



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*December 6, 2016*

## **After OT heartbreaker, Sabres have fast turnaround to meet McDavid**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

December 5, 2015

WASHINGTON -- The Buffalo Sabres have no time to feel sorry for themselves with this schedule.

After absorbing quite the gut-punch Monday in a 3-2 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals in Verizon Center, the Sabres headed to the airport for the late-night flight home. Who was already snugly in their Buffalo beds getting ready to give them fits on the tail end of a brutal back-to-back?

NHL scoring leader Connor McDavid and the free-wheeling Edmonton Oilers. Yikes.

The Pacific Division co-leaders will hit the KeyBank Center ice Tuesday night looking for their NHL-high ninth road win of the season and a measure of revenge for the 6-2 pasting Buffalo put on them Oct. 16 in Rogers Place.

The Oilers will be facing a Buffalo team that might struggle mentally to pick up the pieces after Monday's game, which saw the Sabres come within 6 1/2 minutes of a regulation victory before two goals by Washington's Marcus Johansson ruined their night.

Johansson scored on a power play with 6:18 left, five seconds after Evander Kane was sent off for hooking, and then scored the game-winner at 2:38 of OT on a sizzling slapshot by the glove of Robin Lehner.

"We had a good second period and that's about it," said Lehner, who made 30 saves but fell to 1-5-3 in his last nine decisions. "We're up 2-1 going into the third and we don't want to sit back. Give them credit, they're a good team but we don't want to sit back. They have speed. A lot of momentum. They got the power play goal. We had one good period."

The Sabres' injury woes, featuring the loss of four defensemen, have been the major talking point around the team the last couple days. The narrative switches for a day to the second career meeting between McDavid and Jack Eichel, the top two picks in the 2015 draft, but that is now shrouded by concern over Eichel's status.

Eichel was run into the boards by Washington defenseman Dmitry Orlov early in the second period and clearly was bothered by his high ankle sprain the rest of the way. He finished his second straight pointless game with one shot on goal, his explosiveness clearly hindered and his facial expressions on the bench often revealing signs of pain.

"I think it's the first time he's had any incident on the ice where he did feel the ankle," said coach Dan Bylsma. "Per usual with a high ankle sprain like that, he felt it, tweaked it, whatever the case is. It's fairly normal and then a return to feeling better after that."

Like Bylsma, Eichel insisted he felt better as the game went along. Even though the optics read otherwise.

"Hockey is a contact sport so I figure that's going to happen during the year and I've just got to play through it," Eichel said. "I felt good. I just didn't play well enough."

Eichel isn't alone in that department. The Sabres got a first-period goal from Zemgus Girgensons on a breakaway and took a 2-1 lead on Kyle Okposo's team-high eighth of the year with 4:37 left in the second. But they were outshot, 16-9, in the third period and were unable to hold the lead in suffering their NHL-high sixth loss of the season past 60 minutes.

"We know we need two points. We've got to try to fight our way up in the standings," Okposo said. "You're going to have lulls in a season but we already had ours. We have to make sure we're pushing forward, doing everything we can to get two points. Yeah, getting a point is OK but we had a lead in the third. You've got to try to hold it and get two."

The Sabres had some chances, notably a power play with 3:12 left that fizzled into not much of anything and a 2-on-1 in overtime that Eichel could not connect on.

"As a team, I don't think we're happy with that game," Eichel said. "We did some good things in the second but had a power play with three minutes left and didn't do it. Overtime, a 2-on-1 and don't get a shot on net. It's unacceptable for myself. It's a quick turnaround now playing a really good hockey team. You get home, try to get some rest and try to look for two points tomorrow night."

McDavid leads the NHL in scoring this season with 34 points in 27 games on 11 goals and 23 assists. He was briefly taken off the ice by the league's concussion spotters during Sunday's 2-1 overtime loss to Minnesota but returned for the third period of that game.

In their only previous career meeting, McDavid scored the winning goal in overtime seconds after an Eichel miss in a 2-1 Edmonton win in Buffalo on March 1. McDavid missed last year's meeting in Edmonton due to his broken collarbone while Eichel did not play in the October game in the Oilers' new home.

With so many defensemen injured, the Sabres are left in the unenviable spot of riding top defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Jake McCabe. They played 29:51 and 28:52, respectively, on Monday. Cody Franson (20:45) also cracked 20 minutes on a defense corps that included Justin Falk, the NHL debut of Erik Bergdoerfer and the second game for Brendan Guhle.

Even with the defense taxed, Bylsma said he was putting McDavid & Co. out of his mind as the game went to overtime.

"I tried not to think about that and put 'er all out there tonight and win this one tonight," Bylsma said. "You kind of had it in the back of your mind throughout the game these are guys who are going to have to play tomorrow night and manage their minutes. But I don't think in the case of the game situation you can think about it or do that very much."

## **Sabres notebook: Perseverance pays for Burgdoerfer**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

December 5, 2016

WASHINGTON -- Erik Burgdoerfer knew there was an injury crisis brewing on the Buffalo Sabres' blueline. But six days shy of his 28th birthday and after playing 480 regular season and playoff games in the minor leagues, he knew better than to pay attention. He was simply focused on his job at Rochester, where ice time was increasing with all the callups to Buffalo.

Then the call came Sunday from Amerks coach Dan Lambert after Taylor Fedun became Buffalo's latest injury casualty on Saturday. After stops in Bakersfield, Oklahoma City, South Carolina, Hershey and Rochester, Burgdoerfer was an NHL defenseman.

"I try not to look at all that injury stuff because it plays with your head," Burgdoerfer said prior to making his NHL debut Monday in Verizon Center against the Washington Capitals. "I focus on yourself and what you can control. I was a little bit blindsided by the call. Numbers did dictate that maybe at a certain point maybe it would be my turn, but it was still a pleasant surprise."

Burgdoerfer said the call from Lambert "was a little emotional but it was great." He played in all but one of the Sabres' preseason games, giving coach Dan Bylsma more than enough confidence to call on him in the wake of Buffalo's deluge of injuries.

"It certainly has been a long time coming so I was thrilled to get the call," Burgdoerfer said. "There were definitely certain points in my career I thought this would never happen. You've just got to believe in yourself, work hard and I couldn't be happier with the result."

Burgdoerfer played with Justin Falk on Buffalo's third defense pair. The Sabres had Rasmus Ristolainen with Jake McCabe as their top duo while Cody Franson stayed with junior callup Brendan Guhle after that pair was joined Saturday against Boston for Guhle's NHL debut.

"I told him it's your first NHL game but you've played with all these guys before and you should be comfortable with how we play," Bylsma said of Burgdoerfer. "There's a little more rapport and camaraderie between them now because they played in Rochester."

"A lot of what we've seen with Taylor Fedun I would say about Erik. He's a guy that proved he can play at the NHL level in preseason. We played with very similar lineups to what we've played with in the season and he was a good, steady defender. He competed hard and was able to do it against NHL players."

Burgdoerfer's preseason in Buffalo was a key to getting to this point but he said his run to the Calder Cup finals in June with Washington's Hershey affiliate set the stage for this year. The Bears were swept in the series by Lake Erie.

"That was huge," he said. "Any time you can be on a team that's winning, even though we came up a little short in the Calder Cup final, any one on a team like that gets a boost for the next season. Whether it's with the same team or moving on. There's nothing like winning to propel people's careers."

