



Buffalo Sabres

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Red Wings-Sabres Preview

By Jeff Mezydlo

AP

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One of the rare occasions over the last three-plus weeks that the Detroit Red Wings didn't have trouble scoring came against the Buffalo Sabres.

That's usually the case when these teams meet, and the Red Wings will try to break out of their latest offensive funk Friday night in western New York.

Among the Eastern Conference's lowest-scoring teams at 2.41 goals per game, Detroit (23-15-8) has totaled 20 in its last 11. The Red Wings, though, are 5-5-1 in that span partly because they've yielded 11 non-shootout goals over the last seven contests.

"You can't feel sorry for yourself," said veteran forward Brad Richards, who has gone six games without a point. "It's hard to score in this league right now ... you keep plugging and believe it will go our way and stay our way if we keep doing the right things."

Detroit is coming off consecutive 2-1 home losses - to Philadelphia in a shootout Sunday and three days later to St. Louis - but first-year Detroit coach Jeff Blashill felt his team made strides by recording 30 shots in each. It hadn't done that in the previous six games.

"We don't have to make vast changes to the way we play," Blashill said. "You have to take the emotion out of it - it is frustrating when you don't score, but our processes are fine."

His club has scored more than two goals twice in the last 11 games, highlighted by a 4-3 win at Buffalo on Jan. 2 which made the Red Wings 6-0-1 in its last seven visits.

Detroit has scored nine regulation goals while going 2-1-0 against the Sabres this season. The Red Wings have averaged 3.6 goals while winning 28 times in the past 34 meetings, earning at least one point in all but three.

Tomas Tatar has seven goals and two assists in the last seven games against Buffalo (19-24-4), but it's uncertain if he'll be available after being scratched Wednesday because of the flu. Detroit also announced veteran defenseman Niklas Kronwall, a key figure on the power play, could miss up to a month after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery.

The Sabres fell 2-1 at Colorado on Wednesday, their second defeat in six games since losing a season-high six in a row. Buffalo has scored 23 times in that 12-game span - nine on the power play - and rank near the bottom of the league with an average of 2.28 goals.

Evander Kane scored with the man advantage, but the Avalanche rallied for two goals in the third period.

"We have to win those games," Kane told the Sabres' official website. "Those are big points we just lost. That's unfortunate but now we have to look ahead and look forward to Detroit."

Kane has five points during the current 4-2-0 stretch after having none during the six-game skid. He scored twice in a 5-4 shootout loss at Detroit on Dec. 1, but hasn't recorded a point in the two meetings since.

Buffalo has killed all 15 penalties in the last five contests but has let Detroit go 9 for 20 on the power play in the past six meetings.

Detroit's Petr Mrazek has made three straight starts and owns a 1.15 goals-against average in his last six. He's posted a 2.96 GAA while starting all three against the Sabres this season.

Sabres' power jolt fails to yield rewards

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 22, 2016

The postgame interviews were understandably filled with disappointment. The Buffalo Sabres felt they should have done just a bit more to leave Colorado with two points, or at least get to overtime to salvage one point.

A shot that bounced off Sabres defenseman Mark Pysyk and past goalie Robin Lehner with just 32 seconds left in regulation left the Sabres glum with a 2-1 loss to the Avalanche on Wednesday night.

But the team returns to Buffalo to host the Detroit Red Wings on Friday (7 p.m., First Niagara Center) with a solid special teams foundation.

The Sabres have power-play goals in three straight games and seven of their last 10. The penalty killing unit is on an 18-for-19 run.

The Sabres did not practice on Thursday, arriving back in Buffalo in the early morning after dropping the heartbreaker to the Avs.

The scoring started with another power-play tally for the Sabres – their fourth in their last three games. It was Evander Kane who struck in the second period to give the Sabres the 1-0 lead but the highlight was the work of the five-man unit. Jamie McGinn passed to Rasmus Ristolainen at the point. Ristolainen moved the puck to Ryan O'Reilly, who hit Jack Eichel with a quick pass in the slot. Eichel passed to Kane, who had a quick wrist shot for the goal.

