



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*December 19, 2015*

## **Blackhawks-Sabres Preview**

By Jeff Mezydlo

AP

December 19, 2015

Despite a turbulent summer in Buffalo, Patrick Kane returns to his hometown playing the best hockey of his career.

Back for the first time since he was the subject of a lengthy sexual assault investigation there, Kane tries to help the Chicago Blackhawks to an eighth consecutive victory over the Sabres on Saturday.

It's been a little more than four months since Kane was accused of those allegations at his suburban Buffalo home while celebrating Chicago's third Stanley Cup in six seasons. In the end, Kane wasn't charged and never played like the entire situation was a distraction.

He leads the NHL with 47 points, though his club-record 26-game point streak ended Tuesday.

Considering what Kane endured through the investigation and the pressure of the streak, coach Joel Quenneville doesn't believe his return this weekend will be anything the 27-year-old can't handle.

"He's gone through (several) months of being under a lot of attention, (and) he's gone through a really busy stretch here," Quenneville said. "I don't know if it's going to be much different."

Kane appeared to receive plenty of support from his hometown during those troubling times, and is likely to receive a warm welcome at the First Niagara Center on Saturday. He's scored in his last three games against the Sabres (14-16-3), and has five goals with four assists in nine all-time. A broken clavicle kept Kane from playing in Chicago's 4-3 win at Buffalo on April 3.

The Blackhawks (18-11-4) have averaged 4.0 goals during a six-game winning streak against the Sabres, and scored that many to conclude a 3-1-0 homestand with Thursday's 4-0 victory over Edmonton.

Kane got back on track with an assist, Corey Crawford made 33 saves and the line of Jonathan Toews, Marian Hossa and Teuvo Teravainen combined for three goals and six assists.

"I liked our game," Quenneville told the NHL's official website. "We didn't give up much, and that's the first step when we measure our team performance, and we generated enough (offensively)."

Toews, who had a goal with two assists, recorded one more point than in the previous 10 contests. He has five goals and two assists in the last five against the Sabres.

Crawford has recorded a shutout in three of four starts, and allowed four goals while posting an 0.67 goals-against average to win five of the last six.

"I feel good right now," he said. "I'm really focused and I'm seeing the puck well throughout the whole game and getting a lot of help too from everyone."

Crawford is 5-0-0 with a 1.80 GAA against Buffalo but with Western Conference foe San Jose in town Sunday, he could sit while the Blackhawks try to avoid a fourth consecutive road defeat. Backup Scott Darling has started two of the last three on the road, where he's 0-3-2 with a 3.60 GAA as a starter.

A winner in four of five at home, Buffalo has allowed four goals while winning three of four overall. Chad Johnson made 44 saves and Evander Kane snapped a six-game point drought with his seventh goal in Thursday's 3-0 home win over Anaheim.

"We're playing a lot better defensively in front of the crease and boxing guys out than we did at the beginning of the year, and you see the results," Johnson said.

Following his first shutout since March 2014, Johnson has won three straight at home and owns a 1.23 GAA in his last four starts there.

Buffalo defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has six points in the last five games.

Chicago forward Marcus Kruger, a key player on the penalty kill, will be out four months after he had surgery to repair a dislocated left wrist suffered against the Oilers.

## **Evander Kane living up to Buffalo's 'good neighbor' spirit**

By John Vogl  
Buffalo News  
December 19, 2015

In many Buffalo homes, Christmas is a time of unfulfilled dreams. Presents cost money, and the cash simply isn't there.

Evander Kane wanted to do something about it. He's felt a lot of positivity since arriving in town, and the Sabres forward paid it back Friday by treating 50 kids from the Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo to dinner and a shopping spree.

"Not everybody gets an opportunity, especially as a kid, to get exactly what they want or have an opportunity to get gifts and presents," Kane said. "It's something that I wanted to do, give back a little bit and hopefully put some smiles on some kids' faces, possibly when they have not been as excited for Christmas.

"It's exciting. It probably makes my day more than theirs."

It's safe to say it was a win-win situation. The children feasted on pasta at Chef's and filled carts at Target while the 24-year-old Kane watched with glee and reflected on his own happy childhood moments.

