



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*November 25, 2015*

## **Predators-Sabres Preview**

AP

November 25, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres have found goals hard to come by during a season-high, five-game slide.

The Nashville Predators won't have any sympathy as they endure the longest scoring drought in club history after being shut out three straight times.

These teams with floundering attacks meet Wednesday night, with the visiting Predators seeking a fifth straight win in the series.

Buffalo (8-11-2) fell 2-1 at home to St. Louis on Monday to drop to 0-3-2 in its last five. The Sabres took the lead into the third period on former Predators center David Legwand's first goal only to falter over the final 20 minutes.

"I thought it was a hard-fought game," coach Dan Bylsma said. "There was a lot of good in a lot of areas from our team. You'd like to find some goals in there."

Bylsma's club isn't the only one searching for goals with Nashville (11-6-3) enduring a drought of 213 minutes, 47 seconds after Monday's 3-0 road loss to the New York Rangers. That's the longest in the NHL since the Coyotes were blanked for 245:33 in 2012-13.

The Predators are on the verge of even more dubious distinctions. The last time a team was shut out four straight times happened to the 1967-68 Oakland Seals, who tied one of those games.

The last club to lose by shutout four straight times was the Montreal Maroons, whose streak spanned the end of 1929-30 and beginning of 1930-31. The 1928-29 Chicago Blackhawks are the last team to get shut out four straight times in losses in one season with a five-game slide.

"We've got to find a way to stay with it. We can't get frustrated," captain Shea Weber told the Predators' official website. "It's tough to say that when you haven't scored in three games."

Frustration was evident after Nashville couldn't solve the NHL's top goalie in Henrik Lundqvist, who made 31 saves. The Predators have wasted 10 power-play chances in the last three games.

"The guys are trying to score, and it's not dropping right now," coach Peter Laviolette said.

Nashville has never faced Sabres rookie Linus Ullmark, who started Buffalo's last game. Chad Johnson, who has three career shutouts, won his lone start against the Predators.

The Sabres, averaging 2.1 goals, may be more likely to get blanked since Pekka Rinne has allowed one goal in three career starts against them.

Rookie Jack Eichel, second on Buffalo with six goals, hasn't scored in his last six games.

Ryan O'Reilly, who has seven goals and is in his first season with the club, feels that the Sabres need a better mental approach to games.

"We're close at times and then we fall away from it," he said. "We don't have that mentality that we have to improve, we have to grow together. We sit back too much and we get too comfortable."

Legwand is the Predators' all-time leader in games (956), goals (210) and points (566). He has no points in two games against his former club.

Nashville has outscored Buffalo 14-3 in the last four meetings. The Predators have won seven times, lost once and tied once in nine games at Buffalo.

## **Sabres striving to snap out of power-play doldrums**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

November 25, 2015

The disappointment and frustration of the two-man advantage lingers with Dan Bylsma.

The coach can't talk about the Buffalo Sabres power play without reliving the opportunities wasted in St. Louis and Dallas. Something surfaced when the Sabres failed to convert.

It may be frustration. It may be an erosion of confidence. But the once strong power play, which still ranks in the top 10 in the National Hockey League, has gone 0 for 10 in the last three games.

"I have a tough time thinking about this without thinking about the 5 on 3, and it's almost still affecting us, not scoring on those 5 on 3s in St. Louis and in Dallas," Bylsma said Tuesday afternoon as the Sabres prepared to host the Nashville Predators at 7 Wednesday night in First Niagara Center.

Twice during the 3-2 shootout loss at St. Louis on Nov. 19 the Sabres had a two-man advantage. Their second time with the 5 on 3 they generated six shots on goal, but none found the back of the net.

And that started a slow but slippery slide for the power play units.

The team went 0 for 3 in Dallas with another 5-on-3 opportunity.

In Monday's home loss to the Blues, the Sabre didn't technically have a two-man advantage, but with the goalie pulled for the final minute skated a 6-on-4 power play and again failed to score, going 0 for 3 for the game.

