



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 22, 2016

Sabres-Hurricanes Preview

By Jeff Mezydlo

AP

March 22, 2016

Though the Carolina Hurricanes have earned at least a point in all but one of their eight games this month, they've won only three times and remain a long shot to make the playoffs.

Following another missed opportunity, the Hurricanes try to avoid a fifth consecutive defeat and season sweep by the visiting Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday night.

Carolina (31-27-14) has gone past regulation six times in going 3-1-4 and playing all but one game on the road this month. The Hurricanes opened their recent five-game trip with a 3-2 overtime win over Boston on March 10, then lost the next four while going to OT two more times and then a shootout against Minnesota on Saturday.

"We've got to make one more play," coach Bill Peters said after the 3-2 loss to the Wild. "It's that tight around the league no matter who you play and where you play. Everyone is competing very hard, and everyone is desperate for points."

The Hurricanes are seven points out of the final wild-card spot and need to pass three teams to capture it. Entering Monday, Carolina leads the league in losses after regulation.

"This time of year, it's getting to playoff-type hockey," center Jordan Staal said. "Guys don't want to give up anything crazy and teams make you work for your goals."

"It's also just kind of the way we play. We've been playing solid defensively, making sure no one gets in behind us and making them work for goals. It becomes a tight match sometimes."

Carolina has managed seven goals during the 0-1-3 skid and is 0 for 9 on the power play in three games since going 1 for 3 in a 3-2 overtime loss at Buffalo (29-34-10) on March 12. The Hurricanes, who dropped five straight Nov. 10-20, were last swept in a season series by the Sabres in 2006-07.

Rookie Jack Eichel has scored three of his team-leading 22 goals against Carolina, highlighted by the OT tally earlier this month.

Buffalo sandwiched two wins around an overtime loss before putting forth a lackadaisical effort in Saturday's 4-1 defeat at Toronto. After Brian Gionta opened the scoring early in the first period, the Sabres seemed to sag while totaling 21 shots and allowing three third-period goals.

"We've got to find a way to grind things out when we're not feeling our best," Gionta told the Sabres' official website. "We didn't look like a team that had much energy but you get out to an early lead, you've got to find ways to play under those circumstances."

Buffalo hasn't scored on the power play in five road games in which it's had a chance with the man advantage. It's 1 for 31 in the last 10 road contests.

Carolina has killed off all five Buffalo penalties this season, and 42 of 46 in its last 19 games overall.

Staal scored Saturday for the second time in three games.

Buffalo's Robin Lehner has dropped four straight starts, yielding three goals in each of the last three.

Sabres sign forward Fasching from University of Minnesota

AP

March 22, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The Buffalo Sabres have signed forward Hudson Fasching to an entry-level contract.

Fasching, 20, finished his junior season at the University of Minnesota and will forego his final year of college eligibility. Fasching is one of Buffalo's top prospects after getting 38 points (20 goals, 18 assists) as a junior. He was also named to the All-Big Ten second team.

"Hudson showed us the kind of player he can be during his college career and we are pleased to sign him," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said in a statement. "We believe he has the potential to be an effective NHL player and wanted to bring him in as soon as possible."

Fasching helped lead the Golden Gophers to three consecutive regular-season conference championships. He finished his college career with 94 points (46 goals, 48 assists) in 115 games.

Foligno feels he's a factor for the Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 22, 2016

Contract years can be stressful if a player likes the city where he plays. Marcus Foligno will be a restricted free agent this summer, and he loves Buffalo. He's not feeling any stress, though.

His play has dissolved it.

Foligno, who is putting pucks in the opponents' net and keeping them out of his, feels he's finally put it all together. With consistency and intensity at both ends of the ice, the 24-year-old believes he's proving to the Sabres he should be a necessary piece going forward.

"I've been showing the coaches that they can trust me out there in crucial situations and the offensive side of my game is there," Foligno said Monday. "I've got to bring that every night, and I feel like I have with the physicality of it, sticking up for teammates and things like that. I think the overall game, if I can bring something every night, you're going to be a factor. I've figured it out.

"This is the best I've felt and the most consistent I've played. I believe I'm only going to get better from here on out."

Foligno will enter Tuesday's game in Carolina with two goals and three points in the last four games. He's set a career high in goals (10), and his 11 assists are two shy of his best. The fifth-year winger has learned how to use his 6-foot-3, 226-pound frame in a league where most things happen within a few feet of the net.

