



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

November 17, 2015

Stars-Sabres Preview

By Nicolino Dibenedetto

AP

November 17, 2015

John Klingberg is the NHL's highest-scoring defenseman and playing a vital role in the Dallas Stars' climb to the top of the Western Conference.

Coming off a pair of multipoint efforts, Klingberg tries to help the visiting Stars continue their success against the Eastern Conference on Tuesday night against the Buffalo Sabres.

Klingberg's 20 points are half his total as a rookie last season and put him in the lead among defensemen. He's ahead of Ottawa's Erik Karlsson and P.K. Subban of Montreal - with three Norris Trophies between them - by two and three points, respectively.

The Stars (14-4-0) have never had a Norris winner, but Klingberg might be able to change that. He's collected 19 of his points in victories, including two goals and three assists in the last two games.

He had a season-high three points after scoring in overtime of Saturday's 3-2 win over Minnesota.

One of Klingberg's assists set up a power-play tally by Jamie Benn, giving him 10 points on the man advantage to tie Boston's Patrice Bergeron for the league lead.

"I'm happy about it. I'm a player that should put up those points," Klingberg told the team's official website. "I get to play those minutes on the power play, and there are lots of scoring opportunities."

Dallas is 8-3-0 against the East, winning seven of eight matchups on the road.

Benn is second in the league with 12 goals and third with 25 points, and he's scored eight of those goals against Eastern clubs. The left wing has four goals and five assists in seven career matchups with the Sabres.

The Stars, though, are 1-6-1 with a tie in their last nine visits to Buffalo (8-8-1).

The Sabres are 5-1-1 after opening the season with losses in seven of their first 10 games. They picked up another point Saturday, falling 2-1 in overtime to San Jose as their three-game winning streak ended.

Like Dallas, Buffalo is getting an unexpected increase in production from a defenseman. Rasmus Ristolainen has 11 points after totaling 20 all of last season. He's accumulated three goals and three assists during a four-game point streak after setting up Ryan O'Reilly's third-period tally Saturday.

"I think I've been doing a better job than last year defensively and offensively," Ristolainen told the team's official website. "I think I can still be better and better and I try to be better and better."

"I try to help the team offensively, lately I have some points. But I don't think that way; I try to take care first in the defensive zone and then try to get something started on offense too."

Buffalo might have some defensive help coming as Zach Bogosian is nearing a return from a lower-body injury that's kept him out all season.

"He looks like he should be ready to play sometime this week," coach Dan Bylsma said.

The Sabres could be without center Zemgus Girgensons, who is reportedly still feeling the effects of a hit against the Sharks. However, Bylsma claims it's not concussion related.

Jack Eichel has no points in his last two games, but he remains the team's leaders with six goals. The rookie has five goals and two assists in 10 home games compared to two points in seven on the road.

Johnson, Ullmark put stop to goalie concerns

By John Vogl
Buffalo News
November 17, 2015

When the Sabres lost Robin Lehner in the season opener, they hoped Buffalo's other goaltenders could step in and perform. But hope was all they had to go on. Chad Johnson was a career backup, and Linus Ullmark was a rookie coming off surgery.

Now the team has a bunch of saves to go with that hope.

Ullmark and Johnson have been better than expected, propelling the Sabres to wins in five of the last seven games. Buffalo faces its biggest test of the season Tuesday when the Dallas Stars and the NHL's best offense visit, and the goaltenders seem ready.

"It's a good challenge for us to see what we can really do," Johnson said Monday in First Niagara Center.

Ullmark and Johnson have alternated in net during the last four games, with the lone constant being good results. They have combined for a .949 save percentage, stopping 131 of 138 shots, with a 3-0-1 record.

Not even the biggest optimist could have foreseen that.

"You take that number for anybody, let alone in an emergency situation or without your starter in net, there's got to be some surprise," coach Dan Bylsma said. "Chad's never really been the No. 1 at this level. He's never really had the net consecutively, night in and night out, and Linus is a guy who hasn't established himself as a starting goaltender over here as a young player.

