



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

January 17, 2017

Eichel scores twice in Sabres' 4-1 win over Stars

By Jonah Bronstein

Associated Press

January 16, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jack Eichel scored two goals and the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Dallas Stars 4-1 on Monday.

Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into the first period. Ennis returned after missing 30 games with a groin injury that required surgery.

Jake McCabe also had a goal and Robin Lehner made 31 saves after missing the past three games with an illness.

The Sabres snapped a two-game losing streak and beat the Stars for the first time in four matchups.

Radek Faksa scored for the Stars in the opener of a three-game road trip. Kari Lehtonen stopped 25 shots. Dallas has lost two in a row and six of eight.

Eichel gave the Sabres a 3-1 lead 7:07 into the second period when he scored from the left side of the net on a power play. It was Eichel's first goal in five games. He scored again into an empty net with 9.3 seconds left for his third two-goal game of the season.

Buffalo built a 2-0 lead in the first 13 minutes.

Ennis took the first shot of the game and beat Lehtonen with a wrist shot from the right circle. McCabe got his first goal of the season on a power play with 7:26 remaining in the first when he intercepted Jamie Benn's clearing pass and took a slap shot from the high slot.

Buffalo's Taylor Fedun had a goal disallowed prior to the power play when it was ruled that Lehtonen touched the puck after a delayed penalty on Faksa for hooking.

Faksa poked in the rebound off Jiri Hudler's slap shot that hit the post to make it 2-1 with 4:46 remaining in the first period.

The Stars appeared to tie the game 1:38 into the second period when Patrick Eaves tipped in Stephen Johns' long shot. But Sabres coach Dan Bylsma successfully challenged that Eaves was offside.

NOTES: Eichel set a career high with 10 shots on goal. The Sabres are 6-0-1 this season when Eichel scores. ... Sam Reinhart assisted on Eichel's goal and has 13 points in his past 13 games. ... Stars D Jamie Oleksiak missed his third straight game with a hand injury. ... Buffalo recalled F Cal O'Reilly from the minors on Saturday. O'Reilly entered the lineup in place of Nicolas Deslauriers (healthy scratch). ... The Stars allowed a goal on each of the first three shots in Saturday's 5-4 loss to Minnesota. They are 3-13-5 when allowing the first goal this season. ... The Sabres have won their past five games against Western Conference teams. ... Both teams played the first game of a back-to-back.

UP NEXT

Stars: At Rangers on Tuesday

Sabres: At Toronto on Tuesday

Young stars clash when Sabres visit Maple Leafs

Associated Press

January 16, 2017

TORONTO -- The Buffalo Sabres will be facing a confident, young Toronto Maple Leafs team when they visit the Air Canada Centre on Tuesday night.

The Maple Leafs (20-13-8) are coming off back-to-back road wins Friday and Saturday against the New York Rangers and the Ottawa Senators. They are 8-1-1 in their past 10 games and have 48 points in 41 games.

"I think you want to get caught up in the energy of doing well and having fun and knowing you're getting better, and I think you want to be professional with your approach," Toronto coach Mike Babcock said after practice on Monday. "When things are going good, you better work even harder because, in life, they have a tendency to turn. You've got to just keep grinding."

The Sabres (17-17-9) will go into the game with momentum built from a 4-1 victory over the Dallas Stars Monday afternoon at KeyBank Center led by two goals by Jack Eichel, who has scored 10 times in 22 games.

Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into the first period in his first game since undergoing groin surgery on Nov. 10, and Buffalo, which lost its previous two games, was on the way to improving its record to 4-2-1 in January.

"It's great to have (Ennis) back," said Eichel, whose second goal was into an empty net. "He's such a skilled player. Obviously, he makes everyone around him better. It's awesome to see him back healthy. He obviously adds a new dynamic to our team that's good for us."

"You hope that's just another arrow in the quiver to have in your team's offense," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "And it's one we haven't had most of this year."