"Obviously we've talked about it a lot and it's been a problem," said Ryan O'Reilly, who leads the team with four power-play goals and eight power-play points. "I think we've had three games in a row where we've had a 5 on 3 and didn't capitalize. I think it really hurt our confidence. That's something we expected to do, and if we bury in one of those, it changes the whole dynamic of the game.

"I think we're a little frustrated. We've got to get back to the things we were doing well previous to that."

Previously, the Sabres had the third-best power play in the NHL, scoring 14 goals in 58 opportunities to click at 24.1 percent.

"Maybe because we play very well so we try to make too cute plays there and pass the puck to the net," Rasmus Ristolainen said. "We've got to keep it simple like we did earlier.

"It's on us. We've got to shoot more. We've got pass better. We've got have better passes so we can shoot one-timers right away and just get pucks to the net. That's how we scored and that's how we had success earlier this year."

Ristolainen and Cody Franson both have hard, heavy shots from the blue line, with Ristolainen notching eight of his 12 points on the power play this year.

But the since being snake-bitten on those 5 on 3s, the Sabres haven't been shooting the puck as much with the man advantage.

"Our shot numbers are down ... even our attempts are down and it's something we focused on," Bylsma said.

And O'Reilly echoed the sentiment – shoot more.

"I think it's supporting each other but being ready to shoot all the time," O'Reilly said. "We have to get pucks to the net and we have to play quick. Even though we have the extra man we still have to have that work ethic and outwork the penalty killers.

"When we can, especially early in a power play," we need to "throw pucks to the net. It makes it tough on the killers. They don't know what to expect.

"They're working hard to get back into position and from there, that's when the plays will start to open up and we can make them. I think we have to start right away with that mindset, 'OK let's make a quick play, get a shot and see where we're at.'"

## **Girgensons eyes return to Sabres' lineup**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

November 25, 2015

Zemgus Girgensons, like most hockey players, hates to be away from the team. After sustaining an upper body injury against San Jose on Nov. 14 he missed the next four games.

Tuesday afternoon he was back at practice with a good chance he will return to the lineup when the Buffalo Sabres host the Nashville Predators at 7 p.m. Wednesday in First Niagara Center.

"I'm just excited to practice with the team," Girgensons said. "I've been a little bit bored the past couple of days with the injury. It's never fun."

Coach Dan Bylsma said there was a possibility Girgensons would return, noting the staff would see how the forward felt after Wednesday's morning skate.

Getting Girgensons back would help the Sabres offense, which has sputtered the last five games. The team has scored five goals in that span going 0-3-2. And while Girgensons has just one goal and one assist, he has been a key factor for the Sabres in the puck possession game.

"Whenever we have the puck technically we're on offense no matter where it is," forward Ryan O'Reilly said. "But when we can possess it like that and having," Girgensons, "he has great vision for it. He protects the puck well. It hurts when you have a guy like that out of the lineup."

...

While the Sabres are struggling to score, Nashville comes to town singing its own downtrodden country tune.

A 3-0 loss to the New York Rangers on Monday at Madison Square Garden marked the first time in franchise history the Predators have been shut out in three straight games. The teams' scoreless stretch is now at 213:47, the longest in team history.

"We're getting quality chances," Nashville defenseman Seth Jones said in The Tennessean. "We're moving the puck well, we're shooting pucks. The past," three "games we've probably outplayed the teams and" we're "just not seeing results. There's nothing much more to say."

Frankly, Bylsma didn't even want to approach the topic.

"I really don't want to talk about this. They're struggling to score right now. We're struggling to score right now," Bylsma said. "They went to Niagara Falls today. We did scoring drills. Tomorrow there might be 15 goals in the game. I don't know. I'm a little nervous about talking about that."

...

Along with Girgensons, defenseman Mike Weber returned to practice. Weber has missed the last seven games with a knee injury. Bylsma said Weber was "a little bit longer term" in his schedule to return to the lineup.

Missing from Tuesday's practice were Evander Kane and Zach Bogosian. Bylsma said Bogosian was given a maintenance day while Kane missed with a lower body injury.

"He's day to day," Bylsma said of Kane. "If we were in football I'd say probable but I don't have to say that."