"You've got to be a good player around the net if you want to score," said center Johan Larsson, who has teamed with Foligno and Brian Gionta to form Buffalo's steadiest line. "He's a good player. He's strong on the walls, makes some plays, has got some patience with the puck. He's very good on the forecheck."

Since arriving with a goal-scoring flurry late in the 2011-12 season, Foligno has shown flashes of being a solid power forward. Those flashes have been surrounded by lapses of inactivity. The lapses are disappearing.

"He's been much more consistent in playing a big power-forward game, playing a checking game, being a physical guy," coach Dan Bylsma said in First Niagara Center. "That's what I think has been the best thing about him has been the consistency to it. It's not just a once-in-a-while type of attributes to his game.

"Last game we had him at nine hits. He was a physical guy in the game again and has been that for us for a consistent stretch of the last 25 games."

Foligno credits his offensive improvements to learning how to be patient.

"I just feel a lot more comfortable out there," he said. "I'm using my size, playing smarter with moving my feet out there, trying to protect pucks as much as I can. With the confidence up now, I think I'm just trying to hold on to pucks and do things myself down low. Not in a selfish way at all, it's just I need to handle it so I can buy some time for Gio and Larry to be open.

"Before it wasn't like that. I was getting the puck and getting rid of it as fast as I can. If I can hold the puck down low, we can generate a lot more stuff and create a lot more dangerous plays around the net."

Foligno is just as proud of his work in the defensive zone. While other lines have come and gone, the Larsson, Foligno and Gionta trio has remained intact. They're playing against offensive-minded opponents, yet Foligno's plus/minus rating in the last nine games is plus-6.

"That's a positive in my books," Foligno said. "It's good not to be scored on, and it's good to have that consistency over this past month. It feels like we've been on the plus side every game."

The Sabres are going to miss the playoffs for the fifth straight season, a skid that coincides with the length of Foligno's career. He sees the drought ending next year, and he wants to be around for it. He's coming to the close of a two-year contract that pays \$2.25 million.

"That's my biggest priority is to remain a Buffalo Sabre," Foligno said. "The attitude starts now, but next year is going to be a different feel for it. It's got to be a must-make-playoffs year."

"With all the pieces we've put in place, the way Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart have been playing, two key young guys who are going to be here for a long time, the foundation is built. Now it's trying to stack the right blocks on top of it and get it moving up."

Hudson Fasching signs with Sabres, could make NHL debut Saturday

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 22, 2016

With the Sabres and Hudson Fasching both eager to come to terms, it didn't take long to do so. The sides agreed to a three-year contract Monday night.

"Hudson showed us the kind of player he can be during his college career, and we are pleased to sign him," Sabres General Manager Tim Murray said in a statement. "We believe he has the potential to be an effective NHL player and wanted to bring him in as soon as possible."

Fasching, who was rated as the organization's No. 2 prospect by the Hockey News, is scheduled to arrive in Buffalo on Tuesday for a physical. The Sabres play in Carolina on Tuesday night, and Fasching will join them for practice when they return. He'll likely make his NHL debut Saturday when the Sabres host Winnipeg in First Niagara Center.

Fasching is leaving the University of Minnesota after a junior season that featured 20 goals and 38 points in 37 games. The 6-foot-2, 216-pound right winger led the Golden Gophers with seven game-winning goals.

"I think the fans are really going to take to him," Fasching's agent, Steve Bartlett, said by phone. "He really showed leadership and proved able to score big goals at big times. He just really took it up another level.

"He felt he accomplished what he wanted to do. He's ready to leave with a degree and fulfill the dream he's always had of being an NHL player."

Fasching has finished most of his coursework and is on pace to graduate this year. To help persuade the 20-year-old to leave Minnesota, the Sabres are starting him in the NHL despite having only nine games remaining. The first year of his contract will burn off with the limited number of appearances, but it's a common negotiating practice for college players.

Unlike many college signees, Fasching was able to sign a three-year deal because of his age. College players typically get a two-year contract, so burning a year isn't much of a loss for Buffalo.

Fasching signed for the rookie maximum of \$925,000 per year.

"The team really stepped up and worked with me to get a contract done in a quick and efficient manner," Bartlett said. "It's a big step from college to the NHL and no one's trying to get ahead of the game, but it's a great opportunity for him to get in, get involved with the team."

Fasching played with Sabres rookie Jack Eichel with the U.S. National Development Team in 2012-13. During Fasching's three seasons in Minnesota, he recorded 46 and 94 points in 115 games.