"Kids don't have a choice all the time, so when you can give them an opportunity to kind of take their mind off some of the negative things going on in their life, you want to do that, especially around this time of year," Kane said. "It's fun because it takes you back to remembering how you were like as a kid and can also take my mind off things that are going on with hockey. It's good."

It's clear Kane is making Buffalo his home. It coincides with another Kane making his way home to Buffalo.

Patrick Kane and the Chicago Blackhawks will make their lone visit to First Niagara Center on Saturday for a 1 p.m. matinee. The 27-year-old South Buffalo native hasn't made a public appearance in Western New York since the sexual assault allegations arose in August.

Evander Kane, meanwhile, has been increasing his community presence. He took 60 kids from the Boys and Girls Club to dinner and an arcade in November. This month, he sent a care package featuring a hand-written note, signed jersey and autographed stick to a 14-year-old Williamsville girl who is battling cancer.

"It's something that I've always done. I guess it's maybe getting highlighted a little bit more here in Buffalo," Kane said. "There's a lot of energy in Buffalo, and I find the people here are very positive and very welcoming. When you feel good about the community you live in, it makes you want to give back and do positive things for the people that you play for and the community that you live in.

"For me, that's a big plus and something I'm really enjoying."

The left winger got to enjoy himself on the ice Thursday during a 3-0 victory over Anaheim. He scored a goal to end a drought of six games without a point. He led the team with six hits and five shots.

"We're establishing a forecheck and a pressure team, and he leads the way in that and has led the way in that for the better part of the last eight games," coach Dan Bylsma said after practice in HarborCenter. "He desperately wants to win. That's what I've learned. He's got a pretty serious energy and a passion for doing what it takes to win."

Bylsma has been playing Kane alongside center Jack Eichel, with the duo creating matchup problems for the opposition despite a lack of production.

"The speed they bring at you together is a factor to deal with when they're out there," Bylsma said. "Evander's going hard down the wing and Jack's carrying the puck, their speed is difficult to handle.

"I don't always look at the goals. There have been opportunities there for both of them that haven't cashed in that factor into them playing together."

The duo will be joined Saturday by fellow speedster Tyler Ennis, who is returning from a 15-game injury absence. Kane hopes the line provides more gifts for the Sabres as Eichel continues to gain experience.

"I think he's starting to understand at this level you have to make decisions and plays a little bit quicker," Kane said. "We were able to get some good looks and some good opportunities to score. I thought because of our quick puck movement we did have a lot more opportunities, and I think he's starting to see that a little bit."

## **Ennis will return against Blackhawks, giving Sabres rare dose of health up front**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 19, 2015

The Sabres will play their 34th game Saturday. It will be just the sixth time they'll have three healthy scoring lines.

Tyler Ennis, who has missed 15 games with an upper-body injury, will return for the 1 p.m. showdown with the Chicago Blackhawks in First Niagara Center.

"Yeah, I'm excited to get back," Ennis said Friday after practice in HarborCenter. "We seem to be playing a really good team game, so I'm just trying to jump in the lineup, provide a spark and hopefully put one in the net."

The Sabres haven't had three healthy scoring lines since a five-game run from Oct. 15-24. Before Ennis went out, Zemgus Girgensons was hurt. Evander Kane preceded him on the injured list. Brian Gionta started the season on the sidelines.

The lines in practice were Jamie McGinn-Ryan O'Reilly-Sam Reinhart, Kane-Jack Eichel-Ennis, Girgensons-Johan Larsson-Gionta and Matt Moulson-David Legwand-Nicolas Deslauriers. Cal O'Reilly skated as an extra. Marcus Foligno, who practiced in noncontact role, is the only forward banged up.

"We're finally going to be healthy in our top six, which we haven't been in a while," said coach Dan Bylsma, who has noticed a little pep in the laid-back Ennis. "He's not a guy who comes off with a lot of excitement, but the last few days he's been pretty excited to get back to health and possibly get back out there. We're going to need him out there. Our power play, he's going to get inserted there and probably play next to Jack and Evander for a good portion of the game."

Chad Johnson, who had a 44-save shutout of Anaheim on Thursday, will start in goal against the Blackhawks.

"They've been probably the best team in the league for the last five years," Ennis said. "It's going to be a fun one, a really good test for us to see where we're at. I'm excited to get back."

