



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Kane scores twice in Sabres' 5-2 win over Coyotes

By Jonah Bronstein

AP

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Evander Kane and the Buffalo Sabres are on a scoring spree.

Kane scored twice in the third period and Chad Johnson made 18 saves to help the Sabres beat the Arizona Coyotes 5-2 on Friday night.

Sam Reinhart, Jamie McGinn and Marcus Foligno also scored for Buffalo. The Sabres have had at least four goals in four straight games for the first time in nine seasons and have won three of their last four games.

"We're getting on teams' defense and we're staying on the puck," Kane said. "We're battling to create turnovers and I think there's an urgency and a hunger to put pucks away."

Prior to scoring 17 goals in their past four games, the Sabres had seven goals during a six-game losing streak.

"It seems like yesterday we were answering questions on if we're getting frustrated or not, so it's nice to have," Reinhart said. "One we get a couple, it comes in a wave, and hopefully we can continue for as long as possible and start building up."

Arizona has lost three in a row to begin a five-game trip. Max Domi scored both goals for the Coyotes, and Mike Smith made 23 saves.

The Coyotes have allowed five goals in each of their last three losses and in five of their last 10 games.

"What we are doing lately is not good enough," Coyotes coach Dave Tippett said. "We have too many people playing below par."

Kane scored on a short-handed breakaway 2:40 into the third period for a 3-1 lead. It was the Sabres' first short-handed goal of the season. He later added an empty-net score and has four goals and two assists in his last three games.

Foligno made it 4-2 with 8:16 left after taking a pass from Nicolas Deslauriers behind the net, moving to the right side of the goal and slipping the puck behind Smith.

The Coyotes appeared to score 19 seconds later on a backhanded shot by Nicklas Grossman, but Sabres coach Dan Bylsma challenged the goal and replays revealed Arizona's Martin Hanzal interfered with Johnson.

The Sabres took control in the second period by putting 10 shots on net and scoring two goals in a 6:13 span.

Reinhart tied the game 7:17 into the period by collecting the rebound of Rasmus Ristolainen's shot, skating behind the net and bouncing the puck off Smith's back for his seventh goal of the season. With the assist, Ristolainen has 13 points, including 10 assists, in his last 13 games.

"Those two goals that are from below the goal line just can't go in," Smith said. "Giving up two goals like that, it's kind of deflating."

McGinn made it 2-1 with 6:27 left. In the neutral zone, he kicked Johnson's long pass over to Jack Eichel, and the rookie entered the zone before sending a backhand pass between two defenders back to McGinn for a

straightaway one-timer. McGinn extended his points streak to four games, with two goals and four assists during that span.

"We did the small things right," McGinn said. "We're getting in those hard-nosed areas and they're starting to go in for us. I'm glad for everyone that we are getting rewarded right now."

Domi scored his second goal of the game and 10th of the season on a wrist shot from the left point that made it 3-2 6:42 into the third period.

Domi put the Coyotes up 1-0 with 5:32 left in the first. Hanzal sent a cross-ice pass to Domi streaking up the left side for a breakaway, and Domi skated in front of Johnson before flipping a backhand shot over the goaltender's glove.

The Coyotes were pleased with their first-period play, but couldn't sustain the effort over the remaining 40 minutes.

"When you are all over a team like that, you have to get on them and you have to keep going," Domi said. "As soon as you let them back in the game, the first doesn't mean much after that."

NOTES: The Sabres last scored four goals in four straight games when they had 30 goals over five consecutive contests from Feb. 20 to March 2, 2007. . Buffalo's last short-handed goal was scored by Brian Gionta on March 30 at Arizona. ... Coyotes captain Shane Doan missed his sixth straight game with a lower-body injury. The Coyotes also scratched D Connor Murphy and C Dustin Jeffrey. ... The Sabres scratched D Mike Weber. .. Reinhart, Domi and Coyotes forward Anthony Duclair were linemates on the Canadian team that won a gold medal at the 2015 World Junior Championships. This was their first NHL meeting. ... Sabres LW Matt Moulson played in his 500th career game.

Hall and Purcell lead Edmonton to third straight win, beat Buffalo 4-2

By Shane Jones
The Canadian Press
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EDMONTON - It may have been a bit early to count out the Edmonton Oilers.

Taylor Hall and Teddy Purcell each had a goal and an assist as the Oilers continued their climb out of the NHL basement with a 4-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday.

Jordan Eberle and Luke Gazdic also scored for the Oilers (11-15-2), who have won three in a row and four of their last five to move to within three points of a playoff position.

"It's nice to win three in a row at home," Hall said. "That's a big boost for our group. You look at the standings and we are getting closer and closer to where we want to be. As we start getting bodies back it's important for us to stay in it."

Anders Nilsson continues to be the hot hand in the Edmonton net after making 32 saves for the victory.

"It's nice to get on a little bit of a roll," Nilsson said. "We need to continue on this path and get more wins so that we can get in the playoff race."

Jack Eichel and Ryan O'Reilly replied for the Sabres (11-13-3), who have lost two of their last three.

"There was way too many turnovers," O'Reilly said. "That was the reason we lost that one. We have to be better, especially on the road.

"It wasn't a good night for us on the (power play). I don't know if we were just lazy or not wanting to put in the work, but we have to be out there and use that opportunity to at least outwork them and we'll gain some opportunities."

The Sabres got on the board seven minutes into the first after some sloppy play by the Oilers in their own zone ended up with the puck on the stick of Eichel, who beat Nilsson with a backhand for his ninth of the year.

The Oilers tied the game midway through the first as Hall hooked a shot towards the net from the blue line that was tipped by Purcell past Buffalo goalie Chad Johnson, who finished with 24 saves on 28 shots.

Edmonton made it 2-1 with four minutes left in the opening frame when Ryan Nugent-Hopkins battled to get a puck behind the net and fed it in front for Eberle for the goal.

The home squad added to its lead on the power play with just over a minute left in the first as Purcell slid a puck under a sprawling Johnson to Hall, who scored his 11th into a wide-open net.

The Sabres finally connected on one of their many power plays in the second period with six-and-a-half minutes left as Zach Bogosian threaded the needle with a pass in front to O'Reilly, who beat Nilsson on the backhand.

Edmonton restored its two-goal lead with two minutes left in the second as the puck went in off of Gazdic's skate while he was being shoved into the Buffalo net.

The Oilers scored on their only power-play opportunity while the Sabres went 1 for 4.

Edmonton sits three points behind the Arizona Coyotes and Anaheim Ducks for the third spot in the Pacific Division.

The Sabres are right back at it on Monday, heading to Vancouver to face the Canucks. The Oilers are off until Wednesday, when they host the San Jose Sharks.

Notes: Edmonton swept both games last season... Out for the Oilers were Connor McDavid (clavicle) Rob Klinkhammer (leg), Nail Yakupov (ankle), Benoit Pouliot (lower body) and Andrew Ference (undisclosed) ... Injured for the Sabres were Robin Lehner (ankle), Tyler Ennis (upper body), Mark Pysyk (lower body) and Mike Weber (knee).

Pegula: Things looking up for Sabres

By Mike Harrington
Buffalo News
December 5, 2015

Owner Terry Pegula sees exactly what you do: After two straight last-place finishes in the NHL's overall standing, the Buffalo Sabres appear to be turning a small corner this year.

"I think we're on target. Things are looking up," Pegula said Friday in brief remarks with The Buffalo News in Ralph Wilson Stadium. "We've had a few beat-up players early in the year, lost our goalie early but we're on target."

Even without No. 1 netminder Robin Lehner, the Sabres entered Friday's game against the Arizona Coyotes – a victory – with a 10-12-3 record. And although they were just three points ahead of last year's record through 25 games (9-14-2), optimism is high under new coach Dan Bylsma and with the addition of No. 2 overall draft pick Jack Eichel.

Pegula rarely speaks to the media aside from formal news conferences, but was available after the announcement that the Sabres and the city will be hosting the 2018 World Junior Championships. He had not spoken about the hockey team since the firing of Darcy Regier and Ron Rolston combined with the subsequent hiring of Ted Nolan and Pat LaFontaine in November, 2013.

Asked his impressions of Eichel, a smiling Pegula said, "What do you think? You're all watching it, too. He's going to be a great player. He is a great player."

Pegula said he did not attend any of the 2011 World Junior games played here, which were staged less than two months before his purchase of the Sabres was complete. But he said he's regularly watched the tournament on TV and is impressed how it's positively impacted his young players.

Pegula is particularly thrilled with the way the World Juniors have helped several Sabres, referring to Rasmus Ristolainen's overtime goal for Finland that won the 2014 tournament in Malmo, Sweden. And he said it will be particularly interesting to watch the presumptive USA-Canada matchup outdoors at The Ralph.

