



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Flyers Preview

By Jeff Bartl

AP

February 11, 2016

Sean Couturier's injury put Philadelphia general manager Ron Hextall in an interesting position with the trade deadline approaching and a tight Eastern Conference wild-card race unfolding.

Adding another asset might become futile, though, if the Flyers don't start winning without their young center.

Philadelphia looks to avoid a fourth straight defeat Thursday night when it hosts a Buffalo Sabres team also suffering through a three-game skid and injury concerns of its own.

Couturier had an assist in last Thursday's win over Nashville to give him 10 along with six goals in his last 16 games, but he suffered an ankle injury in that contest that is expected to keep him out at least three more weeks.

The Flyers (23-20-9) are 0-2-1 since the 23-year-old went down following Tuesday's 4-1 loss to Anaheim and are 2-8-2 without Couturier on the season. They'll have to jump five teams to get into playoff position in the East, but it's still a close race with plenty of time remaining.

Hextall could choose to replace Couturier before the Feb. 29 trade deadline, which is shortly before Couturier is expected to return. For now, he's hoping the current players can show they can overcome Couturier's absence.

"He's a big part of our team, we all knew that," Hextall said. "Would we like him back tomorrow? Yeah. It would be terrific. But it's not going to happen, so we're going to go with what we've got. And we need to find ways to win games."

It hasn't helped that the Flyers have been on the ice plenty since returning from the All-Star break. This will be their sixth game in 10 days, and they won't have more than two days off until March 8-10.

"This time of year, it's a busy schedule, so I don't know how many people have the luxury of being 100 percent healthy or feeling physically 100 percent energized," said rookie defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, who has two goals and 10 assists during a nine-game point streak. "Everybody's got to get themselves ready and prepared and go out and do the job."

The Sabres (21-27-6) also are having health issues. Forward Zemgus Girgensons suffered an upper-body injury in Saturday's overtime defeat at Boston and sat out Tuesday's 7-4 loss to Florida, then was placed on injured reserve Wednesday.

Winger Johan Larsson also sat out against the Panthers after suffering an undisclosed injury in the morning skate. He didn't practice Wednesday and his status for this contest is unclear as Buffalo looks to win a third straight meeting with the Flyers this season.

Girgensons scored in overtime to give the Sabres a 4-3 win Oct. 27 before Ryan O'Reilly had a goal and two assists in a 3-1 win Oct. 30. O'Reilly, though, has gone 13 straight without a goal despite having 10 assists in that span.

He assisted on both of Sam Reinhart's power-play goals against Florida.

"I thought Ryan actually was a guy who stood out (Tuesday) in how he played," coach Dan Bylsma said. "He's squeezing a little bit when it comes to shooting the puck and scoring goals for us right now, but I think that's a frustration we all share."

It's unclear if Robin Lehner or Chad Johnson will get the start in net after Johnson relieved Lehner on Tuesday.

Steve Mason is 2-2-1 with a 2.59 goals-against average starting each game for the Flyers since former Sabres goalie Michal Neuvirth suffered a lower-body injury. Coach Dave Hakstol said he hasn't ruled out giving Anthony Stolarz his first NHL start in this contest.

Sabres show heart in defeat

By Mike Harrington
Buffalo News
February 11, 2016

When any team – especially one filled with young players – endures a loss as grievous as what the Buffalo Sabres suffered Saturday in Boston, you have to wonder what kind of carryover effect it might have.

The gift-wrapped penalty shot goal Brad Marchand scored in overtime was a stunner to the Sabres and had to be tough to shake as they returned to practice Monday.

“I had some concern,” coach Dan Bylsma admitted after Wednesday’s workout in HarborCenter. “Maybe felt it the last two days at practice and going into the game.”

The scenario was certainly borne out Tuesday against Florida. The Sabres were down, 3-0, after the first period and fell into a 4-0 hole in the first minute of the second. First Niagara Center fans, content to watch individual development and not fret over scoreboard or standings most of the time this year, unleashed their loudest torrent of boos all season.

The game finished as a 7-4 loss but it was far from the disaster it could have been. Evander Kane finally energized the crowd with three spirited beatdowns of Panthers defenseman Alex Petrovic and the Sabres twice missed goal-mouth chances that could have cut their deficit to a goal.

For a team struggling to stay out of the NHL basement for a third straight year, there’s still plenty of resilience. The hope is that more of that comes out Thursday night in Philadelphia against the Flyers.

“We’re down 4-0 and we battled,” said captain Brian Gionta. “We never gave up in that game, so that’s a huge sign to me. We battled back, got within two, had a couple more chances, had some momentum going. It’s 4-2 and that fifth goal for them was tough. But in light of how things started, we kept going and that’s good to see.”

The Sabres got back in the game by drawing penalties and getting back-to-back power-play goals from Sam Reinhart. He has pushed his season total to 16, and is now tied with Jack Eichel and one off Ryan O’Reilly’s team lead.

