



Buffalo Sabres

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Reinhart's birthday wish: More goals, wins for Sabres

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 6, 2016

BOSTON – Shaving cream was everywhere. In his hair. All over his face. In his ears. On his jersey.

It was hardly the birthday present Sam Reinhart wanted, but he could only laugh at the way it was delivered.

To celebrate Reinhart's 21st birthday Sunday, Sabres teammate Marcus Foligno slyly covered a towel with shaving cream, snuck up behind Reinhart and rubbed gel all over the birthday boy near the end of practice. Reinhart spent more than five minutes trying to clean himself up at the bench, but that didn't do the trick.

"It was stuck in the ear a little bit," Reinhart said, "but a shower helped."

It's commonplace for baseball players to sneak up on teammates and deliver a shaving cream pie to the face. It's rarer in hockey.

That's probably why Reinhart never saw it coming.

"He doesn't know what's going on around him most of the time, so it was pretty easy," Foligno said in Warrior Ice Arena. "I thought since we won last night it would have been a good time to do it."

The Sabres were in a party mood following Saturday's 2-1 victory in Ottawa. Reinhart scored the winner midway through the third period, getting an early start on his milestone birthday celebration. He hopes it continues Monday when Buffalo visits the Boston Bruins in TD Garden.

"Win or loss, this team's pretty good at coming to the rink the next day and moving past it," Reinhart said. "But obviously the feeling's a little more upbeat after a win."

The Sabres have four of the last five, so there have been more jokes and smiles lately. Reinhart's second goal of the season could provide a serious jolt to his game.

Reinhart's only goal in the opening 10 outings was a fluke. He passed the puck from behind the Florida net Oct. 29, and Panthers defenseman Mark Pysyk kicked it in. Reinhart had a sheepish look as the goal light flashed.

He worked for his goal Saturday. He got to the front of the net, kicked a carom to himself and reached for the rebound when the puck stopped on the goal line.

"That one felt a little bit better," he said.

It's no surprise Reinhart got back in goal column by being at the top of the crease.

"It's where he's been able to score in this league and where's gone to be a good player for us offensively," coach Dan Bylsma said. "He had five net fronts in the game, and that one was part of those five."

"We need him to be an effective player where he can be effective, and that's right where he was at."

Reinhart has felt good about his game despite a slower start than many expected. He has two goals and six points in 11 games. He had five goals and 13 points in the final 17 games last season.

He's without Jack Eichel this year, and the line of Reinhart, Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons hasn't found a groove.

"We're starting to get used to each other," Reinhart said. "Hopefully, the goals will start coming for us."

Thanks to stellar goaltending by Robin Lehner, the Sabres haven't needed many goals to win. During the last five games, they've scored 10 goals and allowed five.

Their odds of keeping the good times rolling will go up if Reinhart and others can start scoring consistently.

"We're in every game, and we're competing," Reinhart said. "Obviously, we're winning some. As long as we keep that up, I know the goals will start coming."

Sabres Notebook: New rink for Bruins; Carrier likes debut

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 6, 2016

BOSTON – Dan Bylsma remembers the practice rinks he visited as an NHL player. They were dark, dingy and cramped.

The Sabres certainly didn't skate in one of those places Sunday.

"When you get in the elevator and there's marble, and you go upstairs and you feel like you're getting out of a fancy hotel, it doesn't give you the feeling of a practice rink," the Buffalo coach said in Warrior Ice Arena, the Boston Bruins' sparkling new practice facility.

The building opened in September as part of a project financed by New Balance, a sneaker and sports apparel company that is headquartered next door. While New Balance built the place, it essentially belongs to the Bruins. Banners commemorating their Stanley Cup championships and retired jerseys hang from the ceiling. The team logo is centered on the all-window wall that brings in the sun as cars zip past on the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The Bruins previously practiced 20 miles north of Boston, but the new place keeps them in the city. Located near Harvard University, it's just six miles from TD Garden, where the Bruins will host the Sabres on Monday night. The Bruins hold their morning skates in Warrior Ice Arena, and the Sabres are believed to be the first NHL team to use the rink other than the home boys.

"It's pretty big for this city to have something like this for this team," said Sabres captain and former Boston College star Brian Gionta. "Obviously, playing in Boston and being in school here, I have fond memories of this city. I think it's pretty cool where it is and what it means to the Bruins."

Warrior Ice Arena is the latest in a growing trend of high-class practice facilities. The Sabres have their own with HarborCenter.

"The facilities are being put in place for us to be at our best," Gionta said. "That's the biggest thing. Everything's top notch. Everything's there for you, and you can see it here."

The Sabres practiced without left wing Tyler Ennis and defenseman Dmitry Kulikov. Bylsma said both had maintenance days. Does he expect them to play Monday?

"I expect them to play well," Bylsma said.

The Sabres did not bring any extra forwards or defensemen on the two-game road trip. If either player can't dress, the Sabres will need to summon someone from Rochester.

William Carrier felt good about his NHL debut in Saturday's 2-1 victory over Ottawa. The left winger started the play that led to Sam Reinhart's winning goal, sidestepping a check at the blue line to carry the puck into the zone.

"Plus-1, I'll take that," said Carrier, who led the Amerks last season at plus-14. "That's the kind of player I want to be out there. I was on the ice for the winning goal, so that's fun."

The 6-foot-2, 212-pounder led the Sabres with four hits. He took two shots and blocked one in 6:26 of ice time. He said his instructions were to play fast and physical, so he did.

"That's all they want me to do," Carrier said. "It's a simple role, so I kind of like it. It keeps my brain not working too much. Put the puck in the corner, hit some guys, get the puck back and make some plays."

The Sabres are the only team in the NHL to not have a goal from a defenseman. The blue-liners have picked up assists, led by Rasmus Ristolainen with a team-high eight, but no one has lit the lamp.

"We've talked about this the last couple games is getting more involved in the offense, getting our defense a part of the five-man offense," Bylsma said. "We need to do a better job from our defense of becoming part of that five-man – low to high, getting shots through, finding pucks to the net-front area."

Left wing Marcus Foligno got a chuckle out of seeing former teammate Ryan Miller get ejected Saturday night for being the third man into a fight. The Vancouver goaltender refused to stand idly as rookie Troy Stecher got pummeled by Toronto's Matt Martin, so Miller threw down his glove and blocker and joined the fray.

"That's two fights against Toronto," said Foligno, who recalled Miller participating in a preseason line brawl between the Sabres and Maple Leafs in 2013. "Good for him sticking up for a teammate. I think that's the kind of goalie he was here, a good character guy."

"You just don't want to see him fight all the time like that."

Bruins try to solve home woes vs. Sabres

The Associated Press

November 6, 2016

BOSTON -- Despite serious injuries to key players, the Buffalo Sabres ran up a 4-1-2 road record to start the season.

The Boston Bruins, who missed the playoffs for a second straight year last season because of poor home play, are 1-3-0 on home ice to start the new season (6-5-0 overall).

On Monday night, when the two old Adams Division foes meet at TD Garden, Buffalo (5-4-2 overall) will be coming off a 2-1 victory at Ottawa Saturday night while the Bruins were thumped 5-2 by the New York Rangers on home ice.

Robin Lehner was outstanding in goal for the Sabres -- who lost Jack Eichel and Evander Kane early and Zach Bogosian recently -- Saturday, his 32-save performance the key to the fourth road win of the year. Last year, Buffalo, which finished dead last in the NHL, was 9-29-3 away from home.

Lehner beat his old team Saturday.

"No matter who we played today, it was a win we needed," he said after the game. "We don't want to lose two in a row. I think we can learn a few things from this game, but the way we came out in the third after our first goal and the big (penalty kill) we had, we can take some positives too."

Lehner is 4-3-1 with a 2.14 goals against average and .929 save percentage this season -- and is 3-6-3 with a 2.64 goals against average and .925 save percentage lifetime against Boston.

The Bruins, who won the last three of a four-game road trip, yielded two shorthanded goals and one power play score to suffer another home loss on Saturday. They were just 17-18-6 at home last season -- again barely missing the playoffs.

"We were feeling good about our game," said defenseman Torey Krug. "We didn't play well (but won) in Florida, but Detroit and Tampa, we played well. We wanted to use that momentum to move on into our building.

"We started out well. I thought, five-on-five, we played a pretty good game. We played fast; we were getting a majority of the chances. I thought their goaltender played well. Like I said, the power play let us down. Two goals against, no goals for, that's a big part of it. For a while now, that's been a big part of our team, that power play. Right now, we're not getting the results."

The Bruins have scored just three power play goals, while surrendering three shorthanded scores.

Tuukka Rask suffered his first loss in the Boston net in seven games this season. He didn't play well and may have tweaked the lower body injury that caused him to miss four games.

With a Tuesday date in Montreal waiting, it wouldn't be a shock to see rookie Zane McIntyre in goal for his second NHL start Monday.

The Sabres worked out at the Bruins' new practice facility Sunday. Sam Reinhart, who scored the winning goal Saturday, turned 21 and got a face full of shaving cream from teammate Marcus Foligno during the practice.

"That's Marcus for you," Reinhart told the Buffalo News. "I was kind of wrestling with (Matt) Moulson in the corner, so I didn't see it coming. It was stuck in the ear a little bit, but a shower helped."

Said Foligno: "He doesn't know what's going on around him most of the time, so it was pretty easy."

Tyler Ennis and Dmitry Kulikov both missed the Buffalo practice Sunday, but just to rest. Asked if he expects both to play Monday, coach Dan Bylsma said, "I expect them to play well."

The Bruins, who canceled Sunday practice, won three of the four games between the teams last season but the Sabres took three of a possible four points in the two games in Boston.

Need to Know: Bruins vs. Sabres

By Eric Russo

Boston Bruins

November 6, 2016

BOSTON - The Bruins are back at TD Garden Monday with a chance to start another winning streak. Boston had won three straight before a 5-2 loss to the Rangers Saturday night.

The Black & Gold (6-5-0) host Buffalo (5-4-2) in the teams' first meeting of the season. The teams are tied for sixth place in the Atlantic Division with 12 points apiece.

Puck drop is set for 7 p.m. on NESN and 98.5 The Sports Hub.

Here is what you need to know:

What to Watch For

Improving their power play is no doubt the Bruins' primary focus moving forward. Boston went 0 for 3 with the man advantage against the Rangers, while allowing two shorthanded goals. The Bruins have surrendered three shorties this season and have the second-worst man advantage in the league at 7.9%.

The last time Boston allowed two shorthanded goals in a game was Feb. 10, 2015 against Dallas.

"It's not even close to what we can accomplish," said Patrice Bergeron, who acts as the team's power play "bumper" in the middle of the slot.

"It's actually hurting the team right now. It's about us finding a way and being better."

The Bruins have scored just three goals in 38 attempts this season, after boasting the league's seventh-best power play last season at 20.5 percent.

"There's no secret that we're lacking confidence, especially on the power play," said David Krejci, who along with Ryan Spooner leads the team with two power-play points.

"We've got to figure it out, try to make plays that are there and not really overthink things."

