



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Canadiens-Sabres Preview

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

AP

March 16, 2016

Jack Eichel is making a case to be the NHL's rookie of the year while giving the Buffalo Sabres hope for the future.

Ryan O'Reilly's expected return should bring some optimism to First Niagara Center right now.

With their top scorer back from injury Wednesday night, Eichel and the Sabres look to avenge last week's loss to the Montreal Canadiens.

Eichel - the No. 2 overall pick last summer - is living up to the lofty expectations. The 19-year-old has a team-high 22 goals, the most by a Sabres rookie since Thomas Vanek had 23 in 2005-06.

Eichel's 48 points are one back O'Reilly for the team lead, but he's 14 behind Chicago's Artemi Panarin for the most among rookies. The two will likely be among the three finalists for the Calder Trophy.

Eichel has five goals and two assists during the last six games. He came through in dramatic fashion Saturday when his second goal came with one second left in overtime of a 3-2 win over Carolina.

"If you don't score, you look like an idiot," Eichel said of his breakaway goal in OT.

Buffalo (28-33-9) will welcome O'Reilly back from a lower-body injury that sidelined him 11 games.

He's expected to join a line with Evander Kane and Nicolas Deslauriers, while coach Dan Bylsma will keep Eichel with Sam Reinhart, who has five points in five games.

"Seeing Sam play well next to Jack has been one of the deciding factors to keeping them together, but Ryan also needs wingers next to him on his line," Bylsma said. "Maybe a little bit of a long-term approach."

The Sabres have won five of the past seven meetings with the Canadiens (32-32-6), but they fell 3-2 at Montreal on Thursday.

Eichel was held without a point in that meeting, and he has only two in four versus Montreal. O'Reilly, though, has 10 points in 10 games against the Habs after getting two assists in a 6-4 win Feb. 12.

The Canadiens have lost six of their last eight games (2-5-1), and they followed Saturday's 4-1 loss to Minnesota with a defeat by the same score to Florida three days later.

P.K. Subban missed both games with a neck injury, and the former Norris Trophy winner didn't travel to Buffalo. The team has been without star goaltender Carey Price (leg) since November, perhaps the biggest blow to a team expected to at least reach the playoffs this season.

Montreal is also without eight other regulars.

"We can't use injuries as an excuse. It's the reality of this league," defenseman Mark Barberio told the team's official website. "Every team has injuries. We're obviously in a rough spell but it can't be an excuse for us. Whatever 20 guys we put out on our lineup, we need to get the job done."

Alex Galchenyuk is doing his part with 12 goals over the last 10 games after netting Montreal's lone goal Tuesday. The 22-year-old center has a career-high 26 on the season, and he's got five in the last three meetings with Buffalo - two in each of the last two.

Kasdorf 'trying to take it all in' with Sabres

By Amy Moritz
Buffalo News
March 16, 2016

When one door closes, another opens.

And so the professional hockey career for goaltender Jason Kasdorf begins.

When his collegiate season with Rensselaer came to end in the ECAC playoffs over the weekend, he promptly signed an entry-level contract with the Buffalo Sabres and joined the NHL club on Tuesday.

He wasn't on the ice. Kasdorf has a few days of injury rehabilitation after tweaking his groin late in the college season. But he was on the bench for Sabres practice, talking to coaches, shaking hands with Chad Johnson, eagerly and excitedly taking in as much information as he could.

"I'm incredibly excited," Kasdorf said as he met the Buffalo media. "I'm just thrilled about the opportunity I have to be here and be part of the organization. It's a dream come true. It's what I've worked for my whole life and to be here means a lot."

Kasdorf finished his collegiate career with a minor groin injury that kept him out of the ECAC quarterfinal game, which the Engineers lost to Harvard, bouncing them from the conference tournament. With no NCAA bid on the horizon, Kasdorf took the opportunity to sign his pro deal and start learning the pro game.

He begins his pro career on injury rehab, but there's so much the 23-year-old wants to learn, a few days off the ice will still be time well spent.