Ennis, who has had three 20-goal seasons, missed 30 games since Nov. 7.

"I got a goal early but I was still pretty rusty," Ennis said. "I can play a lot better. There's still an extra step, a little more pop in my skating."

The Maple Leafs will likely go with No. 1 goaltender Frederik Andersen against Buffalo after Curtis McElhinney made 35 saves in his Toronto debut in the 4-2 win at Ottawa.

The 33-year-old was acquired on waivers from Columbus last Tuesday.

With optimism running high in Toronto, Babcock tried to keep things in perspective on Monday.

"Let's not get carried away here," Babcock said. "I mean, Ottawa out-chanced us, we won the game. We've got a lot of work to do here. We're getting a better understanding of what's expected of them, understanding that we're good enough to win every night if you play right. Those things are positive."

"I guess our biggest improvement is understanding and expectations. We know where we're supposed to stand, and we expect to have success. In saying that, it is Game 41. I've been in the league a long time. Lots of things can go good and lots of things can go bad. I think it's just real important that we focus on our five-game segment and keep trying to win."

The game against the Sabres is the first of four in a row at home for the Maple Leafs.

"That's going to be crucial for us," Toronto center Nazem Kadri said Monday. "We had been good all year at home (10-7-2). We have to understand that games at home mean as much as games on the road. This will be nice, I feel like we've been on the road for a while the past couple of months."

Bylsma reunited Eichel and roommate Sam Reinhart on a line for the game Monday, with Marcus Foligno joining them on the left wing.

Reinhart, who was moved from center to right wing, had one assist.

"It's nice to be back playing with him," Eichel said. "We're two people who want to be out there together. We know that if we get each other the puck and get open it's going to come back."

Eichel had a career-high 10 shots on goal against Dallas and won 13 faceoffs.

The Sabres' next challenge will be in Toronto. "It's a good test for us," Eichel said. "Toronto's obviously been really hot lately, so we've just got to go up there and play similar to the way we did (Monday) and we should be successful."

The Maple Leafs won the first game between the teams, 2-1, on Nov. 3 in Buffalo.

Together again, Eichel and Reinhart excel for Sabres

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
January 16, 2017

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Before Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart even left the house, they knew it was going to be a good day. They were going to play on the same line.

"We've wanted to be moved back together," Reinhart said Monday. "We were excited yesterday in practice. We were excited this morning coming to the rink."

It showed. The roommates combined for two goals and three points as the Sabres pounced on Dallas for a 4-1 victory. Eichel scored twice and could have had at least four on a career-high 10 shots. Reinhart set him up for the best ones.

"It's nice to be back playing with him," Eichel said in KeyBank Center. "We're two people who want to be out there together. We know that if we get each other the puck and get open it's going to come back.

"I'm just happy to be back with him, and it's nice to play with the puck a little bit in their zone. We just want to keep going."

They should get a chance right away. Buffalo will visit Toronto on Tuesday, and it will be the first time Eichel faces his fellow young American star, Auston Matthews.

"It's a good test for us," Eichel said. "Toronto's been obviously really hot lately, so we've just got to go up there and play similar to the way we did tonight, and we should be successful."

The pairing of Eichel and Reinhart has been teased a few times the last couple of weeks. They've gotten a shift here and there, and they've practiced together a few times. Finally, with the recall of center Cal O'Reilly, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma shifted Reinhart from the middle to right wing.

It paid off immediately. Eichel attempted seven shots in the first period, with Reinhart feeding him for point-blank chances that Stars goaltender Kari Lehtonen turned away.

Eichel deserved to be on the score sheet – "Most definitely," Bylsma said – and the center got there in the second period to make it 3-1. Reinhart earned the assist after taking two whacks at a goal.

"The second whack came back at me, and I know he's always going to be in that soft area," Reinhart said of the side of the crease. "It's something we've all kind of talked about, so he put himself in a good position to put that in."