Opposing View

Buffalo, coming off a 2-1 win over Ottawa Saturday night, has had a decent start, considering they have been without phenom Jack Eichel and forward Evander Kane for the first month of the season. Eichel, a North Chelmsford, Mass., native and former Boston University standout, had 24 goals and 32 assists last season during his rookie campaign. The 20-year-old suffered a high-ankle sprain during training camp.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian has missed the last two games with an MCL sprain. Forward Tyler Ennis and defenseman Dmitry Kulikov were given maintenance days on Sunday and did not practice during Buffalo's session at Warrior Ice Arena in Brighton.

Entering play Sunday, Buffalo was ranked second in the NHL in faceoff win percentage (54.4%). The Bruins are fifth at 51.7%.

The Sabres' power play ranks ninth in the league at 22.2% (8 for 36). Matt Moulson is tied for the league lead with four power-play goals.

Goaltender Robin Lehner is 3-1-0 with a .961 save percentage and 1.26 goals against average in his last four games.

Sabres forward Kyle Okposo, signed as a free agent during the offseason, has notched 22 points (four goals, 18 assists) in 23 career games against Boston, including six points (two goals, four assists) in his last four games at TD Garden. He leads Buffalo this season with five goals and is tied for the team lead with eight points.

Wait, There's More

- The Bruins and Sabres are meeting for the 282nd time in their histories with the Bruins having a 131-110-29-11 record. Boston is 8-1-2 in their last 11 games vs. the Sabres with their lone regulation loss in that stretch a 6-3 loss in Boston on Dec. 26, 2015.
- The Sabres are the only team the Bruins have never swept in a season series. The teams play four times this season.
- Bruins forward Tim Schaller played the last two seasons with Buffalo, appearing in 35 games with five points (two goals, three assists).

Sabres' Reinhart gets a birthday gift from his teammates

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 6, 2016

Boston, MA (WGR 550) -- It's Sam Reinhart's 21st birthday and of course he got pranked in practice. Marcus Foligno got him with a shaving cream pie that he never saw coming, "That's Marcus for you! I was wrestling with Moulson in the corner so I didn't see it coming."

Foligno knew he could get Reinhart with a sneak attack. He said, "He doesn't know what's going on around him most of the time, so it was pretty easy." Dan Bylsma said Reinhart never should've been had, "It's an old baseball trick, seldom seen and highly effective in hockey. I think he was caught off guard with a towel coming down the rink at him. In baseball, they would've seen that coming a mile away."

Reinhart scored just his second goal of the season, but it was the game winner in Ottawa. Reinhart feels getting that goal may help the puck to start going in for him, "I'm hoping so, I mean the chances have been there and that's been the biggest part."

When players aren't scoring, it can start playing with their heads. Reinhart said, "I think the biggest thing is not to get frustrated and I think with the amount of chances I've been having and playing with Enzo and Gussy, we've been creating a lot, so hopefully that sparks us a little bit."

Bylsma has left that line together for a few games now and Reinhart feels they're starting to develop a chemistry, "We're starting to know each other's tendencies, I think we're all pretty different players, but I think that helps us out there."

Ennis is quite a bit faster than his two linemates, but he doesn't always use that speed to his advantage. Reinhart said, "Enzo is going to find us, he's got a tremendous amount of skill, so if we put ourselves in the right positions, we can find each other and make some plays."

Last year Reinhart was on a pace to score 24 goals and 44 points. This season he's on a pace to score 15 goals with 45 points. He said, "I felt pretty comfortable coming in this year and pretty confident in my ability. I think in the off season I took another step in the right direction. I felt a lot better skating and I felt strong with the puck."

The Sabres skated for about 55 minutes on Sunday. Both Tyler Ennis and Dmitry Kulikov missed practice on Sunday. Dan Bylsma said they had maintenance days and he said he would see for Monday's game.

Buffalo goes into Monday's game with the Bruins with four wins in five games. The Sabres are now in 13th overall in the NHL with a .545 points percentage.

Lehner's dynamic effort sets up Sabres' latest victory

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – Robin Lehner repeatedly added to his highlight reel Saturday night. His improved athleticism was on full display, allowing him to stretch, reach and slide for game-saving stops.

He'd be just fine with not doing it so often.

The goaltender and his Buffalo Sabres teammates happily exited Ottawa with a 2-1 comeback victory. Lehner made it happen, finishing with 32 saves while keeping Buffalo within a goal until its third-period rally.

The goalie stopped point-blank chances, odd-man rushes and stoned Senators who were streaking through the zone. The fact he made so many big saves put a small damper on his postgame party.

"I just want us to be a little bit tighter," Lehner said in Canadian Tire Centre. "There was a little bit too many chances, but you've got to give them credit, too. They're a fast team over there. I think it's just recognizing certain pucks that we're missing."

While Buffalo's skaters may be missing pucks and assignments, Lehner sure isn't. He's 3-1 in his last four starts, allowing just five goals while recording a .961 save percentage. He improved his season totals to 4-3-1 with a .929 save percentage and 2.14 goals-against average.

"He's a battler," Sabres right wing Kyle Okposo said. "Early in the season, you could see his game was coming. He made some really good stops. The last few games that he's played, he's been battling for us and making big saves."

"He made so many huge saves tonight. His athleticism is really good. It's allowing him to make some of those saves."

Lehner was previously regarded as a big goalie who could get in the way of pucks. His body-sculpting summer has transformed him into a tall goalie who can go out of his way to get pucks. It's a huge difference, one that is clear on the stat sheets.

In addition to working on his body, Lehner has improved his angles and footwork under the tutelage of goaltending coach Andrew Allen.

"I'm just trying to work on being patient and use my body, try to be calm in the net and not throw myself everywhere," Lehner said. "I've been working hard this summer. I worked hard with Andrew, worked hard with my dad back home. I think working with Andrew has helped a few things quite a bit."

Lehner had the right angle when Matt Puempel was alone in front in the third. He used his speed to slide across and make pad saves on Fredrik Claesson and Mark Stone. He reached back to rob Jean-Gabriel Pageau with his stick.

"I move better laterally this season," Lehner said. "The Pageau save, it's nice that I got it, but I put myself in that position. I got myself out of the crease and got out of angle there. I was not as patient as I wanted to be, but I was fortunate it didn't go in."

Only one shot did.

"When we beat him, he was there anyways," Senators captain Erik Karlsson said.

Lehner's dynamic showing allowed Okposo to tie the game with 1:07 gone in the third. Sam Reinhart scored the winner seven minutes later. The victory moved Lehner to 2-0-1 against his former team.

More importantly to him, the Sabres improved to 5-4-2 with their fourth win in five outings.

"No matter who we would play today, it was a win that we needed," Lehner said. "I felt good. I've felt good all season. There's been a few goals here and there that I want to work on, but we've all got to keep grinding as a team.

"We've got a few players away, and we don't want to let that affect us. We want to just do our best and work together."

Sabres Notebook: Anderson's cancer fight rallies Senators

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – The lavender signs rested in every stall of the Senators' dressing room. As part of Hockey Fights Cancer Night, Ottawa players were encouraged to write down a name under "I fight for." Some listed family members on the signs. Others listed Bryan Murray.

Most wrote Nicholle.

The NHL's cancer awareness program is special in every arena, but it was off the charts in Canadian Tire Centre. Senators goaltender Craig Anderson recently announced his wife, Nicholle, has cancer, and he returned to the team Saturday after spending a few days with her.

"You try to focus on the two points and the task at hand, but there's a lot surrounding the game for us as a team," Ottawa forward Bobby Ryan said. "Sometimes, it makes you realize there's a lot bigger things going on than a hockey game on Saturday night."

Nicholle Anderson's diagnosis has hit the Senators hard. The organization has watched Murray, the senior hockey adviser, fight cancer since 2014. Ryan's mother succumbed to the disease this summer. It reared its ugly head in the dressing room last week.

Craig Anderson had an emotional shutout in Edmonton hours after the announcement, and the team has rallied together.

"It's incredible when you're affected by it," Ryan said. "I felt like I was pretty sheltered toward the disease until last year, then you get hit with it individually and it seems to crop up again."

"It's easier because you're around guys that share the same common goal. You've got 20 individuals that are with you. When your train of thought's getting away from you, you've got guys that can pull you back in."

Heading into Saturday's start against the Sabres, Anderson had stopped 69 of 70 shots in two victories since the announcement. He missed Thursday's game against Vancouver to be with Nicholle.

"When he's here, he's in," Senators coach Guy Boucher said. "His ability to focus is quite impressive. It's easy to say, but to do? I've seen a lot of players that are good in focus in normal situations, but once you get to pressure situations it's a whole different look."

"He's displayed it on a few occasions now, and to see him be able to come back and focus is quite impressive."

Anderson and the rest of the Senators wore a "Stick by Nik" sticker on their helmets. The goaltender, who is No. 41, wore No. 23 during warm-ups on his Hockey Fights Cancer sweater because it is Nicholle's favorite number.

"He's a very good goalie, but a good professional," Sabres goaltender and former teammate Robin Lehner said. "You can't really say much until you go through it yourself, and hopefully you never do. It's pretty incredible that he can go through it like this and come up big."

Sabres right wing and Ottawa native Nick Baptiste had dinner with his family after arriving home. Then he got ready to play in front of pretty much everyone he knows.

"There's going to be a lot of people here, a lot of family, friends, teachers, people in the area," Baptiste said. "My brother's whole hockey team is coming."

Baptiste played in the Senators' arena as a kid and junior player.

"Those two jump out, but this will be the most memorable for sure," he said.

There's certainly no love lost between the Senators and Montreal, but even Ottawa had no desire to revel in the Canadiens' shocking 10-0 loss to Columbus on Friday night.

"We talked about it this morning and everyone's knocking on wood," Ryan said. "Everybody's been on that side of a rout, so even if they're a rival you don't say much about it."

Quick hits: Sabres 2, Senators 1

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – The Sabres finally have a comeback victory. It was a just reward for Robin Lehner, who kept Buffalo close enough to strike.

The Sabres, who had been 0-4 when allowing the first goal and 0-4 when trailing after two periods, stormed back to beat Ottawa, 2-1, Saturday night. Kyle Okposo and Sam Reinhart scored third-period goals to quiet the crowd in Canadian Tire Centre.

The Sabres wouldn't have been in position to win without Lehner. The former Senators goaltender was stellar against his old team, making 31 saves. Several were highlight-reel quality as Ottawa futilely tried to extend its 1-0 lead.

Buffalo came out hot in the third, taking 10 of the opening 13 shots.

Sens' power play strikes: Buffalo was called for too many men on the ice less than two minutes into the second period, and Ottawa took advantage. Mike Hoffman found an open area in the slot, and he fired Bobby Ryan's pass over Lehner's shoulder with 2:42 gone.

Okposo ties it: Okposo, who was the Sabres' best forward through two periods, was rewarded for his work with 1:07 gone in the third. He withstood cross-checks from Dion Phaneuf in front to reach out and tip Jake McCabe's point shot. The goal was Okposo's team-high fifth of the season. He has four goals and 10 points in 13 career games in Ottawa.

Second effort: Reinhart gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead with 11:38 to play. Zemgus Girgensons' shot hit Reinhart in front, and the winger kicked the puck to himself for a scoring chance. After the puck stopped at the goal line, Reinhart whacked it home for his second goal of the season.