"I really like to watch World Juniors," Pegula said. "When Rasmus did his thing, he was sick as a dog, skating 18- to 20-second shifts to win the 'Golden Game.' Can you imagine coming out here and playing in a game, maybe in the snow a little bit? It will be pretty awesome for these kids."

Sabres notebook: Johnson's intuition proves correct

By Amy Moritz
Buffalo News
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Chad Johnson knew where the puck was headed. He was starting to put his glove out to make the save when he felt a stick hit him.

To be honest he wasn't sure whose stick it was. It could have been from his own defenseman, Josh Gorges. But as soon as the puck went in the back of the net, he caused a ruckus.

"I knew where it was going and I had some contact and I didn't know initially if it was Gorges' stick or the other guys' but I knew there was contact so I sort of screamed and yelled just to make sure that there was a review there," Johnson said.

So the Buffalo Sabres challenged. And they won.

Replays showed that it was Arizona's Martin Hanzal's stick which interfered with Johnson. The goal was overturned and the Sabres maintained a 4-2 lead over the Arizona Coyotes with 7:57 left in the third period. The Sabres went on for a 5-2 win at First Niagara Center Friday night.

"You really couldn't see because the player was off to the side of the net," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "But Johnny reacted and given the time left in the game with seven and half minutes we probably were going to challenge that no matter what we heard from upstairs."

The Sabres had a challenge go in their favor in Nashville when the Predators thought they scored a goal but the officials had waived it off for goalie interference, again against Johnson. Nashville challenged the no-goal call on the ice and the video review confirmed the call.

This time it was called a goal on the ice and a Sabres challenge overturned the call.

"If it wasn't called interference I would have been pretty upset," Johnson said. "I knew right away it was interference. ... I was happy they were looking at it so they could call it back. It was just a little nerve-wracking not going right away. We were just waiting around. I'm like, 'What are we waiting for? We need to make sure we get the goal looked at.' I'm just happy we got that called back."

The Sabres have had three goals called back this year on offsides challenges.

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Marcus Foligno sounded his barbaric yawp over the ice at First Niagara Center.

The forward had gone 10 games without a point. So when he put in a goal at the side of the net after a hardworking forecheck by his fourth linemates, he let it all come out.

"When I scored I just screamed," Foligno said. "It was just anger and frustration coming out at the same time but it was excitement and joy too. It's a good feeling when you score especially in a game where we might have needed that insurance goal big time."

Foligno's goal, his second of the year, came at 11:44 of the third giving the Sabres a 4-2 lead.

David Legwand started the play and Nicholas Deslauriers passed him the puck from behind the net with the goaltender at the far post.

"It was a good pass. ... I was able to kind of backhand-forehand as quick as possible because I knew that he would be sliding over," Foligno said. "It trickled in."

Bylsma said it wasn't just a big goal for Foligno to get him out of a scoring drought but for the entire line.

"It was a big goal for us and just a right way to get a goal, a forechecking goal," Bylsma said. "We put a puck in deep there. They go east-west and he finds it with a good opportunity. We've been imploring Marcus to shoot more, take advantage of those opportunities. This one happens to be ... from a bad angle but the puck went east-west, he had the goalie on the far post and kind of banked it off his skate and in."

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Tux and Pucks returns to First Niagara Center when the Sabres host the New York Islanders Dec. 31 at 6 p.m. Ticket packages, which includes two 300 Level II tickets and a tuxedo rental from Tuxedo Junction are available for \$99. Fans can also be fitted for a tuxedo when the Sabres host the Los Angeles Kings on Dec. 12. Beginning at 5 p.m. a fitting room will be located next to the elevators in the main pavilion of First Niagara Center.

Teamwork on top line keeps Sabres sizzling

By John Vogl
Buffalo News
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The score sheet shows the Sabres' latest victory was a team effort. A whopping 13 players recorded a point, the first time that's happened since an 8-2 victory over Atlanta in March 2011.

But there's no doubt Friday's onslaught started at the top.

The Sabres' No. 1 line of Ryan O'Reilly, Evander Kane and Sam Reinhart had another impressive night, kick-starting Buffalo toward a 5-2 win over Arizona. The trio combined for three goals, one assist and turned the game in the Sabres' favor with a chance-filled second period.

"We're finally starting to get some chemistry going and really starting to figure each other out," Kane said in First Niagara Center. "We enjoy playing together, so it's working really well so far."

The line has been together for four games, and the Sabres are 3-0-1. It's not a coincidence. After failing to record a point during their Nov. 27 debut against Carolina, they've combined for eight goals and 13 points in three games.

"We seem to all be on the same page," Reinhart said. "Communication's a big thing. We're constantly talking, constantly learning from one another, so I think that helps. We keep things simple, and knowing where the other one is helps."

Kane scored two goals for the second straight game, giving Buffalo a 3-1 lead with a short-handed breakaway and sending the 18,204 fans home happy with an empty-net goal with 52 seconds left. Reinhart scored the Sabres' first goal midway through the second period to erase a 1-0 deficit.

The line had two great chances on its shift following Reinhart's goal, keeping the crowd riled up. On the shift after that, the trio again pinned the Coyotes in their own zone to tire the visitors and allow Jamie McGinn to put Buffalo in front, 2-1.

"We're getting on teams' defense and we're staying on the puck and we're battling to create turnovers," Kane said. "There's an urgency and a hunger to put pucks away, especially these last couple games."

"We really poured it on in that second period and were able to come out with the lead, so that was huge for us."

Just as it did in Tuesday's 5-4 shootout loss to Detroit, Kane's speed made a difference. He has four goals and six points in three games.

"He's probably our hardest worker and our guy who puts the most pressure on teams with how he skates and how he plays," coach Dan Bylsma said. "He's getting opportunities now because of that pressure and because of the way he's playing."

Reinhart has three goals in three games by doing things with his head. After collecting the puck near the goal line, he avoided the conventional wisdom of skating around the net and instead stopped to bank in the puck off goaltender Mike Smith.

O'Reilly allows the Sabres to possess the puck, either winning faceoffs (60 percent against the Coyotes) or carrying it up ice. He has one goal and three assists since the line came together.

"We can all do different things, but we still play the same kind of game," Reinhart said. "We can get in there and we can work it down low. We can create chances off the rush as well. There's a time for each, and we kind of work that nicely."

The trio's efforts helped Buffalo score at least four goals for the fourth straight game. The team hadn't done that since the Chris Drury and Daniel Briere era, when the Sabres accomplished the feat in five straight in 2006-07.

This year's Sabres will drive for five Sunday when they visit Edmonton.

"It's nice," Reinhart said. "Throughout the year it's going to change. It seems like yesterday that we were answering questions on if we're getting frustrated or not. Once we get a couple it comes in a wave. Hopefully, we can continue that for as long as possible and start building off of it.

"Obviously, if our line is scoring, if we're generating, we think we're doing a good job and kind of judge it off that. If we keep generating, we're going to keep burying our chances."

John Vogl's Sabres mailbag: Gionta needed on right wing now

Buffalo News

December 6, 2015

After sending out a call for questions for a Sabres Mailbag, the queries came quickly. Not surprisingly, a trend emerged.

"Why does Gionta see so much ice time?"

"Why does Gionta get to play with Eichel?"

"What's with Gio's minutes?"

"Why are they still giving Gionta so much ice time? On the power play?!?!"

Clearly, Buffalo fans are curious as to what coach Dan Bylsma sees in Brian Gionta.

The captain, who turns 37 in January, is skating 19:06 per game. That ranks sixth on the Sabres and third among forwards, with only Ryan O'Reilly (21:49) and Evander Kane (20:59) ahead of Gionta up front.

The production hasn't matched the ice time. Gionta has two goals and six assists in 23 games. According to War-On-Ice.com, Gionta's "points per 60 minutes" of 0.71 ranked in a tie for 482nd in the NHL heading into Saturday's schedule. The captain has the same stats as fourth-line center David Legwand, who plays just 9:36 per game.

It's easy to see why people are wondering what's up. The answer comes in two parts:

1. No one else deserves the minutes.

The Sabres' four right wingers during Friday's victory over Arizona were Sam Reinhart, Gionta, Johan Larsson and Marcus Foligno. Larsson doesn't have a goal and was benched last week. Foligno didn't have a point in 10 games before scoring against the Coyotes. If a player was pushing for a larger role, he could have taken it. With struggling Tyler Ennis out, Bylsma's options on the right side are limited.

2. Little things still mean a lot.

A key to Bylsma's offense is the forecheck. Watch when Gionta is on the ice, and the Sabres will typically send the puck into the right corner. Though the 5-foot-7 captain often takes a beating, he regularly gets to the dump-in at the same time as the defenseman. It hasn't resulted in many goals, but Bylsma hopes it will.

While Gionta can't match the speed of Jack Eichel (who can?), the captain can make up for Eichel's defensive lapses as the center continues to learn the game.