"Unbelievable past three years," Fasching wrote on Twitter. "Had a blast being part of the U of M! Want to thank the entire program and fans for the support along the way. Extremely honored and excited to be a part of the Buffalo Sabres organization! Can't wait to see what the future holds!"

Sabres notebook: Ennis improving; idle Eichel makes trip

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 22, 2016

It's been almost three months since Tyler Ennis played. Coach Dan Bylsma remains hopeful the forward will return before the Sabres' season ends in three weeks.

Ennis, who is out with a concussion suffered Dec. 30, skated on his own and did an off-ice workout Monday in First Niagara Center.

"Tyler's doing quite well, is improving," coach Dan Bylsma said. "Worked out and skated this morning, so he's doing better and better and the hopes of maybe moving in a positive direction in the next seven days."

The Sabres have nine games remaining, starting with Tuesday's visit to Carolina, so time is running short for Ennis to return. He has appeared in just 23 games and only four since Nov. 23 because of multiple concussions.

"I would love to see him on the ice with the team," Bylsma said. "I would love to see him get healthy and play some games."

Jack Eichel made the trip to Carolina and is expected to play after missing Saturday's game in Toronto because of illness. Eichel, who did not practice Monday, is recovering from flu-like symptoms.

"I don't think it was the flu," said Bylsma, who added the center was fine when he arrived in Toronto following Friday night's home game. "He had something to eat at the hotel, and by 4 in the morning he was not doing very good. Got a quick bug. Other people ate the same thing Jack ate at the hotel when we got there, so I'm not quite sure it was food poisoning, but that's what it looked like."

Defenseman Cody Franson (concussion) and goaltenders Robin Lehner (ankle) and Jason Kasdorf (groin) also skipped practice. Lehner did not go to Carolina.

"Resting, recovering, rehabbing, working out off the ice," Bylsma said. "We just want to take it slow. He could tape it up and try to skate today and see how the tweak goes or see where it's at, but really kind of taking a full rest and recovery for it."

Franson hasn't played since being boarded Feb. 19 in Columbus.

"Franson's off the ice and really kind of in a holding pattern for how he's feeling," Bylsma said.

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As expected, negotiations were progressing between the Sabres and University of Minnesota right wing Hudson Fasching.

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Every able-bodied male in Finland is required to serve at least six months of military service by age 29. Buffalo defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, 21, has not yet fulfilled the obligation. It can be done during the summer, but the pending restricted free agent won't do it this year.

"I don't have a contract for next year, so I want to have a good summer," he said.

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The Hurricanes are 3-1-4 in their last eight games, giving them points in all but one since the trade deadline. They've gone to overtime in six of the last seven.

A solid penalty kill has helped. Carolina has stopped 38 of 41 for a 92.7 percent success rate. The Hurricanes have the best kill in the NHL since Dec. 4 at 87.9 percent.

Carolina is 10-3-2 in the last 15 games against the Sabres in PNC Arena.

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Sabres forward Nicolas Deslauriers has never appeared in a shootout, even at the junior level. He may get the chance after a 4-for-5 showing during a competition at the end of practice.

"I know I have a good shot, so I just used it and got lucky, I think," Deslauriers, who celebrated all his goals, said with a grin. "I like doing those things. It's kind of proving to myself that I can score."

Sabres Prospects Update: Playoffs begin in major-junior leagues

By Amy Moritz
Buffalo News
March 22, 2016

The postseason begins this week for the major-junior leagues in Canada and Buffalo Sabres prospects have another opportunity to gain valuable on-ice experience.

In the Western Hockey League all four prospects are playing in best-of-seven first round series which begin on Friday.

Giorgio Estephan (Forward, Lethbridge) finished the regular season with 74 points (30 goals, 44 assists) in 59 games. He also had a plus-26 rating. His Lethbridge team will meet Regina in an Eastern Conference series.

Brendan Guhle (Defenseman, Prince Albert) had 28 points in the regular season (10 goals 18 assists) in 63 games. Prince Albert meets Moose Jaw in the Eastern Conference series.

Brycen Martin (Defenseman, Everett) picked up two assists over the weekend to close out the regular season with 37 points (six goals, 31 assists) and a plus-8 rating. Everett meets Portland in the Western Conference series.

Devante Stephens (Defenseman, Kelowna) was a plus-12 in the regular season with 11 points (two goals, nine assists) in 72 games. In the Western Conference series, Kelowna plays Kamloops.