Eichel and Reinhart instinctively know how to find each other when things are clicking. They were clicking Monday while playing with left wing Marcus Foligno.

"We had our fair share" of chances, Reinhart said. "The three of us like playing together. We know if we keep creating like that we're going to get more and more, and the opportunities will be there for us.

"I liked the effort, and the key for the three of us is to stick with it, not get too frustrated and keep looking for each other out there."

The line tested Lehtonen 14 times while attempting 21 shots. It was an especially important day for Eichel, who had no goals and one assist during the previous four games. He added his second goal of the afternoon with 9.3 seconds left.

"I told myself if I came out here and shot the puck a lot I think I'd get one," Eichel said. "The past few games just trying to be a little too cute on opportunities that I could fire it, and you're not going to score unless you shoot it. Get rewarded with an empty-netter, which is kind of nice, and a tap-in on a great play from Rhino."

Reinhart's assist gave him 19 in 43 games, the same total he put up in 79 games last year.

"With his confidence playing with the puck, he's a lot more physical, I think," Eichel said. "Not as much without the puck, but with it. He's been making it harder on the opposing team to take it away from him."

Eichel has 10 goals in 22 games. That works out to 0.45 goals per outing, which ranks tied for 11th in the NHL. The Maple Leafs' Matthews ranks fourth at 0.51 with 21 goals in 41 games.

The rookie has helped the Leafs become a league-wide surprise. They are 8-1-1 in their last 10 games and 20-13-8 overall, good enough for a playoff spot.

"They're been hot, they've been producing," Reinhart said. "It's going to be a challenge for us going in there, and we're all looking forward to that opportunity."

Mike Harrington: Attack mode should be Sabres' preferred method

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 16, 2017

It was just after 10:30 Monday morning and Sabres coach Dan Bylsma was having his regular pregame briefing with reporters when the subject of the Dallas Stars came up. One look at some of the names in the Stars' lineup and Bylsma's nervous reaction is understandable.

"We have to play a patient game, a responsible game to get the opportunities that I think will come," Bylsma said. "You have to play defense against this group. You have to be aware which side of the puck you're on and if you do so, you'll get opportunities going back the other way.

"If you play a run-and-gun game up and down the ice with this team, you're going to be in for a lot of tough scoring chances against. We just need to play responsible defensively, play good on the defensive side of the puck and that will lead to opportunities for our team."

I get it. But that's so so so coachy.

Poor Lindy Ruff's Stars are a disaster defensively. Goalies Antti Niemi and Kari Lehtonen are swiss cheese in the net. As in full of holes. Niemi gave up three goals on three shots Saturday against Minnesota and Lehtonen entered Monday's game with an .898 save percentage for the season. One or the other had been pulled five times in the last eight games.

So why are we talking about defense? How about saying it's time to attack?

There are many reasons the Sabres have underachieved offensively this season. Their passing stinks at times. Their defense has not done nearly a good enough job getting the puck to the forwards. Injuries have robbed Jack Eichel, Ryan O'Reilly and Evander Kane of significant time. Tyler Ennis finally returned Monday after 30 games.

But too often, it comes down to the system. Bylsma has this team playing the way a lot of coaches do and that's fine. But especially with Ennis back, this team can skate. This top six group of forwards can get up and go.

And that's why the first period of Monday's 4-1 win told you quite a tale. The Sabres had 31 shot attempts, Ennis scored after 19 seconds and Eichel was everywhere. The Stars were blown up into asteroids by the Sabres' speed and puck movement.

Eichel's empty-netter was Buffalo's 100th goal of the season (the standings list 101, counting Cal O'Reilly's November shootout winner against Pittsburgh). The only other teams yet to hit 100 are New Jersey and the pathetic duo of Arizona and Colorado. The Sabres have too much talent to be in the netherworld of NHL offenses anymore.

Eichel, who had a career-high 10 shots on goal, talked afterward about how the Stars were a "high-octane" team. Fair enough when you're talking names like Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn, Jason Spezza and Patrick Eaves. So with Ennis back, can we say the Sabres have potential for similar octane?