"Really I'm just trying to learn as much as I can," Kasdorf said. "I'm just trying to develop and trying to take it all in, learn from the guys what it's like to be a pro now. Just asking guys questions, guys who have been in this position. I think it's a great learning opportunity for me. I want to make the most out of it."

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Kasdorf will spend the rest of the season in Buffalo first getting healthy then getting opportunities in practice. A game is not out of the question, but practice is an invaluable experience for a goalie making the transition from college to pros.

"The opportunity to get NHL shots, to get in practice, to see the speed of the game and the quality of the shooters is going to be an adjustment for him and a great opportunity," Bylsma said. "For him to get into practice, feel the puck, see the puck, see the speed of the NHL game and the shooters, it's going to be a big advantage for him."

It's not Kasdorf's first time around Buffalo. He spent a week of the summer at Sabres development camp, playing with rookies and prospects and making an impression on Bylsma.

"His calmness, his maturity in the net was very clear when he got in the game and it showed in the opportunity he got here in the summertime," Bylsma said. "That's the kind of goalie he is: He's a calm, confident, quiet goalie. Quiet goalie meaning he plays his position well and confidently. He's not all over the map."

Kasdorf made the most out of his week at Sabres development camp over the summer. While playing with rookies and prospects he had the chance to learn skills which carried over into his senior season at Rensselaer both on the ice (playing the puck) and off the ice (nutrition).

He finished with 2.30 goals against average this season and .931 save percentage. He had five games of 40-plus saves including a 49-save performance in a 2-1 win at Harvard on Feb. 12.

But Kasdorf didn't set any goals based on numbers.

"I didn't have any specific statistical goals, just the reason is that it's greatly dependent on your team, right?" Kasdorf said. "Our team did a really good job of clearing rebounds for me and protecting the back door, which allowed me to just focus on the shot and just take care of that. We had a good system going that allowed me to post good numbers and help us get some wins.

"I would give," his senior season "a 10 out of 10 as far as how much I loved it. It was an unbelievable experience. I played with the best teammates I could have asked for, which was extremely special for me. If you've got good teammates, you love coming to the rink, you love battling every day with them and it made it easy to battle when you're doing it for the guy next to you and you love those guys."

Sabres notebook: Gionta starting to put up offensive numbers

By Amy Moritz
Buffalo News
March 16, 2016

The production has started to come for Brian Gionta.

The Buffalo Sabres captain is on a three-game point streak, while in his last six games he has six points (one goal, five assists) and a plus-5 rating.

But mention this to Gionta and he shrugs his shoulders.

"I mean, I think it's nice to be rewarded, but I think our line since we've been together the last month or two, we've been playing well, doing our job," Gionta said. "We're matched up a lot of times against their top line I think, and have been doing a great job of countering what they've been attacking us with."

Gionta's line includes Johan Larsson and Marcus Foligno, and they hope to continue their string of offensive contributions when the Montreal Canadiens come to First Niagara Center for a 7 p.m. faceoff Wednesday. The trio has been put into the role of the defensive line and one of the best ways to keep the opposition from scoring is to keep the puck in their zone.

"I think it's the consistency," Gionta said about his line. "Whether it's throughout the game or games as wholes. We're putting good shifts back-to-back together. We're getting good cycle time, good chances to the net. At the same time, when you're playing against the top line, you're keeping them out of the offensive zone. That's what I like best."

Sometimes, playing your role doesn't show up on the score sheet. Gionta, now 37, has seen his goal production diminish in the last few seasons as his role has shifted. But the numbers, they're not what motivate him.

"For sure, you want to contribute and add to it. But at the end of the day, it's about what you're doing for your team and what role you're playing, what role you're put in and fulfilling that role," he said.

But to see Gionta get involved in offensive production is good for the team.