Burgdoerfer said he expected several family members to make the drive here, either from the family home on Long Island or perhaps even his Buffalo connections. His mother, Jane, is a Western New York native and he has aunts, uncles and cousins in Amherst, Orchard Park and Clarence.

"The Sabres gave me an excellent opportunity in preseason to show I can play at this level and thankfully I ran with it," he said. "Any team would be special to play against but it's close enough to home that my family is able to come, so that will really make it special."

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Burgdoerfer played 10:07 in the game, becoming the 11th defenseman to appear with the Sabres this season and the fourth recall. The Sabres used just one recall on defense all of last season, and that was a one-game stint by the now-departed Chad Ruhwedel.

Burgdoerfer's stay with the Sabres might be short. Bylsma said Dmitry Kulikov isn't likely to play Tuesday against Edmonton but is a possibility for the rematch with the Capitals at home on Friday. The coach also said Fedun had rib X-rays that were negative and is day-to-day with a shoulder injury.

Bylsma said the Sabres would use McCabe in Fedun's spot on their second power play, and could conceivably give Guhle a chance in that slot at some point as well.

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Three Sabres prospects and one Western New York native were named Monday to training camp rosters for the World Junior Championships, which open Dec. 26 at Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

Buffalo's top two picks in the 2016 draft, winger Alex Nylander and center Rasmus Asplund, were both selected by Team Sweden for a return trip to the tournament. Named on defense by Team USA were Boston College defenseman Casey Fitzgerald, the second of Buffalo's third-round picks, and Youngstown native Joe Cecconi, a Dallas draft pick who plays for the University of Michigan.

Team USA's pre-tournament camp will be Dec. 16-20 in HarborCenter. The head coach is Bob Motzko of St. Cloud State and one of his assistants is Boston College's Greg Brown, a 1987 Sabres draft choice. He's the uncle of BC sophomore Christopher Brown, a sixth-round pick of the Sabres in 2014. Motzko coaches top Sabres defense prospect Will Borgen, who played with Team USA last year but will turn 20 this month and is thus ineligible for the tournament.

## **Quick Hits: Capitals 3, Sabres 2 (OT)**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

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WASHINGTON -- Marcus Johansson's slapshot with 2:22 left in overtime was the dagger Monday night as the Washington Capitals came from behind to beat the Buffalo Sabres, 3-2, in Verizon Center.

Johansson took a Dmitry Orlov pass and blasted the puck past Robin Lehner for his second goal of the game, snapping the Caps' three-game losing streak.

**After two periods:** The Sabres were 6-0-3 when leading after 40 minutes while the Caps were 0-5-2 when trailing after same. Buffalo had a 2-1 lead through two periods but couldn't hold on.

**Losing the lead:** The Sabres were in hold-on mode through much of the third period and gave up the lead on Johansson's tip-in of a John Carlson shot with 6:18 left. It came on a power play five seconds after Evander Kane was sent off for hooking.

**Taking the lead I:** The Sabres looked to have snapped a 1-1 tie when Johan Larsson slammed home a Brian Gionta rebound with 5:20 left in the second. But the play was called back on an offside challenge as Larsson clearly entered the zone before the puck as Rasmus Ristolainen's shoot-in went slower than Larsson expected as Ristolainen's stick broke on the shot.

**Taking the lead II:** The Sabres dominated play after the disallowed goal and actually took the 2-1 lead 47 seconds later as Kyle Okposo drove his own rebound past Braden Holtby after corralling the puck when Holtby first stopped Ryan O'Reilly. It was Okposo's team-high eighth goal of the season.

**Piling up big numbers:** The Sabres had several extended flurries in the Washington zone in the last half of the second period and outshot the Caps, 16-7. They also nearly doubled the Caps in attempts, 28-15.

**Long time, no goal:** The Sabres took a 1-0 lead at 5:59 of the first period as Zemgus Girgensons took a Derek Grant pass to break into the Washington zone and burned Holtby on a backhand. It was Girgensons' second goal of the year and first in 22 games, since he opened the scoring in the Oct. 16 overtime loss in Calgary.

**Getting even:** The Caps tied it at 5:23 of the second on Jay Beagle's neat tip-in of a Brooks Orpik pass from the left point. Beagle snuck behind Erik Bergdoerfer, the defenseman called up from Rochester to make his NHL debut.

**Lots of greetings:** Bergdoerfer became the 11th defenseman and NHL-high 33rd player to dress for a game for the Sabres this season. Buffalo dressed 35 players all of last season.

**Familiar foe:** The Sabres are playing Washington three times in a seven-game stretch and then don't play them the rest of the season. They host Washington again Friday night. Said coach Dan Bylsma: "It's almost a mini three-game series."

**Up Next:** Connor McDavid-led Edmonton is in KeyBank Center for its only visit of the season Tuesday night at 7. That starts a run of four straight home games. The Sabres don't play on the road again until Dec. 17 in Carolina. If you want to catch the Capitals again before they come to Buffalo, they host Boston here Wednesday night on NBC Sports Network.

## **Sabres' Erik Burgdoerfer paid dues to reach NHL**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
December 5, 2016

Less than three years ago, Erik Burgdoerfer was an unknown ECHL defenseman playing his fourth season with the Bakersfield Condors.

Tonight against the Washington Capitals, after a stunning 429 minor league games, Burgdoerfer will make his NHL debut with the Buffalo Sabres.

"I'm wondering how the heck, from what I've seen so far, (he) played five years in the East Coast Hockey League," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said during training camp. "Somebody somewhere has missed something, because the way he's played he should be playing at a higher level. He should've been playing at higher level than that."

Who is Burgdoerfer? How did the undrafted R.P.I. product finally reach the NHL just days before his 28th birthday?

We'll pick up his story in 2014, after his coach in Bakersfield, Troy Mann, was hired to run the Hershey Bears, the Capitals' AHL affiliate and a perennial power.

Mann brought along Burgdoerfer, who had only played three AHL games to that point.

"I don't think without him I'd be where I am right now," Burgdoerfer said during training camp. "He believed in me, kind of said, 'Hey, this kid should be here.'"

Burgdoerfer became an AHL regular under Mann. The consistent winning also granted Burgdoerfer, a defensive defenseman, some exposure.

"The last couple years in Hershey we've been fortunate enough to have a good team and the coaching staff gave me a lot of opportunity and believed in me," Burgdoerfer said. "Winning always draws attention. Having a good team, I feel like that really helped push my career forward."

Burgdoerfer earned invites to Washington's training camp, but he had never played an NHL preseason game until this year, after the Sabres signed him to a two-way contract in July.

The East Setauket native immediately impressed Bylsma, who has mentioned him as a recall candidate all season.

The Sabres summoned Burgdoerfer because defenseman Taylor Fedun injured his shoulder late in Saturday afternoon's 2-1 loss to Boston.

"I guess I just kind of slipped through the cracks, but I always believe in myself and my game," Burgdoerfer said. "So I just kind of kept working. Thankfully, with the right people in my corner, we're starting to turn the corner here."

## **Marcus Johansson scores twice, leads Capitals to comeback win over Sabres**

By Isabelle Khurshudyan

The Washington Post

December 5, 2016

The Washington Capitals spilled off the bench and to the precise spot on the ice where Marcus Johansson had finally ended their recent miserable stretch. It was one big group hug, a fitting celebration after they had gone too long without a win.

With his goal in overtime, Johansson lifted the Capitals to a 3-2 win over the Buffalo Sabres, snapping the team's three-game losing streak. It marked Johansson's second goal of the game, made possible by Evgeny Kuznetsov partially blocking the goalie's vision by being in front of the net.