Drawing blood: Buffalo defenseman Dmitry Kulikov got Ryan with a high-stick with 10:14 to play. A bloody Ryan disappeared to the dressing room, while Kulikov went to the penalty box for four minutes. The Sabres killed the double-minor.

Going streaking: Johan Larsson earned the secondary assist on Okposo's goal, giving him points in three straight games. The longest point streak of Larsson's career is four games.

Stick with it: Lehner made the save of the night with five minutes left in the first period. Ottawa's Jean-Gabriel Pageau undressed defenseman Jake McCabe deep in Buffalo's zone, then went around Lehner while getting the goalie to the ice. Lehner reached back with his stick to stop Pageau's shot from crossing the goal line.

Another big save: Lehner made sure the Sabres entered the third period in just a 1-0 hole by making 14 stops during the second. Ryan looked to have his second assist of the night when he fed Mark Stone on a two-on-one, but Lehner stretched out his left pad to turn aside Stone's great opportunity.

Quiet first: The Senators took nine shots and the Sabres had eight during the scoreless first period. Buffalo's best chance was its first one. Ryan O'Reilly got a partial breakaway with four minutes gone, but Anderson made the save.

Using his head: Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen escaped injury when Cody Ceci's slap shot hit him in the back of the helmet late in the first. Ristolainen popped right up and didn't miss a shift.

Long wait: The Sabres, who beat Ottawa in the final meeting last season, won consecutive games against the Senators for the first time since a six-game streak that ran from Dec. 4, 2010, to Nov. 11, 2011.

Carrier makes debut: William Carrier, called up Friday, played the first NHL game of his career. The Sabres left winger skated with center Derek Grant and right wing Nick Baptiste.

In the booth: With regular announcers Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray not making the trip, the play-by-play duties fell to Dan Dunleavy while the analyst was Martin Biron. The former Sabres netminder made his debut as the second analyst to Ray on Thursday.

Counting the house: Ottawa announced a crowd of 16,225. The Senators have gotten off to a slow start at the box office, including just 11,061 fans for a victory over Arizona on Oct. 18.

Next: The Sabres will get a One Buffalo night started Monday when they visit the Boston Bruins. Faceoff is set for 7 p.m., with the Buffalo Bills starting in Seattle at 8:30 p.m. The Sabres will return home following the game and host Ottawa on Wednesday in KeyBank Center.

Inside the Sabres: Canadian TV deal didn't work

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – After brokering a deal to put the Sabres on Canadian television, Ted Black called Steve Romanin. The then-Sabres president knew Romanin had been a season-ticket holder since Day One, and he wanted to personally deliver the news to the Ontario resident.

Like Black, Romanin was thrilled. He canceled his cable account and signed up for Bell Fibe, the television provider that had exclusive access to the Sabres. For three seasons, Romanin watched Buffalo's games from his home near St. Catharines.

He settled in to watch the start of the fourth season last month. The guide still had the Sabres on Channel 1442, but when Romanin turned on the game all he saw was a message. It told him that in order to watch the Sabres, he had to subscribe to NHL Center Ice.

Three years after trumpeting their arrival in Canada, the Sabres quietly went back over the border.

"The agreement expired, and both sides chose not to renew it," says Mark Preisler, executive vice president of media and content for Pegula Sports and Entertainment. "We're fine with it, and I know Bell is fine with it."

It turns out the deal wasn't quite as "momentous" as Black hoped. Despite thousands of Sabres fans in Southern Ontario, not many cared about watching the team on television. There were a few, however.

"It's certainly disappointing to see they discontinued it," said Peter Repple of Niagara Falls, Ont., who recently switched to Bell. "Did they drop it because people weren't watching? Well, people weren't watching because the team was historically bad. How can you come to conclusions after the last three seasons?"

"The team is supposed to get better, and if it seems if they're going in the right direction more people might get interested."

The Sabres had tried for years to get back on the air in Canada, and Black broke through the international barriers in 2013. The team worked out a three-year deal with Bell, and the provider gave its subscribers 50 games in 2013-14, 53 in 2014-15 and 68 games last season.

The deal came with a major drawback. Because the Sabres were on television in Ontario, the area became a home market. Blackout rules came into effect. Fans, bars and restaurants that didn't have Bell could no longer watch Sabres games through the Center Ice package.

The blackout rules are gone. Sabres fans in Canada who want to watch the team can get all the games by purchasing Center Ice or the Game Center app. Some fans have suffered through blackouts when Buffalo played Canadian teams this season, but an NHL spokesman says that is a glitch in Bell's system that is being investigated.

So, as strange as it seems, the Sabres' departure from Canada means more people there can actually watch them.

Kane's legal counterpunches

Evander Kane has fought 21 times during his hockey career, according to HockeyFights.com, and the boxing-trained forward is aggressive when the gloves drop. When it comes to court battles, he's a counterpuncher.

After Rachel Kuechle filed a lawsuit against Kane following their police-investigated encounter last December, the Sabres forward filed a counterclaim alleging the lawsuit was brought for the "sole purpose" of defaming him.

After Kane's latest court appearance on Halloween, his lawyer was prepared to demand orders of protection against two women who accused Kane of grabbing them and pulling their hair.

Demanding an order of protection against allegedly abused women? It was yet another sign the 25-year-old Kane has a warped sense of reality.

If there's another Kane incident in the future, would his legal moves discourage alleged victims from reporting a crime?

Checking the list

The Sabres have made a lot of hires and personnel moves, so it's necessary to check the media guide to see how the hierarchy breaks down.

In the "executive team," the list is of course headed by owners Terry and Kim Pegula. They are followed by Russ Brandon, president and alternate governor; Mike Gilbert, vice president of administration and general manager of HarborCenter; GM Tim Murray; and Assistant GM Mark Jakubowski.

The first person listed on the scouting staff is Rob Murphy, director of scouting. He's followed by Greg Royce, director of amateur scouting; Jerry Forton, assistant director of scouting; Anders Forsberg, director of European scouting; and Kevin Devine, director of player personnel.

It's a sign

The Pittsburgh Penguins have long made themselves at home on the road, bringing signs, rugs and other logoed items into the visiting dressing room. Former Pens coach Dan Bylsma is starting that with the Sabres.

As Buffalo's players exited the room Saturday in Ottawa, they walked past signs that read "Hard to play against" and "Expect to win," with both emblazoned by the "Sharpen Your Swords" logo the team is using this year.

Sabres goalie Robin Lehner stars in comeback win against Senators

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – Buffalo Sabres goalie Robin Lehner, coach Dan Bylsma said recently, gets a twinkle in his eye whenever he plays the Senators.

Lehner, 25, clearly relishes beating his old team, which traded him to keep Saturday's counterpart, Craig Anderson, who's 10 years older.

"Absolutely I can tell that," a grinning Bylsma said following the Sabres' 2-1 comeback win, a game in which Lehner starred, stopping 32 shots.

The Swede dazzled strong throughout his fourth straight start, allowing the Sabres to roar back with two third-period goals before the crowd of 16,225 fans inside the Canadian Tire Centre.

"He may have been the best player on the ice tonight," Bylsma said. "He was our best player on the ice tonight."

Lehner said: "No matter who we played today, it was a win we needed. We don't want to lose two in a row."

After Kyle Okposo tipped Jake McCabe's weak wrist shot in at 1:07, Sam Reinhart put the Sabres up at 8:22, stuffing in Zengus Girgensons' shot when Anderson couldn't secure it at the goal line.

The Sabres later killed a four-minute high-sticking penalty to Dmitry Kulikov.

What else helped the Sabres complete their first comeback victory this season?

"I just think we got going," Okposo said. "We sharpened up. I thought we did a really good job taking it to them. That's what's good teams do. When you're not at your best, you go to find ways to win."

Lehner was their backbone. He made two highlight-reel stops – a sprawling stick save Jean-Gabriel Pageau early and a point-blank stop on Mark Stone later to stymie a two-on-one.

"I think I'm move better laterally this season," said Lehner, who reshaped his body during the summer. "I think the Pageau save, it's nice that I got it, but I put myself in a position."

The triumph, the Sabres' fourth in five tries, put them in an unusual position. They're 5-4-2, meaning they're over .500 for just the second time since *January 2013*.

Stone beat Lehner earlier in the period, wiring a one-time from inside the left circle at 2:42.

The Senators, one of the NHL's biggest surprises through three weeks, had their three-game winning streak snapped.

The Sabres received a scare late in the first period when Cody Ceci's slap shot hit defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen squarely in the back of the helmet. Ristolainen, of course, fell to the ice. But he quickly got up, skated to the bench and didn't miss a shift.

Sabres rookie Nick Baptiste feels support in Ottawa

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – As a native of nearby Barrhaven, about a 10-minute drive from the Canadian Tire Centre, Buffalo Sabres rookie Nick Baptiste had quite the cheering section for his sixth NHL game.

"There's going to be a lot of people here tonight – a lot of family, friends, teachers, people in the area," Baptiste said prior to Saturday's 2-1 comeback win against the Senators, his first NHL appearance here. "My brother's whole hockey team is coming. There's going to be quite a bit of people. I got to try to channel as much as I can and just play."

What's quite a bit? Perhaps 50?

"Oh, I think 50 is like a real understatement," Baptiste said. "I might have 50 people just wanting to see me after the game. It's going to be in the 100s, I assume."

Baptiste, 21, has acclimated well to the NHL. The speedy winger has been noticeable at times, consistently earning more ice time. Sabres coach Dan Bylsma even briefly promoted him to the top line beside center Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo in Thursday's 2-1 loss to Toronto.

"I feel a little bit of confidence," said Baptiste, who compiled three goals and five points in five AHL games following a strong NHL training camp. "When you get more minutes and you get out there with guys like that, it kind of jumpstarts you a little bit."

Bylsma said: "He's going to get those opportunities ... (with) how he can force opposition with his speed."

Baptiste, a 2013 third-round pick, started Saturday on the right side with center Derek Grant and William Carrier, 21, who made his NHL debut.

Baptiste said he had previously played at the Canadian Tire Centre in an Ontario Hockey League game. He also won the Bell Capital Cup, a national youth tournament, here about nine years ago.

While the Senators consistently enjoyed success not long ago, Baptiste said he "wasn't a humongous Sens fan."

"I watched the Sens play because they were the team here, but there was no one really I looked up to too much back in the day," he said.

Instead of a local player, Baptiste looked up to former Toronto Maple Leafs star Mats Sundin and Jarome Iginla, a 19-year veteran who plays for the Colorado Avalanche.

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It was almost a year ago, around the time, not coincidentally, Marcus Foligno began the most consistent stretch of his career, that the Sabres winger finally developed a shoot-first mentality.

By the end of 2015-16, Foligno had pumped a career-high 81 shots on goal. Considering he registered only nine shots in his first 20 games, the number was significant.

These days, Foligno's consistently shooting the puck. No, he's not exactly Alex Ovechkin. Still, Foligno had 13 shots in 10 games entering Saturday's game. He had four shots in Thursday's 2-1 loss to Toronto, scoring the Sabres' only goal.

