



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

September 30, 2016

Quick hits: Sabres 1, Maple Leafs 0 (SO)

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 30, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – The Sabres' offense is still in an offseason slumber. It should wake up when the power play does.

Buffalo eked out a 1-0 shootout victory over Toronto on Thursday, getting the only goal when Matt Moulson scored on the Sabres' fourth attempt of the shootout. Buffalo has scored three regulation goals during its three preseason games.

Buffalo went 0 for 5 with the man advantage against the Maple Leafs, falling to 0 for 16 this preseason. The Sabres were 0 for 5 in the opening 2-1 loss to Minnesota and 0 for 6 in Tuesday's 3-2 overtime win against Ottawa.

The Sabres' power play had eight shots in two minutes midway through the third period, but they couldn't find the net as the game remained scoreless. Marcus Foligno, Cole Schneider, Zach Bogosian and Evander Kane all had close-range chances that goaltender Kasimir Kaskisuo stopped.

The Sabres outshot the Leafs, 38-23, including 35-21 during regulation. Anders Nilsson had the shutout for Buffalo and stopped four shots in the shootout.

Brotherly competition: Alexander Nylander has skated with his brother, William, countless times in his life. He'd never skated against him, however, until Thursday.

With William playing for the Leafs, the Sabres' Nylander had his best moments of training camp in the opening nine minutes. He skated at higher speed than anyone else on the ice and had two scoring chances, including a shot off the crossbar.

"The speed of the game and the pace of the game is something that he's learning," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "Testing-wise, he's one of our fastest skaters, but the pace of the NHL game and the pace at which you play is something you have to learn.

"It's new for him and he's learning to adjust, and he's more than capable of doing it."

Using his head: Nilsson had two shots ricochet off his mask, the second game he used his noggin to make that many stops. He turned aside 26 of 27 shots during his debut Monday.

Sparks cools fire: The Sabres started hot, taking 11 of the first 13 shots and finishing the opening period with an 11-4 edge. Toronto goaltender Garret Sparks was up the task, sending the teams into the first intermission in a scoreless tie.

The Leafs changed goaltenders with 7:31 left in the second period, inserting Kaskisuo. Sparks stopped all 17 shots he faced.

Fasching flash: Hudson Fasching is a power forward who does most of his work near the net, but he showed a creative side late the first. He picked up the puck in the neutral zone, skated through Toronto defenders then circled the net for a shot that got stopped.

Door man: Toronto's Rich Clune laid such a big hit on Brendan Guhle in the corner with 11:35 to play that the Zamboni door entrance popped open. Buffalo's Matt Moulson rushed in to grab Clune, but the officials quickly stopped the skirmish.

Busy man: The Sabres again used defenseman Erik Burgdoerfer, making him the only player to appear in all three preseason games. He skated with Justin Falk. The Sabres signed Burgdoerfer to a one-year, two-way contract in July. He spent all of last season with Hershey of the American Hockey League, putting up six goals and 20 points in 74 games.

Back in town: The Sabres formerly made trips to St. Catharines as part of training camp, but this was their first visit to Meridian Centre. The 5,300-seat arena opened in September 2014 and is home to the Niagara IceDogs of the Ontario Hockey League. It was a pro-Toronto crowd with several "Go Leafs go" chants.

Lettermen: Forward Kyle Okposo and defensemen Josh Gorges and Zach Bogosian served as the Sabres' three alternate captains.

Replacement coach: With Leafs bench boss Mike Babcock coaching Team Canada at the World Cup, Toronto used assistant Jim Hiller as its coach.

Next: The Sabres and Maple Leafs complete their back-to-back meetings at 7 p.m. Friday in KeyBank Center (MSG, Radio WGR-AM 550). After facing Toronto, the Sabres will have three exhibitions left. They play Carolina on Tuesday in Marquette, Mich., and Wednesday in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. The finale is next Friday in Ottawa.

Ristolainen reports to camp as ‘good will’ move

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Lounging around wasn't doing Rasmus Ristolainen any good, so he figured the best way to stay in shape was to skate with the Buffalo Sabres.

He hopes to get paid for it one of these days.

Ristolainen reported to Sabres training camp without a contract Thursday, a "good will" gesture that got Buffalo's top defenseman back with his teammates. The Sabres and the restricted free agent are not close in their negotiations, however, so how long Ristolainen sticks around will depend on upcoming talks.

"Everyone knows how dedicated he is to his training, and he wanted to continue to build on the gains he made this summer," Ristolainen's agent, Mike Liut, said in an email to The Buffalo News. "He skipped the World Championship so he would have a full 16-week training session leading up to the World Cup, so he's more prepared than ever and wants to keep it that way.