"I think it's nice for our secondary scoring to see him get on the sheet," coach Dan Bylsma said. "I think early, first 25 games of the season, we didn't see that. He got injured coming out of training camp, unfortunately, kind of started up a little bit behind. Same thing on the score sheet. I don't think he caught up to that until the last 25 games or so. That line now as a unit ... Brian has gotten opportunities and scored and been a part of that line scoring. That's one of the reasons you see that line stay together ... because it has turned into a good, hard checking defensive line, but also one that can put the puck in the net."

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Bylsma wouldn't go so far as to say Ryan O'Reilly would be in the lineup Wednesday as the Sabres host the Montreal Canadiens.

But it's probably going to happen.

"He's progressing in that direction," was Bylsma's answer.

"He responded well to (Monday's) practice, which was an at-length practice and (he's) back out there again, doing well."

The Canadiens will likely still be without defenseman P.K. Subban. Reports out of Montreal had him missing Tuesday's game at Florida and Wednesday's game here after sustaining a neck injury in last week's game against the Sabres in Bell Centre. Subban was at the Habs' practice Monday but did not skate.

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The Sabres will be selling St. Patrick's Day-themed pucks Wednesday at First Niagara Center with all proceeds going to the Buffalo Sabres Foundation.

The special pucks, which are signed by Sabres players, will be sold for \$20 in the 100 Level concourse prior to the 7 p.m. game.

In addition, the Sabres will wear green St. Patrick's Day-themed jerseys during warmups for Wednesday's game. The jerseys will be part of an online auction at auction.nhl.com through 9 p.m. March 27.

Sabres could get Ryan O'Reilly back vs. Canadiens

By Sean Farrell

NHL.com

March 16, 2016

CANADIENS (32-32-6) at SABRES (28-33-9)

TV: 7 p.m. ET: SN, RDS, MSG-B, NHL.TV

Season series: The Montreal Canadiens and Buffalo Sabres have split their first four games. Montreal evened the season series with a 3-2 win at Bell Centre on Thursday. Montreal defenseman Andrei Markov has one goal and seven points. Center Alex Galchenyuk and right wing Dale Weise, who now plays for the Chicago Blackhawks, each has three goals. Buffalo forward Marcus Foligno has three goals and one assist and forward Ryan O'Reilly has one goal and three assists. They are among 18 Sabres players who have at least one point against Montreal, which has outscored Buffalo 16-14.

Canadiens team scope: Defenseman P.K. Subban, who has six assists against Buffalo, will miss his third straight game. Subban sustained a neck injury after colliding with defense partner Alexei Emelin late in the third period Thursday. He is day-to-day, though he has yet to practice. Forward Lars Eller and defenseman Nathan Beaulieu made the trip to Buffalo, though coach Michel Therrien said after the optional morning skate Tuesday that did not mean either would play Wednesday. Eller did not play Saturday because of the flu and was not ready to return Tuesday, when the Canadiens lost 4-1 at home to the Florida Panthers. Beaulieu, who practiced with the team for a second straight day Tuesday, has missed the past 10 games because of a lower-body injury. "We've got a lot of new players and the structure, a lot of the time, it's not there," Therrien said. "We try to work at it in practice but it takes time. So [Tuesday], I believe the structure was not quite there, we played against a good hockey team, we got beat a few times one-on-one, and it cost us some goals."

Sabres team scope: O'Reilly may be ready to return after missing 11 games because of a lower-body injury. He has been practicing on a line with Evander Kane and Nicolas Deslauriers, though coach Dan Bylsma stopped short of pronouncing him ready after practice Tuesday. "I haven't got my report on him [Tuesday], but obviously he responded well to [Monday]'s practice, which was an at-length practice, and [Tuesday he was], back out there and doing well," Bylsma told the team website. "He's progressing in that direction." Ryan stepped in for brother Cal O'Reilly on the power-play unit, and Zemgus Girgensons took the place of Johan Larsson. We have a net-front in Sam [Reinhart] and again operating with a middle-top guy and two flankers, with Ryan and Jack [Eichel] being on the flanks," Bylsma said. "We're looking for a good, smart middle man in the middle of the ice and Zemgus is a guy that can be both at the net and be that middle guy."