“We got the power plays but we fought hard for those power-play goals,” Bylsma said. “That was some of the highest battle and desperation we’ve had to claw back into that game. I know that about our team. There has never been a quit in our team. We were disappointed and know we played poorly at the start of that game. They’re also a team that’s shown they’re not going to stop competing, not going to quit.”

The Sabres have slipped into an 0-1-2 rut after two straight wins and Bylsma wants to arrest that slide right now. He’s quick to note his team is 6-5-2 in its last 13 after ending a six-game losing streak.

“I think we’ve played pretty hard and pretty well,” Bylsma said. “We’ve been pushing for points and pushing for wins. There was disappointment not only in Boston but at home against Boston losing in a shootout. I did feel some disappointment in our team and we were disappointed with how we played that game (against Florida). It’s not going to get any different. Playing Philadelphia in their building is something where we’re going to have to have a bounceback game.”

The Flyers have lost three straight, getting just two goals from their forwards in that stretch. They’re coming off Tuesday’s 4-1 loss to Anaheim. A win Thursday would give the Sabres their first season sweep against the Flyers since 2001-02; Buffalo won both meetings in October.

"It's another huge game and that's how we have to look at it. They're seven points ahead of us and it's a swing game," Gionta said. "You still have to look it from the standpoint of taking your opportunities to try to catch some teams."

Sabres notebook: Williamsville's Bailey joins big club

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

February 11, 2016

With injuries continuing to nip at the Buffalo Sabres' forward corps, Williamsville native Justin Bailey finally got the call to his hometown team Wednesday afternoon.

The 6-foot-3, 210-pound right winger earned his first NHL recall and is expected to make his NHL debut Thursday night in Philadelphia. Zengus Girgensons, who has missed three games with a lower-body injury, went on injured reserve to make room for Bailey.

Bailey, 20, has played 47 games in his first pro season at Rochester, ranking second among the Amerks in goals (10) and fourth in points (23). He is the team leader in shots on goal with 104. Bailey spent much of the last two months playing on a line with Cal O'Reilly but has blossomed in recent games on a line with Tim Schaller and William Carrier, the winger acquired from St. Louis in the 2014 trade for Ryan Miller and Steve Ott.

Bailey is coming off a huge weekend for the Amerks, with back-to-back multi-point games topped by a three-point outburst in Saturday's 4-0 win at Binghamton.

Bailey was a second-round pick of the Sabres in 2013. He had 76 goals and 148 points in 168 games over three seasons in the Ontario Hockey League with Kitchener and Sault Ste. Marie. He totaled 34 goals and 69 points last year, when he was traded from Kitchener to the Soo and helped the Greyhounds get to the conference finals before losing to Connor McDavid-led Erie in six games.

The recall of Bailey was announced a couple of hours after the Sabres completed a brief practice in HarborCenter that lasted about 35 minutes.

Assuming he makes his debut Thursday, Bailey would become the fourth Buffalo-area native to play for the Sabres and join a short list that includes current Rochester teammate Patrick Kaleta, Tim Kennedy and Scott Thomas. Former Nichols School star Peter Ciavaglia, who played five games for the Sabres in the early 1990s, was born in Albany.

Girgensons and Johan Larsson missed practice Wednesday, although it's possible that Larsson will play Thursday. Jack Eichel also was off the ice for what coach Dan Bylsma termed a maintenance day but the coach said Eichel, who was struck in the leg by a shot late in Tuesday's game against Florida, should be fine.

"That's part of it," Bylsma said when asked about the shot. "He's just got a couple bumps and bruises. The shot block he seems to be fine from."

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Defenseman Jake McCabe played wing in Tuesday's game and did a good job for a player who had not played the position since he was in youth hockey.

McCabe played 9:34, had three shots on goal, three hits and an even rating in a game where nine of his teammates were minus-2 or worse.

"It was nice to be on the forecheck and hit a defenseman, like I go back and get hit with their forecheckers," said a smiling McCabe. "It was different. I just wanted to provide energy out there and keep the game simple, skate around, bang bodies and that's what I tried to do.

"I liked the way he skated forward, forechecked a couple times, went out to the point and dumped a defenseman on his butt," Bylsma said. "He asked today what I wanted him to play and I said, 'You're a defenseman, Jake.' "

McCabe said he met assistant Dave Barr before the game to go over positioning up front and felt more comfortable as the game went along.

"It's definitely different when you have to go out there and really think about the systems and think about, "All right, where am I supposed to be, where am I supposed to go?," " McCabe said. "After a few shifts, I got more in a rhythm."

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The seven goals the Sabres gave up Tuesday to Florida equaled the season high for a Buffalo opponent and created some ugly plus-minus figures. Ryan O'Reilly, Rasmus Ristolainen and Jamie McGinn were all minus-4 while Sam Reinhart, Nic Deslauriers and Zach Bogosian were minus-3.

Ristolainen is minus-9 in his last seven games while O'Reilly is minus-14 in his last 12 and has dropped all the way to minus-19 for the season – fifth from the bottom in the entire NHL.