"In the end, this made sense to him, at least in the short term."

With the blessing of Sabres General Manager Tim Murray, Ristolainen practiced in KeyBank Center with the Buffalo players who sat out Thursday night's preseason game against Toronto.

"He wants to be back on the ice with his teammates, and that's a good thing," coach Dan Bylsma said.

Ristolainen's willingness to take the ice is in contrast to other big-name RFAs still looking for deals. Winnipeg defenseman Jacob Trouba has asked for a trade, while Calgary forward Johnny Gaudreau has made it clear he won't skate without a contract.

The Sabres are planning to use Ristolainen in their top defensive pairing along with Dmitry Kulikov, and the 21-year-old is looking to get paid like a No. 1 blue-liner. The negotiators are reportedly apart by \$1 million per year. The season starts Oct. 13, and Ristolainen must sign by Dec. 1 or sit out the whole year.

Sabres' Nilsson making the perfect first impression

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Anders Nilsson knew a couple of guys when he arrived in the Sabres' dressing room, most notably former teammates Matt Moulson and Kyle Okposo, but to everyone else he was a mystery. Playing the most important position on the team, it was up to the goaltender to get off to a good start and make himself known throughout the organization.

He's certainly accomplished that.

Nilsson backstopped Buffalo to a 1-0 shootout victory over Toronto on Thursday night, stopping 23 shots during regulation and overtime, plus all four in the breakaway challenge.

"You always want to make a good impression, but what it comes down to is helping your team win games," Nilsson said in Meridian Centre. "My job is to stop the puck, and I'm trying to do that every time I come to the rink no matter if it's practice, a scrimmage or an exhibition game."

Nilsson has been as close to perfect as he could get during the opening week of training camp. He didn't allow a goal during his 30 minutes of intrasquad scrimmage time, and he turned aside 26 of 27 shots Monday in his preseason debut against Minnesota.

"He wants to prove he can be in the net and be a capable goaltender when he gets the opportunity," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "He's had two opportunities to this point, and he's been really good in both of them. It gives you a comfortable feeling when you see a guy like that be able to backstop your team."

The Sabres got impressive backup goaltending last season out of Chad Johnson, who left for Calgary. Nilsson was actually Plan B after free agent Jeff Zatkoff reneged on a verbal commitment to play in Buffalo, but the 26-year-old Nilsson is looking like a solid option so far.

"Anders played really, really well, made some big stops," Moulson, who scored the only goal of the shootout, said of his former teammate with the New York Islanders. "He's a guy that works extremely hard on and off the ice. He gets himself ready, and he's been playing some excellent hockey during camp here."

Nilsson had a relatively easy night as the Sabres outshot the Maple Leafs, 38-23, but he was impressive when he had to be. He got a pad on Nazem Kadri's short-handed chance during the second period, then stopped Kadri, William Nylander, Peter Holland and Connor Carrick on their breakaways in the shootout.

"I'm feeling all right," Nilsson said. "It's still early on. I still feel I have some things I can be better on, but overall the guys in front of me have played two very good games. They didn't give up a lot of scoring chances or a lot of shots. It was more a team shutout and a team win."

"It was a tight game. I think we were the better team. We created a lot of scoring chances and really pushed them back in their zone. Over the 65 minutes, I think we really deserved the win."

It's impossible to lose when the goalie stops everything. He had to be perfect Thursday as the Sabres couldn't beat Garret Sparks or Kasimir Kaskisuo. Both teams get another chance to find the net Friday night when they meet in a rematch in KeyBank Center.

Nilsson will get the night off, but the close nature of his two games has helped him ramp up for the regular season mentally.

"It helps you get in midseason shape," he said. "It's always good to play a couple games and get that rust out before the season starts."

Sabres prospect Alexander Nylander enjoys special night against brother

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ontario – Growing up, Buffalo Sabres prospect Alexander Nylander and his brother, William, a Toronto Maple Leafs youngster, were ultra-competitive in whatever game or sport they played.

So, despite being very close, the Nylanders would occasionally get a little emotional.

"We fought a lot, there was a lot when we were playing knee hockey, shinny," an excited Alexander Nylander said Thursday morning prior to the Sabres' 1-0 preseason shootout win, their first-ever meeting at any level of hockey. "We always came clean after it and were best buddies again."

The Nylanders, who only faced each other a few shifts, never pummeled each other inside the Meridian Centre. Still, Alexander, 18, said he was willing to finish a check against William, 20.