Fans may not want to see Gionta on the ice so much, but they will for the foreseeable future.

Question: What do you think happens with the goalie situation when Lehner returns?

Answer: The play of Chad Johnson and Linus Ullmark has made the Sabres' net an interesting place. Both have had stellar runs, with Johnson shining lately. It will allow the Sabres to ease Robin Lehner back from his ankle sprain. Buffalo will probably keep three goalies until Lehner shows he's ready, then send Ullmark to Rochester.

Q: In a worst-case scenario, can we buy Moulson out? What are the numbers?

A: Sorry to break it to you, but this is the worst-case scenario. The left winger looks slow, unwilling to engage, has lost his shot and his confidence. The 32-year-old is playing like he's going to follow Cody Hodgson and Ville Leino out the door.

Moulson is in only the second season of a five-year, \$25 million contract that is broken down into salary and signing bonuses. If the Sabres bought him out in June, it would cost \$7.33 million based on the \$11 million left of his salary. He'd still get an additional \$5 million in signing bonuses and remain on the Sabres' salary cap for six seasons.

According to HockeyCap.com, the cap hit would cost Buffalo \$2.1 million for the next two seasons and \$1.1 million in 2018-19. The Sabres would receive a credit of \$888,889 each season from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Q: Is Kane-O'Reilly-Reinhart the kind of top line that can last together multiple seasons?

A: The trio certainly has a lot going for it in terms of being a long-term line. They're all under contract for at least two more seasons. With Kane's speed, O'Reilly's all-around play and Sam Reinhart's smarts and willingness to improve, they complement each other well.

Q: Can you envision GMTM making a high-profile trade this year for a playoff run, or even setting things up for next year?

A: Yes indeed. Considering trades typically don't take place until the second half of the season, there seems to be an inordinately high amount of chatter already. General Manager Tim Murray has shown he likes to be in the talks.

While the Sabres have right-wing prospects in Hudson Fasching, Nicholas Baptiste and Justin Bailey, they could obviously still use a top-six NHL winger.

Q: I'm bewildered by the seeming lack of any strategy by the Sabres in overtime! With strong, fast skaters like Eichel, Kane and O'Reilly, they should be better at outskating and outpassing their opponents! Do you think Bylsma has any strategy for 3-on-3 overtime?

A: So far, the strategy has been don't give up an odd-man rush. Bylsma has cautioned against all three players skating up ice because a wide shot or turnover gives the opponent a two-on-zero. The Sabres haven't practiced three-on-three very much and have appeared in just five overtimes, so it's still the old "work in progress."

Q: What's your take on No. 55's season so far? Can he keep this up pointwise?

A: Rasmus Ristolainen has been a revelation, sitting in a tie for seventh among NHL defensemen with 18 points in 26 games. He's usually on the ice with O'Reilly's line, meaning he can skim assists when the forwards get hot. Ristolainen also plays on the power play and takes the majority of the shots, so he'll pick up points off rebounds.

While he's unlikely to keep up the point-per-game pace he's shown for the last 13 outings, he shouldn't drop off much.

McGinn back in the swing of things

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 6, 2015

Jack Eichel has taken a liking to Jamie McGinn both on and off the ice. During their chats, Eichel learned that one year ago this week, McGinn was heading to the hospital for season-ending back surgery.

This year, McGinn is getting pats on the back for repeatedly generating goals.

McGinn, with points in four straight games, will attempt to tie the longest streak of his career Sunday when Buffalo visits Edmonton. He has two goals and three assists during the run to bring his season totals to five goals and 11 points, which ranks in a tie for fourth on the Sabres.

"I'm enjoying it," McGinn said. "I'm going to continue to work hard. I think I've done this before in my career once maybe, but I'm looking to continue to produce. I feel that I can do it, but it starts with work ethic. I'm going to start there."

The winger recorded three goals and seven points during a five-game run with Colorado in March 2014. It helped him set career highs of 19 goals and 38 points, and the Avalanche rewarded him with a two-year, \$5.9 million contract.

A balky back limited McGinn to just 19 games last season. He came to Buffalo as part of the Ryan O'Reilly trade in June, and he's starting to find a home.

"You don't just turn around after back surgery and feel your best," Eichel said. "I think he's starting to find his game and feel better in his body, in his back. He's starting to feel like himself again, and you can tell by the way he's playing."

McGinn has done a good job of seizing opportunities. He's getting time on the power play, and he's recorded points on the man-advantage in two of the last three games. He played with Eichel on Friday, and McGinn buried a pass from the center with a one-timer from the slot.

"In practice he scored three or four goals just like that one," coach Dan Bylsma said. "He's a straight-line guy. He's a hard-working guy. He's an inside-presence guy, and that's what he's been doing on the power play. That's what he's been doing for that line."

As Bylsma noted, McGinn is not a fancy player. The 6-foot-1, 205-pounder admits as much.

"I'm just trying to keep it simple, do the things that make me successful," McGinn said. "I have to get myself into it by getting hits early. When I do that, the ice kind of opens up for me a bit."

When McGinn is playing his best, his style also opens up the ice for Eichel. The 27-year-old likes to head toward the net, which draws the attention of defenders and the goaltender. That creates space for Eichel, who has shown he doesn't need much to make things happen.

"I love playing with him," Eichel said. "The thing about Jamie is he knows himself as a player. He knows what he's good at, and he knows how to play the game. He's an honest player. You know what you're going to get."

"The one thing I love about him is he's always looking to get me the puck and then get open to shoot it. I hope we can continue to get opportunities to play together."

The duo should again be together against the Oilers, with captain Brian Gionta on the right side. They'll try to help the Sabres score at least four goals for the fifth straight game and extend their 3-0-1 run.

"It's finally coming around," McGinn said. "It was frustrating there for a little bit, but we stuck with it. We did the small things right, and we're getting to those hard-nosed areas and they're starting to go in for us.

"I'm glad for everyone that we're being rewarded right now, and we can't change anything because it can be taken away real quick. We've got to continue to work hard and get better every day."

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The Sabres' journey to Western Canada has become a family business trip. Buffalo, in need of an extra forward for the three-game swing through Edmonton, Vancouver and Calgary, called up Cal O'Reilly from Rochester on Saturday. The forward is the older brother of Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly.

Cal O'Reilly leads the Amerks with 11 assists and 14 points in 21 games. The 29-year-old is Rochester's captain.

The elder O'Reilly hasn't played in the NHL since Feb. 5, 2012, with Pittsburgh. He has appeared in 113 NHL games, recording 13 goals, 28 assists and 41 points.

The Sabres have 13 forwards on their trip, meaning one will be scratched each game.

Oilers drill Sabres with speed in road trip opener

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 7, 2015

EDMONTON, Alberta -- The stat sheet told the story of a pretty even game. The numbers didn't tell the right tale.

The opener of the Buffalo Sabres' Western Canada roadie was a sloppy stinker for a good 30 minutes Sunday in Rexall Place. The Sabres got worked by the speedy Edmonton Oilers in the defensive zone and fumbled away their offensive attack by turning the puck over with impunity in a disappointing 4-2 defeat.

The Sabres had a 34-28 advantage in shots on goal, including a 16-6 bulge in the third period. They had six more shot attempts (56-50), the same number of hits (25) and only a slight disadvantage in faceoffs won (39-33).

Don't let the numbers fool you. When the Sabres weren't giving the puck away, they were just flat-out beaten to it. And their defense spent much of the net backing in far too much.

Voices all over the dressing room agreed this was not an acceptable performance.

"We were just turning too many pucks over. We were feeding their transition," said center Jack Eichel, who opened the scoring with his ninth goal of the season on a first-period backhand. "A lot of times it comes down to making plays and we didn't make them. Forwards weren't supporting the 'D' well enough. We missed a lot of passes that were easy that we should make. Just a lot of lapses."

The Sabres knew Edmonton would try to play a breakneck game against them. Coach Dan Bylsma spoke sternly about it during his pregame briefing with reporters but his team wasn't able to handle it. Especially the line of Leon Draisaitl, Taylor Hall and Teddy Purcell. Hall and Purcell each scored in the first period as Edmonton built a 3-1 lead and the Sabres never recovered.

"Pretty much for the first 30 minutes of the game, Edmonton did a great job of putting every puck behind us, putting a lot of pressure on us with their speed and forced us in a lot of areas by the way they executed," said Bylsma. "Pretty much every opportunity they got was a result of it."

"We have to be better, especially on the road," added center Ryan O'Reilly. "We have to establish that game, that north-south play, that simple play early. They were just aggressive. They were all over us, put every puck deep and skated on us. We weren't quick enough with the puck, with our decisions and it ate us up."