"They've dealt with it well."

Johnson, who started Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss to San Jose, has a .959 save percentage in his last three appearances. Ullmark has a .947 in his last two, boosting his season total to .924. That's 13th in the NHL among goalies with five or more appearances.

Both netminders are crediting the team for their success.

"They're doing everything good," Ullmark said. "They're blocking shots. They're taking away the rebounds, keep the traffic away from us. We have a clear view of the puck all the time, which makes it a lot easier when the opponent enters the zone."

Johnson points to a 4-3 loss in Pittsburgh on Oct. 29 as the turning point defensively. Buffalo gave up 11 shots in the first period and 14 in the second. The Penguins managed only four shots in the third.

"We realized what we had to do to have success," Johnson said. "That starts with playing good defense and being really hard around the net."

The Sabres were repeatedly beaten off deflections and rebounds before that period, but they've cut down on those scoring chances.

"For us goalies, it's seeing pucks," Johnson said. "Even if you're giving up 30, 35 shots, we're seeing the pucks. We're tying up sticks in front, and if there's rebounds there we're clearing them away.

"That has to do with a lot of compete around our net with our D doing a good job and our forwards coming down to help."

Whichever goalie starts Tuesday will need all the help he can get. Dallas leads the NHL with 3.61 goals per game. Tyler Seguin is second in the league in points with 26 (nine goals, 17 assists) and Jamie Benn is right behind with 25 points (12 goals, 13 assists). Defenseman John Klingberg is tied for fourth overall with 20 points, including 16 assists.

Coach Lindy Ruff's squad has bolted out of the gate with a 14-4 record.

"They're the fastest-playing team and the fastest team," Bylsma said. "We haven't seen them, but I know that's the case. I can watch the tape and see it.

"It will be the fastest team we've seen, and I don't think we've come close really to seeing something like the way they attack, the way they transition, the way they come at you with speed. They really do it quite relentlessly, and we'd really like to slow the game down. We're going to have to slow the game down against them. We cannot get into a track meet with this team."

Sabres notebook: Player turnover near total since Ruff left

By John Vogl
Buffalo News
November 17, 2015

When Lindy Ruff walks into First Niagara Center on Tuesday, he'll say hello to security officer James McDuffie. Ruff will check in with Rip Simonick and other members of the Sabres' equipment staff. He'll say hi to a few folks from media relations.

When he gets to the Sabres who make their living on the ice, Ruff won't need to say much. Nearly everyone he knew during his time in Buffalo is gone.

Though it's been less than three years since Ruff coached in Buffalo, only three people remain. Tyler Ennis, Marcus Foligno and injured Mike Weber were the lone Sabres to suit up for Ruff's finale Feb. 19, 2013.

"It's a good example of how much things have changed in the last few years," Ennis said Monday in First Niagara Center.

Because of the turnover, the annual return for Dallas' coach is no longer a reason to break out the trumpets or tissues.

"It won't be anything like going back the first time. That parade is over," Ruff told reporters in Dallas. "It's nice. I've got a lot of good friends there. It was a great place to play, and it was a great place to coach. But it's nothing like going back the first time. Now it's business."

Though the coach wears green now, Ennis will still think back to Ruff's time with the Sabres when he sees him.

"He was my first coach in the NHL," Ennis said. "He gave me a chance, and I'm thankful for that."

...

Zach Bogosian skated through his toughest practice yet, and how he recovered will determine when the defenseman returns to the lineup. If all went well, he might play against the Stars.

"That's up to coach, but I feel like I'm ready to go," Bogosian said. "I feel like the last few days has been a step forward, for sure."

Bogosian has missed the Sabres' opening 17 games because of a lower-body injury. He returned to practice Friday.