Alexander, the eighth overall pick in June, outplayed his brother, showcasing his speed and slick talents.

"It was something special and it was really fun," Alexander said.

Both brothers missed a shootout attempt.

"I thought it was money lock for him with his move," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said of Alexander's attempt.

Alexander created a scoring chance from the slot in the first period before zooming down the right wing and hitting the post.

"I think my first period was the best period today," Nylander said.

Nylander impressed Bylsma, who said he "kind of saw spurts of his game and what he can bring."

"I thought he showed speed, made a couple nice plays, broke in and beat the guys with his speed ... won some puck battles in the offensive zone," he said.

Nylander looked like a rookie in the second period, getting hit at the Toronto blue line and coughing the puck up near his net on one power-play shift.

"That's just kind of a young kid finding his way in the game," Bylsma said.

The Sabres' real star was goalie Anders Nilsson. The new backup to Robin Lehner looked in control throughout, stopping 23 shots and all four shootout attempts for the shutout. The Sabres pumped 38 shots on Leafs goalies Garret Sparks and Kasimir Kaskisuo.

"He wants to prove what he can be in the net, be a capable goaltender when he gets the opportunity," Bylsma said of Nilsson. "He's had two opportunities to this point (this preseason), he's been really good in both of them, looked real capable. It gives you a comfortable feeling when you see a guy like that in net, be able to backstop your team."

Nilsson added: "I think tonight's game was more a team shutout."

Sabres veteran Matt Moulson scored the shootout winner. His spot, of course, is secured.

What about Nylander?

While he said his comfort is increasing, he still has a long way to go. Since the Sabres have an AHL option with him, they could assign him to the minors in the next week or two.

"The pace of which he is playing there with the puck has to increase," Bylsma said Thursday morning. "That something that's new for him, he's learning to adjust to."

The Nylanders' father, Michael, was originally going to attend but stayed home, Alexander said.

The Sabres, 2-1 this exhibition season, host the Leafs tonight at KeyBank Center.

Notes: Sabres defenseman Erik Burgdoerfer, a defenseman on a two-way contract, is the only player Bylsma has dressed all three games. Burgdoerfer, 27, has never played a regular-season NHL game. ... The Sabres' AHL affiliate, the Rochester Americans, opens training camp today at HarborCenter in Buffalo. ... Billy Dea, a star with the Buffalo Bisons hockey team in the 1960s, has been named one of the 2017 American Hockey League Hall of Fame inductees.

Rasmus Ristolainen practicing as ‘goodwill’ gesture to Sabres

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ontario – Buffalo Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, an unsigned restricted free agent a week into training camp, started practicing with his teammates Thursday as a “goodwill” gesture, his agent said.

“His agent has asked and Rasmus has asked to be able to skate,” coach Dan Bylsma said Thursday morning inside KeyBank Center before the Sabres traveled for their third preseason game.

Sabres general manager Tim Murray gave the OK, and Ristolainen skated with the non-game group. Ristolainen, 21, just finished a three-game stint with Team Finland at the World Cup of Hockey.

Ristolainen’s agent, former NHL goalie Mike Liut, wrote in an email to the Times Herald his client wants to “build on his summer training.”

“He skipped the World Championships to train for 16 weeks to prepare for World Cup,” Liut wrote.

Liut said Ristolainen’s presence in camp doesn’t mean the sides are any closer to a contract.

Ristolainen was the Sabres’ best defenseman last season, compiling nine goals and 41 points while averaging more than 25 minutes of ice in his 82 games. Based on recent contracts, the former first-round pick, one of a handful of unsigned RFAs around the league, could receive a five- or six-year deal worth more than \$5 million per season.

Murray expressed optimism in July a contract would get finished.

Moulson scores SO winner, Sabres top Leafs 1-0 in pre-season

Sportsnet Report

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The matchup between the Nylander brothers fizzled out as the goalies stole the show.

Matt Moulson scored the only goal in a shootout and Anders Nilsson earned the shutout as the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs 1-0 on Thursday at the Meridian Centre.

Nilsson stopped 23 shots in regulation and overtime plus all four Toronto shooters. Meanwhile, Toronto goalies Garret Sparks and Kasimir Kaskisuo combined to stop all 38 Buffalo shots in regulation and overtime. Kaskisuo had stopped the first three Buffalo shooters before Moulson's winner.

"It's kind of a crazy feeling seeing all those long-time NHL players coming down on you," said Kaskisuo, who faced Alex Nylander, Kyle Okposo, Evander Kane and Moulson in the shootout.