On Thursday morning, Buffalo's power play ranked seventh in the NHL, clicking at 20.8 percent.

"We're getting good zone time," Kane said. "We're getting lots of opportunities and even when we don't score on the power play it seems that we're generating quite a bit. The power play has been for us as of late and that's going to be a key moving forward here."

The penalty kill has been a key for the Sabres as well, although potential momentum gained from killing off a four-minute high sticking call against Kane in the third against the Avs turned disastrous instead.

The Sabres killed off the double minor, holding Colorado to just four shots over those four minutes.

Good stuff. Until 32 seconds after the penalty expired when Alex Tanguay scored to tie the game, 1-1.

"I thought we were going to steal the momentum of the game with the kill," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "We killed off the four minutes. It was a crucial part of the game and we hadn't recovered yet. We still hadn't recovered. Guy came back on the ice, he went down low, we still hadn't gotten those guys off the ice from the kill and they took advantage."

"Tough getting that four-minute penalty kill," O'Reilly said. "It was tough to come back from that. We kill it off, we're exhausted and then they score. It's just tough to get that momentum back. We did a good job of getting the kill and trying to save gas to hold them off, but four minutes is never easy."

Since the Sabres were off on Thursday there was no update on Sam Reinhart, who left the game with an upper body injury. Bylsma had said Reinhart would be evaluated in Buffalo and had no indication of how much time, if any, the rookie forward may miss.

The Detroit Red Wings, meanwhile, come to town on a two-game losing streak with an offense that's having trouble scoring. The Red Wings have scored just once in their past two games. But their 2-1 loss to St. Louis in Detroit on Wednesday featured a power-play goal, a 3-for-3 effort on the penalty kill and 30 shots on goal.

"We've got to keep playing the way we played tonight," Detroit coach Jeff Blashill said after Wednesday's loss. "We've got to keep defending well and we've got to find a way to score a little more. We had 30 shots against a real good team. I try to take emotion out of it as best as you can. Everyone is frustrated. You want to score. You want to win. I thought there was lots of our process that was good."

The Red Wings will be without Brad Richards, who went home for two days to attend his grandfather's funeral.

Murray has a decision to make on McGinn

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 22, 2016

DENVER – Jamie McGinn sees the guys in the Sabres' dressing room building something special. His teammates say he's an important part of it. That's why Tim Murray has a crucial message to send during the next five weeks.

Will Murray let McGinn remain in Buffalo and be part of the vital lessons being learned by a budding team, or will the general manager ship out the pending unrestricted free agent for an asset who won't feel the pride of taking the rebuild's first steps?

McGinn's agent, Thane Campbell, said by phone Wednesday he has not had any contract talks with Murray.

"I try not to think about that," said McGinn, who played his first game against Colorado since being dealt to the Sabres. "I'm happy where I am. I'm happy with the logo I'm wearing right now. That's all that matters.

"I want to win. We're starting to do that here, which is good, and I want to be a part of that. As long as I'm having fun out there and just worrying about hockey, all the other stuff will take care of itself."

The pending decision on McGinn comes at an important point in the organization's development. It's why alternate captain Josh Gorges readily weighed in on the desire to keep McGinn.

"As an organization we're trying to build on something and build toward something great this year and next year and the years to come," Gorges said in Denver. "When you can hold a group together, a core group of guys that first and foremost are good guys, guys that want to get better and want to grow and want to be part of something great, if you can keep those guys together, it makes it easier building and growing and making that transition to the next step.

"When guys are coming in and out and interchangeable, sometimes it's a little more difficult to grow as a group. Obviously, as a guy and a teammate we love having him here. He's a big part of it."

McGinn has been a pleasant surprise during his first season with the Sabres. Overshadowed by Ryan O'Reilly in the deal with Colorado, McGinn entered Wednesday's game fourth on the team in scoring with 10 goals and 21 points in 46 games. The 27-year-old has four power-play goals, two game-winners and is third on the team with 95 hits.