## **Sabres notebook: Kane, Blackhawks to make quick getaway**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 19, 2015

Patrick Kane's first public appearance in Buffalo since the summer's sexual assault allegation will be as under-the-radar as it can get.

The annual visit by Kane and the Chicago Blackhawks is normally an all-day affair, with crowds gathering for the morning skate and returning to First Niagara Center for the evening game. But because the Sabres host Chicago at 1 p.m., there won't be a morning skate. The Blackhawks will then leave immediately following the game because they host San Jose on Sunday.

Chicago even laid low on the day before the game, taking Friday off. It meant Kane didn't have to talk in advance of his return.

The South Buffalo native still figures to be under an intense spotlight for a few hours. He is the NHL's leading scorer with points in 27 of the last 28 games, so he'll be watched on the ice. He will have a large cheering section of friends and family, but it will be intriguing to hear the reaction of other Buffalonians. It will also be interesting to hear what he has to say during interviews.

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"We're finally going to be healthy in our top six, which we haven't been in a while," said coach Dan Bylsma, who has noticed a little pep in the laid-back Ennis. "He's not a guy who comes off with a lot of excitement, but the last few days he's been pretty excited to get back to health and possibly get back out there.

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Chad Johnson, who had a 44-save shutout of Anaheim on Thursday, will start in goal for the Sabres. He is 9-9-1 with a .918 save percentage and 2.33 goals-against average.

"He's just solid, compact and in control," Bylsma said. "Pretty much in every aspect of Johnny and the way he prepares and the way he practices, the way he is, you get that controlled, calm demeanor from him. It shows in his net."

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Jake McCabe scored against the Ducks, and Bylsma had praise for the defenseman and partner Zach Bogosian. They're skating as the No. 2 pair behind Rasmus Ristolainen and Josh Gorges.

"We've counted on Risto and Gorges to play hard minutes against some good players, but now we have a second pair in McCabe and Bogo that can do a good job against just about anybody," said Bylsma, who likes McCabe's offensive instincts. "He's been up in the play, supporting the play, adding to the rush, adding in the offensive zone. Right now it's a formidable pair."

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One day after recording his first NHL point in three years, Cal O'Reilly left the league. Buffalo sent the center back to Rochester on Friday after a two-week call-up. O'Reilly appeared in two games, averaging 6:35 of ice time. He had an assist against Anaheim.

With Ennis back, O'Reilly was scheduled to be scratched by the Sabres. Instead, he was set for a two-game weekend. The Amerks hosted Hartford on Friday and will welcome Albany to town Saturday.

## **Sabres' Tyler Ennis ready to play**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
December 19, 2015

BUFFALO – Some quick updates from HarborCenter, where the Sabres practiced today without ace defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who enjoyed a maintenance day.

– Winger Tyler Ennis, out the last 12 games with an upper-body injury, will return Saturday afternoon against the Chicago Blackhawks, the Sabres' last game before Christmas.

Ennis, who hasn't played since Nov. 23, wanted to get back before the Sabres' five-day break.

"You never want to wait because you're competitive and you want to play," he said. "Tough to sit and watch. But at the same time, it's important to rest up and heal. I can't wait to play tomorrow."

**Update:** With Ennis ready, the Sabres have center Cal O'Reilly, who played two games, back to the Rochester Americans this afternoon. O'Reilly had an assist Thursday.

Coach Dan Bylsma plans to play Ennis beside center Jack Eichel and winger Evander Kane.

– Goalie Chad Johnson will start again Saturday. Johnson stopped a career-high 44 shots in the Sabres' 3-0 win Thursday over the Anaheim Ducks.

"He was in total position," Bylsma said.

Johnson also made 32 saves in Monday's 2-1 win against the Detroit Red Wings.

– Ristolainen played 26 minutes, 42 seconds Thursday. The Finn has played 25 or more minutes five straight games.

– Winger Marcus Foligno, out the last two games with an upper-body injury, practiced in a non-contact role.

## **Sabres goalie Chad Johnson showcasing calm style**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
December 19, 2015

BUFFALO – On the ice, despite the chaos that often develops around his crease, Sabres goalie Chad Johnson usually showcases a cool demeanor.

