think we're improving."

The Sabres have been able to create from the blue line and boost their record to 8-8 without their No. 1 defenseman. The return of Bogosian should help even more.

"I like to jump in the play and try to get up there as much as possible," Bogosian said. "It's something Dan encourages. I thought our defensemen have played very well. Anytime you're getting goals from your defensemen, it's a good thing."

"Hopefully, I can mix in a game here pretty soon."

Sabres notebook: NHL watches status of fantasy sports companies

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

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When the Sabres start their pregame warmup Saturday night, a commercial for DraftKings will break out in First Niagara Center. The logo of the daily fantasy sports company will dominate the scoreboard and explode on the ribbon board that circles the arena. It's part of a seasonlong sponsorship.

At least the Sabres hope it is.

Though the Sabres had no comment on DraftKings' legal battle with New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, the organization is undoubtedly keeping an eye on the tussle. DraftKings and FanDuel, a similar daily fantasy site, filed separate lawsuits Friday in an attempt to stop Schneiderman from shutting down the companies in the state. The attorney general demanded Tuesday that DraftKings and FanDuel stop taking bets in New York on the basis that they are illegal gambling sites.

The companies are an important booster to the bottom line in Buffalo and other NHL cities. In addition to sponsoring the pregame, DraftKings has an ad on the boards behind the Sabres' net.

"We are actively monitoring the situation," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in an email to The Buffalo News on Friday afternoon. "It is rapidly evolving."

The Sabres are expected to remain in wait-and-see mode regarding the lawsuits. Given the likelihood of appeals and countersuits by the sides, it could be awhile before anything is resolved. Until then, it will be business as usual before the puck drops.

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Mike Weber underwent knee surgery Friday, and the defenseman will be out on a "week-to-week" basis, coach Dan Bylsma said.

Weber has had a lingering knee problem that became worse this week. He was unable to finish the morning skate Tuesday in Tampa Bay, so the Sabres sent him home for an MRI.

"Once it bothered him and he couldn't play in the game, we wanted to get an evaluation of it," Bylsma said. "We'll know more about a timetable after the surgery."

Weber and Carlo Colaiacovo have been alternating between the blue line and the press box. Colaiacovo will play his third straight Saturday against San Jose.

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Coaches and players often break the season down into 10-game segments, and Bylsma is no different. Buffalo went 3-7 in the opening 10 games and is 5-1 so far in the second segment to improve to 8-8.

"We were looking at 6-4 in a 10-game segment and to do that the rest of the way through the year," the coach said. "This segment right now, we've won five games in the first six of this group. That means we're .500. ... It is significant."

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While Western New Yorkers have had to push through the wind for a few days, the Sabres had to fly through it following Thursday's victory in Florida.

"We were teetering pretty good," defenseman Cody Franson said. "I'm happy to be here today."

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With dual victories Thursday, the Sabres and Bills won on the same day for the first time since Jan. 3, 2010, according to Ian Ott of the Sabres' media relations staff. Here are some other facts from Ott about the teams playing on the same day:

- Buffalo's teams turned the tables on the Florida Panthers and New York Jets. The four teams also faced off Jan. 1, 2006, with the Panthers and Jets winning.
- The Sabres and Bills have played on the same date 210 times. Buffalo has swept the doubleheader on 47 of those days.
- The Sabres improved to 113-64-33 when playing on a Bills game day. The Bills improved to 89-119-2 when sharing the date with the Sabres.

Bills coach Rex Ryan isn't a fan of the same-day scheduling. It happens again Nov. 23 when the Sabres host St. Louis and the Bills visit New England, so Ryan will again miss the hockey team.

"I've got season tickets, I've watched one game," Ryan told reporters in Ralph Wilson Stadium. "It upsets me that there's that football season getting in the way of my Sabres games. But no, they're doing fantastic. I watch them on TV when I can and things. It's such a young team, but I love the enthusiasm that they have."

Sharks, Sabres can get over .500 with victory

By Sean McCullen

NHL.com

November 14, 2015

SHARKS (8-8-0) at SABRES (8-8-0)

TV: CSN-CA, BELL TV, MSG-B

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres swept two games from the San Jose Sharks last season. Buffalo forwards Nicolas Deslauriers and Brian Gionta each scored two goals. Defenseman Brent Burns scored each of San Jose's two goals.

Sharks team scope: San Jose opened its season-high six-game road trip with a 3-2 victory against the Detroit Red Wings on Friday. "We needed a win tonight. I thought we played a good road game," coach Peter DeBoer said. "They outshot us, but we've been on the wrong side of a few of those at home. ... We kept their shots from the outside." Backup goalie Alex Stalock could start after Martin Jones made 26 saves in Detroit. Captain Joe Pavelski, who scored the game-winner against the Red Wings, has seven goals in the past nine games.

