



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 8, 2016*

## **Panthers-Sabres Preview**

By Taylor Bechtold

AP

February 9, 2016

The offensive surge that keyed the Florida Panthers' rise in the Atlantic Division has dissipated during only their second losing streak since early December.

Things could get worse before they get better without one of their go-to scorers, while the Buffalo Sabres are hoping to get back two of their top forwards.

With Aleksander Barkov's status uncertain, the Panthers look to begin a new winning streak Tuesday night by dealing the Sabres their ninth loss in 10 home games.

Florida (31-16-6) was fifth in the Atlantic on Dec. 12 before averaging 3.2 goals during a 17-3-1 push that lifted it into first place. The Panthers totaled 25 goals over a five-game win streak before failing to extend that production in the last two.

Following a 3-2 overtime home loss to Pittsburgh on Saturday, they were shut out for only the third time in Monday's 3-0 loss at Detroit. Making matters worse, Barkov was knocked out in the second period after getting hit by Detroit's Justin Abdelkader.

The center had scored a goal in his previous four games and leads the club with 10 goals and 22 points in the last 21. He has a goal and two assists in his two meetings with Buffalo and the Panthers have won seven in a row in the series when he's played.

"I thought it was a cheap shot," coach Gerard Gallant said of Abdelkader, who was not penalized after hitting Barkov with his shoulder. "Hopefully, he'll be back soon."

Florida has gone 9-1-1 in the past 11 meetings with Buffalo after taking two of the first three matchups this season. Jaromir Jagr has led the way with three goals and five points in the season series, while Jonathan Huberdeau has tallied twice.

Roberto Luongo is 12-2-0 with a 1.78 goals-against average in his last 15 against the Sabres. He's expected to be in net after stopping 31 shots in a 5-1 road win Jan. 5.

Buffalo (21-26-6) has only managed 14 goals while going 1-6-2 over its last nine home games. Now the club will try to avoid its sixth defeat in its last eight games overall following Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss at Boston.

Sam Reinhart got a goal for the second straight contest, but leading scorer Ryan O'Reilly has gone 12 in a row without finding the back of the net. The left wing, however, has three goals and six points in his last four at home versus Florida.

Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has totaled three assists in the season series.

Buffalo could get a boost if forwards Marcus Foligno and Zemgus Girgensons can overcome lower-body injuries to play alongside Jack Eichel. Foligno (4 goals, 11 points) sat out Saturday while Girgensons (5 goals, 11 points) did not practice Monday.

"I feel pretty good," Foligno told the team's official website. "Right now, it's just a pain tolerance, that's all I can really say. There was nothing really major, just a tweak, but it was tough to really play or even skate a couple days ago."

Tyler Ennis, though, remains sidelined indefinitely with an upper-body injury.

Buffalo's Robin Lehner is likely to start between the pipes. He has a .947 save percentage over his last five games and a .942 mark in his last two versus the Panthers.

## **Lehner looking and talking like No. 1 goalie**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

February 9, 2016

Robin Lehner caught Dan Bylsma off-guard. The Sabres' coach was standing on the bench during a stoppage in play when all of a sudden he heard Lehner's voice.

"He's coming to the bench and cheering the guys on and instructing them," Bylsma said Monday. "I've never had a goalie show up there and be a vocal guy, but that's really one of our key words with him is being engaged, being focused at every point."

Lehner has been engaged and focused all right. Finally healthy and able to play, Lehner is showing why General Manager Tim Murray coveted him.

Lehner will head into Tuesday's home game against Florida with a five-game hot streak. The goaltender has stopped 178 of his last 188 shots for a .947 save percentage and 2.00 goals-against average.

Lehner has had the Sabres' back because he finally feels someone has his. He was continually stuck in a rotation or platoon during his five seasons with Ottawa, and it clearly weighed on him. The 24-year-old knows he's the No. 1 guy in Buffalo, which has allowed him to become the type of goalie who can speak up on the ice or in the dressing room.

