



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres hope Reinhart line takes center stage

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 24, 2016

Given his choice of career path, Sam Reinhart would prefer to skate as the right winger for center Jack Eichel. Dan Bylsma sees that as Reinhart's long-term future, too.

However, with Eichel sidelined and Buffalo in need of offense, Reinhart is back at center. The Sabres hope it's a happy return.

Reinhart will skate in the middle of left wing Tyler Ennis and right wing Zemgus Girgensons on Tuesday when the Sabres visit Philadelphia. Drafted second overall as a center, Reinhart's best moments in Buffalo have come as a winger alongside Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly. The 20-year-old is getting another chance to be the centerpiece.

"We're looking for Sam to anchor a line and be that guy in the middle," Bylsma said after practice Monday. "I like the way he skated today just playing center. He was skating up and down the ice, skating with speed. I think that's something he's going to have to bring to make that line effective."

Bylsma hasn't been impressed by Reinhart's footwork through the Sabres' opening four games. The movement should pick up with the added backchecking duties given to centers.

"From a skating standpoint, you're kind of keeping your speed up more," Reinhart said in KeyBank Center. "It's not as much stopping and starting. It's more trying to keep your speed up through the middle of the ice as opposed to being on the wall and trying to get going when the puck gets to you. It's a little bit different and forces you to keep moving your feet."

"When I'm at my best I'm moving my feet, I'm taking up time and space on the forecheck. At times when I move to center it helps me do that."

In addition to getting Reinhart moving, Bylsma hopes the switch gets Ennis and Girgensons going. Ennis has no goals, one assist and is a team-worst minus-4. Girgensons has one goal on just six shots.

"I've liked their jump the last two days," Bylsma said. "They have some offensive punch to them. That's what that line needs to be for us, getting Tyler Ennis going for us, getting Zemgus going for us."

The line seems to have compatible components. Ennis is shifty with puck-carrying ability. Reinhart can pass into tight areas. Girgensons is a north-south player who can get to the net. While they've formed duos before, they've never all been together.

"If I can get it in there with my speed and then have Sam making plays with those great passes he can make, it should be a fun line," Ennis said. "I've got to push the pace, use my speed all over the ice and then just really think of getting the puck to the net."

Reinhart's position switch means another swap for Girgensons. He started at center this year after bouncing between the middle and wing last season.

"You adjust," Girgensons said. "Rhino is jumping into center, so maybe that will be a little spark there and we get a good game out of it."

The objective is to establish stable places for Girgensons and Reinhart. While versatility is good, maximizing their skills in one spot is better.

"At this point I see it as if there's an injury I'll move back to center," Reinhart said. "When Jack's back, I'm hoping we'll get put back together, but at this point I like where our group's at with me down the middle."

Added Bylsma: "Long term, I like seeing him play with Jack Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly. That means he's playing wing. He's a centerman by nature, but I kind of like what I see and have seen from him and Jack together on a line."

Eichel's high-ankle sprain is expected to keep him out until Thanksgiving or later, so for now it's back to the middle for Reinhart. No matter where the players line up, they expect to improve their 1-2-1 record.

"It's not good enough," Ennis said. "We want to win every game, and I think we could have won every game."

Sabres Notebook: Nilsson in net; D changes; injury updates

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 24, 2016

Anders Nilsson has been waiting patiently for his first appearance in the Sabres' net. It was coming soon anyway, but the timeline got bumped up with an illness to Robin Lehner.

Lehner, who started Buffalo's first four games, will watch Tuesday's visit to Philadelphia from home. He was too sick to join the team on its trip, so Nilsson will be the Sabres' goaltender against the Flyers (7:30 p.m., NBCSN, Radio WGR-AM 550).

"Since Day One of camp, Anders has been a complete professional and warrior in net," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Monday. "He's battled in every practice, every scrimmage, every opportunity he got."

Nilsson had a stellar preseason for the Sabres, stopping 49 of 50 shots in his first two appearances. The trade acquisition is eager to build off those performances with his regular-season debut.

"It all comes down to practice and how you prepare in practice," Nilsson said in KeyBank Center. "You go out there for practice and try to see it as a game. For me, that's the best way to prepare."

Nilsson has taken the ice early with goaltending coach Andrew Allen on a daily basis, and Allen believes the work will be evident Tuesday.

"We work a lot in practice on being focused and playing it like a game situation," Allen said. "He's practiced well every day."

