



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

December 3, 2016

Eichel leads energized Sabres vs. Bruins

Associated Press

December 2, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Jack Eichel has returned for the Buffalo Sabres, and as a result so has their scoring.

The league's lowest scoring team has been playing at an entirely different level since the superstar sophomore returned on Tuesday. Eichel missed the first 21 games of the season with a high ankle sprain and has reignited Buffalo's offensive attack.

Eichel had a goal and an assist in his first game of the season, helping to lead the Sabres to a 5-4 road win over the Ottawa Senators.

He was even better in Buffalo's 4-3 win over the New York Rangers on Thursday night. Eichel had two late goals in the third period to lift the Sabres over the top team in the Metropolitan Division.

The Sabres (9-9-5) will look for more of the same in a matinee matchup against the Boston Bruins (13-10-1) at 1 p.m. on Saturday.

"He's a difference-maker. He can open up a game at any time," Sabres captain Brian Gionta said of Eichel. "He's feared out there. He's a threat every time he's on the ice. You have to be aware of him. Other teams have to be aware of him, and it gets them back on their heels.

Eichel has added a much-needed dose of speed along with a pure scoring touch that has been lacking for the Sabres for much of this season.

"It just kind of shows what kind of player he can be, what kind of player he is," Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma said. "He's a dynamic player and he brings so much to our team with speed and attack. And everyone feeds off it."

The Sabres may be without one of their top defensemen against the Bruins. Veteran Josh Gorges was injured blocking a shot in the win over the Rangers.

"He got an X-ray after the game, he's going to get some more testing on it," Bylsma said, according to the team's website. "We're just kind of waiting to see the results of the next test."

Robin Lehner will return between the pipes for Buffalo after suffering a hip injury on Tuesday against the Senators. Lehner has a record of 5-7-0 this season to go along with a save percentage of .921 and a goals against average of 2.40.

The Bruins are coming off a 2-1 shootout win over the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday. Ryan Spooner and David Pastrnak scored in the shootout for Boston, and Anton Khudobin was terrific in net after missing time this season with an upper-body injury. Torey Krug tied the game for Boston with 31.5 seconds remaining in regulation.

"It wasn't our prettiest game, it wasn't necessarily a good game by our standards. But those are goals throughout the season you feel like you earned and you deserved," Krug said. "So we worked and we worked, and it didn't matter how long it took in the third. Ultimately, it would pay off, and it did."

Brad Marchand leads the Bruins in scoring with 20 points (seven goals, 13 assists) in 24 games.

Bruins will again test Sabres' struggling PK units

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

December 2, 2016

The Buffalo Sabres' penalty killing units have become bedraggled. Their ugly numbers could use a boost and their next two opponents have not been dynamos on the power play.

The Boston Bruins come into KeyBank Center Saturday with the No. 23 power play in the NHL while the Washington Capitals, Monday's opponent in Verizon Center, are No. 25. But lately, every unit hitting the ice against Buffalo looks elite.

The Bruins, however, scored three power-play goals in their 4-0 win over the Sabres No. 7 in TD Garden. David Pastrnak entered Friday tied for third in the NHL with 13 goals and a team-high four of them have come with the man advantage.

The Sabres have given up a power-play goal in six of their last eight games and have fallen to 29th in the NHL at 76.6 percent. They killed off their first 18 penalties at home this season, but opponents have gone 5 for their last 10 in KeyBank Center.

"Recently we've tailed off and not come up with the big kill," coach Dan Bylsma said Friday in HarborCenter. "You can really almost pinpoint it directly to our lack of clears."

Bylsma said the Sabres failed to get the puck out of their zone five times Tuesday in Ottawa while killing penalties, leading to two Senators power play goals. They failed twice more on the Rangers' first power play Thursday, which resulted in Ryan McDonagh's goal at 16:15 of the first period. Rick Nash connected on a rebound during New York's other power play, in the second period.

"It's frustrating," said center Ryan O'Reilly. "I was obviously out there for all the goals against and it's small little details. ... It seems we make a mistake and it's in the back of our net. Going forward, we know it's got to be better."

McDonagh's floating shot from the left point came with Marcus Foligno in the penalty box for hooking. The Rangers won the faceoff and kept the puck in the Buffalo zone for 65 seconds before scoring.