With the Capitals trailing by a goal after 40 minutes, Coach Barry Trotz said he "had a few words" in the locker room at second intermission. Whatever he said worked, because in the third period and in overtime Washington got back to a proven scoring formula: traffic in front of the net to generate scoring chances.

"It's a big win for us," Trotz said. "We needed to get mad and play the right way."

Trailing Buffalo 2-1, the Capitals made an impressive push to start the third period, launching 12 shots on goal in the first 15 minutes. Their work in the offensive zone paid off when Buffalo's Evander Kane was called for hooking, sending Washington to the power play for just the third time in the game.

Just five seconds in, a man-advantage that has occasionally struggled to produce this season because of missed shots benefited from an accurate one and some net presence. Defenseman John Carlson shot a rocket from the point and Johansson, posted in front of Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner, tipped the puck in with his stick blade. That tied the game with 6:18 left, setting up the overtime that guaranteed the Capitals would get at least a point out of it.

"That's what we need from the power play," Johansson said. "I think the last few years, that's what we've gotten, too. We have a good power play, and we've gotten results from it. It just hasn't really bounced our way, and I think we've been making it a little too hard, not really taking what's there. I mean, the last two goals, it's just getting the puck to the net, and they both go in."

*[It's 'possible' T.J. Oshie could return to the Capitals' lineup this week]*

Before Johansson's power-play goal, the game seemed to turn in a 79-second span in the second period. With the teams tied at 1, the Capitals struggled to seize momentum in one sequence 14 minutes into the period. Goaltender Braden Holtby stopped four Sabres shots on goal within 18 seconds, at one point finding himself at the bottom of a massive pileup at the net. A loose puck had stopped at the goal line, and a sprawled Holtby had managed to keep it out.

On the next shift, Johan Larsson seemed to score a goal for the Sabres. The Capitals immediately challenged that the play was offside and won, getting the goal wiped off the scoreboard. That marked back-to-back breaks for Washington, but the team didn't take advantage. Less than a minute after the goal was disallowed, Matt Niskanen had a turnover that kept a Sabres shift alive.

Holtby saved a shot by Ryan O'Reilly, and then defenseman Karl Alzner blocked a shot by Kyle Okposo. But Okposo scored on his own rebound, lifting Buffalo to a 2-1 lead entering the third period.

"We catch a break and then they bury on us," Capitals center Jay Beagle said. "It was frustrating, obviously, when you're not playing the right way. Things are — I think they just don't go your way when you're not playing the right way."

That sparked Washington's third period, when a team that has looked disjointed for the past two weeks seemed to click again. The Capitals entered Monday night's game with some concerning offensive trends. Washington had scored just one goal in its past two games, and the team hadn't scored a five-on-five goal in more than a week.

With the Sabres missing three regular defensemen on Monday night, they seemed to be the perfect opponent for the Capitals to break out of their scoring slump. But instead, Washington found itself down a goal after the first period for the fourth straight game.

Sabres forward Zemgus Girgensons received a quick pass from Derek Grant, taking advantage of a defensive breakdown by Washington, and then Girgensons sped down the left side of the ice on a two-on-one. Getting around Niskanen, Girgensons cut to the net and then backhanded the puck over Holtby 5:59 into the game.

Washington had its chances at the end of the first period, as Buffalo was called for back-to-back minor penalties in the last 5:20 of the frame. The Capitals had plenty of zone time on those power plays, but they managed just three shots on goal in four minutes of five-on-four, coming up empty-handed against the 29th-ranked penalty kill in the league.

But the power play came through in the third period, boosting Washington to a much-needed win.

"It should be big for us, just the type of game it was with the pressures of possibly being on a four-game slide," Holtby said. "In a game where it's sometimes not going our way, we're battling through it. It's grinding it out; it's not pretty or anything like that. We fought our way to find a victory, and that's what good teams do and that's what we need to do more of."

## Caps snap losing streak behind Johansson's two goals

By J.J. Regan

CSN Mid-Atlantic

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**How it happened:** Zemgus Girgensons gave Buffalo the early lead thanks to a nice pace from Derek Grant. Rasmus Ristolainen swatted the puck out of the defensive zone to Grant who saw Girgensons turn on the jets on the far side. Grant found him with the one touch pass to launch him in on net. Girgensons finished the play with a nice forehand-backhand move to beat Braden Holtby.

The Caps pulled even in the second period on Jay Beagle's fifth goal of the season. Daniel Winnik kicked the puck out to Brooks Orpik who sent a pass right to the tape of Beagle in front of the net and he tipped the puck past the helpless Robin Lehner. The tie lasted exactly 10 minutes as William Carrier found Ryan O'Reilly all alone in the slot. It took three shots to get it past Holtby, but Kyle Okposo finally put it into the back of the net.

In the third period, the power play finally registered for the Caps as Marcus Johansson deflected a point shot from John Carlson to tie the game at 2. Johansson struck again in overtime with a blistering one-timer to finish off the game.

**What it means:** The win snaps a three-game losing streak for Washington as the Caps avoid their first four-game skid since January 2015. Washington is now 5-1-1 against the Atlantic Division this season.

**Missed turning point:** The turning point of the game came in the second period. With the score tied at one, a scrum broke out in front of the Caps' with the puck loose in the slot. The puck finally squirted past Holtby...and stopped right on the red line. Just 28 seconds later, Johan Larsson scored to give Buffalo the lead, but Barry Trotz challenged that the play was offside and won. The Caps were handed two lifelines in a matter of seconds, but it was not the momentum swing you would expect. Instead of taking advantage, Okposo scored the go-ahead goal 39 seconds later.

**Slow start:** At the start of the season, the Caps emphasized fast starts. In their first 20 games, they gave up the first goal only three times. With Girgensons' goal Monday, the Caps have now given up the first goal in all four of their consecutive losses.

**Power on:** Buffalo entered Monday's game with the 29th penalty kill in the NHL with only a 77.2-percent success rate. They also played without four of their regular defensemen as Taylor Fedun, Josh Gorges, Zach Bogosian and Dmitry Kulikov all were scratched due to injury. And yet, the Caps' power play still could not produce with two first period chances. Washington finally struck when it mattered, however, as Johansson scored the game-tying goal on the team's third power play of the night.

**Breaking the law:** Alex Ovechkin was whistled in the second period for slashing, his fifth minor penalty in three games. He leads the team with 11 on the season. Not what you want to see from your top offensive player and the team captain.

**Look ahead:** The Caps host the Boston Bruins on Wednesday before heading to Buffalo to face the Sabres yet again on Friday.

## **Caps Get Their Mojo Working in 3-2 OT Win over Sabres**

By Mike Vogel

Washington Capitals

December 5, 2016

Monday night's game against the Buffalo Sabres won't go down as the prettiest 62 minutes and 38 seconds of the hockey the Capitals have ever played. But Washington finished with a flourish, coming from behind to knot the game on Marcus Johansson's power-play goal in the third and winning it on Johansson's second overtime game-winner of the season.

The Capitals' 3-2 triumph over the Sabres halted a three-game slide (0-2-1) for Washington, preventing the team's first four game skid in nearly 23 months.

For the second time in as many games, the Caps' much maligned power play came up with a key third-period goal to enable Washington to get a point in a game it trailed heading into the final 20 minutes.

"It's always a big part of the game against this team," laments Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma. "Their power play is dangerous. I thought we did a good job of killing them off in the first period, but the second goal - the goal that they needed there with six minutes left [in the third] - is a direct result of the penalty kill.