"I've been working hard, trying to work on a few things in my game," Lehner said in First Niagara Center. "As I said before, when I played in Ottawa it was a lot of other things that went in my head there. I didn't feel like I got the shot to play when I played good. Here, it's a different thing."

Lehner, who missed three months with a high-ankle sprain suffered in the season opener, has meshed well with his teammates and goaltending coach Andrew Allen. They've made him feel at home in his first season with Buffalo.

"I can hopefully just keep it going," Lehner said. "I'm going to have my struggles here, too, but I feel like I have good support. Andrew is working well with me. It's a good group of guys here."

"We're trying really hard. We're competing as a team. We've just got to keep getting better."

Lehner has recorded at least 33 saves during his last five starts, including 36 in Saturday's disappointing 2-1 overtime loss in Boston. The winning goal came on a penalty shot, infuriating Lehner. He chucked his helmet and said the referees should be embarrassed. He figured he'd get fined for the comments but hasn't heard from the NHL.

Given a couple of days to cool off, he chose to reflect on the positives in back-to-back losses to the Bruins. The Sabres sustained a 3-2 shootout loss to Boston on Thursday.

"Obviously, we would like to win both those games," Lehner said. "It's also a hell of a hockey team over there, and we got away with a point in each of them. We showed that we can be up there. It wasn't like they weren't playing good or anything. We went toe-to-toe with Boston, and we got away with two points in those two games."

"It's small things. They won in a shootout and they won on a penalty shot. You can say what you want about that, but we were right up there. There's a lot of positives to take out of those games, and there's a few things we need to work on."

Lehner, who is a commanding presence at 6-foot-5 and 240 pounds, has been willing to tell his teammates what areas need shoring up.

"He's pretty demanding out there," defenseman Mark Pysyk said. "He tells us what he wants us to do."

It's easier for a player to talk when he's playing well. The Sabres hope Lehner keeps the saves and conversations going.

"He's been awesome," Pysyk said. "You don't really know where he's going to be when he comes back from the injury, but he's been giving us confidence playing in front of him and making big-time saves for us."

## **Sabres notebook: 1,000 students see the science in practice**

By John Vogl  
Buffalo News  
February 9, 2016

The Sabres' arena was rocking Monday. The trick is to keep the atmosphere festive Tuesday.

The Sabres welcomed 1,000 screaming students to practice in First Niagara Center, and they made the building jump with chants and cheers. It was louder than many games, the next of which comes Tuesday when the Florida Panthers visit.

The best way to keep the arena loud will be to win. Buffalo is just 1-6-2 in its last nine home games.

"We've played some good games, some tight games, but things haven't gone our way," left wing Evander Kane said. "We need to make this a tough place to play for the visiting team."

Bringing back the students would be a good start. They had fun watching, which allowed the players to enjoy themselves.

"It's fun for us to have some spectators here," defenseman Mike Weber said. "As a kid I would have loved the opportunity to come to an NHL practice like that and watch. It was probably a pretty cool thing."

The students are part of the "Future Goals" program started by the NHL and its players' association. The children learn science, technology, engineering and math through hockey-related questions. For example, Sabres broadcaster Brian Duff asked the students how many miles the players skate during an 82-game season if they average 5 miles per game.

"I heard some of the math questions and I was skating around trying to figure them out," Weber said.

At the end of practice, Weber, center Ryan O'Reilly and defenseman Carlo Colaiacovo shed their skates, slipped on sneakers and went into the crowd to high-five the kids. While they went willingly, the trip wasn't entirely altruistic. Coach Dan Bylsma set rules for the session-ending shootout contest.

"The last three guys to score had to go up and shake some hands," Weber said.

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Forward Marcus Foligno, who missed Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss in Boston because of a lower-body injury, practiced fully and expects to play against the Panthers. He suffered a deep bruise when he missed a check Thursday against the Bruins.

"It was good to get a full practice in with the guys," Foligno said. "It was tough to even skate a couple days ago."

Forward Zemgus Girgensons missed practice with a lower-body injury.