"When you look at the makeup of a team – any team, good teams – you need to have those guys that do the little things, stuff that sometimes goes unnoticed," Gorges said. "Here's a guy who's a perfect example. Our power play scores a lot of goals because he's right in front of the net. Those goals don't go in if he's not there. His play on the boards, winning battles so that his linemates get extra space and things like that, a lot of times those plays go unnoticed by the majority of the people. But from within the group we recognize how important he is to our team's success."

The Sabres had won four of five heading into the Colorado matchup, increasing the camaraderie that has been evident since training camp.

"We have a great group of guys," McGinn said. "We're learning on the fly. We're learning how to win hockey games right now.

"We're all trying to lead and we're all trying to help each other out. We know we have a young team in here, so we have to have support of each other and be there and help each other out, and that's how we're going to grow

and we're going to grow faster. We have the skill in here. It's just about doing it together, and we're starting to do that.

"It's good to see the wins come, and we feel good. Hopefully, we keep going."

McGinn's play will place him among the more intriguing forwards at next month's trade deadline. The UFA group is top-heavy with Steven Stamkos and Eric Staal, but McGinn could easily fall into the next tier. Murray could certainly get something of value for him, then attempt to re-sign him in the summer if desired.

But the Sabres already are scheduled to make 11 picks at this year's NHL Draft. Would Murray prefer another second- or third-rounder to extending McGinn's contract and showing the players that key building blocks will be kept?

"He loves Buffalo," said Campbell, McGinn's agent. "He loves the city. He really likes the teammates. He really feels comfortable there. He feels the coaches have respect for his game, and he feels that it's a good fit for him."

Sabres notebook: Adams becomes Jr. Sabres president

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

January 22, 2016

The Buffalo Jr. Sabres continued to build its status as an elite youth hockey organization with a series of recent announcements.

The organization will partner with the Academy of Hockey with director Kevyn Adams being named the President of the Buffalo Jr. Sabres. Adams will be in charge of daily operations. Larry Playfair will continue to serve as chairman of the board of directors for the Jr. Sabres.

Playfair will also continue his role as president and governor of the 20-and-under team in the Junior A Ontario Junior Hockey League. Michael Peca will serve as alternate governor. John Tucker, the current head coach for the team, was named general manager and Charlie Mendola assistant general manager.

Additionally, the organization will expand to the squirt level with teams in the 9U and 10U age groups for the 2016-17 season.

The partnership with the Academy of Hockey will allow each Jr. Sabres team to increase its average ice schedule to three weekday practices, including skill development sessions along with weekend games. Teams will also work more closely with the staff at IMPACT Sports Performance to enhance off-ice training.

"I am very excited to extend the Academy of Hockey philosophy to the Jr. Sabres organization," Adams said in a press release from the organization. "Our goal is to accelerate the development of these young players, helping them to reach their highest potential. ... A structured curriculum and focused development progression are keys to long-term success and our staff looks forward to the opportunity to work with these players on a consistent basis."

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The Sabres are holding a game-worn jersey auction on auction.NHL.com through 9 p.m. on Jan. 27. Jerseys available include the first set of game-worn road jerseys for the 2015-16 season. Included in the set is Jack Eichel's first NHL road jersey with patch included on the jersey to commemorate his first NHL road game.

Proceeds benefit the Buffalo Sabres Foundation.

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The 12th annual Sabres Alumni Wine Festival will be held from 6 to 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 10 at First Niagara Center. The Buffalo Sabres Alumni Association event features wineries and restaurants from Buffalo and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Fans can sample wine and food from Western New York and Southern Ontario while socializing with Sabres alumni and their wives. The event includes music, auctions and raffles with proceeds going to breast cancer care in Western New York.

Tickets are \$75 with complimentary parking in the ramp adjacent to the arena and are available at Sabres.com/winefest, the First Niagara Center Box Office or by calling Nick Fearby at 855-4453.

Attendees are asked to dress in business attire.

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Mike Weber, Mark Pysyk and Robin Lehner, along with Sabres alumnus Marty Biron, will participate in the Bald for Bucks program to raise money for Roswell Park Cancer Institute. The four will shave their heads on Saturday, Feb. 20 at First Niagara Center. The event is open to the public.