"We had our chances on the power play. Late in the game there, we had a chance. We had one earlier as well, and weren't able to come up with it."

As Caps coach Barry Trotz put it afterwards, "It wasn't easy."

Buffalo broke the seal on the scoresheet first, getting a goal from its fourth line early in the first period. The Sabres broke out in transition, and two quick and crisp passes from Risto Ristolainen and then Derek Grant enabled Zemgus Girgensons to break into the Washington zone on a semi-breakaway and beat Caps goalie Braden Holtby with a backhand at 5:59 of the first.

The Caps had the advantage in territory and possession for most of the first half of the game, and they pulled even at 5:23 of the second when Jay Beagle deflected a Brooks Orpik shot from the left point to beat Buffalo goaltender Robin Lehner and make it a 1-1 game.

Beagle's goal ended a lengthy drought in which Washington had not scored a five-on-five goal in 115 minutes and 8 seconds of even strength time, dating back to the third period of a Nov. 26 game against the Maple Leafs in Toronto.

In the latter half of the second, the wheels came off the cart for the Caps. Washington's video coaches saved a goal when Buffalo's Johan Larsson scored on a rebound to make it 2-1 at 14:40. The Caps quickly challenged the goal, alleging that Larsson was offside on the play, and a video review confirmed that was that case.

But Buffalo kept the heat on in the Washington end, collapsing down low and creating all sorts of mayhem. A rare Matt Niskanen giveaway in front led to more pressure, and finally Kyle Okposo scored on a third opportunity after Holtby stopped a shot and Karl Alzner laid out to block the rebound, putting Buffalo back on top at 15:23 of the second period.

Okposo's goal came on the 11<sup>th</sup> unanswered shot on goal from the Sabres in a span of just 187 seconds. Perhaps even more unnerving was the fact that each of the last seven of those shots came from inside of 20 feet away.

"They started to come and started to throw pucks on net and create scrums," says Holtby. "We got caught watching a little bit. It's one of those things where you're trying so hard that you go into desperation mode a little too quick and get a little scrambly. But that's a good sign, it shows that we're trying.

Washington came out with more jam in the third, but the Caps were forced to kill off an early penalty to Niskanen. Beagle and Lars Eller both had excellent scoring chances while the Caps were shorthanded, and those two shots on goal while Washington was down a man ended a stretch in which the Caps managed just two shots on net - both from defensemen and both from at least 45 or more feet away - in a span of 17 minutes and 30 seconds.

Facing a Buffalo defense that was missing four regulars, the Caps were getting plenty of zone time in the third, but it wasn't until Eller drew a hooking call on Evander Kane that the Caps were able to come up with the equalizer.

Justin Williams won the right dot face-off at the outset of the power play for Washington, drawing the puck back to John Carlson at the right point. Carlson crept in and fired a waist high drive from just above the top of the right circle, and Johansson was able to deftly drive by and deflect the puck past Lehner to make it a 2-2 game at 13:42, a mere five seconds after Kane had been seated.

Washington's penalty kill came up big one more time against Buffalo's seventh-ranked power play, killing off a Beagle tripping minor with 3:12 remaining to set the stage for Johansson's overtime heroics, his second extra session game winner in less than a month.

Johansson won the game for Washington on the Capitals' only shot of the overtime period. He executed a neutral zone regroup, regained the zone and left the puck for Evgeny Kuznetsov high on the right side. Kuznetsov dished to Dmitry Orlov above the left circle, and the Caps' defenseman carried to the circle, pump faked and went back against the grain to Johansson, who was locked and loaded near the right dot. Johansson's one-timer eluded Lehner on the short side, ending the game and Washington's brief losing spell.

"I think they got a little bit tired," says Johansson of the Sabres. "They got caught out for a little bit. I was actually a little bit tired, too.

"I think that Kuzy and Orly both made great plays to set that up, and I just tried to get it on net. I just tried to get it on net and it was a good feeling to see it go in."

## **Johansson scores twice as Capitals beat Sabres 3-2 in OT**

By Ian Quillen

The Associated Press

December 5, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trailing by a goal, the Washington Capitals spent their second intermission venting about their poor play. Marcus Johansson used the rest of the game to lead the comeback.

Johansson scored the tying goal late in the third period and got the winner midway through overtime to rally the Capitals to a 3-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres.

"We talked in there, pulled ourselves together and played a lot better," said Johansson, who has four goals in his last five games to raise his season total to 11. "It wasn't pretty, but we got the puck deep and we got it done, and that's all that matters."

Jay Beagle added the Capitals' first even-strength goal in three games as Washington snapped a three-game losing skid.

Braden Holtby made 31 saves in the victory, the Capitals' second over the Sabres in an 11-day stretch, with losses to Toronto, the New York Islanders and Tampa Bay sandwiched in between.

"We've been going down a little bit of the wrong path right now," said John Carlson, who assisted on Johansson's tying goal. "The world isn't ending, but we know it's not good enough for this group and our expectations of each other and ourselves."

Even with the victory, Capitals coach Barry Trotz still left the Verizon Center frustrated by captain Alex Ovechkin, who picked up his fifth minor penalty in three games.

"Unacceptable. He's their leader. He can't take those penalties," Trotz said. "I'm going to address it harshly with him tomorrow."

Kyle Okposo scored his team-leading eighth goal of the season to give the Sabres the lead in the second period, and Zemgus Girgensons also scored early for Buffalo.

Robin Lehner made 30 stops for the visitors, who were forced by injury to play two rookie defenders with a combined one game of previous NHL experience.

Still, the Sabres outshot the Capitals 16-7 in a second period that ended with Buffalo leading 2-1, before Washington turned the tables with a 16-9 edge and a goal in the third.

Buffalo was trying to win three out of four for the second time this season.

"I mean give them credit, they're a good team, but I think we're starting to sit back and they have speed, you know?" Lehner said. "I think we see that we can play. We've just got to stop changing, changing how we play."

Washington turned up its pressure as the third period went on and eventually induced Evander Kane into a hooking penalty with under 6 1/2 minutes remaining.

Johansson tied it just five seconds after the ensuing faceoff, redirecting Carlson's shot into traffic.

Washington killed a tripping penalty on Beagle before the third ended.

Then Johansson's winner came 2:38 into the extra period as he took a cross-ice pass from Dmitry Orlov and fired a one-time that beat Lehner over his left pad.

"I think they got a little bit tired," Johansson said of the goal. "I was actually a little bit tired too. But I think (Evgeny Kuznetsov) and (Orlov) both made great plays to set that up, and I just tried to get it on net. It was a good feeling to see it go in."

NOTES: Buffalo C Jack Eichel finished the game despite appearing to hurt his left leg in a second-period tangle with Capitals D Orlov. It was Eichel's fourth game back from a high ankle sprain in the same leg that forced him to miss two months. ... Beagle's goal was Washington's first at even strength since the third period of a 4-2 loss at Toronto on Nov. 26, a span of more than 2 hours and 28 minutes of game time. ... Sabres D Erik Burgdoerfer made his NHL debut after he was recalled from AHL Rochester to step in for D Josh Gorges (broken foot). ... The teams conclude their three-game season series in Buffalo on Friday

UP NEXT

Sabres: Host Edmonton on Tuesday night in the opener of a four-game homestand.

Capitals: Host Boston on Wednesday night.