"I'm hoping this was nothing more than a maintenance day for Zemgus," Bylsma said.

Concussed forward Tyler Ennis remains out.

"Still not able to get on the ice other than to be on the ice by himself," Bylsma said. "His timeline is no better than week-to-week. He has progressed over the last 10 days but still needs to go a little bit further before he can be cleared to go onto the next level."

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Kane has scored in four of the last nine games, bringing his season goal total to 12. One of the goals (against Colorado) came from the slot. Bylsma would like to see Kane there more often.

"Love to see him get into the area where he scored in Colorado, take advantage of his shot inside a little bit more versus just coming down the wing," the coach said. "He's taken it inside with the puck when he's had it. It's more getting there without the puck, getting in those open spots and utilizing his shot on the outside."

Kane said the team could do a better job of getting in front.

"We're getting lots of pucks to the net, but when you don't have anybody there it's tough to get the second and third opportunities," he said. "In today's NHL, that's how you score a lot of your goals. For us, it's about working hard to get to the net without the puck."

## **Barkov ruled out against Sabres**

NHL.com

February 9, 2016

**PANTHERS (31-16-6) at SABRES (21-26-6)**

**TV: 7 p.m. ET; FS-F, MSG-B, NHL.TV**

**Season series:** Corban Knight and Derek MacKenzie each had a goal and an assist in the Florida Panthers' 5-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Jan. 5. Linus Ullmark made 36 saves in Buffalo's 3-2 win against Florida at BB&T Center on Nov. 12.

**Panthers team scope:** Florida will play its second game in as many nights following a 3-0 loss at the Detroit Red Wings on Monday. The Panthers will be without center Aleksander Barkov, who did not play in the third period after taking a hit from Red Wings forward Justin Abdelkader. "You hate to lose your top player, but that's part of the game," coach Gerard Gallant told the Miami Herald. "We're disappointed to lose him. I thought it was a cheap shot, but the referees didn't see it that way and explained to me it was a clean check. It's tough. It happens quick, and we get to see the replay. I think it'll be looked at. [Abdelkader] left his feet a little and got him in the jaw." Goalie Roberto Luongo is expected to get the start after Al Montoya played in Detroit.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo is hopeful forwards Marcus Foligno and Zegmus Girgensons will be able to play Tuesday. Foligno missed a 2-1 overtime loss at the Boston Bruins on Saturday because of a bruised leg; Girgensons did not practice Monday. "I'm hoping this was nothing more than a maintenance day for Zegmus, but he is dealing with a lower-body injury," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma told The Buffalo News. Foligno was injured last Thursday in a 3-2 shootout loss against the Bruins. "It was good to get a full practice in with the guys," he said. "I feel pretty good. We'll see how [Tuesday] is. Right now it's just a pain tolerance. It was tough to even skate a couple days ago. [Sunday], it felt a little better, and today, I was able to skate. We'll see [Tuesday] morning." Goalie Robin Lehner likely will start.

## **Sabres' Dan Catenacci paid dues to earn first NHL recall**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 9, 2016

BUFFALO – In his first three AHL seasons, Sabres winger Dan Catenacci has developed what he believes is a strong relationship with his coaches. So the youngster was shocked when Randy Cunneynworth summoned him to his office Friday and the entire Rochester Americans' staff began berating him.

What was the beef? Something Catenacci called a "nothing play" in the previous game.

"They started yelling at me," he said Monday following practice inside the First Niagara Center.

An "angry" Cunneynworth eventually ordered Catenacci to "get out of my office."

"I turned away and he just smirked," Catenacci said. "He said, 'You're going up.' It was probably the best news I've ever had in my life. It was very nice."

What a way for Catenacci, the 77<sup>th</sup> pick in 2011, to find out he had earned his first NHL recall after 182 AHL appearances.

"The guys were all laughing, hugging me after," Catenacci said. "They've never yelled at me like that before, so I knew something was up."