Fans who donate \$25 or more will receive an exclusive Buffalo Sabre Bald for Bucks t-shirt. To donate and for more information visit sabres.com/baldforbucks.

Red Wings will be without Richards against Sabres

By Michael LoRe

NHL.com

January 22, 2016

RED WINGS (23-15-8) at SABRES (19-24-4)

TV: FS-D, MSG-B, BELL TV

Season series: The Detroit Red Wings have won two of three games against the Buffalo Sabres. Brad Richards scored the only goal in the shootout in a 5-4 win Dec. 1, 2015 and Tomas Tatar scored with 2:50 left in the third period in a 4-3 win on Jan. 2. Ryan O'Reilly and Johan Larsson scored 1:01 apart in the third period to help Buffalo to a 2-1 win Dec. 14. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has five assists for the Sabres. Forwards Justin Abdelkader, Tatar and Richards have three goals apiece for the Red Wings.

Red Wings team scope: Richards won't play because he will be attending his grandfather's funeral. "Unfortunate, for sure," coach Jeff Blashill told the team website. "Those are things that unfortunately you have to go through in life. So it's good he's going to get a chance to be with his family." Richards is expected to be back against the Anaheim Ducks on Saturday at Joe Louis Arena. Brendan Smith didn't practice Thursday because of a maintenance day, but Blashill expects the defenseman to play Friday. "It's that time of the year they get bumps and bruises," Blashill said. "He needed a day to rest." Tatar, who was a late scratch Wednesday because of illness, practiced Thursday and is likely to play against the Sabres. Petr Mrazek will start in goal.

Sabres team scope: Buffalo was off Thursday after losing 2-1 at the Colorado Avalanche on Wednesday. Right wing Sam Reinhart sustained an upper-body injury in the second period of the loss at Colorado when he collided with Avalanche forward John Mitchell; he did not return. Defenseman Josh Gorges, who missed two games with an upper-body injury, returned against Colorado and skated with Mark Pysyk; Jake McCabe and Carlo Colaiacovo were scratched. "It pushes you to be better and be ready to compete and play knowing that we have guys that can come in and do the job," Gorges told the Buffalo News. "If you're not willing to go out there and do what's asked of you, there's guys that can come in and do it and take your job."

Sabres could be active again before trade deadline

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 22, 2016

BUFFALO – Don't let four impressive wins in the last six games fool you. The Sabres still rank last in the Atlantic Division and 29th in the 30-team NHL.

Yes, they've improved greatly this season. Still, they're 11 points out of the Eastern Conference's last wild card spot entering tonight's home tilt against the Detroit Red Wings inside the First Niagara Center.

The Sabres are going to miss the playoffs for the fifth straight year, meaning they'll almost certainly be sellers before the Feb. 29 trade deadline. General manager Tim Murray told ESPN's Pierre LeBrun last week he plans to take the same approach as the last two seasons, when the Sabres finished dead last.

"I do stress that we think we've improved greatly everywhere but in the standings," Murray said. "This is the process. If I can acquire younger assets or future assets for some of our veterans, especially veterans on expiring contracts, I'm going to pursue that for sure."

So what might the Sabres do? As Murray said, some of his five upcoming unrestricted free agents will probably be dealt. But given Murray's history, anything short of trading centers Jack Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly or defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen might be on the table.

Barely two years into his tenure, Murray has demonstrated a willingness to pull off blockbuster trades at any moment. His eight-piece deal with Winnipeg that netted the Sabres winger Evander Kane last season took place Feb. 11.

The big deals greatly depleted the Sabres' large pool of coveted young assets. Between the Kane trade and the O'Reilly deal with Colorado on June 26, they dealt five prospects under 22 they had drafted in the first or second round.

Murray's resources are limited this year.

The market is already active. Here's a quick look at who the Sabres could deal in the coming weeks.