Some of the Sabres' worst decisions with the puck came on the power play. Buffalo went 1 for 4 with the man-advantage, an O'Reilly goal at 13:22 of the second period that pulled the Sabres within 3-2, but also gave up a trio of 2-on-1 breaks. Only good work by goaltender Chad Johnson prevented a short-handed goal that seemed on the brink of coming all night.

"It wasn't a good night for us on the PP," O'Reilly said. "Whether it was being lazy, not putting in the work, we have to go out there and use that opportunity to outwork them and we'll gain our opportunities. It was frustrating. We have to be better. "

"Our execution, passing, receiving," Bylsma said. "All those plays were passing plays that we turned over, we didn't connect on and it led to them."

It was one of Eichel's roughest nights of the season in terms of the physical pounding he endured. He took a puck up high in the first period, was clipped by a Ryan Nugent-Hopkins high stick in the second that gave the Sabres a power play and then was felled by a hard elbow from Edmonton defenseman and former Sabre Andrej

Sekera in the third. Eichel appeared dazed after that blow and skated immediately to the bench but did not miss a shift.

"It's hockey, a fast game," Eichel said sheepishly. "You get your bell rung, it's part of the game. A fast, physical game. I kind of put myself in a bad position reaching and he caught me a little bit high. Part of the game. I'm fine."

"They played well and hard tonight," Bylsma said of the Oilers. "They played well in a lot of areas and played hard on Jack."

Sabres notebook: Rexall Place houses many memories

By Mike Harrington
Buffalo News
December 7, 2015

EDMONTON, Alberta – Their numbers are in the rafters and some of their pictures are on a commemorative poster of Oilers captains adorning a wall of Rexall Place. The names read like a who's-who of Edmonton hockey in the 1980s: Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, Kevin Lowe, Glenn Anderson, Jari Kurri, Grant Fuhr.

The NHL's second-oldest building has hosted seven Stanley Cup finals and innumerable great moments in its 42 seasons, but the end is near for the spartan rink best known from the glory days as Northlands Coliseum. The Oilers are moving downtown next season and Sunday night's opener to a Western Canada road trip was the Buffalo Sabres' final visit here.

Rexall Place opened in 1974 and carried the Northlands name through its glory years and until 1995. Among NHL arenas, only New York's Madison Square Garden is older, opening in 1968. But MSG, remember, has just gone through a three-year, \$1-billion renovation that essentially made it a new facility.

When the Oilers opened here in 1974, they were still in the World Hockey Association and five years away from joining the NHL. Edmonton won the Stanley Cup here in 1984, 1985, 1987 and 1988, and captured its 1990 championship in Boston.

The Oilers lost the Cup final in 1983 and 2006, with that seven-game defeat to Carolina marking their last trip to the playoffs. The building hosted Canada Cup games in 1981 and 1984, World Junior Championship games in 1995 and 2012 and the 1995 NHL Draft.

It was here in 1988 after a sweep of the Bruins was completed that Gretzky started the tradition of the championship team huddling on the ice around the Stanley Cup for a giant group picture before retiring to the dressing room. That's been an integral moment of every Cup celebration since.

"I tucked my jersey in, had powder on my tape like 'Gretz' and my linemate was 'Jari Kurri' in my amateur hockey days," a smiling Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said before the game. "I spent a lot of time watching and emulating Wayne and my linemate was called 'Jari.' I was a young kid, 7-8-9-10 years old. Playing in the back yard. So coming here the first time as a player was very special."

Bylsma, in fact, scored the first of his 19 NHL goals in Rexall Place while playing for Los Angeles on Nov. 27, 1996.

"It was a faceoff shot from the point, second-chance rebound and I dove in the net," Bylsma said. "I dove kind of behind the goalie to get it so I ended up in the net and I just remember Ray Ferraro picking me up off the ice in the net out of celebration."

"There's a lot of history here and it's a fun building to play in," said Sabres winger Jamie McGinn, a regular here from his days with San Jose and Colorado. "The Edmonton fans are loud and very passionate about hockey and they want to win."

Rexall Place always had a reputation for some of the best playing conditions in the NHL, which certainly helped the Oilers' high-powered attack.

"It's always hard ice, good to skate on. They do a really good job here," said McGinn. "When you're going out there, you have to worry about your game and not the ice. It's definitely one of the tops in the league here."

The Oilers are moving to the \$480-million Rogers Place next season. It will seat 18,641 for hockey, more than 20,000 for concerts and feature all the amenities fans and business clients come to expect from new facilities that simply aren't part of the experience now.

There are still discussions going on about the future of Rexall Place, either demolishing it and redeveloping the land, or repurposing it into a smaller facility. That's what Long Island is doing with Nassau Coliseum, the former home of the New York Islanders.

There are eight retired banners in the building, including one for longtime broadcaster Rod Phillips and another for former Sabres defenseman Al Hamilton, a stalwart from the WHA era. The Oilers will raise their ninth and final banner on Friday night to honor longtime coach Glen Sather, and many of the Hall of Famers of the past will be in attendance. The final home game is April 6 against Vancouver.

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The Sabres were to leave immediately after the game for Vancouver, where they will meet the struggling Canucks Monday night in Rogers Arena. Vancouver started the season 6-2-4 but has skidded to a 3-9-4 mark in its last 16 games.

The Canucks have slipped into complete crisis mode in their last five games, going 0-3-2 and suffering a 4-0 home drubbing at home to Boston on Saturday night.

At 9-10-8 overall, the Canucks are tied for the fewest wins in the league. Former Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller is the likely starter and his stats have slipped to pedestrian status after a strong start to the season. Miller is just 7-9-6, 2.59 and .910. Backup Jacob Markstrom took the loss against Boston.

It will be the first game in his hometown for Sabres winger Sam Reinhart, who grew up in North Vancouver and played his minor hockey in the city. Reinhart played junior in Kootenay, B.C., about 500 miles to the east.

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The Sabres did not change their lineup from Friday's game against Arizona, meaning Cal O'Reilly sat as a healthy scratch after joining the team here Saturday. So the debut of Ryan O'Reilly's older brother with Buffalo remains on hold.

"I don't know at this point," Bylsma said when asked if O'Reilly will play on the trip. "We have three games in five days. He is the extra forward right now. We needed to have an extra guy on the trip. Right now, it's just for tonight."

Why Buffalo is USA's new Hockeytown

By Allan Muir
Sports Illustrated
December 5, 2015

You have to hand it to Terry Pegula. The billionaire owner of the Buffalo Sabres had a vision of his city becoming the mecca of American hockey when he committed \$172 million to privately finance the construction of the HarborCenter complex back in 2013.

Just two years later, that's exactly what the city in western New York has become. With the state-of-the-art facility now fully operational, Buffalo has, or will soon, play host to events ranging from the Under-18 Women's World Championship to the International Paralympic Committee Ice Sledge Hockey Worlds to USA Hockey's All-American Prospects Game to the NHL's Draft Combine.

At this point, it's almost safe to assume that if it's happening in hockey, it's happening in Buffalo.

And Buffalo doesn't just do it. The city does it right. That U-18 women's event last January drew nearly 14,000 fans to HarborCenter, making it the event's all-time second-best attended tournament. Fans, players and hockey officials came away raving about the atmosphere at the rink and the work of the organizers.

"Even just our round robin games were unbelievable," Team USA forward Melissa Samoskevich said. "I did not expect to have that many people. It's been great."

The willingness to roll out the red carpet for smaller events on the hockey calendar gave local organizers a leg up on St. Louis and Pittsburgh when it came to landing Buffalo's most recent and biggest prize yet: the 2018 World Junior Championships. USA Hockey has scheduled a press conference for Friday at Ralph Wilson Stadium where it's expected to formally announce plans for the under-20 tournament.

And in a twist befitting this visionary city, the event could feature the biggest game in WJC history: an outdoor showdown on New Year's Eve pitting Team USA against Team Canada.

Of course, there's a chance for a disconnect between planning and reality. The possibility of that match-up is predicated on those two teams being in the same round-robin bracket and that seeding won't be determined until the conclusion of the yet-to-be-played 2017 event. But if Canada's not available to take on the hosts, it could be almost as appealing for the Americans to battle Russia out in the elements.

There's bound to be some criticism about staging a game of that magnitude in a setting where the elements could affect the outcome. That's fair. In fact, USA Hockey may have to do a little bargaining to convince the opposing federation that it's the right idea.

But probably not too much. It's a brilliant concept, one that is sure to not only fill the 70,000-plus seats at the Ralph and sweeten the financial pot for all involved, but increase the visibility of an event that, while massive in Canada, has yet to fully grasp the imaginations of hockey fans in the U.S. and around the world.

There's a chance to make more of it, of course. Pegula has stumped for Buffalo as the site for the 2018 NHL Winter Classic to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the inaugural event back in 2008 and having those two events back-to-back—with a Jack Eichel vs. Connor McDavid showdown on New Year's Day, perhaps?—would make for a magical long weekend.