In the Ontario Hockey League, Eric Cornel (Forward, Peterborough) begins the playoffs with his Petes finishing sixth in the Eastern Conference to face No. 3 North Bay in the best-of-seven series. Cornel ranks 14th in the OHL with 83 points (27 goals, 56 assists) in 68 games.

In the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, Vaclav Karabacek (Forward, Moncton) had a three-point weekend (two goals, one assist) to close out the regular season. In 47 games he put up 30 points (18 goals, 12 assists) Moncton places Victoriaville in the best-of-seven playoff opener.

Rochester Americans

March came in like a Lion for the Amerks, but it's quickly turning into a lamb. After winning four straight to start the month, the Amerks have lost three of their last four, including a 4-1 setback to the Providence Bruins Sunday at Blue Cross Arena.

Rookie forward Justin Bailey scored for the third straight game while Linus Ullmark made 30 saves on 33 attempts while earning his 14th start in 19 games.

The Amerks, now 31-29-2-1 on the season, host the St. John's IceCaps on Wednesday and Friday at Blue Cross Arena.

College hockey

Will Borgen (Defenseman, St. Cloud State) – Has 14 points (one goal, 13 assists) and a plus-18 rating as the Huskies won the NCHC title and earned the No. 2 overall seed in the NCAA tournament.

Christopher Brown (Forward, Boston College) – Picked up an assist in the Eagles loss to Northeastern in the Hockey East semifinals. BC is the No. 5 seed in the NCAA tourney.

Ivan Chukarov (Defenseman, UMass) – Finished his freshman season with three goals and five assists in 36 games. UMass ended its season with a first-round series loss to Boston University.

Hudson Fasching (Forward, Minnesota) – The junior finished his season with a career-best 38 points (20 goals, 18 assists) in 37 games. The Gophers lost to Michigan in the Big Ten championship and did not make the NCAA field.

Anthony Florentino (Defenseman, Providence) –The junior has five goals and seven assists as the Friars took the No. 4 seed in the NCAA bracket after losing in triple overtime to UMass-Lowell in the Hockey East semifinals.

Connor Hurley (Forward, Notre Dame) – The sophomore has 18 points (six goals and 12 assists) as the Fighting Irish enter the NCAA tournament as a No. 12 seed.

Sean Malone (Forward, Harvard) – Had four shots in Harvard's 2-1 overtime win against St. Lawrence in the ECAC semifinal but did not play in the title game, a loss to Quinnipiac. Harvard is the No. 11 seed in the NCAA tourney.

Cal Petersen (Goaltender, Notre Dame) – The sophomore gets new life in the NCAA tourney as the Fighting Irish made the field as a No. 12 seed. He has a 2.19 goals against and a .928 save percentage.

Judd Peterson (Forward, St. Cloud State) – The sophomore has 16 goals and 23 points this season for the Huskies who won the NCHC title and took the No. 2 seed in the NCAA field.

Max Willman (Forward, Brown) – Finished his sophomore season with three goals and 11 points

Europe

Jonas Johansson (Goaltender, Almtuna IS) – In four postseason games has a 3.01 goals against average and an .892 save percentage. He finished the regular season with a 2.39 goals against average and a .913 save percentage.

Victor Olofsson (Forward, MODO) – Finished the regular season with 29 points with 14 goals in 49 games.

Gustav Possler (Forward, MODO) – Had nine goals and 15 assists in 52 games in the regular season.

Sabres expected to have Eichel vs. Hurricanes

By Tim Wharnsby

NHL.com

March 22, 2016

SABRES (29-34-10) at HURRICANES (31-27-14)

TV: 7 p.m. ET; FS-CR, MSG-B, BELL-TV, NHL.TV

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres have defeated the Carolina Hurricanes twice at First Niagara Center, 4-1 on Nov. 27 and 3-2 in overtime on March 12. Center Jack Eichel has three goals for the Sabres and goalie Chad Johnson has two wins and a .948 save percentage. Forward Victor Rask leads the Hurricanes with two goals.

Sabres team scope: Eichel, who missed the 4-1 loss against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday because of an illness, did not practice, but he accompanied Buffalo on the road and is expected to play. "I'm not quite sure it was food poisoning," coach Dan Bylsma told buffalohockeybeat.com. "That's what it looked like." Johnson is expected to start. Goalie Robin Lehner (ankle) is out. Bylsma said forward Tyler Ennis (concussion) skated on his own and there is a chance he could play before the end of the season.