"I'm just trying to get the shot off," Foligno said. "That's something I was harped on a little bit. Coming over the blue line, there's no bad shot getting a shot on net. You never know what's going to happen. So sometimes you're a little bit stubborn, you want to look to pass before shooting or you don't feel comfortable in a certain position. I really do emphasize on shooting this year."

Bylsma urged the 6-foot-3, 228-pound Foligno to utilize his underrated shot last season. When Foligno gets off his game, Bylsma said, he "tends to fight" the shoot-first mentality.

"When he's on his game he has that shoot-first mentality ... he's getting chances and shots like he did (Thursday) around the net, second-chances opportunities," Bylsma said.

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Bylsma said backup goalie Anders Nilsson will likely play one of the back-to-backs against the New Jersey Devils on Friday or next Saturday. Nilsson recently played three straight games subbing for starter Robin Lehner.

xxx

Senators backup goalie Mike Condon, who played 55 games with Montreal last season, has already been property of three teams this season.

Pittsburgh claimed him on waivers from the Canadiens on Oct. 11. He played 20 minutes for the Penguins before they traded him to the Senators on Wednesday.

Condon posted a 27-save shutout Thursday after flying in from California.

Lehner outstanding against former team as Sabres edge Senators

By Ken Warren

Ottawa Citizen

November 5, 2016

Sabres 2, Senators 1

This time, there was no perfect ending for Craig Anderson and the Ottawa Senators.

Unfortunately for the Senators goaltender and his team, it was former Senators netminder Robin Lehner who stole the show in a 2-1 victory Saturday for the Buffalo Sabres.

Lehner stymied the Senators time and again, making 31 saves in a game filled with spectacular saves.

"Both goalies played outstanding, and both teams played really well," said Senators captain Erik Karlsson. "It was one of those games where we generated a lot, but didn't capitalize on the chances we had. When we beat him, (Lehner) was there, anyways."

The game was played under the spotlight of Hockey Fights Cancer night at Canadian Tire Centre and with Anderson's wife, Nicholle, continuing her battle with the disease.

Anderson was sharp, but the Sabres turned the game around in the third, receiving goals from Kyle Okposo and Sam Reinhart to erase the 1-0 lead the Senators had built in the first two periods.

Mike Hoffman scored the lone Senators goal, on a power play, early in the second period.

The Senators were aiming to sweep the three-game homestand and to run their winning streak to four games.

It looked good for a while.

Anderson came into the game having stopped 92 of 93 shots in his previous three games, including a 2-1 overtime victory over Carolina Tuesday, and he was perfect through two periods.

Then came Okposo's floating wrist shot through a crowd of bodies in front of Anderson at 1:07 of third period.

Reinhart scored the winner at the 8:22 mark of the third, jumping on a loose puck behind Anderson.

The Senators had a golden opportunity to tie the game 2-2 when they were handed a four-minute power play midway through the third when Dmitry Kulikov clipped Bobby Ryan under the eye. The good news for the Senators is that Ryan returned after getting stitches. The bad news is that the power play struck out when it was needed most.

In the spirit of the evening, Senators players sported "Stick with Nik" decals on their helmets in support of Nicholle Anderson.

The opening ceremonies for the 16,225 fans at Canadian Tire Centre featured cancer-stricken 13-year-old Justin Leblanc limping out to centre ice on crutches. Leblanc and public address announcer Stu Schwartz, who has also battled cancer, dropped the pucks for the ceremonial opening faceoff.

The Andersons' situation has put an added spotlight on the disease for NHL fans and players.

"I'm sure there a lot of emotions he's going through, when it hits that close to home," said Lehner, who for years seemed destined to take over the Senators' net from Anderson.

"And playing as well as he is ... it's incredible."

As for his own game, Lehner says he's moving better — perhaps because he has dropped at least 20 pounds from his previous weight, which once pushed 240 pounds.

"I'm just trying to work on being patient and use my body, try to be calm in the net," he said.

While he acknowledges beating the Senators is always special, he claims the Sabres simply needed a win over any team.

Anderson stepped into the Senators' net on the heels of Mike Condon's 27-save, 1-0 shutout of Vancouver in his Senators debut Thursday.

Anderson was sharp early, robbing Ryan O'Reilly twice in the opening 10 minutes.

Lehner matched him in the scoreless first period, making a desperate, diving stick save off Jean-Gabriel Pageau. The Sabres goaltender also came up big in the final minute of the first, stopping dangerous shots from Marc Methot and Karlsson.

Hoffman's pretty power-play goal 2:42 into the second — set up by Karlsson and Ryan — broke the ice, but Lehner continued to make huge saves to keep the Sabres close.

Lehner made a kick save, and a beauty, to steal a sure goal away from Mark Stone on a two-on-one break with Ryan.

It was part of a highly entertaining middle period that featured one stretch of eight minutes without a whistle.

Senators coach Guy Boucher was satisfied with the effort, suggesting his squad had every opportunity to put the game away in the second period.

"In the end, we weren't able to bury the unbelievable chances that we got," said Boucher. "He stops one with his stick, we hit a post, we had three one-timers on terrific passes, and normally at least one of those goes in."

The Senators travel to Nashville Monday, beginning a two-game road trip against the Predators on Tuesday. They will face the Sabres in Buffalo on Wednesday.

Three Stars

1-Robin Lehner, Sabres: The former Senator was outstanding in a game that could have got away from Buffalo. Among his many highlights were superb stops off Pageau (three times), Stone and Puempel.

2-Craig Anderson, Senators: Anderson was on top of his game early, keeping the Sabres off the scoresheet until the their third-period rally.

3-Ryan O'Reilly, Sabres: From start to finish, he was a constant threat, creating chance after chance, creating nightmares for the Senators defence.

Memorial product McCabe is growing into an effective NHL defenseman

By Nick Erickson

Leader Telegram

November 6, 2016

ST. PAUL — There's an offensive element Jake McCabe has to his game that has the Buffalo Sabres raving about their young 23-year-old defenseman out of Eau Claire.

Handling the puck, improving his passing and getting in on more offensive rushes was a big point of emphasis for the former Memorial skater in the offseason in order to see more ice time during big moments.

But when push comes to shove and the moment calls for it, as it did Tuesday night at Xcel Energy Center when fellow defenseman Zach Bogosian went down with a knee injury in the first period against the Wild, McCabe can answer the bell and get down and dirty with an old-school style of defense he put on display throughout his time in the Sawdust City.

Buffalo went with five defensemen the rest of the night, and McCabe was on the ice for 22 minutes, 21 seconds in the Sabres' 2-1 victory. The highlights over his 30 shifts included clearing a puck out of the crease that would have given the Wild a lead in the second period and blocking two big shots with under 3 minutes to play to preserve the victory. It's that type of effort that convinced Buffalo to give him a three-year contract extension worth \$4.8 million in the offseason.

"A physical presence, and a guy you can kind of add with the team offense with how he can skate and join the attack," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "We've really been fortunate to sign Jake to that three-year contract extension, and going forward for our team, he's going to be a top flight guy. He's going to be a guy we lean on and go to in a lot of situations."

McCabe, who was on the 2009 Old Abes team before departing for the USA Hockey's National Team Development Program, has always been known as an above-average skater. A season ago, he had four goals and 13 assists in 77 games.

He has the ability to zip a pass from his own zone across the blue line to a streaking forward. He can use his puck skills to clear zone. And every now and then, if he sees an opening, he will join an odd-man rush and crash the offensive zone.

While McCabe, who went on to play collegiately for the Badgers and was first-team All-Big Ten in 2013-14, understood that working on his puck skills and limiting turnovers would be essential to get more of those chances, he also learned in his first full season in the league just how much fitness you maintain in order to bring it consistently on a nightly basis. He understands his most vital resource is his world-class ability to skate for a 6-foot-1, 200-pound defenseman.

"Wasn't anything crazy," McCabe said. "Just getting into the best shape possible because the game is getting so much faster now. You need to be able to skate. That's the biggest thing was the conditioning. Skating is probably my biggest asset, so I want to use that to the best of my ability and just handling pucks and working on the ice."

McCabe, who turned 23 on Oct. 12, got recalled in the second game of the season last year from Rochester of the AHL and flourished. His average ice time of 19:07 was the seventh highest among Buffalo rookies since the league began tracking time on ice in the 1997-98 season.

His plus-6 rating was best on the team. It was a rookie season worthy of a contract extension. And perhaps more importantly for this current group of skaters who call northwest New York home, he earned the trust of an organization with one of the youngest and most promising rosters in the game. According to nhlstatnumbers.com, the Sabres have the youngest average age in the league at 25.664 years.

"You knew he could play the game, but for a young guy with not a lot of experience last year to step up and play the minutes he played and situations he played, he really grabbed his opportunity," alternate captain and first-line defender Josh Gorges, an 11-year NHL veteran, said. "When you see him this year, I feel like he's just got that confidence. He's out there making plays and sees the ice so well and skates so well. When he's on, he's a real effective player for us."

That confidence this year comes from a new level of expectation McCabe set for himself. He wants to reward the Sabres organization for rewarding him in the offseason. He's an established player and playing as such.

His two blocked shots Tuesday night against the Wild were difference makers. Earlier in the season against the Vancouver Canucks on Oct. 20, McCabe stopped a 3-on-1 rush himself, sacrificing his body to redirect a puck away from a slashing forward barreling down the ice for an uncontested shot. He added his third assist of the season Saturday in a 2-1 win over the Senators and his plus-2 rating is among the best on the team.

"I want to be a big part of this team and be a guy that makes a difference out there," McCabe said.

Bogosian is expected to miss a couple of weeks with an MCL sprain, so the Sabres will rely even more on McCabe. And with the team giving up just 24 goals in 11 games and trying to stay afloat as superstar forward Jack Eichel sits out a few more games with injury, he and the rest of the defense are delivering. Buffalo was sixth-best in the NHL in goals allowed per game going into Saturday's contest.

"I think when we play our systems, if we play a six-man unit, it can be a really special thing," McCabe said.

McCabe, who has plenty of international experience and played for Team USA's in May's world championships, is part of Buffalo's long term plans. That's evident.

He also is proving he is one of the most intriguing young defenseman in hockey, with the ability to be both physical and show finesse with the puck. He has all the tools and now some confidence.

By all accounts, it appears Eau Claire will be represented in the NHL for quite some time.

"He's a big part of our future," Gorges said. "The sky is the limit for Jake and what he can accomplish, and I'm excited to watch him grow and see what he can do."

Sam Reinhart scores tiebreaker in third, Sabres beat Senators 2-1

By Darren Desaulniers

The Canadian Press

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA — The Ottawa Senators were hoping one day Robin Lehner would emerge as their No. 1 goaltender. On Saturday he came back to town and beat them as a member of the Buffalo Sabres.

Lehner, who the Sabres acquired from Ottawa prior to last season, made 31 saves as Buffalo came from behind to defeat the Senators 2-1.

"That's the big reason why we won," Sabres forward Sam Reinhart said of Lehner's play.

"He was the one guy for the full 60 minutes that gave it his all and was really the big reason why we won that game."

Kyle Okposo and Reinhart scored in the third period as the Sabres rallied for their fourth win in their past five games.