Sabres' Marcus Foligno enjoying career-best stretch

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 16, 2016

BUFFALO – Four years ago this month, the Sabres summoned a rookie with a famous hockey name and one game of NHL experience for the stretch drive of their playoff push.

Ultimately, they felt short, but winger Marcus Foligno's supreme exploits – six goals and 13 points – nearly helped them roar into the postseason.

For years, as he struggled to find consistency and score, Foligno's play, fairly or not, has been measured against that rollicking 13-game run he enjoyed as a 20-year-old.

"It wasn't 82 (games), so if I was here all year it might've been a different story, different expectations," Foligno said Monday. "Yeah, it definitely raised some heads."

It probably raised expectations too high for the Buffalo-born Foligno, the son of popular former Sabres captain Mike Foligno. Instead of being allowed to acclimate slowly to the NHL like other youngsters, the 6-foot-3, 226-pound Foligno was immediately expected to be a 25- or 30-goal power forward.

Of course, Foligno possesses some slick moves, but in reality, he's more of a checker, a role he has played very well recently while creating offense beside center Johan Larsson and Brian Gionta.

"I think not that I'm a slow developer or a late developer or anything like that," Foligno said. "It takes time. This year has definitely been the best I've felt. It's good it's starting to change."

Foligno, the only plus forward on the team, has five goals and eight points in his last eight home games entering tonight's tilt against the Montreal Canadiens inside the First Niagara Center. He scored his career-high ninth goal Saturday afternoon.

"The way I'm playing now it's similar to what it was in the 13-game segment," Foligno said. "I think I just have to bring the simple game every night where I have been."

So what has changed for Foligno?

"It's consistency, for sure," Gionta said. "How that looks is he's using his speed, he's using his size."

Foligno has consistently been "playing a big man's game, a physical game, a strong game" while maintaining that simple style, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

"I think I start to wig out a little bit when I see Marcus toe-drag a guy and score top shelf in a shootout and go, 'That's not your game,'" he said about one of Foligno's recent goals. "It was a great play and a great goal for us, but when he's consistently on his game and being a big, strong physical guy, presence, forechecking in the offensive zone and at the net, then he's playing his best.

"I think that's what he's been most consistent at doing."

The goals and points, Foligno believes, are a product of becoming "a full power forward."

Incredibly, with winger Tyler Ennis recovering from a concussion, Foligno has been here longer than any player on Buffalo's current roster.

"If someone would've told me that when I first got called up, I wouldn't have believed them," Foligno said about outlasting so many teammates. "It feels good to still be here. That's a positive. There's (been) a lot of changes. Obviously, I want to be here and to be a big part of this team moving forward."

Foligno has experienced a bit of everything during his 255-game career. In his early days, he played for two veteran teams built to challenge for the Stanley Cup. Then the Sabres underwent a deep, two-year rebuild in which they finished 30th twice.

These days, Foligno sees a light at the end of the tunnel following so much losing.

"(I) want to stay here and develop this trend going forward because I think we have a lot of good things in line for the future," he said. "We're only going to get better."

To be the last player left from past eras is special to Foligno, who appreciates the trust the Sabres have shown in him.

"(The belief) you're going to help or be one of the reasons that we get through all this stuff is huge," Foligno said. "I think you want to be that guy. Hopefully, in a couple of years or whenever it is, when we've raised a Stanley Cup over our head, (you) look back and you're going to say, 'Wow, we went through all the tough parts. It was well worth it.'

"That's what I believe in. That's what I think's going to come. Everyone in here is eventually going to believe we're going to win a Stanley Cup."

Goalie Jason Kasdorf could play for Sabres this season

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 16, 2016

BUFFALO – The plan is for goalie Jason Kasdorf to spend a couple of days rehabbing his groin injury before the rookie starts practicing with the Sabres.

The Sabres, of course, have two healthy netminders in starter Robin Lehner and backup Chad Johnson. But with 12 games left, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said there's a "possibility" Kasdorf could play in the NHL this season.