When Johnson's dialed in – and that's been nearly all season – he can almost make hockey's toughest position look easy. The veteran, 29, often reads plays and shots perfectly, making difficult saves look routine.

Johnson mostly tends goal calmly.

"I've always been a guy that sort of keeps things simple," Johnson said Friday inside HarborCenter. "I'm not a very flashy goalie. I'm not going to do the splits and make a windmill glove save. I like to make it look easy and sort of protrude that confidence. I don't need to make things look difficult."

Off the ice, Johnson conducts himself the same way – he's unassuming and soft-spoken.

Occasionally, however, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma experiences the passion that drives Johnson.

"I get more of the calm, controlled from him," Bylsma said. "I get more of the passion when he's not going to be in net. Pretty much in every aspect of Johnny ... you get that controlled, calm demeanor – and it shows in his net."

Fresh off a 44-save shutout Thursday, Johnson will start this afternoon's tilt against South Buffalo native Patrick Kane and the Chicago Blackhawks inside the First Niagara Center, the Sabres' last game before a Christmas break.

With starter Robin Lehner sidelined by a high ankle sprain, Bylsma has mostly alternated Johnson and rookie Linus Ullmark for the last six weeks. Neither goalie has started more than two consecutive games since Ullmark earned four straight nods from Oct. 30-Nov. 7.

Johnson has clearly emerged as the better option. Ullmark has lost seven of his last eight starts. Johnson, meanwhile, went 3-1-1 with a 1.28 goals-against average and a .954 save percentage in November.

But Johnson is a career backup, having never played more than 27 games in an NHL season. This afternoon will be his 22<sup>nd</sup> appearance. Ullmark, 22, played regularly the last two years in Europe, but he underwent surgery on both hips in April.

So Bylsma has kept splitting up the work.

"I don't think we're in a situation where we have a clear No. 1," Bylsma said. "We've had a plan with our goaltenders. I've deviated from that plan at times and sometimes allowed performance to dictate that and sometimes not. I think both goalies have had games where they've played really well and didn't get the next start."

That's when Bylsma sees some of Johnson's passion.

"I'm always confident in what I can contribute to the team and the team's success," Johnson said. "I like to have control of that. I can't say it's frustrating. I don't think you can accept not playing. But I've always been a team guy. It's about the team first, winning."

"I've been there for Linus and helping him, and I've always been a good teammate to him and giving him advice and helping him along the way. ... But I want to play and ... be that go-to guy."

Johnson might become that go-to guy if he can duplicate his recent performances. On Monday, he made 32 saves in the Sabres' 2-1 win in Detroit, including a desperation glove stop on Gustav Nyquist with 19 seconds left.

While Johnson plays calmly, he has about three saves this season destined to become highlight-reel staples.

After Ullmark played Tuesday, Johnson posted a career-high for saves and his fourth NHL shutout in Thursday's 3-0 victory against Anaheim.

"(Thursday) was a very similar performance to being in Detroit, where (he was) just solid, compact and controlled," Bylsma said. "I think even added more of it to his game."

Johnson has rebounded nicely following a down year with the New York Islanders in which his save percentage dipped from .925 to .889. Overall, he's 9-9-1 with a 2.33 goals-against average and a .918 save percentage this season.

"I've felt good all year," he said. "As a team ... now I think everybody's in a groove, and that helps the goalie out, and you see better results statistically for the goaltending side of it."

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"You never want to wait because you're competitive and you want to play," he said. "Tough to sit and watch. But at the same time, it's important to rest up and heal."

Bylsma plans to play Ennis beside center Jack Eichel and winger Evander Kane.

To make room for Ennis, the Sabres sent center Cal O'Reilly back to the Rochester Americans. O'Reilly compiled one assist in two games.

**Notes:** Kane returns to Buffalo as the top Hart Trophy candidate. The slick winger has 19 goals and a league-high 47 points in 33 games. He had his 26-game point streak, the longest in 23 years, snapped Tuesday. ... Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who has played more than 25 minutes five straight games, received a maintenance day from practice Friday. ... Sabres winger Marcus Foligno (upper body) practiced in a non-contact role.

## **Ennis set to make return against Blackhawks on Saturday**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

December 19, 2015

It appears that the Buffalo Sabres might have received an early Christmas present, wrapped in a blue and gold sweater with No. 63 on the back.