"You just gotta stay in the moment and focus. Do what you've got to do to stop the puck."

The Meridian Centre is a 5,000-seat arena home to the Ontario Hockey League's Niagara Ice Dogs, and geographically not quite midway between Toronto and Buffalo in St Catharines, Ont.

Toronto coach Jim Hiller, taking over duties while Mike Babcock is with Team Canada at the World Cup of Hockey, said he was most happy with how his team rebounded from a slow first period in which they were outshot 11-4.

"We had a real tough time handling the speed and the forecheck and the rush in the first period," he said. "But I thought we adjusted to that pretty well."

He later added: "I was disappointed tonight because I thought we came back and played so hard against that team. It would have been a great feeling for the guys (to win). But we can't be disappointed in the effort."

Miller had nothing but praise for his two young goalies, Sparks and Kaskisuo, who are fighting for position on Toronto's AHL team, the Marlies.

Sparks stopped 17 shots before giving way to Kaskisuo with 7:31 left in the second. Kaskisuo stopped 21 Buffalo shots and three shooters before Moulson's winner.

With no Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner or Jack Eichel on the ice, the feature match-up was between brothers William (2014, eighth overall) and Alex Nylander (2016, eighth overall), who had never played each other until Thursday. Neither got on the scoresheet.

Matthews, Toronto's first-overall draft pick, is expected to make his debut on Friday in Buffalo.

With the World Cup of Hockey taking over the Air Canada Centre, the Leafs have taken their pre-season show on the road. They lost their first game 6-3 to Ottawa in Halifax on Monday and play in Buffalo on Friday night before heading back to the ACC for an Oct. 2 matchup against Montreal.

What should the Sabres pay Rasmus Ristolainen?

By Travis Yost

TSN

September 29, 2016

On Wednesday, TSN's Bob McKenzie provided some updates into the status of a number of young and talented restricted free agents, including Buffalo Sabres defenceman Rasmus Ristolainen.

Ristolainen, fresh off of a breakout year that saw him score 41 points (24th among all NHL defencemen), is rumoured to be targeting a contract in the realm of six years with a \$6.5 million AAV. Ristolainen does have some leverage here – NHL blueliners rarely produce 40+ point seasons at the age of 21. Those who have managed the feat (like Erik Karlsson, Paul Coffey and Brian Leetch) tend to have long, successful careers. There's also the fact that Ristolainen was a high first-round pick back in 2013, and draft status – right or wrong – has always acted as an anchor in contract negotiations.

But Ristolainen is an odd case. Unlike most of the above-referenced defenders who explode onto the scene at a young age, there are a couple of statistical oddities that might raise a cautionary flag.

One of the primary curiosities with Ristolainen is that there's not a lot of evidence he improves the play of his team when he's on the ice. It gets right back to the debate about which singular metric best captures a player's skill set and performance. For forwards, the answer has always been scoring rates. For defenders – driven by the relative scarcity with which they score points, save the Karlsson/Brett Burns types – it's RelativeCorsi%.

RelativeCorsi% is simply the differential in shot advantage a team enjoys when a player is on the ice versus off of the ice. For most first-pairing defencemen, we see largely positive RelativeCorsi% performances on a game-to-game basis. Their team, regardless of circumstance or environment, sees an incremental shot output whenever they jump over the boards.

It's also great at mitigating team effects, which are important in the case of Ristolainen. No one would ever compare the raw Corsi% of a player like Hampus Lindholm against Ristolainen. Why? Because the Ducks have had a significantly higher collection of talent, so we would expect the rising tide to lift all boats. The Sabres have had a significantly lower collection of talent, which suppresses the output of every Buffalo skater.

So, how does Ristolainen look from a RelativeCorsi% level compared to some of the other names either currently searching for contracts or being utilized as contract comparables? Here's how that rolls up (by game, since 2013, in which 0 per cent would indicate a player who saw the same shot differential when he was on the ice as his team did when he was off of the ice):

Now, I'm not entirely sure there's a "Ristolainen isn't as good as these guys" argument here. The reason why is pretty straightforward: Ristolainen really played some brutally tough minutes relative to these other blueliners, and there are fair questions about the quality of his partners since coming into the league.

That said, there's a pretty clear difference between five of these players and Ristolainen. Whereas our group of five players are right-leaning – the majority of their individual games finishing as RelativeCorsi% positive – Ristolainen definitively leans left. And, because the player is only being compared in relative performance to his teammates, it's fair to wonder why the Sabres didn't really see the type of incremental shot gains our other five defenders provided to their teams.