There's bound to be some grumbling from St. Louis and Pittsburgh, the other markets that were vying for the WJC, that Buffalo is getting the event again after hosting it in 2011. No doubt they would have done a fine job and they'll certainly be in the running when the U.S. hosts again in 2022.

But neither city stood a chance against Pegula, whose vision or commitment has turned Buffalo America's new Hockeytown.

Hall helps Oilers win third straight, get past Sabres

By Derek Van Diest

NHL.com

December 7, 2015

EDMONTON — After dropping to the bottom of the NHL standings less than a week ago, the Edmonton Oilers are within three points of a playoff spot in the Pacific Division.

Forwards Taylor Hall and Teddy Purcell each had a goal and assist for Edmonton in a 4-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Rexall Place on Sunday.

The victory extended Edmonton's win streak to a season-high three games and got them into the Stanley Cup Playoff picture. It is the second time this season they won three consecutive games.

The Oilers trail the Arizona Coyotes, who lost 5-4 on Sunday, by three points for third place in the Pacific Division.

"It's nice to win three in a row at home, it's a nice boost for our group," Hall said. "You look at the standings and we're getting closer and closer to where we want to be. As we start getting bodies back [from injuries] it's important to stay in it."

Jordan Eberle and Luke Gazdic also scored for Edmonton. Goaltender Anders Nilsson made 32 saves for his eighth win of the season.

Jack Eichel and Ryan O'Reilly scored for Buffalo in the first of a three-game Western Canada road trip. The Sabers visit the Vancouver Canucks on Monday.

"It's nice to get on a little bit of a roll," Nilsson said. "We need to continue on this path and get more wins so that we can get in the playoff race. I thought we played a good game other than giving up too many power plays. Other than that, we battled hard and it was nice to score some goals, too."

The game was supposed to be the first meeting between the top two picks in the 2015 NHL Draft, No. 1 Connor McDavid and No. 2, Eichel. McDavid did not play because of a fractured clavicle sustained in a 4-2 win against the Philadelphia Flyers on Nov. 3. The teams play again in Buffalo on March 1, where McDavid is expected to be back in the lineup.

Eichel scored at 6:58 of the first period to give Buffalo a 1-0 lead, snapping a backhand shot past Nilsson.

Purcell tied the game at 9:36, tipping a point shot from Hall past Chad Johnson.

Eberle scored at 16:06 to put Edmonton up 2-1, converting a centering pass from Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

"I thought we responded well after their goal," Eberle said. "I think we lost our momentum a little bit in the game flow, we took some penalties. We kept going after that and we had control of the game the whole time I think."

Hall extended the Oilers' lead to 3-1 on the power play at 18:55. The Oilers left wing fed Purcell at the side of the Sabres' net, then headed to the front for a return pass.

Purcell flipped the puck in front where it hit center Zemgus Girgensons and landed in the crease, allowing Hall to tap it in.

"We just turned too many pucks over," Eichel said. "We were feeding their transition. A lot of times it comes down to making plays and we didn't make them. Our forwards weren't supporting the 'D' well enough, we missed a lot of passes that were easy that we should make."

O'Reilly cut the lead to 3-2 on a power play 13:22 into the second period. The Sabres leading scorer took a pass in front from defenseman Zach Bogosian, outwaited Nilsson, and lifted a shot over the fallen goaltender.

Gazdic restored Edmonton's two-goal lead at 17:43 with his first goal of the season, which he was able to celebrate three times. He crashed the net on a scramble in front and the puck went in off his skate but the goal was reviewed. The call on the ice stood after it was ruled there was no distinct kicking motion on the play. The Sabres then challenged the goal on goaltender interference, but the goal still stood.

"I wasn't sure what happened, I just kind of drove the net," Gazdic said. "I wasn't sure if I kicked it and I wasn't sure about the goalie getting pushed on. It's a big goal for us, a big goal for our team, and obviously, we're happy about it. I got to celebrate three times over, either way, I'm happy that it contributed to a win here."

Johnson made 24 saves for the Sabres, who outshot the Oilers 16-6 in the third period.

"I think pretty much for the first 30 minutes of the game, Edmonton did a great job of putting every puck behind us," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "They put a lot of pressure on us with their speed and forced us in a lot of areas with the way they executed with the puck and got in there."

Girgensons left the game in the third period after taking a puck to the face and did not return. Bylsma wasn't sure of the extent of the injury after the game.

Kane's two goals lead Sabres past Coyotes

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

December 5, 2015

BUFFALO -- The Buffalo Sabres' offense is finding its stride after a slow start.

Evander Kane scored two goals, leading the Sabres to a 5-2 win against the Arizona Coyotes at First Niagara Center on Friday.

Kane made it 3-1 with a shorthanded goal 2:40 into the third period. Sabres forward Zemgus Girgensons knocked a loose puck in the neutral zone away from Coyotes forward Tobias Rieder and toward Kane, who skated in against goaltender Mike Smith on a breakaway. Kane took a wrist shot that beat Smith on the blocker side.

"We changed up the [penalty kill] stretch a little bit there and [Girgensons] made a good play to kind of disrupt their breakout," said Kane, who added an empty-net goal with 52 seconds remaining. "I was able to get it and put it away."

After scoring 45 goals in their first 22 games, the Sabres have 17 goals in their past four. It's the first time the Sabres have scored four or more goals in four consecutive games since they did it in five straight games from Feb. 20 to March 2, 2007.

"It's finally coming around. It was frustrating for a little bit," forward Jamie McGinn said of the offense. "We stuck with it and we did the small things right, and we're getting in those hard-nosed areas and they're starting to go in for us. I'm glad for everyone that we're being rewarded right now. We can't change anything, because it can be taken away real quick."

The offense broke out after coach Dan Bylsma put together a new first line of Kane, Ryan O'Reilly, and Sam Reinhart. Kane has led the way with six points (four goals, two assists) in his past three games. O'Reilly has five points (one goal, four assists) in his past five games, and Reinhart has three goals in his past three games.

"If our line's scoring, if we're generating, we think we're doing a good job and kind of judge it off that," Reinhart said. "If we keep generating, we're going to keep burying our chances."

Kane's shorthanded goal was the first this season for the Sabres and the League-leading sixth allowed by the Coyotes.

"I don't think you're ever looking for those opportunities when you're going over the boards to kill a penalty, but it's a little bit surprising with the speed we have and some of the guys we have killing that we haven't gotten a better opportunity yet," Bylsma said. "As soon as the puck bounced out there, I had a good idea Evander would capitalize with the speed he has."

Coyotes rookie Max Domi cut the Sabres' lead to 3-2 with his second goal of the game and 10th of the season 6:42 into the third period, but Marcus Foligno restored Buffalo's two-goal lead at 11:44 with his second goal of the season. Foligno took a pass from behind the net by Nicolas Deslauriers and took a wrist shot that got past Smith at the near post. It was Foligno's first goal since Nov. 10.

"When I scored I just screamed and it was just anger and frustration coming out at the same time but it was excitement and joy too," Foligno said. "It's a good feeling when you score especially in a game when we might've needed that insurance goal big time."

The Coyotes nearly got back within a goal 19 seconds later when defenseman Nicklas Grossmann put a backhand shot past goalie Chad Johnson. But Bylsma challenged the goal and, after review, the referees ruled that Coyotes forward Martin Hanzal's stick had interfered with Johnson's glove as the shot came in and nullified the goal.

"It was at a critical time in the game with the challenge," Bylsma said. "It got the game back to a one-goal game. Right from [Johnson]'s reaction when the puck goes in the net, he immediately reacted, but you couldn't really see because the player was off to the side of the net and you couldn't see it, but [Johnson] reacted and given the time left in the game... we're probably going to challenge that one no matter what we heard from upstairs."

Kane completed the scoring when he put his sixth goal of the season into an empty net. He has five goals since he returned from a sprained MCL on Nov. 19.

"We were kind of waiting for him to come back and ever since he did, the energy levels, you know the way he plays, he just raises the energy on the bench and creates a lot," Reinhart said. "So it's a huge help to get him back 100 percent."

The Sabres (11-12-3) have won three of their past four games. The Coyotes (13-12-1) have lost the first three of a five-game road trip.

Domi gave the Coyotes a 1-0 lead at 14:28 of the first period. He received a pass from Hanzal and broke in on a partial breakaway, deked, and put a backhanded shot past against Johnson.

"The first 20 minutes we were all over them, we were moving our feet and executing and doing all that good stuff and we kind of got away from it which you can't afford to do," Domi said.

Domi's 10 goals tied him with Detroit Red Wings forward Dylan Larkin and New York Rangers forward Oscar Lindberg for the goal-scoring lead among rookies.

"He was good tonight," Coyotes coach Dave Tippett said. "We flipped up some guys on lines and Max came out and really gave us a strong game. When players give you strong games like that it's too bad you can't find ways to make those count as wins."