## **Johansson powers Capitals to OT win vs. Sabres**

By Benjamin Standig

The Sports Xchange

December 5, 2016

WASHINGTON -- The skidding Washington Capitals were just over six minutes away from skidding a bit more Monday night. Then Marcus Johansson found the back of the net twice, turning those frowns upside down. Johansson scored in overtime to cap a two-goal performance as the Washington Capitals rallied for a 3-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres.

Johansson's slap shot with 2:38 left in the extra session snapped a three-game losing streak for the Capitals (14-7-3). The final tally, his 11th of the season, came after he tipped a John Carlson perimeter shot in for the tying goal on the power-play with 6:18 left in the third period.

Zemgus Girgensons and Kyle Okposo each scored for the Sabres (9-10-6), who led 2-1 after two periods.

"They were all over us for a while," Johansson said after the ninth multi-goal game of his career. "It was tough there for a bit.

But I think we came out in the third, and we talked in (the locker room), pulled ourselves together and played a lot better. ...It wasn't pretty, but we got the puck deep and we got it done, and that's all that matters."

Goaltender Robin Lehner stymied the slumping Capitals early, but finished with 30 saves. Washington had 16 of its 33 shots after the second period. Buffalo lacked its usual rotation on the blue line Monday with multiple defenders out, including Taylor Fedun (shoulder).

"We're starting to sit back and they have speed," Lehner said of Buffalo's late fade. "They got a lot of momentum and a power play. ...I think we had one good period."

Jay Beagle scored Washington's first goal in the second period, but Okposo countered with the go-ahead goal with 4:37 remaining for a 2-1 lead.

Braden Holtby finished with 31 saves for Washington, which hadn't won since defeating Buffalo 3-1 on Nov. 25.

The Capitals, who finished second in goals scored last season, had only three goals over the previous three losses -- with just one coming in Saturday's 2-1 shootout setback against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"It's a big win for us," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "We needed to get mad and play the right way. We just didn't do it enough through the first 40 (minutes), but we did it for the last 20."

Washington entered Monday tied for 18th with 2.52 goals per game.

"It shows the guys aren't happy with the results we've been getting and what we've been doing on the ice," Holtby said of the late-game push. "That shows we have another level to go to."

The Sabres were without Jack Eichel in the previous meeting against the Capitals, but they welcomed their star center back for their next game and promptly took two of three before the rematch.

Eichel missed the opening 21 games with an ankle injury and pain developed in Monday's game, though coach Dan Bylsma labeled the apparent tweak as "fairly normal."

Buffalo opened the scoring as Derek Grant fed a rushing Girgensons for a one-on-one breakaway. With an open path, Girgensons beat Holtby with a backhand shot at 5:59 of the opening period for his second goal of the season and first since Oct. 18.

Beagle's fifth goal on the year tied the score 1-1 just 5:23 into the second period. It appeared the Sabres regained the lead later in the period, but a score by Johan Larsson was waved off after officials called offsides following a replay review.

Less than a minute later, Buffalo took the lead as Okposo gobbled up a rebound in front of the net and lifted the puck past a fallen Holtby. That seemed like enough until Johansson lifted up the Capitals late.

"We have to try and fight our way up the standings," Okposo said. "You might have some lulls in the season, but we already had ours. We have to make sure we're pushing forward and doing everything we can to get two points. Getting a point is OK, but we had the lead in the third."

NOTES: Capitals RW T.J. Oshie (shoulder) missed his seventh consecutive game. RW Brett Connolly, who scored a goal in the win against Buffalo last month, was also scratched. ... With D Taylor Fedun out, Buffalo recalled D Erik Burgdoerfer from the AHL's Rochester Americans. The move came a day after the Sabres declared D Josh Gorges out for several weeks with a non-displaced fracture of a bone in his foot. D Zach Bogosian was also scratched. ... The season series wraps up Friday in Buffalo. ... The Sabres host the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday. ... The Boston Bruins visit Washington on Wednesday

## **Sabres Fall to Caps 3-2 in OT**

WGR 550

December 5, 2016

Marcus Johansson scored the tying and winning goals in the Capitals' 3-2 overtime win over the Sabres on Monday. Robin Lehner with 30 saves, including 15 in the final period.

### **Scoring**

- Zemgus Girgensons' 2nd goal of the season came nearly 6 minutes into the 1st period. Driving to the net with speed, Girgensons tucked a backhand shot over Braden Holtby's left pad for the 1-0 lead.
- The Capitals tied it up 5:23 into the middle frame on Jay Beagle's 5th.
- Kyle Okposo gave Buffalo the 2-1 lead in the 2nd period, rattling home a rebound in front of Holtby for his 8th of the season.
- Johansson's 10th came just 5 seconds into a 3rd period power play, deflecting Justin Williams' shot off the faceoff by Lehner and into the net. He wristed the winner past the Sabres netminder 2:38 into overtime, lifting Washington to the 3-2 win.

### **Game Notes**

- The Sabres appeared to take the lead with 5:06 left in the 2nd period, but Johan Larsson's goal was waved off after a successful offsides challenge by Washington.
- Jack Eichel returned to the bench in obvious pain after getting crunched along the boards in the 2nd, but played the rest of the game. He skated for a total of 18:31 and finished with 1 shot on net.

### **1st Period**

#### **Goals**

5:59 - BUF - Zemgus Girgensons (2) (Derek Grant, Rasmus Ristolainen)

#### **Penalties**

14:40 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., slashing)

17:28 - BUF - William Carrier (2 min., slashing)

### **2nd Period**

#### **Goals**

5:23 - WSH - Jay Beagle (5) (Daniel Winnik, Brooks Orpik)

15:23 - BUF - Kyle Okposo (8) (Ryan O'Reilly, William Carrier)

#### **Penalties**

17:22 - WSH - Alex Ovechkin (2 min., slashing)

### **3rd Period**

#### **Goals**

13:42 - WSH - Marcus Johansson (10) (PPG) (Justin Williams, John Carlson)

#### **Penalties**

3:55 - WSH - Matt Niskanen (2 min., tripping)

13:37 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., hooking)

16:48 - WSH - Jay Beagle (2 min., tripping)

### **Overtime**

#### **Goals**

2:38 - WSH - Marcus Johansson (11) (Evgeny Kuznetsov, Dmitry Orlov)

#### **Penalties**

None

**Goaltending**

BUF - Robin Lehner (30 saves, 33 shots)

WSH - Braden Holtby (31 saves, 33 shots)

**Power Plays**

BUF - 0 of 3

WSH - 1 of 3

## **From The Locker Room: Sabres-Capitals**

WGR 550

December 5, 2016

Read the Sabres' locker room reaction after their 3-2 overtime loss to the Capitals, including Dan Bylsma's update on Jack Eichel.

### **Dan Bylsma**

"He came off after the hit, and I think it's the first time he's had any incident on the ice where he did feel the ankle. It's kind of per usual with a high ankle sprain like that. He felt it, tweaked it, whatever the case is. Whatever the case is, it's fairly normal and returned to feeling better after that."

"[Washington] won those [power play] battles. They often leave two guys left for them. One was a 2-on-1 and the other one was a narrow miss."

### **Kyle Okposo**

"Thought we did a pretty good job of crashing the net. It would have been nice to get one off somebody or have another one go in. That's a pretty good hockey team over there. We played a pretty decent game tonight, just gotta come back tomorrow and get 2 points."