Hurricanes team scope: Defenseman Ryan Murphy is expected to play after he missed Carolina's 3-2 shootout loss Saturday against the Minnesota Wild with an upper-body injury. Coach Bill Peters said forward Derek Ryan will be recalled from the Charlotte Checkers of the American Hockey League, likely to skate on the fourth line with Brad Malone and Jay McClement. Defenseman Justin Faulk was cleared for practice, but not contact. He has missed 11 games with a lower-body injury. Six of the past seven games have gone past regulation for the Hurricanes (2-1-4).

Sabres sign Hudson Fasching to entry-level contract

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 22, 2016

BUFFALO – The Sabres signed winger Hudson Fasching to a three-year, entry-level contract Monday, adding to their stable of talented forward prospects.

The 20-year-old will start with the Sabres immediately, according to multiple reports, meaning the first year of his deal will likely be used this season.

Fasching just finished his junior season at the University of Minnesota, scoring a team-high 20 goals, including seven game-winners, and 38 points in 37 games. The Sabres' best NCAA prospect compiled 46 goals and 94 points in 115 career contests.

"Hudson showed us the kind of player he can be during his college career and we are pleased to sign him," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said in a statement. "We believe he has the potential to be an effective NHL player and wanted to bring him in as soon as possible."

The Sabres acquired 6-foot-2, 216-pound Fasching with winger Nick Deslauriers from Los Angeles on March 5, 2014, just months after the Kings drafted him in the fourth round, 118th overall.

The Minnesota native built himself into a top prospect as a freshman when he stopped wavering and decided he wanted to play as a power forward. That's why the Sabres paid a steep price – defenseman Brayden McNabb and two second-rounders – for him.

Fasching, a teammate of Sabres center Jack Eichel at Team USA competitions, scored 14 goals and 30 points in 40 games in 2013-14 as the Golden Gophers reached the national championship game.

Sabres rookie Jack Eichel in Calder hunt

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 22, 2016

BUFFALO – Thanks to a scheduling quirk three months ago, the Sabres enjoyed a six-day Christmas break, a rare opportunity to recharge during the rigorous six-month, 82-game season.

At that point, 33 games into his career, Sabres center Jack Eichel had nine goals and 16 points, terrific numbers for a 19-year-old. Still, those statistics ranked nowhere near the NHL's elite.

Eichel used the time to go home to Boston and relax. Having played only 55 total games over eight months as a college freshman last season, the professional grind was a new experience.

That short layoff ignited Eichel, drawing a line in his season. There's the pre-Christmas Eichel and the post-holiday one.

"Yeah, I think it was huge for me, getting to go home and recharge the battery, take a little mental break for the first time in a while," Eichel said last week inside the First Niagara Center. "I think it was nice, see some family and friends. It's almost like a weight's lifted off your shoulders when you go home. You're just back home. It's nice."

On Dec. 26, in his first NHL appearance in Boston, the youngster dazzled in front of his hometown crowd, scoring a career-high two goals and four points in the Sabres' 6-3 comeback win at TD Garden.

His most memorable NHL outing helped buoy Eichel, who has 13 goals and 33 points – as many points as Washington superstar Alex Ovechkin – in 38 post-Christmas contests. That's 18th in the league over that stretch. The second overall pick has five goals and eight points in his last eight games entering tonight's road tilt against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Three strong months have worked Eichel back into the Calder Trophy conversation for top rookie. Eichel ranks second among first-year players with 22 goals and 49 points in 72 games, trailing only Chicago winger Artemi Panarin, who has 25 goals and 63 points.

Eichel, of course, wants to join center Gilbert Perreault (1970-71), goalie Tom Barrasso (1983-84) and defenseman Tyler Myers (2009-10) as the only Sabres to win the award. His main focus, however, is simply on the final three weeks of the season.

"I think we're hockey players, right?" Eichel said. "So you want to be the best in everything you do and really competitive, but I think more than anything you kind of just want to play well these last (nine) games."

A fast finish could help Eichel, who will likely play tonight after battling what was believed to be food poisoning, receive strong Calder consideration. He needs one more point to become the first Sabres rookie with 50 points since Derek Plante in 1993-94.

"I think he's got to be considered," Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said. "He's had a pretty outstanding year."