Lehner, who is 1-2-1 with an .892 save percentage and 3.01 goals-against average, was scheduled to start against the Flyers. But with 11 games in the next 19 days, Nilsson's time was near.

"We've got a lot of games in a short amount of time, and it goes right into November," Bylsma said. "He had a two-week break before he gets his first game, but he's going to get the net here with a number of games and back-to-back situations."

The Sabres recalled Linus Ullmark from Rochester to serve as Nilsson's backup. Ullmark is 3-1 for the Amerks with a .926 save percentage.

The promotion didn't come until after practice, so the Sabres used Allen as their second goaltender. The 40-year-old had a long minor-league career, but he had donned the pads just once in the last five years.

"Embarrassing at times, but fun," Allen said with a smile. "I got a little better as practice went on, but the first drill was tough. Reaction speed is not what it used to be."

Bylsma tweaked his defensive pairs. Dmitry Kulikov moved up to play alongside Zach Bogosian, while Jake McCabe slid next to Cody Franson. Josh Gorges and Rasmus Ristolainen remained the top pair.

"I want Kulikov on the ice in more situations and more opportunities," Bylsma said. "The pairing of Josh Gorges and Risto, while it's not together 100 percent of the time during the last four games, it's been strong as the matchup pairing. It's getting Dmitry more ice time. He needs it, deserves it and we need him to have it."

Kulikov, acquired from Florida as a potential mate for Ristolainen, has no points and one shot while averaging 20:07 of ice time.

It's early, but the Sabres have made tremendous strides in the faceoff circle. They entered Monday's games ranked third in the NHL, winning 55.1 percent. They won 49.4 percent last season to rank 21st.

Sam Reinhart is at 63.1 percent, followed by Ryan O'Reilly at 61 percent. Derek Grant (54.7 percent) and Zemgus Girgensons (52.2 percent) are also winning more than half their draws. Johan Larsson is at 46.5 percent.

Jack Eichel is less than two weeks into the high-ankle sprain that could keep him out for eight weeks. As expected, he is still using his scooter and walking boot.

"It's a slow progression," Bylsma said. "Other than maybe walking around just a little bit on it, he's still in a timeframe where he's being very cautious in the boot."

Evander Kane remains in the week-to-week category with three cracked ribs.

"It's more of pain discomfort than anything," Bylsma said. "He should be able to start moving here shortly – not crazily, but he should be able to start moving shortly here and go from there."

Sabres' Sam Reinhart happy with move to center

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
October 24, 2016

BUFFALO – It was only a matter of time before Sam Reinhart switched positions.

With center Jack Eichel injured, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma loaded up his top line early, keeping Reinhart at right wing, this time beside Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo.

Reinhart, however, produced only two assists in four games. The 1-2-1 Sabres, meanwhile, have just 11 goals as a team, six of them in one outing.

They clearly miss the talented Eichel, who's recovering from a high left ankle sprain.

So Bylsma has moved Reinhart back to center, his natural position, for tonight's tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers, the finale of a four-game road trip. Bylsma said when Eichel was hurt Oct. 12, he anticipated he would eventually switch Reinhart.

"I think we're looking for Sam to anchor a line and be that guy in the middle," Bylsma said Monday inside KeyBank Center.

Bylsma also wants Reinhart to showcase more speed. Playing with wingers Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons should get him moving.

"I think when I'm playing my best, I'm moving my feet, I'm taking my time and space on the forecheck," Reinhart said.

Through two days of practice together, Bylsma said he has liked the trio's "jump" and "offensive punch." So far, only Girgensons has scored a goal this season.

"That's what that line needs to be here for us, get Tyler Ennis going for us, get Zemgus going for us, get Sam (going)," Bylsma said. "He's (been the) best hockey player playing center in his past. I like the way he skated playing center today ... skating up and down the ice, skating with speed."

To Bylsma, Reinhart played his "best hockey" at the 2015 World Junior Championship, a tournament he centered Max Domi and Anthony Duclair, two Arizona Coyotes prospects.

"Sam was a great skater ... with those two guys on his line and having that speed with him," said Bylsma, who watched Team Canada up close as an analyst.

The Sabres, of course, drafted Reinhart as a center second overall in 2014. But with Eichel and O'Reilly entrenched as the top two pivots, Bylsma switched Reinhart to right wing last season so he could play on the first or second line.

"I'm comfortable moving back and forth," Reinhart said.

Reinhart thrived as a rookie, scoring 23 goals and 42 points in 79 games. Other than a brief run in the middle, he stayed on the side.