Speaking of day-to-day injuries, Bylsma was again on the bench during practice as an injury has sidelined the coach from being on the ice. When asked when he'd return, Bylsma said, "Good question. Probably be off tomorrow morning, so Friday. We don't need to talk about that."

## **Predators visit Sabres in battle of struggling offenses**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

November 25, 2015

### **PREDATORS (11-6-3) at SABRES (8-11-2)**

#### **TV: FS-TN, MSG-B, BELL TV**

**Season series:** The Nashville Predators swept the Buffalo Sabres last season with a 2-1 shootout win on Feb. 22 in Buffalo and a 3-0 win March 21 in Nashville. Mike Ribeiro, Craig Smith, and Mike Fisher each had a goal and Ryan Ellis had two assists in the series. Tyler Ennis had the only goal for Buffalo. Pekka Rinne made 24 saves in the 3-0 win.

**Predators team scope:** Nashville has been shut out in three straight games for the first time in franchise history. The Predators haven't scored a goal in the past 213:47; the last goal came from forward Miikka Salomaki at 6:13 of the second period in a 3-2 win against the Anaheim Ducks on Nov. 17. Nashville did not practice on Tuesday after a 3-0 loss at the New York Rangers on Monday. Cody Hodgson will play his first game in Buffalo since he was waived and had his contract bought out by the Sabres on June 30. Hodgson spent 3 1/2 seasons with the Sabres and had 44 goals and 99 points in 218 games.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo has lost five straight games (0-3-2) and has scored five goals in those games. "We didn't get a ton of opportunities in Dallas and [Monday], but what we do know is our shot totals are down and St. Louis did block three or four shots [Monday, a 2-1 loss to the Blues ]... but even our attempts are down and it's something we've focused on and something we have to get back to when we have the opportunity," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said after practice Tuesday. Forward Evander Kane did not practice because of a lower-body injury, but Bylsma said he is probable. Forward Zemgus Girgensons returned to practice after missing the past four games with an upper-body injury. Girgensons skated in Kane's place on a line with Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart. "We saw Zemgus return to practice with the team and it was a good sign for where he's at," Bylsma said. "We'll see where he is tomorrow for that possibility."

## **Slumping Sabres rookie Jack Eichel ‘not happy’ with own game**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
November 25, 2015

BUFFALO – It happens almost every game. Inevitably, at least two or three times, Sabres center Jack Eichel utilizes his supreme speed and other dynamic talents to create scoring chances almost out of thin air.

Still, despite all the flash the rookie has consistently showcased, “He’s not finding the back of the net,” Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

Eichel, who has six goals and 10 points in his first 21 NHL appearances, might be enduring the worst slump of his entire career entering tonight’s tilt against the Nashville Predators inside the First Niagara Center. The second overall pick hasn’t scored a goal in six games and has just one assist in that span.

For almost anyone else, that’s not much of a slump, especially in this low-scoring era. But even two months into his career, Eichel, 19, is held to a higher standard than most NHL players.

Naturally, Eichel’s “not happy with where my game’s at right now,” he said. On Tuesday, he told the Times Herald, “I don’t know what it is.” He wondered if he was overthinking or simply not working hard enough.

“I can’t make any excuses on why I’m not performing,” he said. “At the end of the day, it’s all on me. I have to be better.”

Earlier in the season, Eichel said, he was pumping more shots on net and “creating a lot more.” He hasn’t scored since Nov. 10 in Tampa Bay, a 4-1 win against the Lightning he believes was his best NHL outing.

“I was happier earlier in the year where my game was,” said Eichel, who has registered 15 of his 71 shots in the last six games. “I didn’t really have the points to show for it. I don’t think that was really a good measurement of how I played.”

The Sabres’ struggles – they’ve scored only five times during their five-game losing streak (0-3-2) – have magnified Eichel’s own problems.

“For him, everybody goes through these little bumps in the roads, and unfortunately, it’s happening at the same time as our team struggles right now,” Sabres defenseman Carlo Colaiacovo said.