While the crop of talented rookies might be the best in years, there's no clear-cut favorite, especially given Panarin is 24 years old and played 263 games in the KHL over parts of seven seasons. The Russian debuted in what is widely considered the world's second-best league when Eichel was in seventh grade. His age and experience could turn off some voters. So could the spot he's had on a line all season beside Patrick Kane, the league's leading scorer.

Connor McDavid likely would've ran away with the award if he hadn't suffered a broken collarbone in November. The Edmonton center could still win given he's the most electrifying young player since Sidney Crosby and the only rookie over a point a game with 14 goals and 40 points in 38 appearances.

Some other top candidates:

– Philadelphia defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, who spent a chunk of the season in the AHL, has 16 goals and 39 points 52 games. His wild 15-game point streak, a record for a rookie defender, helped the Flyers roar into the playoff race.

– Detroit center Dylan Larkin has 21 goals, 43 points, a plus-18 rating and ranks fourth in rookie scoring.

– Arizona center Max Domi has 17 goals and 45 points and ranks third in rookie scoring.

– Sabres winger Sam Reinhart, Eichel's linemate, is the only other 20-goal rookie.

"This is a decision I'd like to make," Bylsma said about the winner. "It's a good one."

He added: "It's a tough decision. I'm partial."

Partial, of course, to Eichel.

A strong argument can be made for Eichel, whose 27 assists rank behind only Panarin and Domi.

Eichel has pumped a rookie-high 215 shots on net, 25 more than anyone else. He has averaged 19 minutes, eight seconds of ice time a game, more than any rookie forward in the top 10 in scoring.

Since Christmas, Eichel has one more point than Panarin in three more appearances. Remember, Eichel has played with different wingers all season, only occasionally settling into a regular line. The Sabres' offense ranks 27th out of the 30 teams. Eichel has scored 13 percent of his team's 171 goals.

Eichel, it should be noted, is also a minus-13, the worst rating among the players mentioned.

While Eichel missed practice Monday because of a doctor's appointment, he's improving from the "quick bug" that kept him out of a loss 4-1 in Toronto, Bylsma said. He accompanied the Sabres to Raleigh.

Bylsma said Eichel got to the hotel in Toronto early Saturday morning and ate the same food some of his teammates did, Bylsma said. By 4 a.m., Eichel wasn't doing well.

"I'm not quite sure it was food poisoning," Bylsma said. "That's what it looked like."

Sabres' Jack Eichel ready to play; Tyler Ennis improving

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 22, 2016

BUFFALO – Center Jack Eichel, who missed Saturday's 4-1 loss in Toronto with what the Sabres now believe was food poisoning, will likely play Tuesday in Carolina, coach Dan Bylsma said.

While Eichel missed practice this morning because of a doctor's appointment, the rookie is improving from his "quick bug" and will accompany the Sabres to Raleigh this afternoon, Bylsma said.

Bylsma said Eichel got to the hotel in Toronto early Saturday morning and ate the same food some of his teammates did. By 4 a.m., Eichel wasn't doing well.

"I'm not quite sure it was food poisoning," Bylsma said inside the First Niagara Center. "That's what it looked like."

The Sabres originally said Eichel had the flu.

Meanwhile, goalie Robin Lehner (ankle) is still recovering and rehabbing and won't make the trip, Bylsma said.

In other injury news, Bylsma sounded optimistic winger Tyler Ennis, out the last 37 games with a concussion, could play again this season.

"Tyler's doing quite well, is improving," he said. "He worked out and skated this morning, so he's doing better and better, and the hopes of maybe moving in a positive direction maybe in the next seven days."

He "most definitely" wants to see Ennis play again this season.

Bylsma also said defenseman Cody Franson, out the last 14 games with a neck injury, is in a "holding pattern."

Rookie goalie Jason Kasdorf, who signed last week, is still recovering from his groin injury, Bylsma said. He hopes the R.P.I. product can practice soon.

Gophers forward Hudson Fasching signs with Buffalo Sabres; forgoes senior season

By Chad Graff
Saint Paul Pioneer Press
March 22, 2016

Hudson Fasching's junior season with the Gophers came to an end Saturday, and his NHL debut could come just seven days later.

Fasching opted to forgo his senior season with the Gophers, turning pro instead.

Monday night, Fasching signed an entry-level contract with the Buffalo Sabres.

"Hudson showed us the kind of player he can be during his college career and we are pleased to sign him," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said in a statement. "We believe he has the potential to be an effective NHL player and wanted to bring him in as soon as possible."