Ultimately, he might return to the wing.

"I think it's hard to say," Bylsma said. "I think long term, I like seeing him play with Jack Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly, and that means he's playing wing. He's a centerman by nature, but I kind of like what I've seen from pairing him and Jack on a line."

Reinhart shares strong chemistry with Eichel, his close friend and roommate. Bylsma was set to reunite the two with winger Evander Kane before Eichel's injury scuttled that plan. Late last season, the trio morphed into the Sabres' No. 1 scoring line. A day after Eichel went down, Kane cracked three ribs opening night and is out weeks.

"When Jack comes back, I'm hoping we'll be put back together," Reinhart said. "At this point, I like where our group's at."

Ennis, who suffered a season-ending concussion Dec. 30, hasn't scored since Oct. 27, an 18-game drought. The Sabres' longest-tenured player is a notoriously slow starter.

"I'm just trying to find my game, how it was before the injury," Ennis said.

How is he trying to find his game?

"Just put the puck in the net," Ennis said.

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Before practice started Monday, goalie coach Andrew Allen, 40, was on the ice in full gear putting a few players through some paces, a sign one of the Sabres' regulars was unavailable.

It turns out No. 1 goalie Robin Lehner is sick and unavailable for tonight's tilt, Bylsma said.

"Hoping he would pull through this morning," Bylsma said.

Bylsma said backup Anders Nilsson will start his first game for the Sabres, who acquired him from the St. Louis Blues on July 2 for a draft pick.

They also recalled goalie Linus Ullmark from the Rochester Americans. In four games, Ullmark is 3-1 with a 2.75 goals-against average and a .926 save percentage. He stopped 72 of 75 shots in the AHL club's two weekend wins.

But before the Sabres summoned the Swede, Allen, who retired in 2005, practiced fully in leftover equipment from past Sabres goalies.

"I thought our third goalie today was not very good," Bylsma joked.

Nilsson, meanwhile, has been patiently waiting as Lehner started the first four contests. With the schedule ramping up, Bylsma will be giving him more work.

"Since Day One of camp Anders has been a complete professional and warrior in net," Bylsma said. "He's battled in every practice, every scrimmage (and) every opportunity he's got in net."

Nilsson enjoyed a strong preseason, posting a shutout. Tonight will be the Swede's 53rd NHL appearance and first since April 9.

"I've been trying to go out in practice and see it as a game," Nilsson said.

Sabres goalie Robin Lehner sick; Anders Nilsson to get first start

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
October 24, 2016

BUFFALO – Before practice started this morning, goalie coach Andrew Allen, 40, was on the ice in full gear putting a few players through some paces, a sign one of the Sabres' regulars was unavailable.

It turns out No. 1 goalie Robin Lehner is sick and unavailable for Tuesday's tilt in Philadelphia, coach Dan Bylsma said.

"Hoping he would pull through this morning," Bylsma said inside KeyBank Center.

Bylsma said backup Anders Nilsson will make his first start. The Sabres will also likely recall a goalie.

Update: The Sabres have summoned goalie Linus Ullmark from the Rochester Americans.

In four games, Ullmark is 3-1 with a 2.75 goals-against average and a .926 save percentage. He stopped 72 of 75 shots in the AHL club's two weekend wins.

In the meantime, Allen, who retired in 2005, practiced fully in leftover equipment from past Sabres goalies.

"I thought our third goalie today was not very good," Bylsma joked.

Allen also practiced once in March. Other than that, he hasn't been on the ice in five years.

"I got a little better as practice went on," a smiling Allen said. "The first drill was tough. Reaction speed's not what it used to be."

Nilsson, meanwhile, has been patiently waiting as Lehner started the first four contests. With the schedule ramping up, Bylsma will be giving him more work.

"Since Day One of camp Anders has been a complete professional and warrior in net," Bylsma said. "He's battled in every practice, every scrimmage (and) every opportunity he's got in net."

Nilsson enjoyed a strong preseason, posting a shutout. Tuesday will be the Swede's 53rd NHL appearance and first since April 9 with St. Louis.

"I've been trying to go out in practice and see it as a game," Nilsson said.

Check back later for more, including a story on Sam Reinhart's move to center.

Sabres goalie Lehner ill; Nilsson to start at Philadelphia

Associated Press

October 24, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres starting goalie Robin Lehner is sidelined with an illness, which means backup goalie Anders Nilsson will make his season debut at Philadelphia on Tuesday night.