"You can't give teams and power plays that much time in the zone," Bylsma said. "When you do, they're going to bite you, and they have too much recently."

Bylsma said Robin Lehner, who left Tuesday's game early and sat out Thursday's win with a slight hip problem, will start in goal against the Bruins. Linus Ullmark was returned to Rochester after serving as the backup here Thursday.

The Bruins will be without captain Zdeno Chara for the sixth straight game Saturday due to a lower-body injury but coach Claude Julien said Friday that the 39-year-old defenseman is day to day. Chara practiced fully on Friday. The Bruins are 2-2-1 without Chara and have given up just nine goals in five games without their No. 1 defenseman.

Former sixth-round pick Anton Blidh was called up Friday from Providence and is expected to make his NHL debut Saturday after compiling five goals, nine points and a plus-eight rating in the AHL. He has been a standout for the Bruins in September prospect tournaments here against the Sabres and Devils the last two seasons.

Standout center Patrice Bergeron did not practice Friday, with Julien only saying he was not injured. So it's unclear who Blidh would replace.

Eichel's next task: Extend Sabres' winning streak

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

December 2, 2016

Three goals in two games. Two wins. One roaring home crowd.

Jack Eichel's week has already been a whirlwind. But things are going to get even crazier for the Sabres' star center. Now that he's back from his high ankle sprain, Eichel can put all his focus on something else: Helping his team grow its winning streak.

The Sabres play the Boston Bruins Saturday afternoon in KeyBank Center, looking for their second three-game run of the season. And with the team in an exceptionally busy stretch, Eichel doesn't want to stop there.

The Sabres play Monday in Washington, host Connor McDavid-led Edmonton Tuesday and then the Caps come to town Friday. Buffalo is somehow just four points behind Boston for third place in the Atlantic Division and only four points out of the East's last wild-card slot even though Eichel missed the first 21 games.

A 4-1-1 burst has pulled the Sabres even at 9-9-5 and now they're looking to push forward even more.

"As a group we know where we can get to if we have a bit of a charge," Eichel said after Friday's practice in HarborCenter. "We've talked to each other and as a team about it. These are the times where you need to rattle off a few wins in a row and put yourself in the picture. This is what good teams do.

"The teams that are in the playoffs year in and year out don't win two in a row. They rattle off five or six in a row. I think that would be huge for us if we were able to do that."

There's a wow factor to Eichel's play that's obvious to anyone watching, and a similar wow factor on the stat sheets from Tuesday's 5-4 win in Ottawa and Thursday's 4-3 turnaround over the New York Rangers.

Consider these Eichel nuggets:

According to Elias, Eichel became the first Sabre to score the tying and winning goals in the third period to turn a one-goal deficit into a regulation victory since Drew Stafford did that against Boston on Dec. 15, 2010. According to the service, no other Buffalo player has done that since 1993.

The feat was not pulled off by any NHL player last season, and was last done by Chicago captain Jonathan Toews in the famous end-of-tank-season game against the Sabres here on April 3, 2015. Toews scored two goals in the final two minutes of that one to turn a 3-2 Sabres lead into a 4-3 Chicago victory.

The Sabres have nine goals in the two games Eichel has played. They had scored nine goals in the six previous games prior to Eichel's return. They were averaging 1.81 goals per game in the 21 they played without him. The Sabres had six even-strength goals in their 10 previous home games this season. They had three on Thursday.

The Sabres have four power-play goals in Eichel's two games. They had just five in the previous seven games. Eichel has 12 points (seven goals and five assists) in his last nine home games dating to last season.

For his career, the Sabres are 26-14-4 when Eichel records a point in a game and 10-3-1 when he tallies at least two. They are 11-21-7 when he does not register a point.

"The offense he's provided for us in key times has definitely been huge," center Ryan O'Reilly said of Eichel. "It's nice to have that, especially for guys like myself who have been struggling. It's great to have somebody put the puck in the net and give us a chance to win."

"They're having fun scoring goals," said coach Dan Bylsma. "I don't think we anticipate every game being five goals. We're certainly not going out to try to outgun the other team in terms of trying to get to five first. I just think there's a confidence and an excitement brewing about us being able to score goals and how we're able to play."