Reinhart tied it with his seventh goal of the season 7:17 into the second period, and McGinn gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead at 13:13. McGinn has two goals and three assists in his past four games.

Johnson made 18 saves; Smith finished with 23.

"When adversity hits, we can't feel sorry for ourselves," Smith said. "It's easy to hang your head and say 'poor me,' but the character of this group needs to show in those hard times. Even though it's difficult to do sometimes, we can't let it get us down. We have to build on the positives and the things we haven't done well we need to improve on."

Buffalo forward Matt Moulson played in his 500th NHL game.

No. 2 draft pick Eichel says his focus is on his team, not on McDavid

By Joanne Ireland
Edmonton Journal
December 7, 2015

In the NHL rookie class of 2005, it was Sidney Crosby versus Alex Ovechkin. Constant comparisons were drawn between Tyler Seguin and Taylor Hall before and after the 2010 entry draft. Jack Eichel and Connor McDavid were the top two draft picks in 2015.

Unfortunately, Sunday's highly anticipated first meeting of Eichel and McDavid at Rexall Place was postponed, most likely until March 1, when the Edmonton Oilers and Buffalo Sabres meet again in Buffalo. The injured McDavid, who scored five goals and seven assists in 13 games, should be back in the lineup with his surgically repaired left clavicle by that time; Eichel will have played as many as 63 games.

"(Eichel's) dynamic; he's effortless out there," said Hall, the first overall pick by the Oilers in 2010 while Seguin went second to the Boston Bruins. "Guys like him, you want to shut down. You want to make it hard on him.

"There were teams, my first couple of years that I really struggled against, and it took me another couple of years to finally find my mojo against them."

Eichel scored his ninth goal and 13th point in 27 games early in the first period with a lightning-quick backhand. He finished the game with four shots on net, three blocked shots and two missed shots while winning eight of 19 faceoffs during 21 minutes and 47 seconds of playing time.

He has been centring a line behind Ryan O'Reilly, who has the added pressure of a seven-year, \$52.5-million contract extension. He's also playing for a franchise that, like Edmonton, underwent a lot of changes in the off-season.

"One hundred per cent, it's cooled down a lot," Eichel said of the calmer days that have prevailed since the draft. "That was a long time ago; it means nothing now.

"I've just moved on from that. This has been good; you're just focused on hockey and playing; trying to become better, trying to help your team.

"You start to get in a little bit of a routine, knowing what to expect every day."

Sabres general manager Tim Murray said the biggest adjustments he thought Eichel would have would be off the ice, given that he was coming from Boston University, where weekend games were more conducive to proper eating and sleeping habits.

Eichel has been boarding with Sabres teammate Matt Moulson and his family.

"(The skill set) is high end and he does everything at a high pace," said Murray. "(Years ago) players needed more time to get stronger and to get up to speed. He was up to top speed and his size, his strength and his pace of play is not an issue. His only issue is experience or lack thereof. He looks like he belongs."

"It seems like time flies by," Eichel said. "It's crazy. We've already played 26 games and it's already December. It feels like yesterday that we were at training camp. Things go by pretty quickly. I'm just trying to soak it all in and enjoy it in my first year."

As for the prospect of playing against McDavid, he said that was a subject that needed to be tabled, at least for the time being.

"Two different situations," said Eichel. "He's here in Edmonton and it's unfortunate that he's hurt right now. It's part of the game. I've heard him say that: injuries are going to happen. For me, personally, I'm just focused on the Buffalo Sabres.

"I think the media tries to make more of it than it is. If I were to speak for Connor, I'm sure he's not too worried about it. I'm not either. We're both in our respective cities playing for our own teams and worried about ourselves and our well-being."

Jack Eichel proving he belongs in the NHL

By Mark Spector
Sportsnet
December 7, 2015

EDMONTON — Scalpers, fans, the TV networks, Connor McDavid — they're all a little bummed that tonight's game between the Buffalo Sabres and Edmonton Oilers does not feature the first ever National Hockey League meeting between the top two picks from the 2015 draft.

But what does Jack Eichel think?

"It doesn't mean anything to me," said Eichel, gearing down after a Saturday practice at Rexall Place.

The whole McDavid vs. Eichel thing has never favoured Eichel. McDavid is a pretty tough act to follow, let's face it, and Eichel's own future GM miss-stepped when he showed his displeasure at not winning the right to draft McDavid at the draft lottery.

And to be truthful, Eichel just doesn't need any extra hype. He's the real deal: a big, strong, super fast hockey prodigy who is making his mark in the Eastern Conference just fine, thank you, nearly as emphatically as McDavid was making his mark out West before his injury.

So the whole Eichel-McDavid thing, "I don't really put much thought into it. That's why I don't really talk about it," Eichel said politely. "If I were to speak for Connor I'm sure he's not too worried about it. I'm not either. We're both in our respective cities playing for our own teams and worried about ourselves and our well-being."

You've got to respect the fact that a 19-year-old has the self-confidence to look the media dead in the eye and say, "Meh, your angle has no legs with me." Kudos to Eichel for being his own man, a trait we're seeing more and more now among high echelon draft picks.

Eichel faces the media like a 10-year vet, and he walks into the NHL ready to play at age 18 (he turned 19 on Oct. 28). His general manager, Tim Murray, has been a bird dog for years. He sees a vastly different 18-year-old in Eichel than the one he was drafting a decade or more ago, during previous jobs in Ottawa or Anaheim.

"Right off the bat it's the skill set. It's high-end, and he does everything at a high pace," Murray said of Eichel. "(Years ago) players needed more time to get stronger and up to speed. He was up to speed, and his size, his strength and his pace of play is not an issue. His only issue is experience, or lack thereof. He looks like he belongs."

Eichel and McDavid, Aaron Ekblad in 2014, Nathan MacKinnon in '13 — they all walk right into the NHL like they belong. "These guys, they more than belong," Murray said. "Our league is going younger. Players' prime years are going down. A player's prime? It's not late 20's and early 30's anymore."

At the rate this whirlwind season is going for Eichel, his prime might begin some time in March. He takes a scoring line of 8-5-13 into Game 27 at Edmonton tonight, but admits that, "Sometimes you wake up and you think you're on the road, but you're at home. You're bouncing back and forth..."

"Everything happens fast on the ice and off the ice, too," he said of life in the NHL. "It seems like time flies by. It's crazy, we've already played 25 games and it's already December. It feels like yesterday that we were at training camp. I'm just trying to soak it all in and enjoy it in my first year."

The Sabres put Eichel in the home of Matt Moulson's family, so he's got proper guidance and three squares there. Still, you never know how a kid who was hyped this hard is going to react to all the trapping of being an NHLer.

After watching him play through his teens, Murray knew that Eichel would be fine on the ice. There was only one place where he could possibly trip up.

"To me it was off ice. Lifestyle," Murray said. "How would he handle coming from college, where they gear up to play weekends? How he'd get his rest, eat properly... We have a great staff for those things, but you can't force a 19-year-old to listen."

This 19-year-old? He listens. And, he thinks for himself before he answers.

It's a trait that will serve Jack Eichel well.

Buffalo's Ralph Wilson Stadium to host outdoor game at 2018 World Juniors

By Chris Peters

CBS Sports

December 5, 2015

USA Hockey, along with Buffalo Sabres and Bills owner Terry Pegula, announced Friday afternoon that the 2018 World Junior Championship has been awarded to the city of Buffalo. On top of that, they confirmed previous reports that Ralph Wilson Stadium will play host to the first outdoor game in tournament history.

The announcement was made at Ralph Wilson Stadium along the 18-yard line.

The hope is for Team USA to play rival Canada outdoors in the round-robin portion of the tournament, but nothing is set in stone yet as the schedule still won't be decided until after the 2017 WJC, which will determine group seeding. It is expected that the two North American rivals will end up in the same group and the two teams would play in late December, 2017. The tournament concludes on Jan. 5, 2018.

The outdoor element offers a drastic new twist not previously seen for the tournament, which features teams from 10 countries made up of the best under-20 players in the world. It also explains why USA Hockey went back to Buffalo despite the event being hosted there the last time the tournament was held in the U.S. back in 2011.

Buffalo beat out competing bids from Pittsburgh and St. Louis in the final round of the selection process.

There are probably few markets that could sell out an outdoor game for junior players in a football stadium. Due to Buffalo's proximity to the Canadian border and the fact it is one of the most rabid hockey markets in the U.S., the conditions are just right to make this event a huge success, particularly from a revenue-generating standpoint.

The Bills even trotted out noted hockey fan Rex Ryan to throw his support behind having the event in "his house."

The tournament, held annually, is one of the most popular television events in Canada each year. Team Canada games lead to huge TV ratings north of the border. The tournament is decidedly less popular in the United States, but awareness has been growing in the wake of two gold medals since 2010 and the fact it is carried on TV annually by the NHL Network.