"He looks like he should be ready to play sometime this week," coach Dan Bylsma said. "We put him in a few more situations on purpose to get some five-on-five and some situations, and we'll see how he reacts. But we put him in those situations because the game ones are coming up for him."

While Bogosian might play, center Zemgus Girgensons may not. He needed medical attention after being leveled by San Jose's Tommy Wingels on Saturday. Girgensons returned to the game but missed Monday's workout.

"It's a little bit more than a maintenance day," Bylsma said. "Obviously, the collision that he was involved in there, he's still feeling some bumps and bruises from that, not anything to do with his head."

...

The attention keeps coming for Jack Eichel. He filmed a commercial for an international doughnut chain Monday in HarborCenter. The Chicago Tribune was in town to do a feature on him.

And once again, Bylsma is impressed by the groundedness of the rookie.

"There's a lot of chatter and a lot of talk and a lot of things going on, and he doesn't seem to get it," the coach said. "He doesn't seem to be affected by it. From the comparisons to Connor McDavid to other expectations that are talked about, he just doesn't seem to really get it or understand it. He's just a normal kid trying to play the game and be part of this team.

"I've watched it and been pretty amazed by it."

Of course, Eichel has had amazing moments on the ice, too. The center has climbed to 10th in rookie scoring with six goals and nine points in 17 games.

"He's a player that virtually every game he's played, he has the anticipation of everybody in the building with his skating ability and what he can do," Bylsma said.

...

The Sabres' annual food drive will be held during the next three home games. Fans are encouraged to bring nonperishable food items or cash donations to Tuesday's game against Dallas, Monday's game against St. Louis and the Nov. 25 meeting with Nashville.

All items, which will be collected at the arena entrances, will be given to the Food Bank of Western New York.

Fans who donate will receive a voucher for \$20 off tickets in 300 Level II for select upcoming games and a coupon for 25 Sabres Fan Advantage points. Box-office price for the tickets is \$72, with the discount bringing the total to \$52.

Stars' Eaves, Sabres' Bogosian might return to lineup

By Colin Stephenson

NHL.com

November 17, 2015

Season series: The Dallas Stars and Buffalo Sabres split two games last season, with each team winning by one goal at home. Jamie Benn (two goals, one assist) and John Klingberg (three assists) led Dallas with three points each. Matt Moulson (one goal, two assists), Chris Stewart (three assists in one game) and Brian Gionta (two goals) led the way for Buffalo.

Stars team scope: Dallas, which has won five of its past six games, opens a two-game Eastern trip that concludes Thursday against the Washington Capitals. The Stars will be getting some reinforcements; coach Lindy Ruff said Monday that forwards Patrick Eaves (lower body) and Travis Moen (upper body) are ready to return from injury. Eaves, who has missed 15 games, practiced Monday at right wing on the second line with left wing Mattias Janmark and center Jason Spezza. "I have been ready for a little bit here, so I am excited to get back in," Eaves told the Stars website. Moen, who has missed 14 games, skated on a fifth line. Ruff returns to Buffalo for the third time as coach of the Stars. He played more than 600 games and coached more than 1,100 for the Sabres.

Sabres team scope: Buffalo, which has won five of its past seven games, is expecting to get defenseman Zach Bogosian back in the lineup this week -- possibly for this game -- after he missed the first 17 games because of a lower-body injury. "I feel good," Bogosian told The Buffalo News on Monday after practice. "I'm not going to sit here and say I'm in. That's up to coach [Dan Bylsma], but I feel like I'm ready to go." Bogosian, a right-handed shot, skated on the right side with several partners during line rushes and on the left side with Rasmus Ristolainen, also a right-handed shot, in 5-on-5 drills, according to the Sabres website. Center Zemgus Girgensons might not play after he took a hard hit by San Jose Sharks forward Tommy Wingels in a 2-1 overtime loss Saturday. He did not practice Monday, and Bylsma said it was "a little bit more than a maintenance day," but Girgensons does not have a head injury. "Obviously, the collision that he was involved in there, he's still feeling some bumps and bruises from that," Bylsma said.