At the minimum, it's the type of data point that a team should be questioning before executing on a contract worth something in the range of \$36 million (or more). The number of highly lauded, negative RelativeCorsi% players league-wide can be counted on one hand, and even those names (Shea Weber is the most prominent example, though Brent Seabrook and Cam Fowler are others) have had similar questions asked about them.

It puts Buffalo general manager Tim Murray at a bit of a crossroads. There's no denying the scoring impact Ristolainen had last year, and at the age of 21, there's all the room in the world for him to make big strides in the next few years.

The question becomes how high Ristolainen's ceiling is. Is he a true first-pairing talent, or are we only confident in the fact that his floor is that of a second-pairing guy who racks up a ton of mileage over the next decade?

If you sense the former, there's no reason to bet now. But if you sense the latter, primarily because of some of the cautionary data we see surrounding his game, then perhaps playing a bit of hardball makes sense for the Sabres long-term.

Sabres Top Leafs in Shootout 1-0

WGR 550 Report

September 29, 2016

The Sabres and Leafs battled to a scoreless tie through regulation, five minutes of overtime and three rounds of a shootout before Matt Moulson notched the winner for Buffalo.

Game Notes

The Sabres dominated the first period, outshooting the Leafs 11-4. Buffalo first round draft pick Alexander Nylander came in fast on Garret Sparks, but rang a shot off the post.

Sparks spent the better part of two periods in the Toronto net, and was eventually replaced by Kasmir Kaskisuo.

The Sabres outshot the Leafs 38-23 throughout regulation and overtime. Anders Nilsson was in the Buffalo net for all 65 minutes.

Buffalo went 0 for 5 on the power play on Thursday and the team is now 0 for 16 with the man advantage during the preseason.

1st Period

Goals

None

2nd Period

Goals

None

3rd Period

Goals

None

Overtime

Goals

None

Shootout

TOR - Peter Holland - MISS

BUF - Alexander Nylander - MISS

TOR - William Nylander - MISS

BUF - Kyle Okposo - MISS

TOR - Connor Carrick - MISS

BUF - Evander Kane - MISS

TOR - Nazem Kadri - MISS

BUF - Matt Moulson - GOAL

Sabres' Nylander hopes he faces his brother

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 29, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres play preseason game number three in St. Catharines as Toronto has its home game there because of the World Cup of Hockey.

Number one pick Alex Nylander will be in the lineup and his brother William will likely play too. Alex Nylander said, "I hope he's playing, I think he is so it'll be a lot of fun to play against him tonight."

"I've met him in a lot of different things and competitive stuff except for hockey, so this is going to be exciting and this is going to be fun to see him on the ice. I haven't really played against him other than in practice."

Will is older than Alex and has seen some NHL time. Alex said, "He's helped me a lot, we've both been really competitive since we've played a lot of other sports too, so we really like to win and help each other get better each and every day."

In my mind it's been a process for Nylander as he seems to have had trouble with the pro game to start. Tonight he'll be with Evander Kane and Derek Grant. Nylander said, "It's getting better every practice. I just feel I'm getting more comfortable and working hard, so it feels good getting these two preseason games in, the first one is out of there so now I have this one."

When you're 18 years old, everything is a learning process. Nylander said, "I've been talking to the coach and learning all the systems and the guys help really well so, it's a great group of guys that help you out as best as possible."

Nylander and Kane will bring phenomenal speed to tonight's game. Nylander said, "We played the scrimmages together, so I think we had a good chemistry and it's going to be really fun playing with him."

Dan Bylsma understands how tough it is for young first year players. He said, "Most definitely, the speed of the game and to pace of the game is something that he's learning. He's one of our fastest skaters, but the pace is something that he has to learn."

"Even the power play at Penn State, he has the puck on the half wall, but the pace in which he is playing there with the puck has to increase and it's new, and he's learning to adjust to it and he's more than capable of doing it."

Speed again is what would make these two successful together according to Bylsma, "In the practice sessions yesterday, you saw Alex and his speed make room for Evander on the rushes yesterday and again that's a challenge for Alex as he's got to learn to play at that speed and that pace and have it be effective."

Tonight's Lines:

Foligno Larsson Okposo
Kane Grant Nylander
Moulson C.O'Reilly Fasching
Carrier Catenacci Schneider

Gorges Bogosian
Guhle Franson
Falk Burgdoerfer

Nilsson Kasdorf

Sabres' Ristolainen has shown up without a deal.