"We gotta try and fight our way up the standings. You're going to have some lulls in the season, but we already had ours. We have to make sure that we're pushing forward and doing everything we can to get 2 points. Getting a point's okay, but we had the lead in the 3rd...gotta try and hold it and get 2."

## **Three Sabres prospects named to preliminary World Junior rosters**

By Brayton J. Wilson

WGR 550

December 5, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Three Buffalo Sabres prospects have been named to preliminary rosters for the 2017 IIHF Under-20 World Junior Championship in Canada from December 26 to January 5.

Highlighting the list of prospects participating in World Junior training camps is 2016 first round pick Alexander Nylander, who will represent Sweden in the tournament.

Nylander was the 8th overall pick in the draft out of the Mississauga Steelheads in the Ontario Hockey League. Nylander led the team with four goals in the tournament, and he also registered eight points. Nylander has scored four goals and 14 points in 22 games this season with the Rochester Americans in the American Hockey League.

Also representing the Sabres for team Sweden is second round forward, Rasmus Asplund.

Asplund was taken with the third pick in the second round out of the Swedish Hockey League. Asplund scored three goals in last year's tournament and finished with five points overall. This year with Farjestads BK, Asplund has three goals and nine points in 23 games played.

Sweden will need to make three roster cuts before taking the team to Toronto where they will play in a group with the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland.

The final Sabres prospect to be named to a preliminary roster is defenseman Casey Fitzgerald. He will take part in the World Junior camp with the United States.

Fitzgerald was a third round pick of the Sabres in the 2016 NHL Draft out of Boston College. Fitzgerald has scored five goals and registered 13 points in 17 games so far this season with the Golden Eagles.

The United States will compete in the other group stationed in Montréal where they will compete with host nation Canada, Latvia, Russia, and Slovakia.

## **5 Observations: Sabres fall to Capitals 3-2 in OT**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

December 5, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Should've, could've, would've – that's what the Buffalo Sabres have to be saying after a 3-2 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals. The Sabres found themselves up 2-1 with seven minutes left in the third period, but a power play goal by the Capitals tied things up late. It didn't get any better for the Sabres in overtime, when Marcus Johansson fired home a one-timer from the slot, sealing the win for the Capitals. Buffalo is now 1-6 when they go into overtime or a shootout.

*Five observations from Monday's loss:*

### **Oh no, Jack Eichel**

Yes, this is how I imagined Sabres fans reacting to the scary moment involving Jack Eichel early in the second period. It looked like a routine play, but after getting pinned against the boards Eichel was in obvious pain.

The good news – He was able to finish the game.

Bylsma on Eichel: "I think it's the first time he's had any incident he's felt anything with the ankle, he tweaked it, that's fairly normal"

The bad news – He very clearly wasn't himself from that moment on. It looked like Eichel was limping around in his own end and was several steps slower than what we're accustomed to seeing. What was most apparent was his lack of explosiveness. Eichel is the Sabres most explosive player, maybe more so than anyone they've had since the millennium, but in the second half of Monday's game he was just another guy.

I'm not a doctor, but \*if\* there's any chance this could be something that lingers long-term, the Sabres should sit Eichel for some games now -- rather than have him miss several games later. As Buffalo sports fans have seen with Buffalo Bills wide receiver Sammy Watkins, lingering issues can really turn into a headache – don't let that happen with Eichel.

### **Get Ristolainen some oxygen**

To say the Sabres are dealing with injuries would be a massive understatement. Yes, every player has been asked to step up, but few have been asked as much as Rasmus Ristolainen. Once again, the 21-year-old defender logged huge minutes, finishing with 29:51 of ice time.

Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma has said that he doesn't want to give Ristolainen such a massive work-load, but when it gets late into games it just kind of happens. Although he hasn't scored a goal – Ristolainen deserves a ton of credit – he's playing well at both ends and is holding things down without players like Dmitry Kulikov, Zach Bogosian and Josh Gorges.

The only thing you can criticize Ristolainen for is missing a golden chance in overtime

### **Late collapse**

To the judge's card we go:

1st period – Capitals

2nd period – Sabres

3rd period – Capitals

Late in the game the Sabres were chasing and were quite frankly lucky to get a point. I thought they had a good start to the final period – but were a step behind the Capitals as the clock approached zero.

### **When at first you don't succeed, Kyle Okposo**

Okposo is hot, hot, hot – in the Sabres last six games Buffalo's prized free agent signing has three goals and four assists (seven points). Monday Okposo scored his team leading eighth goal and has proven to be an incredibly valuable addition to the team.

What has also been nice to see – how Okposo and Ryan O'Reilly have played with 21-year-old newcomer William Carrier. I like this combination far more than when Matt Moulson has been lined up at the wing. That's not a knock on Moulson, he's been much better this year, but Carrier adds some needed speed with two steady two-way guys like Okposo and O'Reilly

### **Guhle continues to impress**

Keep it simple, stupid. I had a teacher that told us that whenever we started to over think something. That's the way Guhle has played in his first two starts. He doesn't make any bone-headed mistakes (at least yet), he makes clean and crisp passes and he calculates when to jump into the zone. For a 19-year-old thrown into the NHL by surprise he's handled himself incredibly well – further proving why so many in the organization have big expectations for the young defender. What says it all? With the game on the line, Guhle was on the ice to end the third period

### **Bonus observation:**

Kudos to Cody Franson who has played a much steadier brand of hockey these last few weeks. With so many injuries the guys who have actually been in Buffalo all season have been asked to step-up their games, and Franson, at least in my opinion, has done just that.

However, he didn't have a good final shift of regulation – and when I say "he didn't have a good" I really mean: Wow, that was brutal.

## **Marcus Johansson gives Capitals win in OT**

By Katie Brown

NHL.com

December 5, 2016

**WASHINGTON** -- Marcus Johansson scored with 2:22 left in overtime to help the Washington Capitals defeat the Buffalo Sabres 3-2 at Verizon Center on Monday.

Johansson scored a power-play goal with 6:18 left in the third period to tie the game. He tipped in John Carlson's point shot for his 10th goal.

"It was a big win for us," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "We needed to get mad and play the right way."

Trotz said he addressed players during the second intermission but that it was up to them to get the job done.

Girgensons scored at 5:59 of the first period to make it 1-0. He lifted a backhand shot on a breakaway behind Holtby for his second goal of the season.

Washington has allowed the first goal of the game in four straight after scoring first in 17 of 20 to start the season.

Beagle tied the game 1-1 at 5:23 of the second period after redirecting defenseman Brooks Orpik's pass in front of Lehner for his fifth goal.

Okposo gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead at 15:23 of the second. He scored on the rebound of his shot attempt. The goal was his eighth of the season.

"They had a stretch in the second," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "We came back with a good stretch in about the last 10 minutes of the second period and again it was a good stretch of 10 minutes there where they were coming at us. They weren't getting a lot, but they were coming at us with a lot of speed, coming at us through the neutral zone and it wasn't until after the [tying] goal that we were able to get back going the other way."

### ***Goal of the game***

Girgensons scored on a two-on-one from on a pass from Derek Grant, lifting a backhand past Holtby.

### ***Save of the game***

Holtby sprawled in the crease to prevent the Sabres from scoring in the second period.

### ***Highlight of the game***

Johansson scored the game-winning goal in overtime off a one-timer in the slot. Defenseman Dmitry Orlov received the puck from Evgeny Kuznetsov and faked a shot before passing to Johansson.

### ***Unsung moment of the game***

The Capitals got a break when Sabres forward Johan Larsson's goal was overturned in the second period. Washington alleged that Larsson was offside prior to the goal and it was waved off after a review.