Coach Dan Bylsma provided the update after Lehner missed practice Monday. Bylsma said Lehner was "feeling under the weather," and not scheduled to travel with the team.

Buffalo filled the backup spot by promoting Linus Ullmark from Rochester, the team's American Hockey League affiliate.

Lehner has 1-2-1 record in playing all four games this season.

Buffalo gave up a fifth-round pick in the 2017 draft to acquire Nilsson in a trade with St. Louis in July.

He has a 19-22-4 record over three NHL seasons split between three teams, including the New York Islanders and Edmonton Oilers.

Sabres recall G Ullmark

The Sports Xchange

October 24, 2016

The Buffalo Sabres recalled goaltender Linus Ullmark from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League on Monday.

Ullmark, 23, joins the Sabres for his first recall of the 2016-17 season after recording a 3-1-0 record, 2.75 goals-against average and .926 save percentage in four games for Rochester.

The 6-foot-4, 221-pound native of Lugnvik, Sweden, appeared in 20 games for the Sabres during his first season in North America in 2015-16, posting an 8-10-2 record with a 2.60 goals-against average and .913 save percentage

Lehner out against the Flyers; Ullmark recalled

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 24, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Sabres goalie Robin Lehner struggled to get through practice on Sunday as he battled through an illness. On Monday, Lehner did not practice as he continues to fight off the sickness.

Head coach Dan Bylsma said he will not make the trip to Philadelphia and Anders Nilsson will get his first start as a Sabre in net. To back up Nilsson, the Sabres have recalled goalie Linus Ullmark from the Rochester Americans.

Between scrimmages and preseason games, Nilsson only gave up one goal through training camp.

The goaltender does have something to prove as he never really played well with the Islanders, Edmonton or St. Louis.

The defensive pairs changed in practice on Monday and look like this:

Gorges - Ristolainen

Kulikov - Bogosian

McCabe - Franson

Nelson

Bylsma moved up Kulikov because he said he has earned and needs more minutes. Kulikov has averaged 20:07 per game while McCabe has been at 20:20. Josh Gorges trails the left defensemen with 17:15 per game.

Faceoff on Tuesday from Philadelphia is at 7:35. The only place to catch Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray is on WGR Sports Radio 550.

Sabres' Ennis is happy to have Reinhart in the middle

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 24, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Even when Tyler Ennis was scoring 20 goals in a season, he usually got off to a slow start. This season is no different as he has just one assist in four games and is minus 4. He also is only averaging just over 14 minutes a game as he tries to earn more ice time.

Ennis came to practice on Sunday and found himself with a new center in Sam Reinhart. Zemgus Girgensons is on the other wing. Ennis teamed with Girgensons and Matt Moulson a few years ago and they had good chemistry. Ennis is happy with his new line, "It's exciting. Sam played center in junior and he was drafted as a centerman so it'll be a good test for him and a good test for our line."

Reinhart can find a player with a pass that many don't even think is available. Ennis is looking forward to that, "He's an incredible passer and I think it'll be a good spot for him because he has all the ice to find somebody."

The question I pose to Ennis almost every season is how does he get out of the slow start? He said, "I'm just trying to find my game, how it was before the injury. There's going to be a little rust and I have to find that shooting mentality."

He gave it a little more thought and smiled saying, "Just put the puck in the net I guess." He did get serious after that and agreed he must use his speed more, "Yes I think so, I think I need to push the pace and use my speed all over the ice and then just think about getting the puck to the net."

Bylsma has seen the line for two practices and he thinks Reinhart has already taken to it, "I've liked their jump the last two days and they've had some offensive punch to them. That's what that line needs to be for us. He's best as a hockey player playing center in his past. I liked the way he skated today playing center. He's skating up the ice and skating with speed."

Bylsma admitted when Eichel went down he thought about Reinhart at center right away.

The Sabres traveled to Philadelphia after practice on Monday to face the Flyers Tuesday.

Reinhart hopes for more speed after switch to center

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

October 24, 2016

Sam Reinhart says often that playing with fast players makes him play faster, and his coach said Sunday that he'd like to see Reinhart move his feet a bit more. Having said that, it made sense to see Reinhart centering a dynamic skater like Tyler Ennis for the second-straight practice at KeyBank Center on Monday.

Reinhart has played on the left wing alongside Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo through the first four games of the season, which Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said was done in an effort to "overload" his top line in the absence of Jack Eichel and Evander Kane. Now, in an effort to restore balance to his scoring lines, Bylsma has placed Reinhart on a line between Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons.