For now, Catenacci, 22, is still up with the Sabres. He made his debut Saturday, skating seven minutes, 42 seconds on the fourth line in a 2-1 overtime road loss to the Boston Bruins.

Sabres winger Marcus Foligno practiced Monday and could return from his lower-body injury tonight against the Florida Panthers inside the First Niagara Center, meaning Catenacci might be scratched. But winger Zemgus Girgensons couldn't practice and is also questionable with a lower-body injury.

If Catenacci plays, it will give his parents another chance to see him in an NHL game. His father, Maurice, and mother, Nancy, couldn't get from their home outside of Toronto to snowy Boston.

"My mom called me crying before the game," Catenacci said. "They couldn't get a flight out of Toronto that wasn't delayed. She cried about it, and I promised her I'd get another game for her to come and see. Hopefully, I get that opportunity."

Why did the 5-foot-9, 191-pound Catenacci, who has seven goals and 15 points in 36 AHL contests this season, receive his first big league opportunity?

"(He's) really using his speed, playing a straightforward game, being a forechecking pest, being on pucks," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "That's really what's been the strength of his game this year."

After some early butterflies, an emotional Catenacci settled down and showcased some of those talents Saturday. Bylsma said he felt he was going to score. At one point, Catenacci battled Zdeno Chara, who's almost a foot taller, and won a puck battle by "taking a chunk out of" the hulking defenseman, Bylsma said.

"You don't want to screw up," Catenacci said. "But I think as the game went on I gained a lot of confidence and feel a lot better around the guys now."

Catenacci's journey reminds Bylsma of the one he took 20 years ago. Bylsma played four minor league seasons, including 85 games in the ECHL, before the Los Angeles Kings rewarded him with a four-game look in 1995-96.

"It's been a long time for him in the game and (he) paid some dues and had some lumps," Bylsma said. "I think he's worked through his game to another level and had to do it through his years (as a) pro. It's a big payoff for him to get his first game.

"Yes, I see some of the same look on his face and appreciation of finally getting here and finally playing a game that I remember a long time ago."

Catenacci has been overshadowed by other forward prospects for years. These days, rookie AHL wingers Justin Bailey, who could be on the Sabres' radar next thanks to four goals and six points in the last three games, and Nick Baptiste garner most of the attention.

Quietly, Catenacci has improved his game. He scored 12 of his 15 goals in the final 38 contests last season and had two goals and seven points in the seven games prior to his recall.

"Last year I thought I had a great second half and a good year," he said. "I wanted to build on that. I knew maybe there wasn't a good chance of making it at first. Obviously, I knew if I kept working hard I'd get my shot."

Forwards Cal O'Reilly, Tim Schaller and Phil Varone all got a shot this season before Catenacci.

"Those guys get called up and I'm excited for them," he said. "When I got called up, they were all very excited for me. They kind of told me what to do, told me what to pack, what to expect. I think they're all great guys about it. I think when they come up here and do well, you know you can do the same."

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Foligno said a deep-tissue bruise kept him from playing Saturday.

"Right now, it's just a pain tolerance," he said. "That's all I can really say. Nothing really major, but it was just a tweak."

## **Sabres' Marcus Foligno feeling better; Zemgus Girgensons questionable for Panthers**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 9, 2016

BUFFALO – Sabres winger Marcus Foligno, who said a deep-tissue bruise kept him out of Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss in Boston, practiced today and could play Tuesday against Florida.

"We'll see how tomorrow is," Foligno said this afternoon inside the First Niagara Center. "Right now, it's just a pain tolerance. That's all I can really say. Nothing really major, but it was just a (lower-body) tweak."

Foligno, who said he had a jammed into him late Thursday, briefly left today's session before returning minutes later.

The Sabres, however, could still be without one of their regular forwards against the Panthers. A lower-body injury kept winger Zemgus Girgensons from practicing today.

"Hoping this was nothing more than a maintenance day for Zemgus," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

The Sabres still have forward Dan Catenacci up from the AHL.

Meanwhile, Bylsma said winger Tyler Ennis, out since Dec. 30 with a suspected concussion, is still "no better than week-to-week." Ennis has been skating on his own.