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 29, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen does not have a contract, but he has reported to training camp. He skated with the non-game group on Thursday. Dan Bylsma said, "It will include going on the ice. His agent has asked and Rasmus has asked to be able to skate. Tim said that would be all right, so we will see Rasmus out on the ice."

It looks like Ristolainen doesn't want to sit home and wants to be working with his teammates. Bylsma said, "I think it's great. The contract negotiation is between Tim and the agent and obviously Rasmus is involved, but he wants to be back on the ice with his teammates and that's a good thing."

The Sabres head to St. Catharines to play the Leafs tonight. All the action gets underway at 7:00.

5 observations from Sabres 1-0 win over Leafs

By Matt Bove

WKBW

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHERINES, ONTARIO (WKBW) - It wasn't pretty, but on Thursday the Buffalo Sabres moved to 2-1 in the preseason, with a 1-0 shootout win over the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Matt Moulson was the hero, ending things for the Sabres in the fourth round of the shootout. Goaltender Anders Nilsson stopped every shot he faced (23) including four shots in the shootout. The Sabres dominated in the shot department, generating 38, but were unable to get on the board in regulation. Five observations from Thursday's game:

Hudson Fasching: Half human, half grizzly bear

During the first period I tweeted a picture of a bear catching a fish in its mouth. Thursday against the Leafs, Hudson Fasching was the bear and the Leafs were the fish. He dominated possession behind the net and generated multiple scoring chances throughout the game. The 21-year-old was using all of his 6'2" 216 lb frame and was one of the best players on the ice, especially early in the game. If Fasching is going to make the Sabres he'll need to continue to be a nightmare for opposing teams. I don't necessarily think his numbers will jump off the page from the start, but over time that should come.

Taking sibling rivalry to another level

The first chapter of Alex Nylander vs Willie Nylander goes to the Sabres 2016 first round pick (Alex). In the first period, Alex Nylander had several scoring chances -- including a play where he streaked down the boards beating a Leafs defender, firing a laser off the post. Regardless of tonight, it's going to be very fun over the next few years watching these brothers develop. Both Willie (Toronto) and Alex (Buffalo) missed on their shootout attempts but it's clear, they have a ton of skill and potential — adding another storyline to every Sabres and Leafs game.

Where's Matt Moulson?

Oh, there he is! Moulson sealed things off for the Sabres in shootout, securing the 1-0 win. Moulson started slow -- but generated some chances in the second and third period. Moulson will surely need to keep the momentum going if he's going to return to the player he was in 2013 — but Thursday was a step in the right direction.

Anders Nilsson continues to impress

Since training camp opened Anders Nilsson has looked out of this world. The newly acquired goalie said he is just trying to stop the puck and get better every day. So far, he's doing a great job. During the Sabres first preseason game Nilsson let in one goal on a weird rebound and that was it. Thursday, Nilsson stopped 23 shots, including all four of Toronto's in the shootout. In two preseason games and two scrimmages Nilsson has allowed only one goal. Seriously, one goal. Nilsson won't be the starter opening night but having two goaltenders that can play is a good thing. A very good thing.

The Sabres can't figure out the power play

Three games into the preseason and the Sabres have yet to score a power play goal. The Sabres are an abysmal 0-16 so far on the power play and it's something head coach Dan Bylsma knows is hurting them. After Thursday's game he joked that the Sabres would probably have a power play goal if Jack Eichel was playing. He's probably not wrong. It's certainly concerning, but not something Sabres fans should worry too much about.

The Buffalo Sabres play the Toronto Maple Leafs again Friday night at Key Bank Center. Puck drop is at 7 p.m.

Matt Moulson gives Sabres win in shootout

NHL.com Report

September 29, 2016

Forward Matt Moulson scored in the fourth round of a shootout to give the Buffalo Sabres a 1-0 win against the Toronto Maple Leafs at Meridian Centre on Thursday.

Moulson beat Maple Leafs goalie Kasimir Kaskisuo with a wrist shot in the fourth round.

Sabres goalie Anders Nilsson made stopped four shots in the shootout and made 23 saves in regulation for the shutout.

Maple Leafs forward William Nylander played against his brother, Sabres forward Alexander Nylander, for the first time.

Michigan town gets to be Hockeyville USA for day

By David Satriano

NHL.com

September 29, 2016

Lakeview Arena in Marquette, Michigan, was named winner of Kraft Hockeyville USA 2016 in April, but because of a bad internet connection, it almost didn't happen.

Dr. Frederick Hoenke, who submitted the winning essay, almost didn't send it a second time after his first attempt accidentally was deleted.