Sabres team scope: Buffalo has won three straight games and five of six to reach .500 for the first time since the end of the 2012-13 season. Rookie goalie Linus Ullmark made 36 saves in a 3-2 victory at the Florida Panthers on Thursday. Coach Dan Bylsma would not say Friday whether Ullmark or Chad Johnson will start. Ullmark is 4-2-0 with a 2.45 goals-against average and .924 save percentage. Defenseman Zach Bogosian, who has been out since the first week of training camp because of a lower-body injury, was a full participant at practice Friday. "We were on the ice at 11 or 12, and I think I was out here at like 8 o'clock," Bogosian told the Sabres website. "I was a little excited." Bylsma said he hopes to have Bogosian participate in a morning skate at some point next week to determine if he's ready for game action. Defenseman Mike Weber is week-to-week after he had surgery Friday on a lingering knee injury, Bylsma said.

Significant wins have Sabres primed to go over .500

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 14, 2015

BUFFALO – Eighteen NHL teams, including nine in the Eastern Conference and four in the Atlantic Division, have more points than the Sabres' 16. At 8-8, they're one of 20 clubs at .500 or better.

On the surface, and without fully understanding their recent turbulent past, the Sabres' start might look a bit pedestrian. But having won three straight games and six of eight, they've roared back into the playoff picture. In the last two weeks, the upstart Sabres have played their best and most significant stretch of games in years.

The Sabres' 3-2 triumph Thursday in Florida was perhaps their most important victory in a few seasons. After they won 4-1 on Tuesday in Tampa Bay, his players knew they needed one more win to reach .500, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Friday.

"It is significant," Bylsma said. "I know our guys were looking at it."

The Sabres haven't been .500 or better at this point in the season since 2011-12. Incredibly, they haven't been at the mark since ending the lockout-shortened 2012-13 campaign 21-21-6. They haven't been over .500 since starting that year 2-1.

So tonight against the San Jose Sharks inside the First Niagara Center the Sabres, fresh off consecutive 30th-place finishes, can own their first winning record since January 2013.

The Sabres have come a long way very quickly this season.

"We started 2-6," Bylsma said. "We thought we had done some good things. We thought we had played well. We thought we were better than that. I think our guys have worked hard and fought hard to be better than that and get wins."

Clearly, the Sabres, who overhauled their lineup and hired a new coaching staff during the offseason, are learning to win. There were early signs when they performed well in some losses, outplaying and outshooting some opponents.

But with so many new faces and a new system, they needed some time.

"It took a while," Sabres winger Marcus Foligno said. "I think that's what we showed in some of our losses this year. We dominated games, we didn't get the win. Now we're dominating games and getting wins and vice versa. So I think it's just getting familiar with all the guys.

"I think we have a great bunch of guys. The chemistry's great. Everyone gets along with each other. That's huge, so that translates on the ice."

The understanding the coaches have passed to the players through teaching "has been amazing," Foligno said.

"Everyone's been soaking it up and spitting it up out there," he said.

These days, the Sabres possess a strong belief they can triumph in any game.

"We haven't found a way to win a long time," said winger Tyler Ennis, the Sabres' longest-tenured forward.

The Sabres beat the Panthers despite getting outshot 38-19. They eked out a 3-2 win over Vancouver last Saturday when the Canucks outshot them 37-22. In between, they played a near-perfect road game in defeating Tampa Bay, ending a seven-game losing streak against the Lightning.

"We've been outshot in (two of the past three) games, but I don't think ... you would say, 'Oh, we didn't deserve to win that,'" Foligno said.

Foligno's excited "because the mentality of our team has changed so much."

"We're in games, we're positive throughout the whole game," he said. "There's a belief that we're going to win games now. Not that there (wasn't) before, but there's a definite thing if we're down a couple of goals, we're going to come back and win. It's great to be a part of this now where this team's rolling in the right direction."

Ennis added: "I think every day, every game like that we get the belief, confidence grows. So we just need more of that. Confidence is a huge part of this game."

Notes: Bylsma on scratching gritty winger Nick Deslauriers, a player whose passion and talents he often lauds, on Thursday: "It is hard. I think he is and will be a big part of our team and how we play. ... It wasn't pleasant." Deslauriers played every game last season. ... The Sabres have beaten the Sharks eight straight games. The Sharks have only won once in Buffalo – a 5-1 victory Dec. 2, 2005 – in their 24-year history.

Sabres' Zach Bogosian practices, day-to-day; Mike Weber having knee surgery

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 14, 2015

BUFFALO – Just how antsy was defenseman Zach Bogosian to join his Sabres teammates for practice at noon today?

"I was here at like 8 o'clock, I think," Bogosian said this afternoon after skating inside the First Niagara Center. "I was a little excited. It's nice to be around the guys."

Bogosian, who's been sidelined with a lower-body injury since the third day of training camp, is finally nearing a return. While there's no timetable for his season debut, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma wants him to participate in a morning skate next week.

More on Bogosian, who's day-to-day, later. The Sabres' blue line is still thin.