"They're guys I feel have been extremely good and we count on them to play good defense and be good on that side of the puck," Bylsma said. "You look up and see minus-3, minus-4 situations and psychologically, it's not a good feeling. It's kind of weighing on both Rasmus and Ryan a little bit the last eight games or so."

According to Hockey-Reference.com, Reinhart was the first Sabres player to post a minus-3 rating during a two-goal game in the regular season since Alexander Mogilny did it in a loss to Montreal at Memorial Auditorium on Feb. 26, 1993. Stu Barnes did it in a losing effort during Game Two of the 1999 Eastern Conference final at Toronto.

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Former Sabres goalie Michal Neuvirth took part in practice with the Flyers Wednesday for the first time since suffering a lower-body injury Feb. 1 but Steve Mason is likely to get his sixth straight start Thursday night in Philadelphia.

Neuvirth has not played since Jan. 27. He is 11-6-2 with a 2.14 goals-against average and .933 save percentage, both career highs. He entered play Wednesday tied for the NHL lead in save percentage with Detroit's Petr Mrazek and eighth in goals-against average.

Buffalo-born Bailey is Sabres bound

By Kevin Oklobzija
Rochester D&C
February 11, 2016

Justin Bailey phones home to the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville to talk to his mother on a regular basis; at least once a week, usually more.

A lot of times, the Rochester Americans rookie right winger will call shortly after practice. How's everything? How are grandma and grandpa? You're coming to the game this weekend, right?

They'll talk a little hockey, too, but they rarely get into the specifics of the game at the American Hockey League level.

This was pretty much the case last week, before the Amerks headed on the road to play the Syracuse Crunch and Binghamton Senators on the weekend.

"He said, 'I'm not calling for comfort, I'm not calling for hockey advice,' " his mother, Karen Buscaglia, said. "I said, 'OK, I never played hockey so I really can't tell you about that, but I can tell you how life works.'"

And so, as the Amerks came out of the AHL All-Star break, she proceeded to provide a little motherly advice: It's time to make a statement, time to make sure you're doing everything you can.

"I just said you have to separate yourself from the pack," Buscaglia said.

Bailey, 20, took the words to heart. On Friday, he scored a goal and assisted on another in a 5-4 victory at Syracuse. Then next night, he scored two goals and assisted one one in a 4-0 victory at Binghamton.

That kind of performance, coming on the heels of strong play heading into the All-Star break, will get you noticed. And more.

In need of a forward due to injuries to Zemgus Girgensons and Johan Larsson, the Buffalo Sabres recalled Bailey on Wednesday afternoon. He flew with the team to Philadelphia and could make his NHL debut against the Flyers on Thursday night.

If he's in the lineup, he'll be the fourth Buffalo-area native to play for the Sabres, joining a list that includes Scott Thomas, Tim Kennedy and Patrick Kaleta.

Bailey learned of his promotion after practice from Amerks coach Randy Cunneynworth. His mother found out when Justin phoned home a few minutes later.

"I'm kind of numb," she said. "I wasn't expecting this at all but I have faith in him and in God.

Buscaglia was at work at Stampede Presentation Products when the call came. Her co-workers, who by now are big fans of Bailey, soon knew what was happening.

"The whole office was like, 'Road trip!' " she said.

Buscaglia and her mother and father, Donna and Bob Tronolone, indeed plan to make the trip to Philly.

"I'm lucky having the kind of family I have," she said. "My dad, he's done all the road trips with me and all the practices. He has a great relationship with Justin."

The recall wasn't rushed by any means. A month ago, Bailey was in the conversation when the Sabres needed a forward, but they chose to go with more experienced players in Phil Varone and Cal O'Reilly. The same was true last week when Dan Catenacci was promoted.

In a perfect world, the Sabres won't fast-track their prospects to the NHL. The unofficial motto: Better to be overdone than underdone.

Bailey had shown flashes early, begin to find consistency in December and most recently has put together a fairly solid month of two-way play. Over his past eight games he has produced 5 goals, 6 assists and 11 points. For the season, he ranks fourth in the Amerks in scoring with 10 goals (only Varone, with 12, has more) and 13 assists.

"For quite a while I think he's been playing a good brand of hockey," Amerks coach Randy Cunneynworth said.

Bailey has an NHL shot (when he hits the net), NHL speed and NHL acceleration. He only needs a stride or three and he's at full speed. There's amazing power in his strides.

He's understanding responsibilities away from the puck, "the thinking part of the game," Cunneynworth said. He's also trying to play with more snarl.

"Last game he went to the front of the net and he took a little bit of a beating and he gave it back, which he wasn't always willing to do," Cunneynworth said.

"I'm excited for him. Whenever you see a guy like Catenacci or him get his opportunity, we're excited."

Not nearly as excited as his family, though.