"I voted for the rink, not knowing what exactly it was, and then it said 'Why your rink should win,' so I pounded out a quick little entry and hit send and it deleted," Hoenke said. "A few hours later, I got back to my office and something in the back of my head was bothering me, so I said, 'I'll try one more time.' I tried to remember from memory what I said, did it quickly and hit send. I still really didn't know what I had entered."

Marquette and Lakeview Arena finished ahead of more than 1,000 communities, including runner-up Rushmore Thunderdome in Rapid City, South Dakota. A total of \$335,000 was awarded to the top 10 finishers, including \$150,000 to Marquette, which also will get to host a nationally televised preseason game between the Carolina Hurricanes and Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; NBCSN).

Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was the winner of the inaugural Kraft Hockeyville USA last season, meaning that Cambria County War Memorial Arena received arena upgrades and got to host a preseason game between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Tampa Bay Lightning.

"I had never heard of [Kraft Hockeyville] before," Hoenke said. "I didn't even know what it was when I applied for it. Our hockey association sent a request to all the parents, 'Will you vote for this thing?' I said 'OK, fine.' I can click a button and vote for this thing like anyone else can."

Shortly after, Hoenke got a call from Kraft telling him that Marquette was a top 10 finalist and would be receiving at least \$10,000 for upgrades to Lakeview Arena. It was announced as the winner on April 30, live during NBC's broadcast of the New York Islanders at Tampa Bay Lightning in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Second Round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

"It's overwhelming," Hoenke said. "The idea that all the people we competed against, clearly in some way my essay made an impact, I think it really got people interested. What this does for the community is enormous."

"The community rallied together. Without paying for it, we cleaned the inside of the rink. It was all cleaned by hand, and then the inside was painted, mostly by volunteers pretty much. It looks beautiful inside. Every seat has been cleaned in ways that make it shine, and it has been very gratifying."

The lighting and public address systems were upgraded, Zambonis were overhauled, and replacement glass was donated by the Colorado Avalanche.

Hoenke said he wrote in his essay the impact hockey has on Marquette.

"Our community is limited in size and population," he said. "Costs of these kind of things have gone up, so the budget has gotten more and more challenging even just to keep the place going. Lakeview Arena is 43 years old. When I first came to town, it was a pretty new facility, and you sort of don't realize over the years what happens, but the reality is it was deteriorating badly. The roof leaked. The boards were worn. The glass was beat up; you couldn't see through it. The compressors were shot. The dehumidification system couldn't keep the ice hard. So that's how we are spending the money."

The arena already has undergone most of the transformation and will be at the center of the hockey universe Tuesday.

Hoenke didn't play hockey, but he's always been a fan of the game. He said hockey has always been huge on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and to the people who live there, affectionately known as "Yoopers." In fact, his son played against a recent Stanley Cup champion at Lakeview Arena.

"When my son was 10, he and I went into town and watched a game and he started playing," Hoenke said. "He was on a really strong Bantam AA team that advanced to the state semifinals. He actually played against Phil Kessel, who didn't score on us in three games, and got into it. There is no other game half as good as hockey.

"Our teams were very successful for a small town like we are, and all the things we said [in the essay] were really true. The Yoopers are really tough people and love the game. [The essay] just came from the heart at that point; it was pretty easy."

Lakeview Arena opened in 1974 and has been home to several teams in a number of leagues including the Marquette Iron Rangers (United States Hockey League), the Marquette Electricians (Midget AAA), and the Marquette Rangers (North American Hockey League). Northern Michigan University (NCAA Division I) went undefeated at Lakeview Arena during the 1990-91 season before going on to win the 1991 NCAA championship.

"When people come to town, they are going to see this beautiful interior, and it says a lot about who we are as a community," Hoenke said. "To me, it's far more important what it means to the community for culture, spirit, history and legacy in drawing people together."

Nilsson Earns Shutout In Shootout Win Over Leafs

by Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

September 29, 2016

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. - Anders Nilsson may not have been the busiest man in Ontario on Thursday night, but he was perfect when the Sabres needed him. That ended up including 60 minutes of regulation play, a five-minute overtime period and a four-round shootout as Buffalo earned a 1-0 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs at Meridian Centre.

Nilsson has allowed one goal through preseason two games. He made 26 saves in two periods against Minnesota on Monday, his Sabres debut, and was impressive in two scrimmages during the first weekend of camp. Not bad for a guy acquired over the summer to serve as Buffalo's backup to Robin Lehner.

"He was rock solid," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I think he wants to prove he can be in the net and be a capable goaltender when he gets the opportunity. He's had two opportunities to this point. He's been really good in both of them and looked real capable. It gives you a comfortable feeling."