Bylsma added: “I think (Eichel) feels like he needs to carry the load.”

Of course, Eichel isn’t used to slumping. Many young stars don’t face their first real bit of adversity until they’re in the NHL. Eichel compiled 26 goals and 70 points as a freshman last season at Boston University, winning the Hobey Baker Award.

“You don’t know if you think it’s going to come easy, but it’s come easy to you in the past,” Bylsma said. “I think he’s getting good opportunities. Maybe he hasn’t got it in the same areas or there’s more pressure (with) NHL guys checking him. I think he’s finding that how and when he’s going to score a goal.”

Eichel’s still acclimating to the NHL’s long and often grueling schedule. He played only 40 games last season, a number he could hit by early January if he stays healthy. The Sabres have four games this week.

“It’s a little different playing more,” Eichel said. “You’re on the ice more often, longer. That’s probably the biggest adjustment for me right now, is trying to keep my body energized and be ready to go every time I go on the ice.”

Eichel must also play a tougher brand of hockey every shift. Play away from the puck usually dictates offensive success in the modern NHL.

"That's got to be better, too," Eichel said. "It all translates. Play in the faceoff dot translates to us getting the puck and how I play away from the puck translates to when I have it. So there's a lot of things I need to work on and get better at. I just don't want to try to put too much pressure on myself now. I'm definitely enjoying this experience. But at the end of the day, you want to see results for yourself and your team.

"As of recent, it hasn't been as good as we've wanted. I think I have to hold myself to a higher standard and expect more out of myself. I think as a team we should expect more out of ourselves."

xxx

Tonight's contest could be a real snoozefest. Incredibly, the Predators have been blanked three straight games and haven't scored a goal in a franchise-record 213 minutes, 47 seconds. No team has been shut out in four straight games since the 1967-68 Oakland Seals, according to the Nashville Tennessean.

"They went to Niagara Falls today," Bylsma said Tuesday. "We did scoring drills. Tomorrow there might 15 goals in the game. I'm a little nervous about talking about that."

## **Sabres' Zemgus Girgensons close to returning**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
November 25, 2015

BUFFALO – Sure, Zemgus Girgensons has only mustered one goal and two points in 17 games this season. But the center, 21, is one of the Sabres' best two-way players.

Not coincidentally, the Sabres have lost all four games since an upper-body injury sidelined Girgensons.

"We've missed him considerably," said coach Dan Bylsma, who noted the Sabres have allowed more scoring chances without Girgensons. "It's a big piece down the middle and a big piece matchup-wise for our team."

That big piece might be able to play Wednesday when the Sabres host Nashville.

Girgensons, who was hurt when San Jose's Tommy Wingels hit him as he fell down Nov. 14, practiced inside the First Niagara Center this afternoon.

"I feel like I'm ready to go," Girgensons said.

His presence would alleviate some pressure on center Ryan O'Reilly, who has been forced to take more defensive-zone draws.

Girgensons returned after Wingels' hit, although he started feeling "a little banged up in multiple spots" later that night.

In other injury news, a lower-body ailment unrelated to his recent MLC injury kept winger Evander Kane from practicing today. Bylsma said Kane's "probable" for Wednesday.

Meanwhile, defenseman Mike Weber, out seven games after undergoing knee surgery, practiced today but isn't ready to play, Bylsma said.

Bylsma also said defenseman Zach Bogosian had a maintenance day.

## **Girgensons, Weber return to practice while Kane is day-to-day**

By Jourdon LaBarber  
Sabres.com  
November 25, 2015

Zemgus Girgensons and Mike Weber each took a step forward in their recoveries when they returned to practice for the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday at First Niagara Center.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said that Girgensons, who's missed the past three games with an upper-body injury that he sustained on a hit against San Jose on Oct. 14, is a possibility to play when Buffalo hosts Nashville on Wednesday night.

"It's a good sign for where he's at," the coach said. "We'll see how he is tomorrow."

Weber, Bylsma said, is further from game action. The defenseman has missed six games with a knee injury that required surgery and was placed on injured reserve on Nov. 17.