Kasdorf, 23, signed a one-year, entry-level contract Monday, two days after his college season at R.P.I. ended. The Sabres will keep him the rest of the year.

The Winnipeg native watched practice today in workout gear from the bench as players and coaches came over and chatted with him.

"I'm incredibly excited," Kasdorf said inside the First Niagara Center. "I'm just thrilled the opportunity I have to be here, to be a part of the organization. It's a dream come true."

The 6-foot-3, 172-pound Kasdorf played his final NCAA game Friday, finishing the season 12-12-5 with a 2.30 goals-against average and a .931 save percentage. He wasn't healthy enough to play Saturday.

"I would give it a 10 out of 10 as far as how much I loved it," he said about his season. "It was an unbelievable experience."

Bylsma knows Kasdorf a bit from summer development camp and followed his season.

"He was the best goalie here in the game (in July)," Bylsma said. "His calmness, his maturity in the net was very clear when he got to the game and showed in the opportunity he got here in the summertime, and that's the kind of goalie he is – he's a calm, confident, quiet goalie."

Just practicing in the NHL will be a "huge" experience for Kasdorf, Bylsma said.

"The opportunity to get NHL shots, to get him practice, to see the speed of the game and the quality of the shooters is going to be an adjustment for him and a great opportunity for him," he said.

The Sabres acquired Kasdorf in last year's blockbuster trade with the Winnipeg Jets that brought winger Evander Kane to Buffalo.

While Kasdorf's in the NHL, he still has schoolwork and has spoken to his professors.

"I got to kind of stay on top of things when I'm not at the rink, got to do some homework, stuff like that," he said.

He plans to graduate in May with a business management degree.

In other news, Bylsma said center Ryan O'Reilly (foot) is "progressing" toward playing Wednesday when the Sabres host the Montreal Canadiens. O'Reilly practiced again today.

Sabres head in a different direction in player performance

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 16, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Multiple sources have confirmed to me that the Sabres have relieved Director of Player Performance Oliver Finlay of his duties. Finlay oversaw strength and conditioning as well as player rehab.

Finlay didn't even last a full year with the Sabres. Questions about his qualifications have been popping up all year and some players had lost trust in him.

Robin Lehner, Zach Bogosian, Cody Franson and Tyler Ennis all have had setbacks at times during the season under Finlay's supervision.

In other news from the arena Tuesday, newly signed goalie Jason Kasdorf said he couldn't play the final game of his college career due to a groin injury. He also said that he's been told he will remain with the big club until the end of the season.

Kasdorf watched practice from the bench and the excitement of signing with Buffalo was very evident, "I'm incredibly excited, I'm just thrilled about the opportunity I have to be here and part of the organization. It's a dream come true, it's what I worked for my whole life and now to be here with the big club, it means a lot, it's really special."

Dan Bylsma said having a college goalie join practice near the end of the season is not foreign to him, "We're going to get him healthy and then we'll transition him into practice in various ways depending on our practice and our schedule. I've had this experience before with a goaltender pretty much almost every year where you end the college season and he comes to the NHL team and the opportunity to get NHL shots, to get into practice, to see the speed of the game and the quality of the shooters is going to be an adjustment for him."

"We could see three goalies on the ice, but most likely we'll only have two depending on the day and the situation. We have 12 games left here so we'll see if he can work into practice and then the possibility of a game."

Ryan O'Reilly was in full practice for a second straight day. Bylsma is optimistic about him playing Wednesday, "Today he was back out there again doing well, so he's progressing in that direction."

RPI coach Seth Appert: Kasdorf 'Will not be out-worked'

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 16, 2016

Goaltender Jason Kasdorf, who just signed his first professional contract with the Buffalo Sabres on Monday, has given a lot of credit to Seth Appert, his coach for the entirety of his career at RPI, for helping him become the goalie he is today.

Appert a former goaltender himself at Ferris State University, chatted with Sabres.com on Tuesday to discuss the team's new netminder.