Okposo tied the game early in the period when he tipped a point shot from Jake McCabe past Craig Anderson just 67 seconds into the final frame.

The Sabres (5-4-2) then took their first lead of the game as Reinhart took advantage of a turnover at the side of the Ottawa goal. Anderson stopped the first shot before Reinhart was able to jam a loose puck in between the skate of the Ottawa goalie and the post at 8:22.

"It was kind of an in-tight play and kind of lucky the way it worked out and was able to come back and be on the right side of the goalie," Reinhart said.

Later in the period the Senators got a great opportunity to tie the game when they were awarded a four-minute power play after Dmitry Kulikov got a high stick into the face of Bobby Ryan, but were unable to produce.

Mike Hoffman had the lone goal for the Senators (7-4-0), who got a 30-save performance from Anderson.

"I think the game could have went either way and I think both teams played pretty good and had chances but Lehner did play really well," Hoffman said.

"We were generating chances which is, at the end of the day, what we want to do. Some days they're going to go in, unfortunately this was one of those days that things didn't go our way."

A scoreless first period did produce one highlight-worthy moment that ended with a sprawling stick save by Lehner in the Buffalo goal.

Jean Gabriel Pageau worked his way through the Sabres defence and got Lehner down as he went wide of the netminder, but Lehner was able to reach back and get his stick down to knock Pageau's shot wide.

"I think the Pageau save, it's nice that I got it, but I put myself in a position where I got myself out of the crease and got out of angle and wasn't as patient as I wanted to be," Lehner explained.

"I was fortunate it didn't go in."

Hoffman fired a one-timer from the slot past Lehner at 2:42 of the second period while the Sabres were killing a too many men on the ice penalty for the game's first goal.

There was also a stretch in the period where there was no stoppage in play for seven minutes 48 seconds.

The Sabres will conclude their mini two-game road swing against the Bruins in Boston Monday before returning home for a rematch with the Senators Wednesday.

The Senators will face the Predators in Nashville Tuesday.

Notes: Chris Wideman and Max McCormick were scratches for the Senators while scratches for the Sabres were Nicolas Deslauriers, Zack Bogosian and Hudson Fasching...The Sabres have won back-to-back games against the Senators for the first time in five years...Sabres forward William Carrier played his first NHL game...Senators forward Derick Brassard hasn't scored since opening night, a span of 10 games...Senators forward Mike Hoffman failed to score in his first seven games but now has goals in three of his past four.

Lehner subdues former team as Sabres edge Senators

By Don Brennan
The Sports Xchange
November 5, 2016

OTTAWA - - Robin Lehner let out a huge roar at the final buzzer, but later insisted beating his old team was nothing extra special.

"No matter who we played today, it was a win we needed," Lehner said after making 32 saves in the Buffalo Sabres' 2-1 victory over the Ottawa Senators at Canadian Tire Centre on Saturday night.

"We don't want to lose two in a row. We can learn a few things from this game."

In earning his fourth victory of the season, Lehner, who spent six years in the Senators' organization, managed to outlast his former goaltending partner. Ottawa goalie Craig Anderson was also brilliant while making 30 saves on Hockey Fights Cancer night.

Anderson's wife, Nicholle, was recently diagnosed with the dreaded disease.

"I think both goalies played outstanding, and I think both teams played really good as well," Senators defenseman Erik Karlsson said. "It was one of those games we generated a lot, but didn't capitalize on the chances we had."

"When we beat him, he was there anyways."

The Senators held a 1-0 lead after a second period power-play goal by winger Mike Hoffman, who has snapped out of an early season funk with three goals in his last four games. But the Sabres bounced back with a pair in the third, as winger Kyle Okposo notched his fifth of the year at the 1:07 mark and center Sam Reinhart jammed one in the short side for what proved to be the winner with 11:38 left.

The goal was the second of the season for Reinhart, who later heaped praise on Lehner.

"That's a big reason why we win," Reinhart said. "He was the one guy for the full 60 minutes who gave his all, and was really a big reason why we won that game."

Lehner's best save of the night was in the first period off Senators center Jean-Gabriel Pageau, who broke in alone, moved the puck to his backhand, and took a shot that was stopped by the goalie's stick.

"It was a great save," Pageau said. "I thought I had him and he put the paddle (down) at the end. Obviously, next time I'll try to get it up. But it was a good save."

The Senators had numerous chances to build on Hoffman's goal in the second, but Lehner blocked the other 14 shots he faced in the period.

"When it was 1-0 we got unbelievable scoring chances manufactured by our players, nothing lucky, and we weren't able to bury," Senators coach Guy Boucher said. "At that point, 2-0 and 3-0 it easily could have been." Okposo and center Ryan O'Reilly each had five shots on the Senators goal. O'Reilly was stoned twice in the first period by Anderson.

"When you're not at your best, you find ways to win," Okposo said. "I thought we did a really good job of that tonight. We stuck with it. We regrouped after the second period and knew what we had to do coming out in the third and we went and executed."

The Senators had a four-minute power play in the third winger Bobby Ryan took a stick in the face from Sabres defenseman Dmitry Kulikov at the 9:46. But their inability to get the equalizer wasn't all because of Lehner.

"It was obviously not one of our best (power plays)," Hoffman said. "We couldn't get set up, kind of everyone in the wrong positions."

Added winger Mark Stone: "Towards the end of the game when you get that, you've got to bear down and get looks. And we didn't really generate anything off of it."

The loss snapped the Senators' winning streak at three games, leaving them with an 7-4-0 record. Buffalo improved to 5-4-1.

Over the last four games, Lehner has allowed five goals.

"He's a battler," Okposo said. "The last few games he's played he's just been battling for us and making big saves. He made so many huge saves tonight. His athleticism is really good. It's allowing him to make some of those saves."

And his teammates knew it was special for him to beat the Senators.

"I'm sure any time you play your old team, you want to show that they made a mistake or whatever," Okposo said. "You get a little bit of extra motivation."

Asked if he could tell Lehner relished the win over Ottawa, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma nodded.

"Absolutely," he said. "Absolutely I can tell that."

The Sabres play in Boston on Monday then return home to meet the Senators again on Wednesday. The Senators face the Predators in Nashville on Tuesday.

NOTES: Senators G Chris Driedger has been returned to the American Hockey League team in Binghamton, leaving the goaltending duties to Craig Anderson and Mike Condon. Coach Guy Boucher said of Anderson: "When he's here, he's in." When he's not with the team, Anderson will be with his wife Nicholle as she battles cancer. ... Senators G Andrew Hammond is getting closer to making his return from a groin injury. ... With Senators D Chris Wideman out with an upper body injury, D Fredrik Claesson took his place in the lineup for the second consecutive game. ... Senators C Max McCormick was a healthy scratch ... Listed as the Sabres scratches were D Zach Bogosian (knee), W Nicolas Deslauriers (knee) and W Hudson Fasching (groin). All three are injured ... During warmup, Sabres W Marcus Foligno skated by Anderson and tapped him on the pads as a show of support

Sabres Top Senators 2-1

WGR 550

November 5, 2016

Kyle Okposo and Sam Reinhart scored 3rd period goals on Saturday, lifting the Sabres to a 2-1 win over the Senators. Robin Lehner made several impressive stops, picking up 32 saves along the way.

Scoring

- Mike Hoffman opened the scoring 2:42 into the 2nd period, a power play goal from the slot. Hoffman one-timed a Bobby Ryan pass into the Buffalo net for the 1-0 Senators lead.
- The Sabres finally got on the board 1:07 into the 3rd on Okposo's 5th. Okposo deflected Jake McCabe's point shot, tying the game 1-1.
- Reinhart put Buffalo ahead later in the period, jamming a loose puck past Craig Anderson for the 2-1 lead.

Game Notes

- Okposo now leads the team in goals with 5. Matt Moulson and Ryan O'Reilly have 4 each.
- Johan Larsson's assist on Okposo's goal gave him points in 3 straight games (1 G, 2 A).
- The Sabres killed off all 4 minutes of a Dmitry Kulikov double minor, a high stick that drew blood on Bobby Ryan.
- William Carrier logged 6:26 of ice time in his NHL debut, recording 2 shots on goal.

1st Period

Goals

None

Penalties

9:26 - OTT - Chris Kelly (2 min., high sticking)

12:31 - BUF - Josh Gorges (2 min., tripping)

2nd Period

Goals

2:42 - OTT - Mike Hoffman (3) (PPG) (Bobby Ryan, Erik Karlsson)

Penalties

1:56 - BUF - Bench minor (2 min., too many men on the ice, served by Nick Baptiste)

3rd Period

Goals

1:07 - BUF - Kyle Okposo (5) (Jake McCabe, Jake McCabe)

8:22 - BUF - Sam Reinhart (2) (Rasmus Ristolainen, Zemgus Girgensons)

Penalties

9:46 - BUF - Dmitry Kulikov (4 min. double minor, high sticking)

Goaltending

BUF - Robin Lehner (32 saves, 33 shots)

OTT - Craig Anderson (30 saves, 32 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 0 of 1

OTT - 1 of 4

From the Locker Room: Sabres-Senators

WGR 550

November 5, 2016

Robin Lehner was sharp on Saturday, stopping 32 shots in a 2-1 win over the Senators. Sam Reinhart notched the game-winner in the 3rd after Kyle Okposo tied it with his 5th. Read what each had to say after the win.

Robin Lehner

"I'm just trying to work on being patient and use my body. Trying to be calm in the net and not throw myself everywhere."

"Working on my shuffle, small pushes, getting my angles. That's what we've been working on and I feel like I'm not out of position a lot."

Sam Reinhart

"[Lehner's] obviously a big part of that win. Him and the penalty kill, especially in the 3rd period. They really gave us a chance to win."

"We knew going into the 3rd we had more to give. If we played like we did in any one of the periods against Toronto we felt confident in ourselves and felt like we could come out with a win."

Kyle Okposo

"We weren't very good in the 1st period. We were just kind of flat. I was too. Started to get going in the 2nd as a team, but [Lehner] was terrific. He made some huge saves. If he doesn't make some big saves we're probably down 4-0 going into the 3rd."

"[Lehner] obviously played terrific and also our penalty kill. Those were the two keys. I thought we did a really good job in the 3rd sticking with it. We took the game over I thought. Just came out with some energy and found our legs."

Sabres rally past Senators

By Chris Stevenson

NHL.com

November 5, 2016

OTTAWA -- Robin Lehner made 32 saves, Sam Reinhart scored the winning goal, and the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Ottawa Senators 2-1 at Canadian Tire Centre on Saturday, ending the Senators three-game winning streak.

Lehner, who played for the Senators from 2010-15, is 2-0-1 against his former team.

Kyle Okposo tied the score in the third period for the Sabres (5-4-2), who are 4-1-2 on the road.

Mike Hoffman scored for the Senators (7-4-0) and Craig Anderson made 30 saves.

The Sabres said they knew how much Lehner relishes beating his former team.

"Absolutely," coach Dan Bylsma said. "Absolutely I can tell that."

"For sure," said Okposo, who scored his team-leading fifth goal. "I'm sure any time you play your old team you want to show that they made a mistake. You get a little bit of extra motivation. I'm sure that he had some tonight and he played a heck of a game."