The Sabres will need some of that Saturday. They are 0-2-2 in their last four games against the Bruins, including a 4-0 loss Nov. 7 in TD Garden. Buffalo is 2-4-4 in the last 10 meetings.

"We know they're a good team and we know it's going to be a tough game for us," Eichel said of the Bruins. "They play a tight-checking game with good goaltending and good defensemen. But I think if we do a lot of same things we've done the last few nights ... we just took it to a really good hockey team last night and I think we're pretty happy with our efforts. But we know if we come out and lay an egg, that doesn't matter so we're just looking forward to another good test against another good team."

Eichel and linemates Sam Reinhart and Evander Kane combined for eight shots on goal in the game against the Rangers, while Eichel had 12 shot attempts and Kane compiled eight.

"There will be games where one or two of us might struggle over the course of the game," said Kane. "But as it goes on, we'll find ways to create offense and create opportunities to score. You have to stick with it. We're all familiar with each other. We've had games where we've been terrible and still come up with a couple goals as a line and that's a great part about it."

The Sabres can't afford to fritter away many points because every team in the Eastern Conference except the New York Islanders is playing at least a .500 points percentage. There are six sub-.500 teams in the West.

"That's the thing about the league," said Kane. "You win a couple games in a row, you stop the bleeding and you're right back in there. Our division, everybody is .500 or better. Teams are playing well and you have to continue to win every night."

Sabres recall Guhle on emergency basis

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

December 2, 2016

With their defense corps getting thinner by the day, the Buffalo Sabres have pulled the trigger on a surprising recall, summoning Brendan Guhle from the Prince George Cougars of the Western Hockey League on an emergency basis.

Guhle, 19, was Buffalo's second-round pick in the 2015 draft. He had three goals in four games since being acquired by Prince George in a trade with Prince Albert on Nov. 19.

Guhle was a surprising snub for Team Canada's entry to the upcoming World Junior Championships. He nearly made the Sabres out of training camp last season before being sidelined with a concussion suffered on a hit by Dion Phaneuf during an exhibition game in Toronto. He was again impressive in summer development camp and training camp but the Sabres opted to return him to junior.

The Buffalo defense is already dealing with long-term injuries to Zach Bogosian and Dmitry Kulikov and the status of Josh Gorges is now uncertain after he took a shot to the foot in Thursday's win over the New York Rangers.

Gorges had one set of X-rays done after the game and skated on his own Friday in HarborCenter before leaving the ice. He was scheduled to be examined later Friday, and the team said it would have no updates on his status until Saturday morning prior to the matinee against Boston in KeyBank Center.

When it comes to TV, Amerks in sync with Sabres, Bills

By Leo Roth

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

December 2, 2016

Not as many Rochester Americans hockey games will be carried on local television this season.

But the move to MSG from Time Warner cable puts Amerks games on the same channel that carries the parent Buffalo Sabres, as well as Buffalo Bills programming, meaning the same sports fan base can do one-stop channel clicking.

"Being able to align the Amerks broadcasts along with the other properties of Pegula Sports and Entertainment is very exciting for us," said Rob Kopacz, vice president of business operations for the Amerks. "It's something I believe will be great for our fans and hockey fans throughout the region."

The MSG package is for only five games, half of what was aired on Time Warner, but it sets the groundwork for more games to be carried in the future. Of those five, three are against New York-based clubs Syracuse, Albany and Utica.

That will give the American Hockey League a bump in exposure; in addition to Sabres games, MSG also carries Rangers, Islanders and Devils NHL action, along with the New York Knicks.

"It's great for us but it's also great for the rest of the league," Kopacz said. "Working with all parties, we tried to focus on New York state teams and were fortunate to get three of the five. If we're doing games on television, we said 'Let's have mass appeal.' "

MSG Networks have carried Sabres action since 2005 and had the highest local TV ratings of any NHL team in the United States last season.

A new rights deal between MSG and Pegula Sports and Entertainment Properties signed this year also brought Bills programming into the fold, including The Rex Ryan Show. It was during those talks that the idea of bringing the Amerks aboard was floated.

Amerks games will be simulcast with radio coverage with Hall of Famer Don Stevens doing play-by-play, joined by analyst Ric Seiling and Mike Catalana of WHAM-TV (Channel 13).