Through two days at practice, the coach has liked what he's seen.

"I've liked their jump the past two days and [they] have some offensive punch to them," Bylsma said. "That's what that line needs to be for us. Get Tyler Ennis going here, get Zemgus going and Sam, he's his best hockey player playing center in his past."

Reinhart is a natural centerman, having played the position in junior hockey and on the top line for Team Canada when he won gold at the World Junior Championship in 2015. He shifted to wing as a rookie last season after finding success on lines alongside both O'Reilly and Eichel.

However long his stay at center ends up being, Reinhart thinks the move will help his game going forward. He's reiterated that he's willing to play either position, but Bylsma said Monday that he still envisions Reinhart on the wing next to O'Reilly or Eichel in the future.

"I think when I'm playing my best I'm moving my feet and I'm taking away time and space on the forecheck from their defenders," Reinhart said. "I think at times when I move to center it helps me do that and if I ever get a chance to go back to wing it I think it benefits my game that much more."

Playing center means more time playing down low, which is where Reinhart has thrived for the Sabres on the power play. Ennis called Reinhart an "incredible passer," and both of his assists so far this season are products of him putting that ability on display low in the offensive zone.

He's also fared well when called upon in the faceoff circle so far this season. He won seven of 11 draws in the opener against Montreal, when an oblique injury prevented O'Reilly from taking a number of faceoffs for his line, and is 12-for-19 this season (63.1 percent).

The goal for Reinhart as a center is to not only generate more offense himself, but also to help derive more from his linemates. Ennis and Girgensons have scored just one point each through four games, and Ennis admitted he's still trying to get his game back to where it was prior to sustaining a season-ending concussion last December.

"We've got to support the puck and try to use speed, get the pucks behind them and then go to work," Ennis said. "If I can get in there with my speed and have Sam making plays with those great passes he can make, it should be a fun line."

Nilsson to start Tuesday

Robin Lehner was absent from practice on Monday due to illness and did not travel with the team to Philadelphia, meaning Anders Nilsson will make his regular-season debut for the Sabres against the Flyers on Tuesday night. Linus Ullmark was recalled from Rochester to serve as Nilsson's backup.

New defensive pairs

Dmitry Kulikov and Jake McCabe swapped defensive partners on Monday, with Kulikov skating alongside Zach Bogosian and McCabe alongside Cody Franson. Bylsma said the move was made in an effort to increase the responsibilities for Kulikov, who also practiced on the power play.

Kulikov has seen his ice time increase in every game since missing the end of preseason and then the regular-season opener with a lower-body bruise. He skated 21:35 in the loss to Vancouver on Thursday.

"I want to get Kulikov on the ice in more situations and more opportunities," Bylsma said. "That pairing of Josh Gorges and [Rasmus Ristolainen], while it's not together 100 percent of the time during the last four games, has been strong in the matchup pairings. Getting Dmitry more ice time, I think he needs it, deserves and we need him to have it."

Injury report

It's been a bit less than two weeks since the Sabres lost Eichel and Kane to injury, and Bylsma offered updates on their status on Monday. Bylsma said that Eichel (high-ankle sprain) remains in a walking boot and will continue to proceed with caution, while Kane's timetable (cracked ribs) for a return is still "weeks."

"It's more of a pain and discomfort than anything at this point in time," Bylsma said of Kane's injury. "He should be able to start moving here shortly. Not crazily, but he should be able to start moving shortly and kind of go from there."

Monday's practice

26 Matt Moulson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
63 Tyler Ennis - 23 Sam Reinhart - 28 Zemgus Girgensons
82 Marcus Foligno - 22 Johan Larsson - 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 27 Derek Grant - 52 Hudson Fasching

4 Josh Gorges - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
77 Dmitry Kulikov - 47 Zach Bogosian
29 Jake McCabe - 6 Cody Franson
34 Casey Nelson

31 Anders Nilsson

Sabres recall Ullmark

Buffalo Sabres

October 24, 2016

The Buffalo Sabres today announced the team has recalled goaltender Linus Ullmark from the Rochester Americans (AHL).

Ullmark (6'4", 221 lbs., 7/31/1993) joins the team for his first recall of the 2016-17 season after recording a 3-1-0 record and .926 save percentage in four games for the Americans so far this season. The Lugnvik, Sweden native appeared in 20 games for the Sabres during his first season in North America in 2015-16, posting an 8-10-2 record with a .913 save percentage and a 2.60 goals-against average.