Lehner was traded to the Sabres on June 26, 2015, along with center David Legwand, for the 21st pick in the 2015 NHL Draft (the Senators used the pick to select center Colin White).

Lehner downplayed the revenge factor.

"No matter who we played today, it was a win we needed," Lehner said. "We don't want to lose two in a row. We can learn a few things from this game. The way we came out in the third after our first goal there, and the big PK we had, we can take some positives."

The Sabres killed a double-minor penalty for high sticking to defenseman Dmitry Kulikov at 9:46 of the third period.

Goal of the game

Reinhart scored the winner at 8:22 of the third period with some good stick work along the goal line. The puck fell at his feet at the edge of the crease and he kicked it to his stick, putting a shot from the goal line off Anderson's foot. As the puck crept towards the goal line, Reinhart got his stick in front of the post and nudged it in for his second goal of the season.

Save of the game

With the game scoreless with 5:05 to go in the first period, Senators forward Jean-Gabriel Pageau carried the puck over the blue line and showed some patience to let traffic develop in front of Lehner. Pageau carried the puck to Lehner's right and tried to score with a backhand, but Lehner sprawled to extend his right arm and got his stick on the puck.

Highlight of the game

With three minutes to go in the second period, Senators forwards Bobby Ryan and Mark Stone broke out on a 2-on-1. Ryan carried the puck along the left wing and fed a pass between the skates of Buffalo defenseman Jake McCabe to Stone at the edge of the crease. Lehner moved strongly to his left and stopped Stone's shot.

Unsung moment of the game

Sabres forward William Carrier, playing in his first NHL game, made a strong play in the neutral zone and got by Senators defenseman Mark Borowiecki at the Ottawa blue line to start the play that led to Reinhart's goal.

They said it

"There's been a couple [of big saves] this season. I think I move better laterally this season. I think the Pageau save, it's nice that I got it, but I put myself in that position. I got myself out of the crease and got out of the angle there. I was not as patient as I wanted to be. Fortunate it didn't go in." -- *Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner*

"He may have been the best player on the ice tonight. He was our best player on the ice tonight. End of the second period and in the third there, he had four or five excellent saves." -- *Sabres coach Dan Bylsma on the play of goaltender Robin Lehner*

"I think both goalies played outstanding, and I think both teams played really good as well. It was one of those games we generated a lot, but didn't capitalize on the chances we had." -- *Senators defenseman Erik Karlsson*

Need to know

The Sabres have won four of their past five games. ... Karlsson had a game-high 29:00 of ice time. ... The Senators lost for the second time on home ice this season (5-2-0). ... The Senators have scored once on their past 15 power plays.

What's next

Sabres: At the Boston Bruins on Monday (7 p.m. ET; Sportsnet, TVA Sports, NESN, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Senators: At the Nashville Predators on Tuesday (8 p.m. ET; TSN5, RDS2, FS-TN, NHL.TV)

Lehner sensational in net as Sabres top Senators 2-1

By Chris Ryndak

Buffalo Sabres

November 6, 2016

OTTAWA - Through two periods Saturday night, the Buffalo Sabres weren't quite on their game, but their goaltender was. The Sabres ended up scoring twice in the third period to win the game, but it was the play of Robin Lehner that made the comeback possible.

Lehner made 32 saves, including a few jaw droppers as Buffalo defeated the Ottawa Senators 2-1 at Canadian Tire Centre. He's now 2-0-1 in four appearances against his former club with a .953 save percentage and a 1.41 goals-against average.

"No matter who we played today, it was a win we needed," Lehner said. "We don't want to lose two in a row. I think we can learn a few things from this game, but they way we came out in the third after our first goal and the big PK we had, we can take some positives too."

Kyle Okposo scored 1:07 into the third to get the ball rolling and Sam Reinhart put home the winner a few minutes later. Both were keenly aware of Lehner's contributions.

"He was the one guy that, for the full 60 minutes, he gave it his all and was really a big reason why we won that game," Reinhart said.

Let's look at two of Lehner's bigger stops early on.

He made an unreal save on Jean-Gabriel Pageau with 5:06 remaining in the first. As Pageau cut into the middle of the ice, he put the puck on his backhand and tried to stretch around to beat Lehner - who came out to challenge the shot - on his stick side. However, Lehner reached back to his right, put the paddle down and stoned Pageau.

"He's a battler. Early in the season, you could see that his game was coming," Okposo said. "He made some really good stops and the last few games that he's played, he's just been battling for us and making big saves. He made so many huge saves tonight and his athleticism is really good. It's allowing him to make some of those saves."

You know what? Just watch it for yourself.

Lehner realizes, however, that he probably didn't have to make such a spectacular save if he had made a better decision as Pageau was cutting in.

"The Pageau save, it's nice that I got it, but I put myself in that position," he said. "I got myself out of the crease and out of angle there. I was not as patient as I wanted to be, but fortunate it didn't go in."

Lehner then made another great stop on a 2-on-1 late in the second period. With Bobby Ryan bearing down with Mark Stone, he threw a pass to the right to Stone, who had pretty much the entire net to shoot at. Lehner pushed over to his left to make the pad save on Stone's one-timer.

Let's look at his night overall.

The final 20

Buffalo's play in the third period was a stark contrast to how they played a majority of the first two frames. They came out of the intermission with confidence and assertiveness and that led to the quick goal by Okposo.

"It started with the first shift of the third period and the tone was set by those guys jumping over the boards," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "It was a completely different last 20 than the first 40 for our group. The tone was set with that first shift which led into that first goal."

The Sabres sustained pressure in the Ottawa zone and were able to partially complete a line change during the sequence. A point shot by Jake McCabe deflected in off Okposo's leg to put Buffalo within one.

Reinhart's goal 8:22 into the third was the result of a second and third-chance effort in and around the net. Once again, strong work from the five-man unit led to the positive result.

The big kill

With 10:14 to play, the Sabres penalty killers were heavily leaned upon when Dmitry Kulikov was charged with a four-minute double minor for a high stick that clipped Bobby Ryan and drew blood.

The Buffalo units consisting of Ryan O'Reilly, Derek Grant, Brian Gionta, Johan Larsson, Marcus Foligno, Josh Gorges, Rasmus Ristolainen, Jake McCabe and Cody Franson cleared the puck - by Brian Duff's count - 11 times.

The penalty killers were also looking for some redemption after Ottawa opened the scoring on the power play 2:42 into the second period on a goal by Mike Hoffman.

Up next

The Sabres will take advantage of an extra hour of sleep as they clear customs and head to Boston. They're scheduled to practice in Beantown on Sunday and prepare for a game on Monday against the Bruins at TD Garden at 7 p.m. It'll be the third of five-straight games against divisional opponents for Buffalo.

Sabres' Nicholas Baptiste eager to drive home his NHL ability

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 4, 2016

OTTAWA -- The texts have steadily buzzed Nicholas Baptiste's phone during the past week.

"Are you coming?"

"Will you be in the lineup?"

"Are you playing?"

It appears the answer to all will be "yes," a thrilling development for the Buffalo Sabres forward and Ottawa native. Baptiste is home and should be in the lineup Saturday night when the Sabres visit the Senators in Canadian Tire Centre.

"Certainly, I've thought about it and my family's thought about it, and it'll be quite an amazing night if I was able to play in Ottawa," Baptiste said.

The 21-year-old practiced on the fourth line again Friday, putting him in position to play his sixth NHL game in front of family and friends.

"It's super exciting for me," Baptiste said in KeyBank Center. "I'm getting texts and calls and a lot of media attention regarding it. People are asking me, 'Are you in the lineup? Are you playing? Are you there?'"

The rookie is attempting to carve out a regular role in Buffalo so that the questions will turn from "Are you coming?" to "What should we do when you get here?" Travel plans are still tenuous as Baptiste learned Friday when the Sabres sent his best friend, Justin Bailey, back to Rochester and called up William Carrier for his NHL debut.

The uncertainty is a motivator for Baptiste, who has one goal and six shots in his five games while earning power-play time.

"I'm a couple games in now, so it's time to focus in and not worry about the jitters and stuff," Baptiste said. "I have a ton more confidence. In the first two games I was skating and not having many touches with the puck. The last few games I've had pretty good offensive chances in the time I've been getting on the ice."

Baptiste had a chance at his first NHL assist during Thursday's 2-1 loss to Toronto, carrying the puck on a two-on-one. His pass to Marcus Foligno failed to connect after Maple Leafs defenseman Connor Carrick delivered an unpenalized tackle on Foligno.

Baptiste also skated on the second power-play unit with Tyler Ennis, Brian Gionta, Dmitry Kulikov and Cody Franson. He's expected to start Saturday's game on a line with Carrier and center Derek Grant.

As exciting as it is to play in Ottawa, there's disappointment he won't share the moment with Bailey. Since the Sabres drafted both in 2013, they've grown into best friends and roommates. They've pushed each other to make it to the big leagues.

During the previous two games, they made it together.

"That's one of the things we've talked about for a long time now is looking toward the future, seeing each other doing well," Bailey said before his demotion. "We both had a lot of success in junior. We get to Rochester, and I

think in the first couple months it was a grind. It was tough. It was one of the harder things I've had to do in hockey, and for him, too. There were ups and downs. He was hurt, and we were on lower lines.

"There were just a lot of challenges we had to overcome to get to this moment, and that adds to it."

Baptiste's speed has helped him fit in. His potent shot is sure to show itself at some point. He totaled 114 goals during his last three years of juniors. He finished strong in Rochester last year after a slow start and finished with 13 goals.

He has one so far and would like to add another in his hometown.

"We have great group of guys here that have welcomed us in, and it makes it that much easier for us young guys," Baptiste said. "We're just starting to learn what it is to be an NHL player."

Sabres Notebook: Carrier to debut; Kane skating; Eichel watching

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 4, 2016

OTTAWA – William Carrier had already gone to bed when his phone rang at midnight. The call telling him he was headed to the NHL was so good that he woke everyone else up, too.

The Sabres recalled Carrier from Rochester early Friday morning, and the 21-year-old is expected to make his NHL debut Saturday when Buffalo visits the Ottawa Senators. The Quebec native will be only a couple of hours from home, so most of the family members he called in the middle of the night will make the journey to Canadian Tire Centre.

Carrier will get his initial big-league look after scoring three times in the Amerks' opening seven games, including the last two.

"It's great, especially early in the season," Carrier said after practice in KeyBank Center. "I had a good start in Rochester, so it's pretty fun."

The Sabres thought enough of Carrier's potential to acquire him in the trade that sent Ryan Miller and Steve Ott to St. Louis. The 6-foot-2, 212-pound winger was one of the stars of development camp and the prospects tournament, but he couldn't carry it into the preseason.

"You're always disappointed when you don't make the team out of training camp, but I proved myself down there, practiced hard, had a good start, and now I'm back here," Carrier said.

In addition to the scoring touch, Carrier is responsible defensively (he led the Amerks at plus-14 last season) and plays with an edge. He practiced as the left winger for center Derek Grant and right wing Nicholas Baptiste.