With the additions of Girgensons and Weber came two subtractions from the Sabres' practice. Defenseman Zach Bogosian sat out for a maintenance day while forward Evander Kane was absent with a lower-body injury.

Bylsma said that Kane's current injury is completely unrelated to the injury to his MCL that forced him to miss 10 games from Oct. 24 to Nov. 19. The forward has played in three games since returning from the injury.

"He is day-to-day," Bylsma said. "If we were in football, I'd say 'probable.'"

Coverage of the Sabres' contest Wednesday begins at 6:30 p.m. with Tops Sabres Gamenight on MSG-B and Bell TV. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550 with puck drop scheduled for 7 p.m.

---

### **LINUS' VIEW**

Josh Gorges gave his reaction to St. Louis' game-winning goal after the game last night, which was scored when the puck bounced back and forth between him and the body of Blues' forward Robby Fabbri prior to eventually falling to the ice and gliding past the goal line.

But what did Linus Ullmark, the goaltender who dived in a desperate attempt to save the puck, see on the deciding play?

"Nothing," he said. "Actually, I didn't see [anything]. I saw they shot it to the net, it didn't get through and then the puck is just bouncing around. Someone whacks it, the puck just disappears and I see it in my peripheral vision that the puck is on my left side and it's about to go in.

"I turn around and try to whack it out there, but I'm too late."

The goal especially hurt considering just how good Ullmark had been up to that point in a 1-1 tie. His glove was quick and he limited second chances while keeping St. Louis off the board until five minutes into the third period.

The first Blues goal was nearly as much a matter of circumstance as the second. A shot from the point hit off Bogosian's leg and fell to his feet in front of the net, where the Blues' Troy Brouwer was able to swat a backhand past the unsuspecting goaltender.

Up until that point, Bylsma thought his team's 1-0 lead might hold – in large part because of Ullmark's play.

"With the way he was playing one was going to be enough to win," the coach said. "He had the breakaway shot in the first that was a grade-A opportunity; there were two other grade-As that he stopped.

"The other ones he was solid on and looked good on. He swallowed a lot of pucks. I thought he was on his way to pitching a zero."

The "grade-As" for Ullmark were can't-miss moments in the game. He stayed with former Sabres captain Steve Ott on a breakaway attempt and robbed him down low with his glove in the first and, later in the period, flashed the glove again to stifle Fabbri after a turnover at the blue line.

After being unhappy with the amount of rebounds he allowed in a 27-save effort in St. Louis on Thursday, Ullmark said he felt sharper Monday at home.

"I had clearer vision of the puck all day," he said. "I had better focus, felt like my hand-eye coordination was a lot better. It's something day-to-day, sometimes you're a little bit off and that creates rebounds that you usually don't create.

"I don't know if it was something with the trip or something like that. I don't know. It can happen to anyone, but it's something that I need to keep in mind next time on the road to be prepared when something happens like that so I know how to handle it."

In that case, Tuesday appeared to be another one of the good days. Ullmark stopped a few more great scoring chances during Sabres shooting drills at practice, first diving to stop David Legwand on a 2-on-1 rush and later swiping a puck from mid-air behind his back.

He tossed the puck to the ice, fully aware of the quality of save he had just made.

"We had a good practice today," he said, laughing. "We had a lot of shots, a lot of high scoring chances – 2-on-1s, all of that. It gets you into the zone a lot more because you're battling against players so hard in comparison to when you're having a regular practice with just 1-on-1s.

"I think it's really fun to have these kinds of practices because it makes you compete a lot more and then it creates those kinds of saves."

---

## **TUESDAY'S PRACTICE**

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

28 Zemgus Girgensons – 15 Jack Eichel – 23 Sam Reinhart

82 Marcus Foligno – 22 Johan Larsson – 63 Tyler Ennis

44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 17 David Legwand / 59 Tim Schaller – 88 Jamie McGinn

4 Josh Gorges – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

29 Jake McCabe/25 Carlo Colaiacovo – 46 Cody Franson

6 Mike Weber – 3 Mark Pysyk

35 Linus Ullmark

31 Chad Johnson