Winger Tyler Ennis: The diminutive speedster has been a huge disappointment in the second season of a five-year, \$23 million contract, scoring only three goals and 11 points in 23 appearances. Twenty-five goals or so seemed like a given since he scored 20 the last two years on terrible teams.

Ennis, 26, has struggled under new coach Dan Bylsma's rigid system. He's also battled injuries. Right now, he's sidelined with an upper-body injury and hasn't played since Dec. 30.

At some point, the Sabres will have to clear some salary to pay for some of their young players heading toward restricted free agency. Ennis could be a prime candidate.

Winger Jamie McGinn (upcoming UFA): If the Sabres are serious about winning, they would be wise to try to re-sign McGinn, 27, an afterthought in the O'Reilly deal and perhaps the Sabres' biggest surprise. The team needs wingers badly, and his 10 goals are tied with Kane for fourth on the low-scoring club.

McGinn might net at least a second-round pick. But why deal a versatile presence in his prime? McGinn has also showcased some strong chemistry with Eichel and O'Reilly, his close friend.

Goalie Chad Johnson (upcoming UFA): Goaltending is the Sabres' greatest strength. Johnson, 29, has been strong almost all season. He's 9-6-2 with a 1.98 goals-against average and a .936 save percentage in 18 games since the beginning of November.

But the crease might be too crowded for Johnson to stick around. Starter Robin Lehner just returned from a high ankle sprain. In his absence, rookie Linus Ullmark played well, showcasing qualities of a future No. 1. The Swede's in Rochester right now, but he might be ready for permanent NHL duty.

Johnson probably wants a two-year contract and has played well enough to earn one. It's very possible a contender will want him.

Defenseman Mike Weber (upcoming UFA): Veteran depth defenders usually have strong value, especially down the stretch. The gritty Weber, who just endured two brutal seasons, has rebounded nicely this year, performing like a solid No. 6. Weber, 28, could be worth a low draft pick.

The Sabres also have defenseman Carlo Colaiacovo, a healthy scratch 18 of the last 19 games. Colaiacovo, 32, has performed well enough this season he might generate some interest.

The Sabres' other upcoming UFA, graying fourth-line forward David Legwand, 35, earns \$3 million and would probably be wanted more for his mentoring skills than his on-ice exploits.

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The Sabres had Thursday off after losing 2-1 in Colorado on Wednesday, so there's no new update on winger Sam Reinhart, who left in the third period after suffering an upper-body injury when he collided with John Mitchell. Bylsma said following the game Reinhart would be evaluated further.

O'Reilly: Traveling with Mom

By Ryan O'Reilly

Sabres.com

January 22, 2016

Sabres alternate captain Ryan O'Reilly shares his thoughts with Sabres.com while having his mom around for the annual Parents Trip. This year, the parents experienced life on the road in Phoenix and Denver.

I got to do a parents trip with my father when I played here in Colorado, but my mom was bummed because she never got the chance to. It's been nice to finally be able to bring her on one because our parents always just hear about the travel. They never get to experience it.

Admittedly, these aren't necessarily places she hasn't seen before. I played for six years in Colorado and my brother played in Phoenix for a bit too, so she's seen both arenas and cities. But just to come on the trip and travel and see what it's like, she's enjoyed that very much. She definitely thinks we've got the life. She's quite jealous.

It's nice that she gets to experience the nice hotels, the meals that we set up and just traveling the way we do. It's definitely something we sometimes take for granted – how lucky we are to have this kind of set up. But my mom's enjoyed it. She loves talking hockey with all the parents and getting to meet everyone. She said it's been outstanding and the people in the organization have just been great.

In particular, she couldn't believe how down to earth Mrs. Pegula was, just so kind and generous. She talks to every single person and knows something about every single person. With the amount of people that she meets on a daily basis and the things that she's involved in, for her to be like that shows that she's just an amazing person and my mom was so impressed with that.

Most of all, it's awesome to give back to our parents knowing how much they've given to us. I remember long road trips of them driving late, staying up late just to get me to these games. To see now these buildings and the way we travel and what it's like, my mom sometime has to pinch herself. She can't believe it. But it's definitely an amazing feeling.