Sabres defenseman Mike Weber will undergo knee surgery today and is week-to-week, Bylsma said. Bylsma said Weber was dealing with "chronic problems with the knee."

Bylsma said the Sabres will have a firmer timetable for Weber, who has missed two games, after the surgery.

Bogosian, meanwhile, enjoyed today's practice, his first in a month and just his second this season. Bylsma characterized the 25-year-old as "rambunctious."

Being around the team is different when you're injured, Bogosian said.

"You try to stay as positive as possible and try to help out the guys that are actually playing in the games," he said. "You feel like you're part of the team, but you're kind of on the outside looking in. To actually be out there with the guys, mixing it up, laughing, joking around, makes it a good time."

Bogosian wanted to be smart with the injury and let it heal properly.

"I've played through injuries before, but this is one that if it wasn't taken care of right away, it could be nagging for a while," he said. "I just wanted to make sure, as well as the training staff, it's feeling good and 100 percent before I come back. It's a long season, I know. I'm antsy as well as everyone else to get back. But you have to be smart about it as well."

Bogosian spent some of practice beside Rasmus Ristolainen. Bylsma, however, said he hasn't chosen a partner for him yet.

Bogosian a full participant in practice

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

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It doesn't take much searching to find a mustache at Buffalo Sabres practice nowadays. With "Movember" in full swing, whiskers are at a premium amongst players who aim to raise awareness for The Movember Foundation, which is committed to improving men's health.

On Friday, however, one mustache on the ice was a particularly welcoming sight. It belonged to Zach Bogosian.

"We were on the ice at 11 or 12 and I think I was out here at like 8 o' clock," Bogosian said. "I was a little excited."

The excitement came for good reason. After a week of skating in Buffalo while the rest of the team played in Florida, the defenseman participated in a full-contact practice for the first time since sustaining a lower-body injury during the first weekend of Training Camp.

"It went good," Bogosian said afterwards. "I'm just trying to get my legs under me a little bit in a practice; it's a little different doing a rehab skate rather than an actual practice so you try to get your wind as good as possible but the only way to really get into game shape it to get into games.

"Hopefully I'll get into a game here pretty soon."

Both Bogosian and Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said that the defenseman remains day-to-day, with Bylsma adding that he hopes Bogosian can participate in a morning skate to test his game readiness at some point next week.

This isn't the first time we've seen Bogosian on the ice since his injury. He wore a red non-contact jersey while practicing on Oct. 14 and traveled with the team to Florida that day with the expectation of participating in more practices.

That didn't take, however, and he wasn't seen in practice again until a brief appearance in Pittsburgh on Oct. 29.

As much as the Sabres have missed his presence on the ice, neither the team nor Bogosian wanted to rush his return.

"I've played through injuries before but this was one where if it wasn't taken care of right away it could be nagging for a while," he said. "I just wanted to make sure as well as the training staff, make sure that it's feeling good and 100 percent before I came back."

Now, after a week of skating, Bogosian says that he finally feels like himself again.

"I'm feeling confident, something that maybe when I was skating before I wasn't as confident with it," he said. "I'm feeling good."

As for the thick hair above his upper-lip, Bogosian admits he had about a four-month head start on his teammates – rather than start from scratch, he simply shaved the beard around his mustache.

The team's Movember page – where you can donate to support the men's health movement which focuses on prostate and testicular cancer, mental health and physical activity – **can be found here**.

WEBER TO HAVE SURGERY

Bylsma announced that Sabres defenseman Mike Weber will undergo surgery on his lower-body injury on Friday. Weber left Buffalo's morning skate early on Tuesday in Tampa and flew back home to Buffalo for further evaluation.

Bylsma ruled Weber was week-to-week while stressing that the results of the surgery will provide better insight into a specific timetable for his return.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

The Sabres have won five out of six games, and Bylsma has attributed their success in-part to a newfound expectation to win within the team. That held true on Thursday when, despite not playing at their best offensively, the Sabres were able to earn a 3-2 win against Florida.

The Sabres were outshot 38-19 and yet led for nearly the whole game.

"We've seen it where we're up 2-1 in Florida and Tampa, and we needed a goal to push them out of the game and make it 3-1," forward Marcus Foligno said. "We got both those goals."

Foligno said that the team's confidence in those types of game has changed from their first 10 contests, when the Sabres were playing well in certain aspects of the game, but went 3-7-0.

"Yeah, big time," he said. "When the game's a 2-1 hockey game or a 1-1 game, you feel like, 'We're not going to get scored on.' That's the biggest thing. I think we feel like we're not in a defensive mindset. We're going to attack and we're going to be fine in our zone."

Winning has changed the team's mindset in games, but the positive results won't lead to them taking their foot off the pedal in practice. Despite a late flight back from Florida on Thursday night, the Sabres had a full session on Friday.

"No days off around here, that's the biggest thing," Foligno said. "We got in a late last night, we won two games, but it's no big deal. We're .500, not first in the league. That's our goal."