Sabres' Girgensons, Larsson questionable

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

February 11, 2016

SABRES (21-27-6) at FLYERS (23-20-9)

TV: 7 p.m. ET; MSG-B, BELL TV, CSN-PH, NHL.TV

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres have defeated the Philadelphia Flyers twice this season. Zemgus Girgensons' overtime goal gave the Sabres a 4-3 win Oct. 27 at Wells Fargo Center. Ryan O'Reilly had a goal and two assists in a 3-1 win Oct. 30 at First Niagara Center.

Sabres team scope: Forwards Jack Eichel, Girgensons and Johan Larsson did not practice Wednesday, according to the Buffalo News. Coach Dan Bylsma said Eichel was given a maintenance day. He blocked a shot with his leg during a 7-4 loss to the Florida Panthers on Tuesday. "He's just got a couple bumps and bruises," Bylsma told the Buffalo News. "The shot block he seems to be fine from." Girgensons and Larsson are questionable, with Bylsma hoping at least one could play. Buffalo recalled forward Justin Bailey from Rochester of the American Hockey League on Wednesday and he could make his NHL debut Thursday. He has 10 goals and 23 points in 47 games, but had his best game of the season Saturday with two goals and an assist against Binghamton.

Flyers team scope: Goalie Steve Mason is expected to start his sixth straight game. It will be the most consecutive games he's played this season. "I don't see fatigue in him," Philadelphia coach Dave Hakstol told the Courier-Post. "No more than anybody else in this locker room. I think he's fine. I don't think there's any issues that anybody else in this room isn't dealing with. This time of year it's a busy schedule. I don't know how many people have the luxury of being 100-percent healthy, feeling physically 100-percent energized. This time of year everybody's got to be ready and prepared to do the job." Goalie Michal Neuvirth practiced for the first time since sustaining a lower-body injury Feb. 2. He had been skating on his own but won't be available Thursday. "Timing is off," Neuvirth said. "First practice with the team. I'm a little rusty and timing is off."

Evander Holyfield approves of Sabres' Evander Kane's fighting form

By Des Bieler
Washington Post
February 11, 2016

Buffalo Sabres forward Evander Kane did something unusual Tuesday night: He fought the same player, Florida Panthers defenseman Alex Petrovic, three times in the same game. According to Sportsnet Stats, that hadn't happened since 2002, when noted enforcers Bob Probert and Jody Shelley of the Chicago Blackhawks and the Columbus Blue Jackets pulled off the hat trick.

The 6-2, 204-pound Kane, who has 122 goals and 121 assists in 405 career games, isn't exactly a goon. He is known as a skilled fighter, though, and he was widely judged to have won all three scraps Tuesday (right, HockeyFights.com?) against the 6-4, 206-pound Petrovic.

Those performances were noted Wednesday by a man who knows a thing or two about duking it out over multiple rounds: Evander Holyfield. The former heavyweight champion tweeted out his approval of Kane's "right hand," which, in turn, was met with appreciation by the Sabre.



Evander Kane @evanderkane_9 · 3h

Appreciate the love Real Deal!

Evander Holyfield @holyfield

@evanderkane_9 Nice overhand right.

← ↻ 194 ❤️ 485 ⋮

Holyfield may have been referring to a devastating punch Kane threw in Fight No. 3. Oh, and yes, Kane was named after the boxing great (the pair met several years ago).

Florida's Alex Petrovic, left, gets into a fight for the third time in the game with Buffalo's Evander Kane. (AP Photo/Gary Wiepert)

Buffalo Sabres forward Evander Kane did something unusual Tuesday night: He fought the same player, Florida Panthers defenseman Alex Petrovic, three times in the same game. According to Sportsnet Stats, that hadn't happened since 2002, when noted enforcers Bob Probert and Jody Shelley of the Chicago Blackhawks and the Columbus Blue Jackets pulled off the hat trick.

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Sabres star Ryan O'Reilly frustrated by long slump

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 11, 2016

BUFFALO – As Ryan O'Reilly's struggles have increased recently, so have the frequency of his talks with Sabres coach Dan Bylsma, who has told his top center to take a deep breath and relax.

Just a few months ago, as O'Reilly, 25, enjoyed a scorching start, the two didn't need to chat much. But the Sabres' lone NHL All-Star is *extremely* hard on himself. After nearly every loss, he almost sounds inconsolable as he laments his miscues and lost opportunities.

So naturally, O'Reilly, who has a 13-game goal drought entering tonight's road tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers, hasn't handled his current slump well.

"Very frustrated," O'Reilly said Wednesday following practice inside HarborCenter. "I'm obviously not confident in shooting the puck right now. My five-on-five play is not where I'd like it to be, but I'm trying. I got to find new things, find new ways to have success."

O'Reilly, who hasn't scored since Jan. 8, leads the Sabres with 17 scores and 45 points. Still, he's a team-worst minus-19. He had two assists in Tuesday's 7-4 loss to the Florida Panthers, although he was a minus-4.