The 20-year-old from Burnsville and Apple Valley High School served as an alternate captain for the Gophers this season and tied for the team lead with 20 goals, adding 18 assists in 37 games.

He concludes his Gophers career with the 94 points in 115 games.

Fasching's NHL debut could come as soon as Saturday when the Sabres play host to the Winnipeg Jets.

Sabres make the signing of Fasching official

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 22, 2016

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) -- Minnesota junior winger Hudson Fasching has decided to leave school and sign a contract with the Sabres.

Fasching will not play in Carolina on Tuesday as he needs to fly to Buffalo to take a physical.

The 6'2, 216 pound winger was a fourth round pick of the Kings in 2013 and then came to Buffalo with Nick Deslauriers for Brayden McNab, Jonathan Parker and two second round picks.

In 37 games with the Gophers this season, Fasching had 20 goals and 38 points.

He also played for Team USA twice at the World Junior Tournament. He had seven points in 10 tournament games.

In a release General Manager Tim Murray said, "Hudson showed us the kind of player he can be during his college career and we are pleased to sign him." Murray added, "We believe he has the potential to be an effective NHL player and wanted to bring him in as soon as possible."

There are no guarantees, but if he passes his physical there's a pretty good chance his first NHL game will be Saturday afternoon vs Winnipeg.

Sabres games are getting rougher

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 22, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- It seems like there are a lot more scrums in games the past few weeks. Fans think players like Dion Phaneuf and Chris Neil are taking advantage of the Sabres. Dan Bylsma said, "I think it's more our response to the game than it is us reacting to the opposition. I think we've been the initiator, been more physical, been harder to play against and you have seen that."

Zach Bogosian is always quick to defend a teammate along with Marcus Foligno and Nick Deslauriers. Lately, players like Rasmus Ristolainen, Josh Gorges and Brian Gionta have popped up in scrums. The defenseman said, "I don't know if it's necessarily us as a team, I think at this point of the year, a lot of teams are trying to get into the playoffs, if they're not already there and if they're out, some guys are fighting for jobs as well, so they're intense games, you're playing for something and that's the pride of wearing the jersey."

"Sometimes things get heated and I think as a group we've responded well to being there for each other and sticking up for each other."

Bogosian has probably been the most active when it comes to defending teammates, but he says he's liked what he's seen from everybody, "For sure, you try to be there for each other, you don't have to drop your gloves and fight, just stick your nose in there and calm things down or be there for a teammate. It makes everyone in the room feel good."

It's not in Mark Pysyk's nature to be aggressive or fight, but he's been told since last year that he needs to be more aggressive and you can tell he's giving it an effort. Bylsma has noticed too, "Good for Mark, I'd like to see more from him. That's a part of his game that he's working on is being physical, being aggressive and it's been something that you've noticed."

With trying to be more aggressive, Pysyk taking a few more penalties. Bylsma never wants penalties, but he can live with what Pysyk is doing, "I think 17 games ago he got two minors and we did say to ourselves, maybe that's what you get when you're asking a player to be a little more physical and a little more aggressive in his defending." Bylsma added, "We want to play aggressive defensively, we want to be a hard team to play against and Mark's learning and growing in playing that way."

The team left for Carolina right after Monday's practice."

Sabres' Eichel almost recovered. Ennis has improved

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 22, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres believe Jack Eichel had a case of food poisoning. Eichel went and saw the doctor on Monday and he will make the trip to Raleigh.

Robin Lehner was also still not out there. Dan Bylsma said, "We just want to take it slow. When you're dealing with the continuing of the ankle sprain, he could tape it up today and try to see how it goes, but we're going to take rest and recovery for it at this point in time."

Tyler Ennis seems to be progressing in his concussion rehab. Bylsma said, "Tyler's doing quite well and is improving. Worked out and skated this morning, so he's doing better and the hopes of maybe moving in a positive direction in the next seven days."

Bylsma hasn't given up on Ennis and wants to see him back this season, "Most definitely, I would love to see him on the ice with the team, I'd love to see him get healthy and play some games."

Cody Franson still isn't much better. Bylsma said, "Franson's off the ice and really in a holding pattern right now for how he's feeling."

The team split up and had a 32 round shootout which saw Nick Deslauriers score five straight times on Chad Johnson. Each celebration got wilder and wilder and he said he did it for his goalie's benefit, "Yes, when I'm on Johnnie I think he doesn't like it when I celebrate, so I try to go overboard there."