"I don't have where he's at progression-wise," Bylsma said.

## **Sabres trying to improve 3-on-3**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 9, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- With so many regulation wins, the Sabres haven't had too many 3-on-3 overtimes. It also seems like when they do get to overtime, very often there's a penalty which makes it 4-on-3.

WGR Sports Radio 550's stat expert Matthew Collier says in the eight games so far they've scored two goals and allowed one.

Collier said Buffalo has been outshot 19 to 11 with it even worse when you look at shots attempted, 34-21.

Matthew has one stat that to me is the most telling, "They rank 4th worst in the NHL in Corsi differential at 3-on-3 and have only five 'high danger' chances, which are shots close to the goal, compared with 21 for their opponents."

Dan Bylsma has tried different things on the 3-on-3. He said, "We haven't had a lot of it, but I don't think tentative is what we are, I think there are things we can do better."

"We tend to be on the outside and go to the outside to get the puck."

For two games Bylsma has implemented a strategy where he starts Josh Gorges giving him two defensemen on the ice and if Buffalo wins the draw, which it did both times, Gorges goes straight to the bench for Evander Kane to come on. If they lose the draw, Gorges would stay on and defend. Bylsma said, "I do like that play for various reasons, but it hasn't really worked yet. Evander had somewhat of a chance coming off the bench, but I do like how it sets up for us defensively if we don't get possession."

The Sabres come into Monday 27<sup>th</sup> in the NHL, one point in front of Toronto, Columbus and Edmonton and one point in back of Calgary and Winnipeg. Tim Murray told Schopp and the Bulldog that he's told Bylsma he has a few weeks to see what direction the team should go at the February 29 trade deadline. Pittsburgh holds down the final Wild Card berth in the East with 59 points. That's 11 in front of Buffalo with 29 games to play.

With points at a premium has Bylsma told his team to take chances in overtime? "There's no part of what we're doing that is trying to tie the 3-on-3, we're trying to win the game. We're not trying to sit back or get to a shootout, so we are trying to take chances. There are times in the game where good players take advantage of the situation and in 3-on-3, it's really a time to be thinking about that. When you're playing in the defensive zone and the puck gets to the net or gets down low, just one step puts you in a good offensive position. If we get possession or if a D-man intercepts a shot to the net and you've taken a step to the offensive zone, you're going to beat the guy that shoots the puck on net and that's a smart cheat."

Zack Bogosian skates very well which can help him when he's the defenseman in overtime. He said, "If you look at how we play it, sometimes a defenseman is leading the rush, so when you get back you just take a guy, but you could be up at the blue line so in 3-on-3 you can't just say 'I'm a defenseman' because you have to play the play that's in front of you, it might be different cycles or different looks."

Marcus Foligno did everything in practice and Bylsma said he looked to be fine despite still battling a lower body injury. To make things worse Foligno took a puck to the groin and stayed down a minute before walking to the room to shake it off. He said he lost his breathe and was a little queasy, but returned a short time later.

As far as Zemgus Girgensons missing practice, Dan Bylsma said it could go either way on if he'll play Tuesday against Florida. The coach said, "Zemgus has got a lower body injury and we're hoping it was nothing more than a maintenance day so we'll see." Girgensons did get a shift with Jack Eichel Saturday in overtime.

Over 1000 school kids came and saw the team practice. After a shootout drill Ryan O'Reilly, Mike Weber and Carlo Colaiacovo all took off their skates, but went into the stands to say hello with the rest of their stuff on.

The kids were loud and had a lot of fun. Bogosian said, "I think for the kids to come out and see practice it's cool and for us, it puts a smile on our faces. I think anytime you get a chance to see kids that are enjoying themselves and enjoying the game it's just good to see them having a good time."

## Foligno hopeful to return on Tuesday

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 9, 2016

Marcus Foligno was back on the ice while Zemgus Girgenson was absent from it, but Buffalo Sabres coach Dan Bylsma expressed hope that both forwards will be ready come Tuesday night when the team plays host to the Atlantic Division-leading Florida Panthers.