"He does take so much on personally and emotionally for our team and himself, and there's a huge amount of accountability he takes on his own shoulders," Bylsma said. "I have talked to him. He's the leader and (a top competitor) for our team. That's where his focus has got to be."

What else has Bylsma told O'Reilly?

"Kind of just try to get new ways to be successful and kind of enjoy the game a bit more, have that kind of shoot-the-puck (mentality)," O'Reilly said. "He's been telling me to shoot the puck a lot more. Obviously, you can't score if you don't shoot."

O'Reilly has become extremely tentative, registering only eight shots in the last nine contests. When he scored in three straight games in mid-November, he pumped 17 shots on net. In five of those recent games, he had zero, including Tuesday's ugly loss, the Sabres' third straight setback (0-1-2).

Bylsma, however, liked O'Reilly's effort against the Panthers, calling it "his highest compete and highest battle in a number of games."

"In the second and third period he was almost dominant in the offensive zone," he said. "He was going one-on-three and holding off guys. I think that's the best he's played in a while for us."

"He's squeezing it a little bit when it comes to shooting the puck and scoring goals right now. But I think it's a frustration we all share."

Of course, O'Reilly, who actually has a four-game point streak, took little solace in his outing.

"I think it doesn't matter if we lose," he said. "I did possess the puck a lot more, but still, I wasn't great defensively. Yeah, it's still nowhere near where I need to be."

While O'Reilly won't acknowledge it, fatigue has possibly crept into his game. The seven-year veteran plays in every situation, skating a whopping 21 minutes, 54 seconds a game, the NHL's highest total among forwards. Bylsma said last week he knows O'Reilly's probably tired.

"I prepare to play big minutes and go a long way," O'Reilly said. "I don't feel tired at all. I think just the frustration's there, which makes it everything a little more difficult. But besides that, I feel in great shape."

He added: "For how much ice I get, I need to be more effective. It's something that's in my hands. I can't look to anyone else to do that. It's something I think maybe did a bit better earlier on but I have to do way more now."

So what else has happened to O'Reilly? He was on pace for months to shatter his career high of 28 goals he set with the Colorado Avalanche in 2013-14, when he also had 64 points. Right now, he's on pace for 26 goals and 68 points, terrific numbers in this low-scoring era.

O'Reilly, whose hockey smarts are often lauded by Bylsma and his teammates, believes some of his early goal-scoring prowess could've simply been luck.

"I think I got a lot of good bounces early that seemed to go my way," he said.

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With two forwards injured Tuesday, the Sabres used defenseman Jake McCabe as a fourth-line winger. Bylsma joked the rookie looked too impressive up front.

"I told him that he did a poor job, because when you play that well, it makes you want to him again there," Bylsma said. "We talked before the game, D-men, they have to skate kind of in a fashion they're normally not used to. I thought Jake did a real good job of skating, forechecking."

McCabe said he hadn't played forward since he was a kid.

"It was different," he said. "I just wanted to provide energy out there, keep the game simple."

Sabres recall Williamsville's Justin Bailey

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 11, 2016

BUFFALO – The Sabres recalled rookie winger Justin Bailey, a Williamsville native who grew up rooting for the team, from the Rochester Americans this afternoon.

The 6-foot-4, 206-pound Bailey, 20, could make his NHL debut in Thursday's road game against the Philadelphia Flyers. Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said earlier today winger Zemgus Girgensons and center Johan Larsson, who both missed Tuesday's 7-4 loss to Florida, were questionable for the Flyers. Neither player practiced today.

Bailey, the 52nd overall pick in 2013, has been scorching for the Amerks, scoring four goals and six points in the last three games. Overall, he has 10 goals and 23 points in 47 games.

A year later: Sabres and Jets both benefited from Kane mega-trade

By Tim Campbell
Winnipeg Free Press
February 11, 2016

One day it was a troubling combination of a pit in your stomach and the headache, not the debilitating one, but the one that's barely there but never seems to go away.

Then the next day, one year ago today, it was all gone, replaced by promise on so many fronts.

This was the bottom line for the Winnipeg Jets and GM Kevin Cheveldayoff, who sent intractable winger Evander Kane, defenceman Zach Bogosian and prospect goalie Jason Kasdorf to the Buffalo Sabres for winger Drew Stafford, defenceman Tyler Myers, prospects Joel Armia, Brendan Lemieux and a first-round draft pick that became Miami (Ohio) centre Jack Roslovic.

Transaction day was the end of a 10-day period of acute turmoil with the Jets, the need for some kind of deal brought to a head by the events of Feb. 3, 2015 in Vancouver.

There, Kane was a healthy scratch in his hometown, by many reports rebuffed by his teammates for flouting team rules yet again.

By the end of the week, the power forward was calling an end to his season and opting for shoulder surgery while all kinds of claims were being aired — that he was pulling the plug on his team; that he was seriously injured and had been playing hurt for a long time; that he had asked to be traded; that he had not.