He wasn't without help. The Sabres outshot the Maple Leafs 35-23 and generated several scoring chances but were unable to find the net until Matt Moulson scored the game-winner on their fourth shot of the shootout. Defensively, they blocked shots and limited Toronto's opportunities. Afterward, Nilsson called it a "team shutout."

"You always want to make a good impression but what it comes down to is helping your team win games," he said. "My job is to stop the puck and I'm trying to do that every time I come to the rink."

It was Moulson, his former teammate with the Islanders, who was able to seal the win for him on Thursday. He saw a bit of room on the blocker side during his shootout attempt and promptly fired the puck past Toronto goalie Kasimir Kaskisuo, ensuring that Nilsson wouldn't need to stop a fifth shot in the shootout for his perfect night to remain intact.

SO

"He's a guy that works extremely hard on and off the ice and gets himself ready," Moulson said of his goalie. "He's playing excellent hockey during camp with us."

The game mirrored the Sabres' preseason opener against the Wild in that they were able to generate the bulk of the scoring chances but unable to make much of a dent on the score sheet. Buffalo outshot Minnesota 40-31 on Monday but lost 2-1.

Without a complete roster, however, Bylsma seems to be taking more good than bad from these performances. The Sabres are playing the way they want to play as a team: earning odd-man rushes, putting the puck to the net and placing themselves in the right spots to create scoring chances.

"I'd like to see Jack Eichel get one of those opportunities, I'd like to see Ryan O'Reilly get one of those opportunities," Bylsma said, referencing his top two centers, who have yet to play in a preseason game due to their involvement in the World Cup of Hockey (O'Reilly and Team Canada won the tournament Thursday night). "I like the fact that we're getting them."

Nylander versus Nylander

The game on Thursday was the first of what could be many meetings between William and Alexander Nylander, the two brothers who were selected eighth overall in the draft two years apart by Toronto and Buffalo, respectively.

"It was a fun experience," the Sabres' Nylander said. "It was fun seeing him out there playing from the bench and not from the stands for the first time. It was something special."

Alex said prior to the game that he and his brother had a competitive relationship, and you could see it on the ice in the first period. He came out looking more comfortable than he had his preseason debut against the Wild, first forcing a turnover to create a shot attempt from the high slot and then when he used his speed to beat the defense into the offensive zone and rung a shot off the post.

"I thought he played pretty well in the first, I thought he showed speed, made a couple nice plays," Bylsma said. "The second period was largely ruled by the power play and I think it took a little steam out of his sails, took a little confidence from him ... That's just a young kid finding his way in the game."

Even still, Alex said himself that he felt more comfortable on Thursday than he had in his debut. Plus he gets bragging rights over his brother until the next time they play, rights he almost lost in the shootout when the two brothers shot back-to-back. Alex missed with the same forehand-backhand that served him so well at development camp in July, setting up William for a chance to give Toronto a lead.

Luckily for him, Nilsson was up to the challenge.

"He maybe should've deked," Alex said. "That's what he usually does."

Let's do it again

The Sabres are back at home to face the Maple Leafs again on Friday, with the puck is set to drop at 7 p.m. You can tune into the game on MSG or listen live on WGR 550, or purchase tickets and join us for the second of only two preseason games at KeyBank Center.

Sabres, Ristolainen 'not close' on contract, but he's skating with team

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 29, 2016

Rasmus Ristolainen is back with the Sabres. He's not close to a contract, however.

The restricted free agent arrived in KeyBank Center on Thursday as a "good will" gesture while waiting for a new deal. Buffalo and representatives for the 21-year-old defenseman are not close in their negotiations, but Ristolainen will work out with the team during talks.

"Everyone knows how dedicated he is to his training, and he wanted to continue to build on the gains he made this summer," agent Mike Liut said in an email to The Buffalo News. "He skipped the World Championship so he would have a full 16-week training session leading up to the World Cup, so he's more prepared than ever and wants to keep it that way.

"In the end, this made sense to him, at least in the short term."

The Sabres, who have a preseason game against Toronto on Thursday night in St. Catharines, Ont., have a practice for their players not skating in the contest. With the blessing of General Manager Tim Murray, Ristolainen was on the ice.

"His agent has asked and Rasmus has asked to be able to skate," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "Tim has said that will be all right, so we will see Rasmus get back on the ice.

"It's great that he wants to. The contract negotiation is between Tim and the agent and obviously Rasmus is involved, but he wants to be back on the ice with his teammates, and that's a good thing."