Gorges banged up; Lehner good to go

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

December 2, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- While the Buffalo Sabres reap the benefits of having Jack Eichel back in the lineup from injury, the team got more bad news on the injury front on the blue line.

On Thursday, defenseman Josh Gorges blocked a shot off the foot but was able to finish the game. Head coach Dan Bylsma said that Gorges got x-rays following the game, and that he would get more tests done on Friday. Gorges did step on to the ice prior to the practice this morning, but he did not skate with the team.

Bylsma said there was a chance the team will need to make another recall from the Rochester Americans in the American Hockey League. However, the Sabres have called up Brendan Guhle from the Prince George Cougars of the Western Hockey League on an emergency basis.

Gorges has played in all 23 games this season with one assist, 10 shots on goal, 53 hits, a team-high 43 blocked shots, and a minus-3 rating.

On the brighter side of things, goalie Robin Lehner is set to make his return to the net for Buffalo. Bylsma confirmed this afternoon that he will start in goal on Saturday against the Boston Bruins at the KeyBank Center.

Lehner left Tuesday's game in Ottawa early with a hip injury, and was forced to sit out of Thursday's game against the New York Rangers. Lehner has played in 16 games this season with a 5-7-3 record, a 2.40 goals-against average and a .921 save percentage.

Bylsma also mixed up the lines at practice this afternoon, however he said it was to facilitate the special teams units. Here is how they looked on the ice.

Girgensons - O'Reilly - Okposo

Grant - Eichel - Reinhart

Foligno - Larsson - Gionta

Carrier - Kane - Moulson

Faceoff on Saturday is scheduled for 1 p.m. with pre-game coverage beginning at noon on WGR with Brian Koziol.

Sabres recall Guhle from juniors

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

December 2, 2016

Rochester, NY (WGR 550) -- The Buffalo Sabres are getting thin on the blue line with injuries to multiple players on the roster. But instead of going to the Rochester Americans for a defenseman, the Sabres have called up one of its top defensive prospects to the National Hockey League.

On Friday, the Sabres announced the recall of Brendan Guhle from the Prince George Cougars in the Western Hockey League on an emergency basis.

Guhle, 19, was Buffalo's second round pick (51st overall) in the 2015 NHL Draft. Guhle has five goals and two assists in 19 games split between the Cougars and the Prince Albert Raiders this season. Guhle was acquired by the Cougars on November 18.

The latest defenseman to go down to injury is Josh Gorges after blocking a shot in Thursday's win over the New York Rangers. Gorges has x-rays following the game on his foot, and had more tests done on Friday after taking the ice for a brief period at HarborCenter.

The Sabres are already without Dmitry Kulikov (mid-body injury) and Zach Bogosian (knee), and it is still unclear when both will return to the lineup. With Kulikov and Gorges out, the Sabres are down to Jake McCabe and Justin Falk on the left side of the blue line.

In five preseason games with the Sabres, Guhle registered five shots on goal, a penalty, and was a plus-1.

Guhle will be required to be re-assigned to Prince George when his time with the Sabres has concluded.

Sabres having fun, thinking playoffs again with Jack Eichel back

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
December 3, 2016

BUFFALO – It was Sunday morning, more than two days before center Jack Eichel finally returned from his 21-game absence, when coach Dan Bylsma first noticed a change in his Sabres, owners of the NHL's worst offense. Thanks to Eichel's presence in practice, Bylsma said he saw "confidence and an excitement brewing about us being able to score goals and how we need to play."
Never mind the Sabres had lost eight of their last 10 games at that point. Never mind they had scored two or fewer goals in nine of those contests.

The good feelings carried over, the confidence kept building throughout the week.

"You felt that the next day," Bylsma said Friday inside HarborCenter. "You felt that in (the) morning skate. Now you're feeling it in the game, and that's a big thing to have."

The Sabres have quickly morphed into a different team with Eichel, 20, back in their arsenal. Not only are they winning, they're playing exciting hockey.

Since the second-year star returned from a high left ankle sprain Tuesday, the Sabres are 2-0 and have scored nine goals, a whopping 19 percent of their season total.

Eichel, of course, is scorching entering this afternoon's tilt against the Boston Bruins inside KeyBank Center, having already compiled three goals and four points.