In the end, the truth surfaced on all of it, admissions made easier by the fact Cheveldayoff was able to find a willing trade partner in Buffalo's Tim Murray, whose needs aligned with his.

The Sabres saw upside in the immensely talented Kane, who already had a 30-goal season on his resumé, but were happy to be without him for the rest of the season due to the surgery. That allowed them to get worse in the short term, important given Buffalo's already low standing and the urgent need to land one of the year's two generational draft picks.

Their prize in that respect was Jack Eichel, and the deal also brought them Bogosian, a skate-like-the-wind workhorse of a defenceman with a great attitude and a team outlook.

He, too, was to be grateful for a fresh start elsewhere.

Kasdorf, one surmises, was a college goalie the Sabres liked, and he was added to the mix for a final balance.

Fresh start was a common theme with this blockbuster trade.

Stafford, then 29, was seen to have gone stale in step with the Sabres, who had missed the playoffs three years running.

His 31 goals of 2010-11 had become 16 in 2013-14, and last year's pace was again that prior to the trade.

Myers, the 2010 Calder Trophy winner as the NHL's best rookie, had becoming increasingly under the gun for not living up to his league debut.

It could have been a case of being asked to do too much on a thin roster. It could also have been that young defencemen in the NHL are rarely on a straight-line ascent to their best game.

Clearly the Sabres and their fans had grown impatient — not unlike what frequently happens in Winnipeg — and the consideration for him to be included in this deal likely had much to do with what it would take to land a player of Kane's scoring ability.

The other three elements that came to the Jets may turn out to be as important down the line.

Armia had given the Sabres some level of frustration in that his adjustment to North America wasn't swift. The Finn, the team's first-rounder of 2011 in the 16th spot, spent almost all of his first two seasons in the AHL, including after the trade.

Then he started with the Moose this fall after a nondescript training camp, adding more finger-tapping for those on the impatient side.

Lemieux was rumoured to not be interested in signing with the Sabres, though it was never confirmed, so it was potentially a risk Buffalo would rather have not taken.

His attractiveness to many teams, including the Jets, was obvious. Not only was he the first pick after the first round in 2014, but he'd shown an ability to be an agitator like his father, Claude, and also to skate and score.

Lemieux's size and his willingness to be involved in the game have seen him blossom even more after the NHL deal.

The unknown at the time of the trade was the lower of Buffalo's two first-round picks. It would up at No. 25, and the Jets made it 18-year-old Jack Roslovic of Columbus, Ohio, who had played two seasons with the U.S. national development teams.

Roslovic, an offensively gifted centre, was better than a point-per-game player in his second USNDT season in the USHL.

How The Trade has worked out for all parties one year after Jets-Sabres blockbuster

By Ken Wiebe
Winnipeg Sun
February 11, 2016

It was a move that sent shockwaves around the NHL.

When Winnipeg Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff made his first NHL player for NHL player trade, it turned out to be a blockbuster.

That move — which brought defenceman Tyler Myers, forwards Drew Stafford, Joel Armia, Brendan Lemieux and a first-round pick that turned into centre Jack Roslovic and sent defenceman Zach Bogosian, forward Evander Kane and the rights to college goalie Jason Kasdorf — was made one year ago Wednesday.

It's obvious that the two clubs were in very different places at the time of the trade.

The Sabres were going nowhere, other than bottoming out and finishing dead last in the standings.

The Jets, who had Wednesday off and will face the Boston Bruins at MTS Centre on Thursday before hitting the road for a four-game trip, were trying to make a playoff push and knew they would be without Kane for the rest of the season after undergoing shoulder surgery.

Kane needed a change and over time, it became clear that Bogosian was also ready for a change of scenery — though he was disappointed to leave the franchise that made him the third overall pick in the 2008 NHL Draft.

"Again, we addressed a situation that needed to be addressed at the time. We dug in and did it in the best fashion that we possibly could," Cheveldayoff said earlier this week after Dustin Byfuglien was signed to a contract extension. "It's addressing a lot of the different needs that we (had) then, now and going forward."

The short term benefit was obvious, as Myers and Stafford were rejuvenated to join a team that was making a playoff push instead of one that essentially was going to the rink expecting to lose.

The Jets wouldn't have made the playoffs without the contributions made by Stafford and Myers.

Stafford enjoyed the run so much that he decided to pass on unrestricted free agency to sign a two-year deal with the Jets that carries a cap hit of just over \$4 million per season.

All Stafford, who signed a two-year deal stay with the Jets before becoming an unrestricted free agent, has done this season is lead the Jets in goals and he has 25 goals and 47 points in 75 games since joining the club.

Myers has been steady while playing on one of the top-two pairings and seeing ample time on special teams, chipping in eight goals and 34 points in 77 games.

"They've both been really big parts of our team," said Jets centre Bryan Little. "Stafford is a veteran voice in the room, he's so patient and poised out there and helps us a lot on offence. With Myers, there's not a lot of players like him that are 6-foot-8 and can fly like him and quarterback a power play like he can."