Before we talk about Jason Kasdorf, the goaltender, what have you learned about him as a person that he'll bring to the Sabres dressing room?

Realistically I've been involved with him now for six years. There was a two-year recruiting process and then six years of coaching him so I know him really well. As good a goalie as he is – and he's a great goaltender – he's a better human being. He's just one of the best people that I've ever had the privilege to coach.

He's very unselfish, very caring, great work ethic, character and compassion for other people, real strong religious beliefs and strong faith that he and his wife share ... just a really, really quality person.

Talking to him for the first time today, there seemed to be a really genuine excitement from him about being here. Have you spoken to him and has he conveyed that to you?

For sure. He and I are very close, and yeah, he was talking to me through the whole process and then I went and had coffee with him and [his wife] Stacy on Monday morning. He's really excited. Again, he had options. He could've graduated and left and tried to be a free agent this summer. He could've come back for his fifth year and tested the same thing. He did have other options.

I think the fact that he took the opportunity with Buffalo shows how much belief he has in himself and also shows how much excitement he has to be a part of the Sabres organization.

Obviously he has the big body and the height. What else can you tell us about his skills as a goaltender?

I think a couple of things are key with him. One is that he's not a blocker. A lot of 6-foot-4 goalies that I see in the NHL are a little bit of blocking style of goaltender. He's an athlete that plays goalie, he just happens to be 6-foot-4. He's not a blocker by any stretch, he makes save in there without just relying on his size. But at the same time he's gained a great understanding of the technical aspects of the position to utilize his size when necessary.

I think the other thing about him is he's probably as good as I've ever worked with from a goalie perspective at taking learning situations in practice and then applying them to games. And that's a really, really unique skill.

When you say that, do any specific instances come to mind?

I remember the first game that he ever played here which was two months into his freshman year. In junior hockey, he was more of an athletic, competitor goalie that was kind of all over the place and over-aggressive. You know, typical of young goalies.

And then I remember when he went in relief and we were playing Union, which is our biggest rival. And we were on the road, it's a sold-out game – I'd been working with him on being calmer with less movement in the net. In a nervous situation for most people, he went in and had a real calm presence.

I remember him saying afterward, 'That was everything we worked on and talked about in practice.' For a 20-year-old kid at the time to feel that way and own that feeling in a sold-out building, coming off the bench against your biggest rival, it just showed he could apply those things in hard situations.

On that same token, he was here for some time over the summer at Development Camp. Did you see him bring back anything that he picked up and took into his final year?

I don't know if I'd say it was definitely from Buffalo or not. He and I talk about goaltending all the time and I don't believe that I'm the only person that can coach goalies, so I'm always trying to learn from other people. Jason and I will watch NHL goalies and try to steal ideas from them, when he goes home in the summer to Winnipeg or Buffalo last summer, it's the same thing.

Something that we gained from this summer, and it may have specifically come from Buffalo, was using the paddle-down situation more in some of the battles around the crease and things like that. I think that's something that he implemented into his game real well on scramble plays in front of the crease.

If you give him real strong logic for something that will help his game and then you show him how to work on it, he's going to work on it. His work ethic is tireless. He's going to work on it and he's going to apply it, he has that special ability. And he will not be outworked.

What do you think will be especially valuable for him to learn over these next three weeks?

College hockey is very good, but the NHL is better. We've got guys on our team who are certainly going to play in the NHL, but seeing a whole team of NHL-caliber shooters every day at practice, every day at goalie session, that will be invaluable.

Also gaining familiarity and starting to build a relationship, a bond of trust, with the goaltending coach and starting to understand things that Buffalo wants to see in him. And then I think what's most valuable from every guy I've coached that's gone to the NHL is just being around great players, great veterans, and learning how to be a pro. Not skill, not talent, but how they handle themselves.

Their attitude, how they come to practice, all of those things that make pros 15-year pros versus guys that just see the NHL. Saddle up the guy with Matt Moulson and Brian Gionta and guys that have been able to carve out long careers, and you just sit back and admire and appreciate how they go about their business.