Tyler Ennis skated with his teammates for the third day in a row at a Friday morning practice at HARBORCENTER, prompting Sabres coach Dan Bylsma to announce that the forward will return from his 15-game absence on Saturday against the Chicago Blackhawks.

Bylsma also announced that Chad Johnson, who posted a regular-season franchise record 44-save shutout in the Sabres' 3-0 win over Anaheim on Tuesday, will start in net against Chicago.

Coverage of Buffalo's matchup with the reigning Stanley Cup champions begins at 12:30 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 set for 1 p.m.

How Ennis's return will affect the Sabres' power-play units is difficult to tell given the absence of Rasmus Ristolainen at practice on Friday. Ristolainen took a maintenance day after logging 26:42 of ice time on Thursday.

Ristolainen's assist against Anaheim gave him 19 points in his last 20 games, a feat last reached by Sabres defenseman when Garry Galley did it in 1996.

Without the defenseman, Ennis lined up on a unit with Ryan O'Reilly, Sam Reinhart, Jamie McGinn and Zach Bogosian. Buffalo's other unit consisted of Jack Eichel, Evander Kane, Matt Moulson, Brian Gionta and Cody Franson.

Marcus Foligno, meanwhile, also made a return to practice sporting a red non-contact jersey. Foligno has missed two games with an upper-body injury and hadn't skated with the team since Dec. 14 in Detroit.

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### **FRIDAY'S PRACTICE**

88 Jamie McGinn – 90 Ryan O'Reilly – 23 Sam Reinhart  
9 Evander Kane – 15 Jack Eichel – 63 Tyler Ennis  
28 Zemgus Girgensons – 22 Johan Larsson – 12 Brian Gionta  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 17 David Legwand – 26 Matt Moulson  
82 Marcus Foligno – 19 Cal O'Reilly

4 Josh Gorges – 25 Carlo Colaiacovo  
29 Jake McCabe – 47 Zach Bogosian  
6 Mike Weber – 46 Cody Franson

31 Chad Johnson  
35 Linus Ullmark

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### **MCCABE GETS HIS GOAL**

Jake McCabe's goal in the second period on Thursday provided a bit of redemption for the Sabres defenseman.

Not even a week ago, McCabe thought he had notched that third goal already against the Los Angeles Kings but it was overturned on a coach's challenge.

It's no coincidence that he's found twine twice in the last six days. Bylsma said that he's seen McCabe develop more of a tendency to leave the point and contribute to the rush over the past few games. He did it twice on his goal-scoring shift against Anaheim.

"I think it's just kind of reading and reacting," McCabe said. "If you know you can get a jump on that puck and be the first one to it to keep that cycle alive, the O-zone possession alive, that's a huge thing.

"I know the flip side of things, when teams keep it alive in our D-zone. As a defenseman you continue to have to play D-zone coverage and you're running around and you get pretty tired."

McCabe sat as a healthy scratch in Vancouver on Dec. 7, a night he said he used to take a deep breath and regain his confidence. Two games later, Bylsma thought he played his best game of the season in a 2-1 win over the Kings.

"I think from the get-go I was just involved with the game physically, mentally, making the simple plays to transition the puck up ice and playing solid defense," McCabe said. "That's kind of how I like to model my game is to stop their attackers as soon as possible to get the puck up to our offense."

It hasn't all been perfect. McCabe and his partner Zach Bogosian were on the ice for both of the Devils' goals in a 2-0 loss to New Jersey on Tuesday. But Bylsma still sees a formidable pair forming between the two defenders.

McCabe played the beginning of the season alongside Cody Franson and, at times, Mark Pysyk while Bogosian rehabbed a lower-body injury. Now, McCabe and Bogosian are feeling better each day about the chemistry that's begun to develop.

"It's been good," Bogosian said. "I think obviously with a new D-pairing there's been some growing pains but I've thought we skated well; that's our asset."

"Each guy has different tendencies," McCabe said. "You've got to figure that out and you've got to play together; it's going to take time but when you talk things out it's going to be easier. Zach, you can hear him all the time out there.

"Coming back to the bench, he's not a guy who's going to get on you if you make a bad play or whatever it may be. He's an easy guy to play with and hopefully we continue progressing here."