Myers reiterated how glad he is about how things have turned out.

"There had been rumours leading up to it, but when anything like that happens, there's still a little bit of a shock element to it," said Myers. "Obviously, I had never gone through that before, so there was an adjustment to be

made. As soon as we got to the room, all the guys were really good and I've been very happy with my time in Winnipeg. I feel at home. It's been a really good fit."

The medium term is represented by Armia, who has only two goals and three points in 22 games with the Jets and is showing signs of figuring things out and demonstrating that he's got the skill-set to be a solid NHL regular for years to come.

The future element of the trade comes in the form of Lemieux and Roslovic.

Lemieux is having another solid OHL season after being traded to the Windsor Spitfires and is set to turn pro next fall, while Rolsovic has been close to a point-per-game player during his freshman season with the University of Miami (Ohio).

Make no mistake, the Sabres are quite happy with what they got in return, though you can't deny the fact the loss of Kane and Bogosian took away some of the Jets identity, in terms of being a team that was fast and incredibly tough to play against.

But even without the benefit of hindsight, this is a deal that Cheveldayoff doesn't regret making and the Jets should be reaping the benefits for years to come.

Sabres call up Bailey

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 11, 2016

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- Justin Bailey grew up in Williamsville and Thursday he's going to be the next local kid to fulfill his dream and suit up for the Buffalo Sabres.

Bailey was called up Wednesday and arrived in Philadelphia with his teammates.

The kid has been developed the right way learning the pro game and has improved a lot in his first season with Rochester.

In his last eight games Bailey has 11 points. Overall he has 10 goals and 13 assists for 23 points in 47 games.

The Sabres 2013 second round pick told Amerks.com, "I called my family first and now am getting myself prepared for my first game in the NHL. It's exciting and it's one of the better days in my life so far, so just a lot of emotions are going through my head."

Bailey found out the news during practice. He said, "We were just doing drills and Cunney called me over and pulled over Tails and they just kind of told me that you're going up. There was a little bit of disbelief at first, but I was excited and looking forward to it."

Zemgus Girgensons was put on IR to make room. Both he and Johan Larsson stayed home for the trip.

Bailey will not wear his familiar 95 with the Sabres. He wore 56 in preseason.

Sabres' Ristolainen feels he must get better with everything

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 11, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres practiced for a little over 30 minutes Wednesday at HarborCenter. Jack Eichel, Tyler Ennis, Zemgus Girgensons and Johan Larsson were all missing.

Dan Bylsma said Eichel was having a maintenance day, partly due to the shot from Zach Bogosian that hit him. The coach said he expects he will play in Philadelphia.

Bylsma said Girgensons and Larsson were being evaluated and one or both could play in Philadelphia. He said if both are out, they will not go with seven defensemen and there will be a call up from Rochester.

Rasmus Ristolainen was pretty down after practice and only provided very short answers on his current slump, "We've been losing so I've got to get better." I asked in what way and he said, "In every way." I asked nothing specific and he said, "No."

He did open up a little after that, "I've made some bad plays, so I've just got to keep getting better and cut those plays off."

Bylsma said that he's not concerned that Ristolainen is down and actually likes it, "I think we're all down given the situation that we're all in and how we played and frankly I like that and the accountability and the responsibility of taking that on, I like that in Rasmus."

Ristolainen has struggled the past few weeks and Dan Bylsma said there's one thing in his game lately that has slipped, "Puck play the last few games has been, you know the turnovers and execution have been on occasion to the other team and not to us and has led to their opportunities and their goals against."

"I at times think Rasmus is trying to do too much with his puck play and needs to be a little more simpler."

Ristolainen sees how the team has been playing lately, he said there are ways to get things better, "I think first we've got to battle harder, win some one on one battles and last night we pretty much gave them all the goals."

"We've got to play more in the offensive zone, that's where we win the games and if we keep the puck there and get some shots to the net, we'll play better in the defensive zone."

Ristolainen was minus four last night and had two games of minus three against Detroit and the Rangers. In between he had four games of being even or a plus.

Every player on the roster now is minus except for Mike Weber whose plus three and Dan Catenacci whose even. Ryan O'Reilly is the worst at minus 19. He's minus 11 in his last eight games.

After losing in Boston thanks to a phantom penalty shot call, it really appears there was a hangover Tuesday night. In 21 minutes Buffalo was down 4-0 to Florida and Bylsma said, "I had some concern and felt it for two days of practice and going into the game, but you talk about the stretch we've gone the last 13 games 6-5-2 I think we've played pretty hard and pretty well as we've been pushing for points and pushing for wins, so the disappointment of the two Boston games I did feel some disappointment from our team."

WNY native Bailey to make Sabres, NHL debut

By Shawn Stepner

WKBW

February 11, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Williamsville native Justin Bailey is about to live his dream.

He is set to suit up for the Sabres and make his NHL debut on Thursday when Buffalo visits the Philadelphia Flyers. Bailey was called up to the Sabres Wednesday from the AHL's Rochester Americans.