"I give a first star to our video guy," Trotz said. "That was huge."

### ***They said it***

"That's what we need from the power play and I think the last few years, that's what we've gotten too. We have a good power play, we've gotten results from it and just hasn't bounced our way. I think we've been making it a little bit too hard and not really taking what's there. The last two goals, just getting the puck to the net and it goes in, I think that says a lot. That's a big goal for us and it's big for our confidence moving forward." -- *Forward Marcus Johansson on the Capitals' power play tying the game*

"They're a team that goes to the net hard. Probably one of the hardest teams in the League that go to the net and crash and jab your goalie and get in your goalie's face. It's frustrating, obviously, when you're not playing the right way. I think they just don't go your way when you're not playing the right way." -- *Capitals forward Jay Beagle on the Sabres*

"It's always a big part of the game against this team. Their power play is dangerous and I thought we did a good job of killing [it] off in the first period but the second goal, the goal they needed with six minutes left, is a direct result of the penalty kill. And we had our chances on the power play. Late in the game there we had a chance. We had one earlier as well and weren't able to come up with it." -- *Sabres coach Dan Bylsma on the Capitals power play*

### ***Need to know***

Johansson has a four-game goal streak against the Sabres. ... Bylsma said Eichel tweaked his ankle and felt a little pain after getting tangled up with Orlov in the second period but added that it's normal for that to happen after recovering from a high ankle sprain.

### ***What's next***

**Sabres:** Host the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday (7 p.m. SNW, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

**Capitals:** Host the Boston Bruins on Wednesday (8 p.m. NBCSN, TVA Sports, NHL.TV)

## Jack Eichel playing through pain with Sabres

By Tom Gulitti

NHL.com

December 5, 2016

**WASHINGTON** -- Jack Eichel knew there would be games like these.

In his fourth game back from a high ankle sprain that forced him to miss the first 22 games of the season, the Buffalo Sabres center appeared to tweak his ankle during a 3-2 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals at Verizon Center on Monday.

Eichel got up slowly after becoming tangled with Capitals defenseman Dmitry Orlov in the neutral zone 3:09 into the second period. He hobbled off the ice and appeared in pain on the bench, standing while play continued. But he did not miss a shift and was able to finish the game.

Upset about the Sabres blowing a 2-1 lead in the third period, Eichel initially denied his ankle bothered him after the collision with Orlov, but later acknowledged it's something with he's going to deal with because he doesn't expect his ankle to be 100 percent "for a while."

"Hockey's a contact sport, so I figure that's going to happen during the year and I've just got to play through it," Eichel said.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma sounded confident that Eichel will be OK to play against Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers at KeyBank Center on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; MSG-B, SNW, NHL.TV).

"Obviously, he came off after the hit," Bylsma said. "I think it's the first time he's had any incident on the ice where he did feel the ankle. Kind of per usual with a high ankle sprain like that, he felt it, tweaked it. Whatever the case is, it's fairly normal and (there was) a return to feeling better after that."

Eichel was injured in the Sabres' final practice before the start of the season. Although he returned to the Sabres lineup for a 5-4 win against the Ottawa Senators on Nov. 29, he said after the morning skate on Monday that he'll have to continue treatments on his ankle between games.

"It's definitely something you've got to continue to stay on top of," he said. "It's not just going to go away. It felt good enough for me to play and that's why I'm playing."

After the overtime loss to the Capitals, Eichel was more concerned with how the Sabres weren't able to protect the lead in the third period and his role in that rather than his ankle.

It was the fourth time this season the Sabres failed to win when leading after two periods (6-0-4).

"I felt good," Eichel said. "I just didn't play well enough myself and as a team I don't think we're happy with that game."

Up next is Eichel's second game against McDavid in the NHL. McDavid was the No. 1 selection by the Oilers in the 2015 NHL Draft and Eichel was picked No. 2 by the Sabres that year.

Eichel missed the first game between the Sabres and the Oilers this season - a 6-2 Sabres win at Rogers Place on Oct. 16 - while he was recovering from his ankle injury. He didn't have much time to think about facing McDavid again after the game on Monday.

"Quick turnaround," he said. "In 24 hours we play a really good hockey team, so get home, get some rest, get ready to play and just look for two points [Tuesday] night."

## **Sabres lose third-period lead, fall to Caps in OT**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

December 5, 2016

**WASHINGTON** - Only 10 days had passed between games at Verizon Center for the Buffalo Sabres by the time they returned on Monday night, and those days hadn't been kind to the Washington Capitals. Since beating the Sabres 3-1 on Nov. 25, Washington had lost three straight games in which they were a combined 1-for-16 on the power play.

The Sabres were looking for revenge in their rematch, and found themselves in good position to get it when they entered the second intermission with a 2-1 lead on the strength of goals from Zemgus Girgensons and Kyle Okposo. Washington's power play continued to struggle as Buffalo had already killed off two penalties.

In the third period, however, the Sabres tested their luck one too many times. A call against Evander Kane for hooking gave the Capitals their third power play with 6:18 remaining in regulation, and it took only five seconds after that for Marcus Johansson to tie the game with a tip-in goal.

The game rolled into overtime, and Johansson - who also scored in the first meeting between the Sabres and Capitals - scored the game-winner midway through the extra period to seal a 3-2 victory for Washington.

"Their power play is dangerous," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I thought we did a good job of killing them off in the first period but the second goal, the goal that they needed there with six minutes left, was a direct result of the penalty kill. We had our chances on the power play ... We weren't able to come up with it."

After Johansson scored to tie the game, the Sabres still earned one more power-play chance of their own with 3:12 remaining in regulation. Like their first two power plays, however, they failed to turn it into any momentum. The Sabres were outshot 4-3 combined on their three chances with the extra man.

"Our execution was kind of poor," Okposo said. "It just seemed like we weren't in sync, we just weren't making the play that we normally do. Next game I think we just have to bear down and make sure that we're back to being simple."

Even without success on the power play, the Sabres earned their lead during a hard-working second period in which they outshot the Capitals 16-7. Okposo's go-ahead goal in the second period capped off four shifts of relentless play around the Washington net.

The third period spurred opposite results, with Washington outshooting Buffalo 16-9.

"In the end, we're not winning hockey games with one good period," said Sabres goalie Robin Lehner, who made 30 saves. "We see that we can play, so we've just got to stop changing how we play."

The loss marks the second in a row the Sabres, who found little solace in taking a point on the road. They'll have one more chance at beating the Capitals when they meet again at KeyBank Center on Friday night.

"I think at this point we know that we need two [points] and we've got to try and fight our way up the standings," Okposo said. "You're going to have some lulls in a season but we already had ours and we have to make sure that we're pushing forward and doing everything that we can to get two points. Yeah, getting a point is OK, but we had the lead in the third. We've got to try and hold it and get two."

### **If at first you don't succeed ...**

It took quite the series of events before Okposo was finally able to score and regain the lead for the Sabres with 4:37 remaining in the second period. In fact, you could argue that the Sabres came as close as a team can come to scoring without actually earning a goal on each of the three shifts prior to Okposo finally sealing the deal.

There were two mad scrambles around Capitals goalie Braden Holtby, one of which involved a save on Johan Larsson's shot from the edge of the crease and a puck stopped dead on the goal line. Between those net-front scrums, there was a Larsson goal on a long rebound that was overturned when it was ruled he had entered the zone offside.