The outdoor element surely helped put Buffalo's bid over the top as officials from USA Hockey said their only goal was to host the best World Junior Championship possible. Being able to provide a football stadium and a chance to fill it with 71,000-plus screaming fans was too much to pass up.

The Pegula family has done a lot for the city of Buffalo, having bought both of its most prominent professional sports franchises. They've also done a lot to try to turn Buffalo into the preeminent hockey hub of the United States.

By nabbing yet another major event like the World Juniors and even taking it to a new level with the outdoor game, this is some serious muscle flexing of their hockey prowess. They've hosted two other world hockey events aside from the 2011 World Juniors, including the World Sled Hockey Championship and the Women's World Under-18 Championship. They'll also be hosting the 2016 NHL Entry Draft.

The outdoor element for the World Juniors is sure to have its detractors. Unlike the NHL season, where an outdoor game may be one in a series of 82 for NHL clubs participating, this is one of a maximum of seven games a team would play.

The game would be part of the preliminary round, however, which has been diminished in its importance in recent years. Eight teams make the playoff round, which would almost assuredly include both the U.S. and Canada. At most, the game has seeding implications for the medal round. So that's probably why they're going forward with this idea. It's an important game, but not unlikely to be a make-or-break affair.

Putting teams out in the elements in late December in Buffalo might be a little on the risky side, but this game has an opportunity to further raise the profile of the World Juniors in the U.S. It's been gaining a lot of steam south of the border over the last five-plus years, but this is the kind of attention-grabbing event that could really turn the exposure up a few notches.

It's an interesting idea to say the least. We'll see how it all comes together in two years.

Sabres' Evander Kane finally scoring

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
December 7, 2015

BUFFALO – Realistically, having scored six times in 16 games this season, Sabres winger Evander Kane likely won't hit his lofty preseason target of 40 or 50 goals.

Scoring once in his first 11 appearances and missing 10 contests with an MCL injury certainly didn't help.

But that disappointing start has recently become an afterthought, as Kane's one of the NHL's hottest scorers as the Sabres start a three-game Canadian road trip tonight against the Edmonton Oilers.

Kane, 24, scored twice Friday – a slick short-handed breakaway and an empty-netter – in the Sabres' 5-2 win against Arizona. He was perhaps the best player throughout Tuesday's 5-4 shootout loss in Detroit, scoring twice and pumping six shots on goal.

Suddenly, Kane, who didn't score his second goal until Nov. 23, is on a 27-goal pace.

"I'm starting to feel like my old self again," Kane, who has six points in his last three games, said Friday.

It has taken Kane almost a year to regain some normalcy. He underwent season-ending shoulder surgery in February. Then, in the midst of a slow start, he hurt his left knee Oct. 24.

These days, he looks like the first-line power forward the Sabres envisioned when they acquired him in a blockbuster deal with Winnipeg on Feb. 11.

"He's probably our hardest worker, our guy who puts the most pressure on teams with how he skates and how he plays," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I just think he's getting opportunities now because of that pressure, because of the way he's playing."

Kane's playing well, in part, because he has finally found some linemates. In four games together, Kane, center Ryan O'Reilly and Sam Reinhart have become the Sabres' undisputed No. 1 line.

"I think we're starting to find some offensive chemistry – me, Ryan and Reino," Kane said. "We're working well. I think we all kind of have different skill sets. I think we're gelling quite nicely."

"For me, I got my legs right now. I'm feeling good about my game and about my line. It's fun to play right now."

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Very quietly, winger Jamie McGinn has morphed into one of the Sabres' top offensive threats, scoring two goals and five points in the last four games.

McGinn, who has played with just about every forward this season, has recently been skating with center Jack Eichel and captain Brian Gionta.

"I gave him the opportunity to play on that line ... because their best games have been together," Bylsma said. "He's a straight-line guy. He's a hardworking guy. He's an inside presence guy, and that's what he's been doing on the power play, that's what he's been doing for that line."

Overall, the 6-foot-1, 201-pound McGinn has five goals and 11 points in 26 games.

"I'm just trying to keep it simple, do the things that make me successful – be physical out there and kind of get the boys into it right away where I have to get myself into it by getting hits early," McGinn said. "When I do that, the ice kind of opens up for me a bit. I'm fortunate they're going in right now."

xxx

The Sabres recalled forward Cal O'Reilly, the older brother of Ryan O'Reilly, from the Rochester Americans on Saturday. The team needed an extra forward for its road trip.

Cal O'Reilly, the Amerks' captain, has three goals and a team-best 14 points in 21 games, including eight in his last seven appearances.

O'Reilly, 29, has played 113 NHL games with Nashville, Arizona and Pittsburgh, compiling 13 goals and 41 points. He hasn't appeared in an NHL contest since 2011-12.

The O'Reilly brothers have never played an NHL regular-season game together. When they both dressed for a Sept. 25 preseason contest in Toronto, it marked the first time they had ever played a game together.

The Sabres signed Cal O'Reilly to a two-year, \$1.4 million contract in July, a massive sum for an AHL depth player.

xxx

Sabres winger Matt Moulson, who has only four goals and 11 points in 26 games, on his struggles: "Sometimes it's tough when you're not playing as confident. ... It makes things a lot easier when you're playing with a lot of confidence. I guess I just have to keep working. That's the only way I know to get yourself going."

Moulson was benched by Bylsma for a bit Tuesday.

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The Sabres practiced Saturday in Edmonton.

Sabres' offense explodes in win over Coyotes

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
December 5, 2015

BUFFALO – First, Sam Reinhart utilized his soft hands around the net Friday. Jamie McGinn followed with a wicked one-timer off a perfect feed from Jack Eichel. Evander Kane scored later on a short-handed breakaway.

Not only are the Sabres finally scoring goals these days, they're generating pretty ones, a sure sign the offense is humming for the first time all season.

The Sabres' third win in four games, an exciting 5-2 victory against the Arizona Coyotes inside the First Niagara Center, was their fourth consecutive game with four goals.

How rare is that kind of offensive output? The Sabres hadn't scored four times in four straight contests since they did it five times from Feb. 20 to March 2, 2007.

"It's finally coming around," McGinn said. "It was frustrating for a little bit. We stuck with it and we did the small things right, and we're getting in those hard-nosed areas and they're starting to go in for us. ...

"We can't change anything, because it can be taken away real quick."

Remember, the Sabres scored only seven times during their recent six-game losing streak.

"Throughout the year it's going to change," Reinhart said about the offense. "It seems like yesterday we were answering questions on if we're getting frustrated or not, so it's nice to have. Once we get a couple it comes in a wave."

What else has changed recently?

"I think we're getting on teams' defense and we're staying on the puck," said Kane, who also scored into an empty net late. "We're battling to create turnovers and I think there's an urgency and a hunger to put pucks away, especially these last couple games."

The No. 1 line of Kane, Reinhart and center Ryan O'Reilly has buoyed the offense.

To wit:

- Kane has four goals and six points in the last three games.
- Reinhart has three goals in the last three games.
- O'Reilly has one goal and five points in the last four games.

“Sam’s goal, showing some nice patience and hands down low, I think we’re finally starting to get some chemistry going and really starting to figure each other out,” Kane said. “We enjoy playing with one another so I think it’s working out well so far.”

But the Sabres received other contributions Friday. McGinn’s goal, which put the Sabres up 2-1 13:33 into the second period, was his second goal and fifth point in the last four games.

Marcus Foligno’s second goal this season made it 4-2 11:44 into the third period.

Naturally, winning can be even more fun when you’re scoring goals.

“The guys are a little happier in the room,” McGinn said. “There’s some smiles around. The confidence is high. We’re working hard in practice right now and scoring a lot of goals because we went through a struggle.”

The Sabres got going after a first period in which they generated little and fell behind 1-0 when Max Domi scored the first of his two goals.

“There wasn’t a lot of energy and a lot of jam in the first,” Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

Then Nick Deslauriers’ hit on Zbynek Michalek in the corner with 13:12 left in the second period changed the game, Bylsma said.

“They had a few people that were more concerned over (Deslauriers) than playing the game at the time,” Bylsma said.

The Coyotes nearly got back into it when Nicklas Grossman appeared to score 19 seconds after Foligno. But the Sabres challenged, alleging Martin Hanzal’s stick interfered with goalie Chad Johnson.

The officials agreed, and when the goal was overturned, the crowd of 18,204 fans erupted. The Sabres had three critical goals lost to reviews earlier this season.

“Probably overdue for this building,” Kane said. “So I’m sure the fans were just as happy as we were.”