He scored the tying and winning goals late in Thursday's 4-3 triumph against the New York Rangers and also had a goal and assist early in Tuesday's 5-4 victory in Ottawa.

While it's a small sample size, the games have offered a glimpse into what kind of team the Sabres could be with a healthy forward lineup.

"It feels kind of normal, what our lineup should've been and how our team should've been," Sabres winger Marcus Foligno said. "It feels kind of rejuvenated, more energy."

After so many low-scoring games – they've played eight 2-1 contests – participating in two high-scoring, rollicking affairs has been fun.

"They're having fun scoring goals," Bylsma said. "I don't think we anticipate every game being five goals. We're certainly going to try to outgun the other team in trying to get to five first."

But at least the Sabres have shown they can play a high-octane style.

"It's games like that where we have to show teams that we have to keep coming no matter what," Foligno said. "Right now, we got to build for the playoffs. That's our goal here. That hockey (Thursday) night felt like playoff hockey."

Yes, playoff chatter is alive again following two strong wins. The Sabres rank last in the Atlantic Division and 15th in the Eastern Conference, but they were only four points out of the final wild card spot as of Friday afternoon. Of course, six teams are ahead of them in the race.

Teams out of a playoff spot around Dec. 1 historically don't climb back in. If the Sabres roar back up, they need to compile long winning streaks. They haven't won more than three straight games this season.

"We need to rattle off a few wins in a row," Eichel said. "We'll put ourselves in the picture. (This is) what good teams do. ... Teams that are in the playoffs year in, year out, they don't win two in a row. They rattle off five or six in a row."

The Sabres looked like a playoff team Thursday, attacking the Rangers in waves, one line after another. By the second period, they began dominating one of the NHL's best clubs.

"We got to playing really one shift after another, each line playing in the offensive zone, playing with speed," said Bylsma, who believes that period was the Sabres' best all season.

Bylsma added: "Really took control of the game, took over the game."

When the Sabres took over the game, the crowd inside KeyBank Center erupted like it did 10 or so years ago when the Sabres won consistently.

"It's awesome, especially when the crowd gets behind you and starts chanting, it just puts you in the game more and gets you emotionally involved," Foligno said. "That plays into our favor. We have a lot of guys on the team that thrive off that stuff. Obviously, it keyed the comeback."

Eichel added: "We got to keep winning to keep the atmosphere like that. Keep winning, keep scoring goals and hopefully the crowd will get into it."

Sabres recall top defense prospect Brendan Guhle from junior

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

December 3, 2016

BUFFALO – In a surprising move, the Sabres dipped into junior hockey Friday and recalled Brendan Guhle, their top defense prospect, on an emergency basis to replace the injured Josh Gorges.

Guhle, 19, almost made the Sabres out of training camp the last two years. The 2015 second-round pick will likely make his NHL debut this afternoon against the Boston Bruins inside KeyBank Center.

Gorges blocked a shot in Thursday's 4-3 win against the New York Rangers, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. Gorges tested the injury early in Friday's practice inside HarborCenter but left the ice.

He had an X-ray after the game and underwent more testing Friday, Bylsma said.

The Sabres' defense corps, which stayed remarkably healthy last season, has quickly become depleted. Gorges, Zach Bogosian (knee) and Dmitry Kulikov (back) – three of the team's regulars – are all injured.

Guhle has five goals and seven points in 19 games this season split between the Western Hockey League's Prince Albert Raiders and Prince George Cougars. He played six AHL games with the Rochester Americans last season, his only pro experience.

In other news, Sabres goalie Robin Lehner, who missed Thursday's game with a sore hip, will start this afternoon, Bylsma said.

The Sabres returned goalie Linus Ullmark to the Amerks on Friday.

Lehner was hurt early in Tuesday's 5-4 win in Ottawa.

Late turnovers, penalties lead to shootout loss

By Jourdon LaBarber

Associated Press

December 2, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — A judge will dismiss the charges against Buffalo Sabres forward Evander Kane stemming from scuffles with women in a bar if he stays out of future trouble.

The arrangement is contingent on the 25-year-old player avoiding legal issues for the next six months. Kane didn't speak during or after his brief appearance in a Buffalo court. Kane's lawyer says Monday's action doesn't include an admission of guilt, and Kane still denies the allegations.

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