The 20-year-old has ten goals on the season for the Amerks, which is good for second on the team. He's fourth in points with 23. He's scored five goals and six assists in the past eight games.

Bailey was selected by the Sabres in the second round, 52nd overall, in the 2013 draft.

The Sabres are down healthy forwards with Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons missing Tuesday's loss to Florida. Tyler Ennis is also out.

Bailey is the son of former Bills linebacker Carlton Bailey.

Bailey recalled from Rochester; Girgensons placed on IR

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 11, 2016

Jack Eichel joined Zemgus Girgensons and Johan Larsson as absentees from the Buffalo Sabres' practice at HARBORCENTER on Wednesday, but only for a maintenance day. Coach Dan Bylsma said that he expects Eichel to be ready to play in Philadelphia on Thursday night.

If the Sabres' recall of rookie forward Justin Bailey on Wednesday afternoon is any indication, the prognosis for either Larsson or Girgensons might not be as encouraging.

Bylsma had said after practice that both forwards were being evaluated with the possibility of playing on Thursday and that a call-up would only be necessary should one or both be unavailable.

However, in a corresponding move to the Bailey recall, Girgensons was placed on injured reserve. Both Girgensons and Larsson last played on Saturday in Boston. Girgensons has been out since Monday's practice while Larsson was injured during Tuesday's morning skate.

Bailey, a Buffalo native, has adapted well to the American Hockey League in his first professional season, ranking second on the Rochester Americans in goals (10) and fourth in points (23). He's scored 11 points (5+6) in his last eight games alone.

Bailey played one game for the Sabres during the preseason, logging 14:31 of ice time and putting one shot on goal.

FUN AT FORWARD FOR McCABE

With hopes of avoiding a stint on IR for Girgensons or Larsson still intact, Bylsma proceeded into the game against Florida on Tuesday with seven defensemen in his lineup rather than recalling a forward from the Amerks.

Jake McCabe was ultimately chosen to switch from defense to right wing for the game, skating on Buffalo's fourth line alongside Dan Catenacci and David Legwand. If you're wondering when McCabe last played forward, well, so was he.

"I don't know ... squirt? Pee-wee? A long time ago," McCabe said. "I knew the injury situation and that it was possible. They told me before the game. I kind of went over some systems with Coach [Dave] Barr and just got mentally prepared."

McCabe accumulated three shots and three hits in 9:34 of ice time. While he admitted the shifts were more tiring – he joked that Brian Gionta told him there's a lot of wasted energy from "just skating around" – he appeared to enjoy each and every one of them.

"I told him that he did a poor job because when you play that well, it makes you want to play him again there," Bylsma said. "I thought Jake did a real good job of forechecking and skating. He said today he enjoyed maybe a little bit being the hunter versus the hunted on the forecheck."

Obviously, there were a few adjustments. Bylsma said he caught McCabe skating backwards a few times when he'd be more suited to skate forward, for example. McCabe himself admitted it took a few shifts before he got used to thinking through the systems as a forward.

"Jake's a pretty intelligent and cerebral guy when it comes to playing and often there are areas of our game that are applicable to both playing forward and D," Bylsma said. "Puck retrievals, coming out of D-zone, even the wall play is something that every one of our defensemen takes in practice and practices. Jake's pretty good at it, so he was fully ready."

So, given his results, might we eventually see McCabe again on a forward line?

"He asked today, 'What do you want me to play?'" Bylsma said. "I said 'You're a defenseman, Jake.'"

A POSITIVE FROM TUESDAY'S GAME

After two games without a power-play goal, Buffalo was 2-for-4 against the Panthers. While Sam Reinhart scored both goals at Roberto Luongo's doorstep, Ryan O'Reilly also factored in each time with an assist.

"I thought Ryan actually was a guy who stood out last night in how he played," Bylsma said. "In the second and third period, he was almost dominant in the offensive zone, at times going 1-on-3 and holding off guys. I think that's the best he's played in a while for us."

"He's squeezing a little bit when it comes to shooting the puck and scoring goals for us right now, but I think that's a frustration we all share."

Hearing that, one play in particular from the second period comes to mind. O'Reilly carried the puck into the offensive zone and was able to stickhandle his way through a double team, maintaining possession long enough to create a potential shooting lane and ultimately drawing a hooking penalty from Jaromir Jagr.

O'Reilly is currently in the midst of a 13-game goal scoring drought (although, to be fair, he has scored at least an assist in all but four of those games). While he didn't break that drought on Tuesday, it's plays like that Jagr penalty that show the other areas he excels in even he's not finding the back of the net.

The Sabres and Flyers will face off Thursday at 7 p.m. from Wells Fargo Center. Pregame coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell TV. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550. And stay tuned during the TV broadcast for the beginning of Round 2 of Sabres Showdown where Tyler Ennis goes head-to-head against Rasmus Ristolainen.