"Will's been playing the best and really been demanding a call-up with his play," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "What I like about his game is speed and tenacity. He's been a hard, physical guy and has been a guy that's had a presence at the net."

The Sabres sent left wing Justin Bailey back to Rochester after two games. Bailey skated just 7:02 during Thursday's 2-1 loss to Toronto, recording one shot attempt and one hit.

Bylsma said the 21-year-old simply didn't play to expectations.

"It would seem odd that you send a guy down if that wasn't the case," the coach said.

Left wing Evander Kane skated on his own for the fourth straight day in his comeback from cracked ribs. He may return to the lineup next week.

"He's skated now four days quite hard, quite extensively, got good conditioning in his skates," Bylsma said. "He's added some physicality to it, and he needs to continue to add more of that to see how he's going to feel and react to the physicality.

"He's going to be dealing with some discomfort and pain coming back from it. ... It can be with you for a while."

Fellow injured forward Jack Eichel watched practice from the stands. He's been out three weeks with a high-ankle sprain that is expected to sideline him for up to eight weeks.

"He's been really quite good, quite patient about his recovery," Bylsma said. "He's with the team every day. He's been at practice multiple times, sitting in the stands and watching, but he also understands he's got some time with this injury.

"We know it's going to take time, but I like seeing him in the stands. I like having him around. I like his focus is wanting to get back here, wanting to get back as part of the group."

Goaltender Robin Lehner will likely play at least 10 of the Sabres' 14 games in November. The former Ottawa netminder is 3-3-1 with a .922 save percentage and 2.30 goals-against average. Anders Nilsson (1-1-1, .937, 1.95) will get three or four starts.

"They've done a very good job of netminding for us," Bylsma said, "really giving us a chance almost every night to win a game."

Speed, tenacity earned William Carrier recall to Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 4, 2016

BUFFALO – If William Carrier had stayed healthy late last season, the Sabres prospect likely would've earned his first trip to the NHL. But Carrier, an often overlooked winger, broke his hand in March. When this season started, the Sabres passed on him twice to recall Justin Bailey and Nick Baptiste. Carrier, meanwhile, kept impressing in the AHL, compiling three goals and four points in seven games.

The Sabres decided Carrier, 21, deserved a chance, so they summoned him from the Rochester Americans earlier today. Bailey has been sent back.

"It's great, especially early in the season," a smiling Carrier said this afternoon inside KeyBank Center. "I've proven that I could do it. I had a good start in Rochester."

Wearing No. 48, the 6-foot-2, 212-pound Carrier skated on the left wing today with Baptiste and center Derek Grant. Carrier should debut Saturday in Ottawa.

Why did the Sabres finally recall Carrier? Coach Dan Bylsma said his play demanded it. Amerks coach Dan Lambert also kept recommending him.

"He's been playing the best down there," Bylsma said. "They have a few guys that are playing well but banged up a little bit."

Carrier enjoyed a strong development camp in July, but he wasn't impressive during the preseason.

"I don't think Will had a great preseason," Bylsma said. "I don't think Will got to display the kind of game he can play, and it's a challenge in the preseason when you get one or two opportunities to do it."

"But (what) I like about his game is speed and tenacity, he's been a hard, physical guy, and he's been a guy who has had a presence at the net."

Carrier, who had 13 goals and 30 points in 56 games last season, said he was in bed around midnight when the Sabres called. He then got up and phoned his family with the special news.

In other news, Bylsma said winger Evander Kane, out since cracking four ribs Oct. 13, has been skating "quite hard, quite extensively" on his own the last four days. Kane needs to up his physicality in drills next.

'Deuce Line' showcasing defense, offense for Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 5, 2016

OTTAWA – There's no obvious nickname for the trio of Marcus Foligno, Johan Larsson and captain Brian Gionta, the Buffalo Sabres' most consistent and sturdiest line in years.

The first letters of their names don't form a witty acronym. They don't have a common background.

They do, however, share a digit. Foligno wears No. 82, Larsson wears 22 and Gionta wears 12.

"I heard someone call us 'Deuces' because we all got 2 in our number," Foligno said Friday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's tilt against the Senators. "The 'Deuce Line.' I don't know."

That nickname works on multiple levels. Based on ice time, responsibility and production, it's Buffalo's No. 2 line. The checking line is often charged with shadowing the opponent's top scorers.

Foligno scored the only goal in Thursday's 2-1 loss to Toronto, a game in which the trio effectively shut down young star Auston Matthews, the first overall pick. All three players played at least 17 minutes.

Larsson, the center, converted Gionta's pass for the late go-ahead goal in Tuesday's 2-1 win in Minnesota, his second winner in three days. Gionta, the right winger, scored the eventual winner in Sunday's 3-1 win in Winnipeg.

"For the most part, they're playing against other teams' top lines, a checking role," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "But when you look at our chances against and chances for, they're minimizing the chances against but they're also getting a good portion of our offense."

Considering how well the trio played after it was formed in the winter, the contributions aren't surprising. By now, the players know each other's tendencies.

"This is the most consistent line I've ever played on," Foligno said inside KeyBank Center. "It's easy to get along with those guys out there with the chemistry we have. It's simple. We're always talking. We're always communicating. I think that's why we've been together for so long."

Late last season, Foligno finally developed into a consistent, physical presence on the line, utilizing his 6-foot-3, 223-pound frame. Right now, Foligno said, he has never felt better.

"I feel really good about my game," he said. "I feel confident that my physical play's been there every night. Obviously, getting points is great. But I feel like the way I've been playing, the way I've been skating and the way I've been helping this team out is a great start for me."

Gionta believes Foligno hadn't grasped how strong and powerful he can play.

"He finished strong last year," Gionta said. "He kind of came into his own. ... So now that he's starting to realize he can dominate some people with his size and strength, you see him taking off to a different level."

Meanwhile, Gionta, the team's oldest player, is still thriving at 37 years old.

Gionta scored his third goal in his eighth game Sunday. The Greece native scored his first goal last season Nov. 12, his 13th game, and his third goal Dec. 7, his 25th appearance.

Stability has helped buoy Gionta at an age when most players are retired. He switched lines regularly during his first two seasons as the team was rebuilt.

"We have a familiarity with our line being able to play last year together," Gionta said. "If you look back the previous two years, we've been juggling lines a little bit coming into it. You never get too comfortable or stay with somebody long enough to find their tendencies."

This is the final season of Gionta's three-year, \$12.75 million contract. How long would he like to play?

"I feel good," said the 15-year veteran, who will play his 935th NHL game tonight. "I want to continue playing. I feel great. The body's holding up good."

Foligno said he can't see the smooth-skating Gionta "slowing down."

"I want to be a player that helps him get another contract," Foligno said. "You look at him, he's a player that's in great shape. He's good for us. He's a good guy. He's fun to play with. He's a good player still. I hope that he has many more years."

Sabres - Maple Leafs rivalry renewed

By Nick Wojton
Batavia Daily News
November 4, 2016

BUFFALO – A team ‘tanking’ will kill off many things. Wins, for one.

But along with that, game atmosphere, excitement, and rivalries can go out the door as well.

The Buffalo Sabres (4-4-2) weren’t the only team on the ice Thursday who was guilty of tanking away games.

The Toronto Maple Leafs (4-4-3) did the same last season.

And both succeeded as well. While he’s out of the lineup, Buffalo’s Jack Eichel was the target for many Sabres fans, even over Connor McDavid. Toronto hit the jackpot this offseason, landing Auston Matthews with the first pick in the NHL Entry Draft.

The youth on both sides of the border goes deeper than just Eichel and Matthews though.

William Nylander, Jake Gardiner, Morgan Rielly, and Mitch Marner, who scored both Toronto goals in Thursday’s 2-1 win for the Maple Leafs, will certainly be formidable opponents for the likes of Sam Reinhart, Rasmus Ristolainen, and eventually the brother of William Nylander, Alex Nylander, can be tossed into the mix.

Chapter one of the post-tanking meetings between the two organizations is in the books and both sides are taking notice of the increased energy from the stands to the locker room at Key Bank Center.

“We haven’t had a lot of success here (at Key Bank Center), but things are different,” Toronto’s Tyler Bozak said. “We have a lot of different guys.”

While not a youngster, Ryan O’Reilly is another new piece to the puzzle for the Sabres with only a year under his belt on the team. Matthews and Marner are on the top of the list of new skilled players for Toronto, according to O’Reilly.

“You could see it tonight with Marner getting two. Matthews made a couple plays. They’re dangerous players, definitely elite. What they can do at their young ages is definitely incredible. Going down the road it’s going to be even tougher,” O’Reilly said.

Marner, a big factor in his first trip to the Queen City, took notice in the crowd, which wasn’t particularly packed but had their faction of Maple Leafs fans. Something that was lacking in recent ‘down’ years.

“That (first Buffalo experience) was very exciting to be part of, with fans on both sides cheering,” Marner said.

Casey Nelson, an undrafted free agent defender for Buffalo, also played in his first game Buffalo-Toronto with Marner, noticed the crowd as well, noting that it’s cool, but maybe not **that** cool at the same time since he wants strictly Sabres fans cheering him on in Key Bank Center.

“It’s pretty cool. It’s nice, well not nice, just pretty cool that the building is half-and-half when they come,” Nelson said. “I think there are a lot of good games between us coming up.”

With both teams certainly attempting to be on the upswing, Buffalo head coach Dan Bylsma said it isn’t any individual players who will make the rivalry better, specifically pointing out Eichel and Matthews.

Instead, Bylsma said the best way to add fuel to the fire is by winning.

“The rivalry is going to get bigger and better but it’s not just going to be about Auston Matthews and Jack Eichel, it’s going to be because we’re both competitive, winning hockey games,” Bylsma said.

"I think that's where it's going. I love the rivalry. Since, I've gotten here, you get a sense of how big the rivalry is between Buffalo and over the border," he added.

Sabres fans will have to wait a bit for the second chapter in the renewed rivalry as the two teams won't face each other again until Jan. 17. By then it might really be the first chapter as Jack Eichel is scheduled to return from his high-ankle sprain prior to that.

Regardless, after last night's game Sabres' forward Marcus Foligno said what most Buffalo fans think, or hope, to be true.

That the Sabres are ahead of the Leafs in their post-tank regrouping efforts.

"It's going to be a great rivalry. They got a great, skilled, young bunch," Foligno said. "I think we're a little ahead of them in the growth department with the young guys. But it's going to be head to head for many years to come and it's exciting. It's good for the game."

Buffalo next faces Ottawa on Saturday at 7 p.m.

Sabres recall Carrier

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 4, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Last season Will Carrier was going to get his chance in the NHL, but got injured and never got the call.

This season, he's finally going to get that chance as he's been called up from Rochester. Justin Bailey is a right winger who has been trying to play the left side. He has been sent back down.

Carrier was a 2nd round pick of the St. Louis Blues in 2013 and was acquired in the Ryan Miller trade.

In 126 AHL games Carrier has 23 goals and 32 assists for 55 points. This season, the left winger has three goals and an assist for four points in seven games.

Bailey's numbers in Rochester are the same as Carrier's. In two games with the Sabres, he did not get a point.