Foligno missed the game in Boston on Saturday with a lower-body injury. Bylsma said that Girgenson is dealing with a lower-body injury, but added that he hoped Monday's absence from practice was "nothing more than a maintenance day."

If both players do suit up, there's a good chance they'll return as linemates flanking Jack Eichel. Foligno joined the line of Girgenson and Eichel for Buffalo's game in Montreal on Feb. 3 and scored his fourth goal of the season. He was back alongside Eichel in line rushes on Monday morning.

"It's tough, it's frustrating," Foligno said. "You have a chance to play and do good things for this team and then you have a little setback again. It's just something where you have to keep grinding, you have to keep moving forward and I'm looking forward to get a chance hopefully back with [Eichel] next game."

Foligno sustained his injury on an attempted hit in the third period against the Bruins. He left the ice with six minutes remaining and did not return.

"I feel pretty good," Foligno said. "We'll see how tomorrow is. Right now, it's just a pain tolerance, that's all I can really say. There was nothing really major, just a tweak, but it was tough to really play or even skate a couple days ago. Yesterday felt a little bit better and today I was able to skate again."

Bylsma said that Tyler Ennis, meanwhile, is continuing to skate on his own but his timetable has not progressed. Ennis has missed 16 games with an upper-body injury.

"It's no better than week-to-week," Bylsma said. "He has progressed over the last 10 days but still needs to go a little bit further before he can be cleared to go onto the next level."

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### CATENACCI'S DEBUT

In the event that either Foligno or Girgenson can't go on Tuesday, it might open the door for Daniel Catenacci to remain in the Sabres' lineup. Catenacci made his NHL debut against the Bruins, tallying two shots and three hits in 7:42 of ice time.

The night had been a long time coming for Catenacci, who was drafted by the Sabres in the third round in 2011, but had yet to be recalled from Rochester midway through his third pro season. During the national anthem, he said, the nerves kicked in.

"I tried to hide the nerves but playing in my first NHL game, I was pretty nervous," he said. "I had a lot of butterflies. It took time as the game went on to gain confidence and lose those butterflies."

He had a scoring chance right off the bat, getting in position for a potential redirect goal just less than 10 seconds into the game. His line ended up drawing a hooking call on that possession to earn Buffalo its first power play of the night.

"My first shift actually went pretty well," he said. "But, again, it's nerve-racking. It's your first NHL game and you don't want to screw up. But I think as the game went on I gained a lot of confidence and feel a lot better around the guys now."

After receiving what he said was "probably the best news" of his life, Catenacci said his Rochester teammates were gracious in helping him prepare. Players like Philip Varone, Cal O'Reilly and Tim Schaller told him what to pack and what to expect. He's shared the same enthusiasm when they've been called up in the past.

At the same time, it's seeing the success of players he's played with or against at various levels that makes Catenacci think he just might be cut out for the NHL too.

"You see guys you've played with in the past and have played against and they're doing very well in the NHL these days," he said. "They're getting called up and doing well so there's no reason you can't. Coming up, you want to make an impression and do well and that's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to show that I belong."

The hunger to do that, Bylsma said, has shown in the rookie's face in the few days he's spent in Buffalo. It's a familiar look for the Sabres coach, who had to wait a few years himself before making his NHL debut as a 25 year old in 1995.

"It's been a long time for him," Bylsma said. "He's paid some dues and had some lumps and I think he's worked through his game to another level and had to do it in through his years pro. It's a big payoff for him to get his first game and, yes, I see some of the same look on his face and appreciation of finally getting here, finally playing a game that I remember a long time ago."

Whether Catenacci's second game in the NHL comes on Tuesday or sometime in the future, he's already thought about what he needs to build on from his debut – namely, showing patience with the puck. Catenacci said that there were times where he may have had a lot more time to make plays than he thought.

"That's just confidence," he said. "I think that's building every second."

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