Sabres goalies Linus Ullmark and Chad Johnson willing to share net

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 17, 2015

BUFFALO – Linus Ullmark’s spirited celebration, which has quickly become a regular occurrence when the final horn signals another win for the Sabres goalie, wasn’t premeditated.

When Ullmark notched his first NHL victory Oct. 30, he excitedly got on one knee and pumped his arm low after a 27-save performance in a 3-1 win against Philadelphia. The Swede, 22, never really planned to do it again, but his next three wins were all one-goal triumphs.

The rookie couldn’t help himself.

“Every game has been so tight so you are just exploding (with) emotions right afterwards,” Ullmark said Monday after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s home tilt against Lindy Ruff’s Dallas Stars.

Just weeks into his career, Ullmark, a sixth-round pick in 2012, looks like he could be a No. 1 goalie someday. His strong netminding – he’s 4-2 with a 2.45 goals-against average and a .924 save percentage – has helped buoy the Sabres to an 8-8-1 record, their first .500 mark in almost three years.

Ullmark’s last outing, a 36 save-performance in Thursday’s 3-2 win in Florida, might’ve been his best NHL game.

But on Saturday, instead of starting Ullmark again, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma gave Chad Johnson the nod. Johnson (4-6-1, 2.67, .900) responded with 30 saves in a 2-1 overtime loss to San Jose.

Bylsma has split the action between Ullmark and Johnson the last four games, quickly developing a strong tandem. After Johnson made 31 saves, including an incredible diving stop on Tyler Johnson, in a 4-1 win in last Tuesday in Tampa Bay, Bylsma used Ullmark.

“They’ve both really had to deal with that situation,” Bylsma said. “Chad may have been disappointed he wasn’t going against Florida and he stepped back into the net last game and did a great job.”

A starter hasn’t been named for the Stars, the NHL’s highest-scoring club.

Johnson, a career backup, and Ullmark, a neophyte in his first North American season, are fine with sharing the net.

“You always want to play every game that you get, but it’s also a good thing that you’re rotating, keeping you fresh all the time so you’re not going at it too much,” Ullmark said. “You can have a really hard time if you’re facing 50 shots in the net to go on the next day. It’s good to have two goalies that are alternating. He can step up and play his best.”

Johnson, 29, has played some of his best hockey recently, posting a .959 save percentage in his last three appearances. He hasn’t allowed a five-on-five even-strength goal since Oct. 29, a stretch of 191 minutes, 51 seconds.

“I think nowadays it works,” Johnson said about goalie tandems. “You give guys a lot of rest and (it) allows you to prepare.”

Johnson subbed well for injured starter Robin Lehner most of October before looking shaky in a 7-2 loss to Montreal on Oct. 23. Ullmark started his first game the next night, sat out two and then played four straight.

Early on, Johnson wasn't rewarded with wins or good numbers.

"I wasn't getting results, but I think when I look at the games, regardless of the results or anything like that, I was playing good hockey up until the Montreal game," Johnson said.

Naturally, stronger team play has helped the goalies. The Sabres, despite some hiccups in the last 10 days, play as a more cohesive unit these days than they did a month ago.

"I think it's just we've found that groove defensively as a whole, which obviously for a goalie makes a big difference, especially statistically it helps," Johnson said. "I think that's probably the biggest thing."

Ullmark added: "They're doing everything good. They're blocking shots, they're taking away the rebounds, (keeping) the shots away from us."

Still, Ullmark has faced plenty of shots. He has 75 saves in his last two outings. The poise he keeps showcasing has earned praise from teammates.

Ullmark said that calm, cool demeanor comes from embracing a "no worries" approach to the game. A song from the 1994 movie "The Lion King" – 'Hakuna Matata,' a Swahili phrase – inspires him.

"I used to say 'no worries,' kind of what my motto is," Ullmark said. "Hakuna Matata. Awesome movie, one of my favorites. ..."