Hall, Purcell Lead Oilers Past Sabres 4-2

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

December 7, 2015

Taylor Hall and Teddy Purcell each notched a goal and an assist in Edmonton's 4-2 victory over the Sabres on Sunday. Jack Eichel and Ryan O'Reilly picked up their 9th goals of the season in the loss. Chad Johnson managed 24 saves while Anders Nilsson stopped 32 shots for the Oilers, including 16 saves in the 3rd period.

Scoring

- Jack Eichel started the scoring nearly seven minutes into the game, taking a backhand feed from Brian Gionta and flipping his own backhand past Anders Nilsson for the 1-0 lead.
- Edmonton notched the final 3 goals of the opening period including a tip-in by Purcell, Jordan Eberle alone in front and Hall's 11th of the season, a power play goal at 18:55 of the 1st.
- Ryan O'Reilly got Buffalo back within a goal 13:22 into the 2nd. O'Reilly cashed in on the Sabres' third power play attempt of the evening.
- Edmonton made it 4-2 just 4:21 later on a heavily-reviewed goal by Luke Gazdic. The goal was initially reviewed by Toronto to see if Gazdic kicked the puck into the net. Once the play was upheld, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma used a coach's challenge for goaltender interference, but the goal was once again allowed to stand.

Game Notes

- The crowd at Rexall Place gave Eichel a round of boos following his opening goal.
- Jamie McGinn assisted on Eichel's goal, extending his point streak to 5 games (2 G, 4 A)
- O'Reilly has racked up 6 points in his last 6 games (2 G, 4 A).
- With their goals on Sunday, Eichel and O'Reilly remain tied for the team lead with 9 each.
- Eichel nearly tied the game moments after O'Reilly's power play goal, but fired a shot off the post. With Buffalo down by two, Rasmus Ristolainen also cranked one off the post in the 3rd.
- Zemgus Girgensons exited the game in the 3rd period after taking a puck to the face.
- Buffalo's offensive output snapped the team's four-game streak of four goals or more.

What's Next

The Western Canadian swing continues on Monday with a late-night visit to Vancouver. The Sabres and Canucks will face off at 10 p.m. ET on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

6:58 - BUF - Jack Eichel (9) (Brian Gionta, Jamie McGinn)

9:36 - EDM - Teddy Purcell (5) (Taylor Hall, Leon Draisaitl)

16:05 - EDM - Jordan Eberle (5) (Ryan Nugent-Hopkins)

18:55 - EDM - Taylor Hall (11) (PPG) (Teddy Purcell, Justin Schultz)

Penalties

12:03 - EDM - Matt Hendricks (2 min., roughing)

12:03 - BUF - Zemgus Girgensons (2 min., roughing)

18:39 - BUF - Josh Gorges (2 min., interference)

2nd Period

Goals

13:22 - BUF - Ryan O'Reilly (9) (PPG) (Zach Bogosian, Carlo Colaiacovo)

17:43 - EDM - Luke Gazdic (1) (Oscar Klefbom, Anton Lander)

Penalties

2:20 - EDM - Ryan Nugent-Hopkins (2 min., high sticking)

7:37 - EDM - Brandon Davidson (2 min., tripping)

11:30 - EDM - Eric Gryba (2 min., interference)

3rd Period

Goals

None

Penalties

5:07 - EDM - Taylor Hall (2 min., boarding)

11:45 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., unsportsmanlike conduct)

11:45 - EDM - Taylor Hall (2 min., unsportsmanlike conduct)

Goaltending

BUF - Chad Johnson (24 saves, 28 shots)

EDM - Anders Nilsson (32 saves, 34 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 1 of 4

EDM - 1 of 1

Three Stars

1.) EDM - Anders Nilsson (32 saves)

2.) EDM - Taylor Hall (1 G, 1 A)

3.) EDM - Teddy Purcell (1 G, 1 A)

Sabres fall behind early in loss to Oilers

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

December 7, 2015

EDMONTON - Playing in his one and only game at Rexall Place, Jack Eichel added a goal in the Edmonton Oilers' storied building to his resume on Sunday. The problem for the Buffalo Sabres was what followed.

Edmonton answered Eichel's marker with three goals in the first period and the Sabres never fully recovered, skating to a 4-2 loss in their last game in the building that the Oilers have called home since 1974. Edmonton will call the state-of-the-art Rogers Place home starting next season.

"We just turned too many pucks over," Eichel said. "It just comes down to making plays and we didn't make them. Forwards weren't supporting the D well enough; we missed a lot of passes that we should make so [there were] just a lot of lapses."

Ryan O'Reilly also tallied for the Sabres, backhanding a power-play goal to cut the deficit to 3-2 with 7:38 remaining in the second period. Edmonton answered before period's end, however, and the Sabres were unable to score again.

Buffalo outshot Edmonton 34-28 in the loss, which snapped a four-game point streak. Chad Johnson made 24 saves in net for the Sabres.

In the end, Buffalo's early mistakes with the puck allowed Edmonton's young players to beat them multiple times with their speed and offensive skill.

"We didn't start the way we wanted to," O'Reilly said. "There were way too many turnovers. That was the reason why we lost that one and we have to be better, especially on the road."

EICHEL SCORES EARLY

Eichel opened the scoring for Buffalo 6:58 into the first period, scoring his ninth goal on a backhand shot from the outskirts of the right circle.

The goal was a product of good passing between the rookie and his linemates. Eichel won a battle along the right wing boards and fed Jamie McGinn in the corner. McGinn pushed the puck to Brian Gionta in the right circle, who tapped it back to Eichel to set up the score.

"I cycled it down to [McGinn], he makes a good play to [Gionta] and I just tried to get to the net and put something on there," Eichel said. "It's good scoring goals in the offensive zone off of cycles and things like that, it's something I think I need to work on still but it's nice to see it paying off."

McGinn's assist on the play marked his fifth-straight game with a point (2G+4A), tying a career high.

THREE UNANSWERED FOR EDMONTON

Eichel's goal was a lone bright spot in a first period that quickly turned in Edmonton's favor. Teddy Purcell tipped a turn-around shot from the blue line by Taylor Hall to tie the game for the Oilers less than three minutes later and the Oilers added two more before the horn to jump out to a 3-1 lead.

Jordan Eberle was fed by Ryan Nugent Hopkins from behind the net and beat Johnson with a wrist shot from point-blank range with 3:55 remaining in the period. Josh Gorges was called for interference shortly after, and it took Edmonton just 16 seconds to score with the extra man as Hall cleaned up a loose puck in front of the net.

"I think pretty much for the first 30 minutes of the game, Edmonton did a great job of putting every puck behind us, putting a lot of pressure on us with their speed," Bylsma said. "Every puck for the first 30 minutes was behind our defensemen and they got in with speed, got in with the forecheck and forced us in a lot of areas."

MAYDAY'S MOMENT OF THE GAME

"My moment was the lackluster play by the Sabres after they had finally taken a first-period lead. Poor defensive zone coverage led to the Oilers' second goal and the late power-play goal by Edmonton came from not enough resistance defensively. The Sabres could have easily escaped the first even at one."

- Brad May, Sabres Studio Analyst

BAD NIGHT FOR THE POWER PLAY

O'Reilly scored on the power play in the second period, but the Sabres struggled otherwise with the man advantage. Buffalo was unable to convert on two attempts prior to O'Reilly's goal and then squandered a chance to tie the game on a power play early in the third.

The Oilers, meanwhile, took advantage of turnovers to create multiple 2-on-1 rushes while they were shorthanded.

"It wasn't a good night for us on the [power play]," O'Reilly said. "I don't know if we were just lazy or not wanting to put in the work. We have to go out there and use the opportunities, at least just outwork them and get our opportunities, but it was frustrating and we have to be better."

CHECK IT AGAIN

Edmonton regained a two-goal edge late in the second period. The puck emerged from a net-front scrum and Luke Gazdic rushed in to score on an open cage.

It took multiple reviews to confirm the goal. First, the referees checked to see if the goal had been scored with a kicking motion; once they determined that it wasn't, they went back to the video after Bylsma challenged for goaltender interference.

"They had a guy poking at [Johnson] from the side of the net three or four times," Bylsma said. "At that point in time, with 22 minutes left in the game, we didn't feel great about the challenge but we wanted to take a stab at it."

ZEMGUS LEAVES EARLY

Sabres forward Zemgus Girgensons left the game in the third period after being hit in the face by the puck. He did not return and was still nursing the injury afterward.

"He's getting stitched up," Bylsma said. "I don't want to say he's fine because he's got a pretty nasty looking cut on his face."

BACK AT IT TOMORROW

The Sabres continue their tour of Western Canada with a game against the Vancouver Canucks Monday night at Rogers Arena. With the loss on Sunday, Buffalo fell to 1-3-0 in first games of back-to-back sets. They are 2-1-0 in second games so far this season.

Pregame coverage begins at 9:30 p.m. with Tops Sabres Gamenight on MSG-B. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550 with puck drop set for 10 p.m.;