Johnson's response was with a laugh was, "I wasn't looking, I was just distraught that he scored on me so many times, I just buried my head to be honest."

Eichel expected to return to lineup in Carolina

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 22, 2016

Jack Eichel wasn't at practice with the Buffalo Sabres on Monday morning, but he wasn't sick at home, either. Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said that the rookie forward was feeling much better than he was on Saturday, when sudden sickness caused him to miss a game that night against Toronto.

Bylsma said he expects Eichel back in the lineup in Carolina on Tuesday night.

"Jack is a lot better and will be going on the trip with us," Bylsma said. "He was a lot better yesterday, just seeing the doctor this morning so [he] missed practice."

With all the questions Eichel has faced this season regarding the physical and mental demands of an 82-game season on a 19-year-old rookie, there's a bit of irony in the fact that what caused him to finally miss a game – with only 10 to go at the time, no less – might have been a bad meal.

"He had something to eat at the hotel and by four in the morning he was not doing very good," Bylsma said. "Other people ate the same thing Jack ate at the hotel when we got there so I'm not quite sure it was food poisoning, but that's what it looked like."

Rookie forward Daniel Catenacci, who replaced Eichel in the lineup in Toronto on Saturday, was re-assigned to Rochester on Sunday morning. The Sabres practiced with 11 forwards on Monday, using assistant coach Dan Lambert as a fourth-line substitute on some drills.

Goalies Robin Lehner (ankle) and Jason Kasdorf (groin) were also absent from practice. Lehner has missed two games with lingering issues from the high ankle sprain that cost him the first three months of the season, while Kasdorf has yet to practice since signing an entry-level contract last Monday.

Neither goaltender traveled to Carolina. Bylsma said that he still hopes to see Kasdorf practice with the team at some point, but added that he remains in the off-ice rehabilitation stage of his injury. As for Lehner, he said, the team is simply proceeding with caution.

"Just want to take it slow," Bylsma said. "You're dealing with the ankle, [a] continuing of the ankle sprain. He could tape it up and try today and see how the tweak goes or see where it's at, but really kind of taking a full rest and recovery at this time."

Bylsma also provided updates on two Sabres in the midst of dealing with long-term injuries. Defenseman Cody Franson has missed 14 games with a neck injury while forward Tyler Ennis has missed 36 with a concussion.

"Franson's off the ice and really kind of in a holding pattern for how he's feeling," Bylsma said.

"Tyler's doing quite well, is improving, worked out and skated this morning so he's doing better and better [with] hopes of maybe moving in a positive direction in the next seven days."

DESLAURIERS BACK ON TOP

Nicolas Deslauriers joked on Saturday that the reason he celebrates so enthusiastically when he scores is because, as a fourth-line wing, he never knows if it's going to be his last goal. He had plenty of chances to unleash those signature celebrations on Monday, however, during an end-of-practice shootout.

Brian Duff has the full scoop on that shootout in Monday's Sabres in :90, embedded above. It went 16 rounds, including Deslauriers scoring on his first four attempts.

When he finally did miss, Marcus Foligno – who was on the opposing team – yelled that it was Deslauriers' "longest shift ever," shouting for somebody to grab him some water. Judging by how line rushes went on Monday, the timing was fitting.

Deslauriers was back on the top line alongside Ryan O'Reilly and Evander Kane, where he had played – and scored – against the Ottawa Senators on Friday. He had been switched to the fourth line and replaced at the top by Matt Moulson to begin Saturday's game, but switched back by the third period.

Deslauriers, who has 10 goals this season, previously scored twice on a line with O'Reilly at the end of October. For the time being, it appears he'll get more opportunities in that spot.

"I think I'm the kind of guy that can move up and down the lineup," Deslauriers said Saturday. "I accept my role and I know what I have to bring. If I go on a checking line I know I just have to play my game and if it's more on line or something else like that I just have to bring the same thing."

MOVING ON

The Sabres were rightfully disappointed after a 4-1 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday. It was an uncharacteristic effort from a team that hadn't lost a game by more than two goals since Feb. 19.

The pace and tone of practice on Monday, however, suggested that the team had put that game in their rearview mirror with their sights set on finishing strong in the final nine games of the season.

"It was extremely disappointing, there's no way around that," captain Brian Gionta said. "But when you come back in today you've got to forget it and move on just like any other game ... I thought we had good jump today."

MONDAY'S PRACTICE

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