Kasdorf 'Thrilled' to join Sabres for remainder of the season

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 16, 2016

Jason Kasdorf's eyes widened Tuesday when he spoke about his last 24 hours. The 23-year-old goaltender had signed his first professional contract the day before and, while he didn't participate due to a nagging groin injury, had just concluded watching his new teammates take part in an NHL practice.

Kasdorf said he will remain with Buffalo for the remainder of the season. Once he's recovered from his injury – he said it shouldn't take more than a few days – he'll join the team for practice. Sabres coach Dan Bylsma didn't rule out the potential for him to play in one of the remaining 12 games.

But, for now, he's just happy to be here.

"I'm incredibly excited," he said. "I'm just thrilled about the opportunity I have to be here, to be a part of the organization. It's a dream come true. It's what I worked for my whole life and now to be here with the big club, it means a lot. It's really special."

Kasdorf, who was acquired from Winnipeg in February 2015 as a part of the deal that brought Evander Kane and Zach Bogosian to Buffalo, concluded his season at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on Saturday.

While he spent four seasons at R.P.I. and remains on track to graduate in May, he had one year of eligibility remaining due to an injury that cost him all but two games during his sophomore year.

At the time of the injury, Kasdorf was two years removed from being drafted in the sixth round by the Jets, his hometown team, and one season removed from setting a single-season school record by posting a 1.62 goals-against average in 23 games as a freshman at R.P.I.

As disappointing as it may have been to miss his sophomore year, he doesn't believe the season was wasted.

"It definitely helped with the mental side of things, learning how to stay in the game even though you're not playing," Kasdorf said. "Just trying to focus on mental things and off-ice things, trying to get stronger and nutrition ... There was a lot that I was able to take from that year."

Fittingly, those are the sort of things Kasdorf will be focusing on as he concludes the season with Buffalo. He got right to it on Tuesday, soaking in practice from the bench and speaking at various points with goalies coach Andrew Allen.

"I'm just trying to learn as much as I can," he said. "I'm just trying to develop, trying to take it all in, learn from the guys what it's like to be a pro now. Just kind of asking guys questions, learning from them, guys who have been in this position. Really just, I think it's a great learning opportunity for me and I want to make the most of it."

Bylsma first saw Kasdorf in action at Development Camp in July. Kasdorf impressed during that week and even played 30 minutes of shutout hockey as the starting goaltender in the Blue and Gold Scrimmage (his opposition included Jack Eichel).

He took what he learned at camp – specifically, he said, how to better play the puck – and utilized it during his senior season. He posted a 2.30 GAA and a .931 save percentage in 30 games as a senior and graduates as the school's all-time leader with a 2.39 career GAA.

Bylsma said that on most days, there will still only be two goalies on the ice for practice depending on the situation. When Kasdorf is one of them, the coach said, he'll be gaining invaluable experience by seeing NHL shots.

"It's huge," Bylsma said, who added that he's had goalies in this position several times. "The possibility, opportunity to get some NHL shots, to get into practice, to see the speed of the game and the quality of the shooters is going to be an adjustment for him and a great opportunity."

The work won't stop for Kasdorf when he leaves the rink. The business and management major still has a few courses he'll need to finish up in the meantime to earn his degree.

"I've already talked to my professors and I've just got to kind of stay on top of things when I'm not at the rink," he said. "Got to do some homework and stuff."

NEW POWER-PLAY UNIT

With Bylsma saying that Ryan O'Reilly is progressing towards playing against the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday, he changed Buffalo's power-play unit accordingly at practice. O'Reilly replaced his brother Cal, while Zemgus Girgensons was also in for Johan Larsson.

"We have a net-front in Sam [Reinhart] and again operating with a middle-top guy and two flankers, with Ryan and Jack [Eichel] being on the flanks, we're looking for a good, smart middle man in the middle of the ice and Zemgus is a guy that can be both at the net and be that middle guy," Bylsma said.