"You can't just dwell on the past. Everything's going to be all right in the end. If it's not going well right now, it's going to be better in the future, you never know. That's why you can't take anything for granted."

Sabres' Zach Bogosian will play this week; Zemgus Girgensons questionable for Stars

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 17, 2015

BUFFALO – Nearly two months after suffering a lower-body injury, Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian is almost ready for his season debut.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Bogosian, 25, will play this week. But based on how hard the Massena native has been practicing in recent days, could he play Tuesday when the Sabres host the Dallas Stars?

"It's been feeling good for a little while," Bogosian said today after skating. "So now it's just getting your wind back a little bit. I'm not going to declare what game I'm in. I'm just going to take it day-by-day."

The Sabres also play Thursday in St. Louis and Saturday in Dallas.

Bogosian, a right-handed shot, practiced on the left side with Rasmus Ristolainen today inside the First Niagara Center. Playing the off side, something Bogosian has done occasionally, doesn't bother him.

The two would make an intriguing duo. Ristolainen, the Sabres' second-leading scorer and top minute-muncher, has emerged as the team's ace defenseman with Bogosian sidelined.

In other injury news, center Zemgus Girgensons missed practice and is questionable for Tuesday, Bylsma said. Girgensons briefly left Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss to San Jose in the third period when Tommy Wingels hit him as he fell.

"I don't have a good update right now," Bylsma said. "It's a little bit more than a maintenance day."

Bylsma said the injury isn't head-related.

Sabres' Bogosian is ready

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 17, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- It looks like the wait to get Zach Bogosian into the lineup is almost over. The defenseman continues to practice and said he's ready, "I feel good, I'm not going to say I'm in, that's up to coach, but I feel like I'm ready to go and I feel like the last few days have been a step forward for sure."

Dan Bylsma wasn't going to commit to Tuesday's game against Dallas, but he's pretty confident Bogosian's season debut is almost here, "He looks like he should be ready to play sometime this week."

The head coach feels that way because of practice, "Today we put him into a few situations on purpose to get some 5-on-5 situations and we'll see how he reacts, but we put him in those situations because the game ones are coming up for him."

As expected, Bogosian has been working on the left side. When he gets back they'll have four right hand shooting defensemen dressed with the others being Rasmus Ristolainen, Cody Franson and Mark Pysyk. Bogosian is fine with playing over there, "I've played both, more on the left side in short spurts, so I'm comfortable, but any game I get into whether it's the left or the right, it's going to take a little while to get my timing back, so I'm prepared to do both sides."

Bogosian did a lot of on ice work with Dennis Miller before getting back with his teammates. He said that hard work gave him confidence when he returned to practice, "Dennis does a great job and Cody McCormick has helped out a lot as well on and off the ice. That was probably more for my sanity and not being around the guys, so both those guys have been a big part of me coming back."

Zemgus Girgensons got bounced around pretty harshly against San Jose and he didn't practice on Monday. Bylsma said, "I don't have a good update, it's a little bit more than a maintenance day, but obviously the collision he was involved in there he was still feeling some bumps and bruises from that."

It is possible he could miss Tuesday's game.

With Girgensons out the lines were:

Moulson O'Reilly Gionta

Larsson Eichel Ennis

Deslauriers Legwand McGinn

Foligno Schaller Reinhart

As Ristolainen rides point streak, Bogosian inches closer to return

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 17, 2015

Given the way their game against the San Jose Sharks went on Saturday, it seems that the Buffalo Sabres' day off Sunday was particularly well-timed.

Three players – forwards Zemgus Girgensons and Tyler Ennis and defenseman Cody Franson – took hits in that game that required checks from the trainers. All three were cleared to return to play that day, but Girgensons was still feeling the effects of his hit Monday and sat out of practice for a maintenance day.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said that Girgensons' injury is not head-related, but did leave open the possibility that the forward will sit when Buffalo hosts the Dallas Stars on Tuesday night.