The Sabres embark on a two game road trip beginning Saturday night in Ottawa.

Sabres' Bylsma needs more from Bailey

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 4, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres weren't real happy with Justin Bailey's training camp or his performances in preseason games. The result was Bailey was part of the first group that got sent to Rochester. Coming into camp it was thought he had the inside track to make the team, but those roster spots were earned by Hudson Fasching and Derek Grant.

Bailey played two games after Fasching got hurt, but Friday he was sent back down with Will Carrier coming up.

The obvious question to Dan Bylsma would be if Bailey got sent down because he didn't live up to expectations. Bylsma said curtly, "It would seem odd that you would send a guy down if that wasn't the case."

Carrier impressed in the second half of last season and was about to be called up to Buffalo for the first time in his career, but he got injured. Now, he gets the call for real and said, "It's great, especially early in the season to prove what I can do, especially since I've had a hot start in Rochester."

Carrier performed very well during the Prospects Tournament, but his Training Camp wasn't as good as Bylsma would have liked, "I don't think Will had a great preseason, I don't think Will got to display the kind of game that he can play and that's the challenge in preseason when you only get one or two opportunities to do it."

Anytime I've watched Carrier I've seen a guy that skates very well and always has his nose in the middle of things.

Carrier was actually in bed for the night when he got the call that he was coming up. Carrier was so excited, he had to hit the phone, "I got up and called the family to say that I was being called up, so that was pretty fun."

In Friday's practice Carrier played left wing with Derek Grant and Nick Baptiste.

With so many games in November, Bylsma said Anders Nilsson will play in the back-to-back with the Devils and will see action in four or five games.

Jack Eichel was in the stands watching practice. It isn't the first time he's done that and Bylsma said he likes the kid around, "He's been really quite patient about his recovery. He's been around every day, he's with the team every day, he's been at practice multiple times sitting in the stands and watching, but he also understands he's got some time with this injury." Bylsma added, "I like having him around, I like his focus is to get back here and to be part of the group."

The Sabres visit Ottawa Saturday with Brian Koziol coming your way with the pregame at 6:00.

Sabres recall Carrier, send Bailey to Rochester

By Matt Bove

WKBW

November 4, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Friday the Buffalo Sabres made yet another roster move, recalling 21-year-old forward William Carrier from the Rochester Americans.

Carrier has had an impressive start with Rochester, scoring four points (3G, 1A) in seven games. He has yet to make his NHL debut -- so the call up seems like it makes sense.

In response the Buffalo Sabres sent Western New York native Justin Bailey back to Rochester after a two-game stint with the organization.

My thoughts:

The Sabres want to see what Carrier can bring at the NHL level. Bailey was put into a tough position during his most recent call up, playing very limited minutes on the fourth line with Derek Grant and Nick Baptiste. During his two games with the Sabres Bailey was on the ice less than any other player. I don't think he looked bad by any means, but he didn't stand out either, which is exactly what Bailey needed to do. Before the season is done Bailey will be back in Buffalo and the next time he gets called up he will need to do what he did when he was called up last season -- get shots off and generate chances.

Sabres report card: The first ten games

By Matt Bove

WKBW

November 4, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - The Buffalo Sabres have finished their first ten games of the 2016-2017 season. For some perspective, imagine a medium eight slice pizza. The Sabres are essentially only one slice into their pizza -- so there's a lot of cheesy comparisons left!

Record: 4-4-2

Goals scored: 23

Goals allowed: 24

Points leaders:

Ryan O'Reilly - 8 (4G, 4A)

Kyle Okposo - 7 (4G, 3A)

Rasmus Ristolainen- 7 (0G, 7A)

MVP: Ryan O'Reilly

LVP: Derek Grant

Biggest surprise: Matt Moulson

Offense: B-

The Sabres love scoring goals in bunches. After a 4-1 loss to Montreal in the season opener, it looked like this season the Sabres were going to have yet again another goal scoring problem. Then, they responded with a six goal performance in their next game against the Oilers. Since, they haven't come close to another six goal game, and they might not for the rest of the season -- but with the injuries Buffalo suffered on offense I think they're scoring enough to win games. Okposo and Reinhart have picked up their play in Buffalo's last five games -- and will need to continue to produce or the Sabres could be in some serious trouble. Matt Moulson and Johan Larsson both have five points and have been pleasant surprises thus far.

Moulson will need to start scoring when the Sabres aren't on the power play, but he is playing so much better than he was early last season. Larsson along with Marcus Foligno and Brian Gionta have picked up where they left off last year -- providing the Sabres with a very serviceable third line that can be on the ice regardless of the situation. The trio has arguably been the Sabres best line and if nothing else, has been Buffalo's most consistent.

Defense: C+

It's hard to say that the defense has looked bad when you consider the Sabres have only allowed 24 goals, but they haven't looked great either. So far, they get a respectable grade with room for improvement.

Ristolainen has been flying all over the ice, but at times has been a little shaky in the Sabres end. Zach Bogosian will be out due to a knee sprain for 'weeks' according to head coach Dan Bylsma -- and that certainly doesn't help the Sabres, especially after a rough performance by Casey Nelson in his first game of the 2016-2017 season.

Gorges has played exactly how you expected going into the season -- solid in his own end, but doesn't provide much offensively. Kulikov has looked like a quality top-four guy, I really like his game.

McCabe and Franson have taken a lot of heat as a pair but they've looked better during the Sabres last few games. McCabe has impressed me with his passing and has shown some nice physicality, but I'd like to see him jump in the rush more as the season continues. Franson has gotten some criticism, and while he does struggle in his own end, he has a knack for getting pucks through traffic on net.

Goaltending: B-

When the season started it looked like goaltending once again was going to be a big question mark. Ten games in, it still very well could be. However, in the Sabres last five they've allowed only eight goals, and both Lehner and Nilsson seem to be finding a groove. Expect Lehner to get about seven starts in the Sabres next ten games, regardless of how he looks.

Rebound control has been his biggest bugaboo early on in this year's campaign, but during the last couple games that hasn't been as big of an issue. Both Lehner and Nilsson are streaky goalies -- but have the talent to keep the Sabres in every game and occasionally steal a win or two.

Final Thoughts:

Overall Grade: B-

The first ten game stretch is surely a small sample size (only one piece of the pizza) but what the Sabres did in the first part of their schedule is what they need to continue to do. Realistically, if the Sabres can float around the .500 mark until their most talented player returns, then they'll at least be within striking distance of the playoffs. There's no denying the Sabres started the season flat -- but they bounced back under tough circumstances and deserve some credit for it.

Thursday, General Manager Tim Murray told WGR 550 that Evander Kane, who was hurt in the Sabres season opener, could possibly be back as early as next week. His return will certainly help the team -- but let's not kid ourselves: This is about survival until Jack Eichel is back on the ice and 100-percent. In that same interview, Murray said Eichel is progressing how the team expected -- but wouldn't provide a timetable for his potential return. Don't expect Eichel back in the lineup within the next ten games, but if all goes according to plan, *maybe* he'll be able to return sometime in December.

Six of the Sabres next ten games are at home, which may not be a good thing when you consider the Sabres are 1-3 at home so far this season. I do expect they'll start playing better at home and now would be the ideal time.

Long wait for Carrier ends with first career recall

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

November 4, 2016

As the Sabres continue to search for the right fit to fill the final spot on their forward lines, yet another player is set to make his debut this weekend. Forward William Carrier earned his first career recall on Friday morning while Justin Bailey was reassigned to Rochester in a corresponding move.

It's been a long wait for Carrier, who scored a career-high 30 points (13+17) in 56 games with the Amerks last season before his campaign was cut short due to a broken hand. As he recovered, he watched his roommate, Evan Rodrigues, and Cole Schneider both earn their first recalls for the Sabres' final two games of the season.

He's had to be patient again this season. Hudson Fasching and Derek Grant claimed the final roster openings out of training camp, and Nicholas Baptiste and Bailey were the first two recalls when the Sabres lost more forwards to injury. Carrier has been happy for all of his teammates along the way, but he had an awfully big smile when speaking after practice on Friday.

"You're always disappointed when you don't make the team out of training camp," Carrier said from his stall at KeyBank Center. "But I regrouped myself, went down there, practiced hard, had a good start and I'm back here."

Carrier has three goals and an assist in seven games for Rochester this season. He brings an element of physicality to the ice that Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said was missing in his limited preseason opportunities, but has returned in the early going for the Amerks.

"I don't think Will had a great preseason," Bylsma said. "I don't think Will got to display the kind of game he can play. That's a challenge in the preseason when you get one or two opportunities to do it. But what I like about his game is speed and tenacity. He's been a hard, physical guy and he's been a guy who's had a good presence at the net for Rochester the last two weeks."

If Carrier can find success on Buffalo's upcoming two-game road trip in Ottawa and Boston, he might earn himself a chance to stick around for a while. Sabres forwards Jack Eichel, Evander Kane and Nicolas Deslauriers are all week-to-week with injuries, while Fasching is currently day-to-day as he nurses a groin injury.

Carrier skated on the left wing on a line with Grant and Baptiste on Friday.

"I'm trying to go day-by-day here, not trying to think too far," Carrier said, still smiling. "Just trying to make an impression tomorrow."

Foligno shooting more often

At this time last year, Bylsma was pleading with Marcus Foligno to shoot the puck more often. Foligno only took six shots through his first 10 games of 2015-16 season and added just three more in the next 10.

Eventually, that message got through. Foligno went on to set a career high with 81 shots, 50 of which came from January on as he became more comfortable with linemates Brian Gionta and Johan Larsson. He's picked up on that pace this season with 13 shots in his first 10 games, and had seven shot attempts against Toronto on Thursday.

"When he gets off his game he tends to get away from it, and I think when he's on his game he has that shoot-first mentality and he's getting chances and shots like he did last night," Bylsma said. "When he's on his game, he not only has that shot mentality, but he's around the blue paint, taking the puck to the net."

Foligno scored his second goal of the season on a rebound on Thursday.

Injury update

It's now been three weeks and one day since Kane went down with cracked ribs in Buffalo's season-opener against Montreal, and he's been making progress as of late. Bylsma said that Kane has been skating on his own but needs to continue to add physicality before he returns to full-contact practices.

"He's skated down four days, quite hard, quite extensively," Bylsma said. "He's added some physicality to it and he needs to continue to kind of add more of that to see how he's going to feel and react to the physicality."

Jack Eichel, meanwhile, is continuing to nurse his high-ankle sprain but was seen watching practice from the stands at KeyBank Center on Friday.

"He's been really quite good and quite patient about his recovery," Bylsma said. "He's been around every day. He's with the team every day. He's been at practice multiple times, sitting in the stands and watching, but he also understands he's got some time with this injury."

"I like seeing him in the stands, I like having him around. While he's being patient, I like how his focus is want to be back and wanting to be with the group."

Friday's practice

26 Matt Moulson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
82 Marcus Foligno - 22 Johan Larsson - 12 Brian Gionta
63 Tyler Ennis - 28 Zemgus Girgensons - 23 Sam Reinhart
48 William Carrier - 27 Derek Grant - 73 Nicholas Baptiste

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

40 Robin Lehner
31 Anders Nilsson