But the Sabres kept pounding away. Okposo's forechecking behind the net on the next shift led to a Capitals turnover forced by William Carrier. Shots by Carrier and then Ryan O'Reilly led to Okposo getting the puck in front of the net, and he scored on his own rebound.

"We tried to get the puck to the net," said Girgensons, who had been involved on one of the scrambles out in front. "I think it's a good sign, we're going harder to the net now, getting those dirty goals maybe if that's what you call them. I think it's a good sign that we're getting there.

### **Eichel stays in game after ankle scare**

For nearly two minutes in the second period, Buffalo was left holding its collective breath as people wondered whether Jack Eichel has reaggravated the high-ankle sprain that forced him to miss the first 21 games of the season.

Eichel had stayed down on the ice and drifted off gingerly after a battle along the boards. Once he returned to the bench, he immediately went over to be checked by trainers and was caught by cameras seemingly wincing in pain. He never did leave the bench, and returned on the very next shift after Jay Beagle scored to tie the game at 1-1 for the Capitals.

"I think it's the first time he's had any incident on the ice where he did feel the ankle," Bylsma said. "Kind of per usual with an ankle, a high-ankle sprain like that, he felt it, tweaked it, whatever the case is it's fairly normal and he returned to feeling better after that."

### **Girgensons ends his goalless drought**

Girgensons snapped a 21-game drought without a goal when he scored to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead 5:59 into the contest. Girgensons was the beneficiary of a perfect one-time pass from Derek Grant in the neutral zone, allowing Girgensons to make his entry one stride ahead of the defense. He swept across the net from the left side beat Capitals goalie Braden Holtby with a backhand shot.

"He saw me coming across and just ripped it there," Girgensons said. "I got it and just took it to the net."

### **Up next**

The Sabres return home to conclude their back-to-back set of games when they welcome Connor McDavid and Edmonton Oilers to KeyBank Center on Tuesday night. The Sabres earned a 6-2 when they played the Oilers in Edmonton on Oct. 16 sans Jack Eichel and Evander Kane.

Coverage on Tuesday begins at 6:30 p.m. with the TOPS Pregame Show on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops between the Sabres and Oilers at 7 p.m.

## **Sabres' Burgdoerfer has an emotional call up to the NHL**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 5, 2016

Washington, DC (WGR 550) -- More injuries for the Sabres defense as Taylor Fedun is battling a shoulder problem. That means journeyman, Erik Burgdoerfer, becomes the 11<sup>th</sup> defenseman to dress for Buffalo this season. Burgdoerfer will be paired with Justin Falk against the Capitals tonight in Washington.

The road to the NHL has not been an easy one for the 27-year-old, and he said he felt really emotional when he got the call from his coach, "I got the call from Dan Lambert, the coach down there and it was a little emotional, but it was great."

After four years at R.P.I., Burgdoerfer played 337 games with Bakersfield of the East Coast League. He then graduated to the AHL, playing 157 games with Rochester, Hershey and Oklahoma City. Through it all, Burgdoerfer has stayed positive, but it wasn't easy, "There was definitely certain points of my career where I thought this would never happen, but you've just got to believe in yourself and work hard and I couldn't be happier in the result here."

Buffalo has played 4-2-1 hockey lately, but are still 27<sup>th</sup> in the NHL with a .479 points percentage. After the return of Jack Eichel last week, and nine goals in two games, the Sabres were back to normal netting just one against Boston Saturday.

The power play was 0-for-3 against the Bruins after going 4-for-7 in the previous two games. The Sabres power play is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the league at 22.5 percent. The Caps, meanwhile, are a surprising 22<sup>nd</sup> scoring at a 14.5 percent clip.

Robin Lehner gets the call in net tonight against Braden Holtby. Lehner is 5-8-3 with a 2.38 goals against and .922 save percentage. Holtby is 10-6-2 with a 2.16 goals against and .922 save percentage.

Philipp Grubauer was in net for the Caps the last time these teams played, the day after Thanksgiving, a 3-1 loss for the Sabres.

Holtby has struggled lately, winning just one of his last five starts, giving up 14 goals in those games. His last start was a 2-1 shootout loss in Tampa.

Alex Ovechkin has 12 goals in 23 games while his linemate, Nick Backstrom, leads the team with 21 points in 23 games.

Ovechkin has been cold - not scoring since netting a hat trick November 23rd against St. Louis. The Caps have scored one goal in two games.

T.J. Oshie has missed six games with an injury. The only other player to miss any games due for Washington is Lars Eller who out for one game due to injury. Washington has had two players miss seven games combined.

The Capitals picked up points in 22 of its last 28 games against Buffalo going 18-6-4. The Caps have also gone 11-2-2 in their last 15 home games against Buffalo.

## **'Emotional' call gives Burgdoerfer the word of NHL debut with Sabres**

By Mike Harrington

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WASHINGTON -- After 480 regular season and playoff games in the minor leagues, the NHL dream of Erik Burgdoerfer becomes a reality tonight in Verizon Center. Six days shy of his 28th birthday, Burgdoerfer joins Justin Falk on the Buffalo Sabres' third defense pair for their game against the Washington Capitals.

Burgdoerfer got the word Sunday from Rochester coach Dan Lambert, noting that the call "was a little emotional but it was great." He played in all but one of the Sabres' preseason games, giving coach Dan Bylsma more than enough confidence to call on him in the wake of Buffalo's injury crisis on the blueline.

"It certainly has been a long time coming so I was thrilled to get the call," Burgdoerfer said after the Sabres' optional morning skate. "There were definitely certain points in my career I thought this would never happen. You've just got to believe in yourself, work hard and I couldn't be happier with the result."

His preseason in Buffalo was a key to getting to this point but Burgdoerfer said his run to the Calder Cup finals in June with Washington's Hershey affiliate set the stage for this year. The Bears were swept in the series by Lake Erie.

"That was huge," he said. "Any time you can be on a team that's winning, even though we came up a little short in the Calder Cup final, any one on a team like that gets a boost for the next season. Whether it's with the same time or moving on. There's nothing like winning to propel people's careers."

The Sabres will have Rasmus Ristolainen with Jake McCabe on their top defense pair, while Cody Franson staying with junior callup Brendan Guhle after that pair was joined Saturday against Boston for Guhle's NHL debut. Burgdoerfer will play with Falk.

"I told him it's your first NHL game but you've played with all these guys before and you should be comfortable with how we play," Bylsma said. "There's a little more rapport and camaraderie between them now because they played in Rochester."

"A lot of what we've seen with Taylor Fedun I would say about Erik. He's a guy that proved he can play at the NHL level in preseason. We played with very similar lineups to what we've played with in the season and he was a good, steady defender. He competed hard and was able to do it against NHL players."

Burgdoerfer said he expected several family members to make the drive here, either from the family home on Long Island or perhaps even his Buffalo connections. His mother, Jane, is a Western New York native and he has aunts, uncles and cousins in Amherst, Orchard Park and Clarence.

"Belief in myself, support of my family, friends and people in hockey who believed in me," he said about his quest. "The Sabres gave me an excellent opportunity in preseason to show I can play at this level and thankfully I ran with it. Any team would be special to play against but it's close enough to home that my family is able to come so that will really make it special."

Burgdoerfer's stay might be short. Bylsma said Dmitry Kulikov isn't likely to play Tuesday against Edmonton but is a possibility for the rematch with the Capitals at home on Friday. The coach also said Fedun had rib X-rays that were negative and is day-to-day with a shoulder injury.