There was also good news coming out of practice on Monday – defenseman Zach Bogosian was a full participant yet again, and it appears that his season debut is inching closer. While not committing to any specific game, Bogosian said that he feels ready enough to play right now, and his coach backed him up.

"He looks like he should be ready to play sometime this week," Bylsma said. "We put him in a few more situations on purpose to get some 5-on-5 situations and we'll see how he reacts. We put him in those situations because the game ones are coming up for him."

Bogosian played on the right side in alternating defensive pairs during line rushes, but then saw time playing on the offside to the left of Rasmus Ristolainen when 5-on-5 drills began later in practice.

Wherever he ends up come game time, Bogosian said he'll feel comfortable.

"I've played both, I guess more on the left side in short spurts but I'm comfortable," he said. "I think at this point any game I get into, whether I play the left or the right, it's going to take me a little while to get my timing back so I'm prepared to do both sides."

AN ASSIST OFF THE ICE

When asked about his rehab workouts with pro scout Dennis Miller, Bogosian was quick to bring up another injured Sabre playing a role in his return to the ice.

"Cody McCormick has helped out a lot as well, on and off the ice," he said. "More for my sanity and not being around the guys, but it's nice having him around and he's a great team guy so both of those guys have been a part of me coming back as well as the training staff."

McCormick has not played since January of last season, which was cut short due to blood clots. But for the time being, it seems he's found another way to make an impact.

RASMUS IS ROLLIN'

Ristolainen extended his point streak to four games (3G+3A) on Saturday with his assist on Ryan O'Reilly's third-period goal against the Sharks. He has 11 points this season, tied for 12th in the League amongst defensemen and is rapidly approaching the 20 points he totaled in 78 games last season.

"I think I've been doing a better job than last year defensively and offensively," he said. "I think I can still be better and better and I try to be better and better."

"I try to help the team offensively, lately I have some points. But I don't think that way; I try to take care first in the defensive zone and then try to get something started on offense too."

The eighth-overall pick in 2013 may not think offense first, but his ability to contribute to that aspect of the game has been abundantly clear. This season, it's been amplified not only by his self-improvement but also by a new system that stresses a five-man offense.

The message defensemen have received from coaches, he said, is "Keep your head up and shoot."

"Even in the offensive zone it's been a five-man unit and our defensemen have been a big part of that, not just Rasmus," Bylsma said. "We've had a lot more shots, a lot more activity, a lot more including of defenseman and I think you're probably going to see other guys' numbers be a little bit higher than they were last year as well."

In respects to Ristolainen, who recently turned 21, Bylsma said that the offensive talent was evident even before he saw him on the ice for the first time in camp. The skills Ristolainen has flashed at times this season bring Bylsma back to the goal he scored to win the 2013 World Junior Championships for Finland.

In that game, Ristolainen received the puck along the right-wing boards and skated wide around a defender to create a lane he would use to skate through the crease and deliver a backhand winner in overtime.

"He's just a strong skater, he's a powerful guy, him coming down even in a couple times last game," Bylsma said. "I think it was in the third period, he went and cut down behind the guy coming out on him, got the puck back from [Ennis], now he's coming from the top of the circles to the dot."

When I see that it reminds me of his game-winning goal for Finland."

MONDAY'S PRACTICE

26 Matt Moulson – 90 Ryan O'Reilly – 12 Brian Gionta

22 Johan Larsson – 15 Jack Eichel – 63 Tyler Ennis

82 Marcus Foligno – 59 Tim Schaller – 23 Sam Reinhart

44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 17 David Legwand – 88 Jamie McGinn

Defensemen: 4 Josh Gorges, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 47 Zach Bogosian, 29 Jake McCabe, 46 Cody Franson, 3 Mark Pysyk, 25 Carlo Colaiacovo

31 Chad Johnson

35 Linus Ullmark