"He's such a skilled player. Obviously makes everyone better around him," Eichel said of Ennis. "He obviously adds a new dynamic to our team that's good for us."

It's easy to forget Ennis is a three-time 20-goal scorer in this league because Monday was just the 37th game he's played in Bylsma's two years as coach here. He's got quick feet and stupid-good hands, as his lacrosse move with the puck by scooping it on his blade and nearly throwing it behind Lehtonen in the first period showed.

Bylsma loved that one. Said Ennis has been trying it in practice for weeks and never thought he would actually pull it out for a game. The bigger picture is what Bylsma was accurately pondering.

"You hope that's just another arrow in the quiver to have in your team's offense," Bylsma said of Ennis. "And it's one we haven't had most of this year."

You have Eichel, Sam Reinhart, Kane, O'Reilly, Kyle Okposo, Rasmus Ristolainen. This team has to push the envelope more than it has. Especially with Ennis back.

Okposo, a first-year Sabre who watched from afar in Brooklyn and saw what was building here last year, credited the game to the kind of puck management that was absent for the final two periods of Friday's debacle in Carolina.

"We have good forwards and we're developing a lot of depth up front in our lineup," Okposo said. "We're able to play a game like that but structurally we want to be a little more defensive, a little more sound. Once you're down to the nitty gritty, you have to win games and that's what does it."

Perhaps. Still, I think the goal has been to win too many games 2-1 so far. That shouldn't be the way to play when you have high-end draft picks and big-money trade or free agent acquisitions.

Especially when you look at the standings. The Sabres are 8-3-2 against the Western Conference this year and have won five straight here against Western teams. One of their little issues is that 9-14-7 mark against the East and their 4-8-3 disaster in the Atlantic Division.

You can't go to the playoffs with just nine wins in 30 games in your conference. Pick up the pace and go grab some games. Stop looking like the Devils too many nights.

Come Tuesday night in Toronto, what are Auston Matthews and Co. going to try to do against the Sabres? Skate like the wind and run them into the ground. That's how the Sabres should be playing more than we've seen. Like they did much of the time Monday.

More, please.

Sabres Notebook: Ennis returns with feats of skill and creativity

By Amy Moritz
The Buffalo News
January 16, 2017

Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into the game but that wasn't the play everyone was talking about.

No, the play the signaled the true return of Ennis came later in the period, when he was alone behind the Dallas Stars' net, took a stride to his right and attempted to lift the puck into the corner. It's a lacrosse-style move and one that nearly worked. The Buffalo Bandits may want to take note.

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"He's been skating a lot for quite a long time trying to work his way back from this injury," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "And he actually pulls that lacrosse move off quite often. To have enough presence of mind to try to do it in a game when there's grown men out there trying to crush ya, it just shows the comfort level he's at and the ease with which he plays the game. In practice, I've seen him put it right in the top corner a couple times and this one almost went in after a bounce or two. That was just a flash of his skill."

Ennis has speed and skill, but that play highlighted the other part of his game -- his creativity.

"I mean, that's Enzo," said Kyle Okposo who played on the top line with Ennis. "That's just kind of his stuff that he's able to do. He thinks the game a different way. He thinks in a very creative way. Obviously, scoring the goal on the first shift helps his confidence in trying stuff like that. He had some room and it would have been fun to see him pull it off."

"That's the element that he brings, the element of creativity," added Jack Eichel. "He definitely keeps the opposing team on their heels."

Ennis was excited about the first goal, which gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead en route to 4-1 win over the Stars. "I planned it that way," he smiled when asked about scripting his return to the team's lineup after missing 30 games with a groin injury.

But he was also "pretty bummed" about missing the chance on his lacrosse move.

"I think (the puck) rolled off," Ennis said. "I had some room, actually. I think I just had to maybe hang on to it for maybe a split second and it fell off. One day, one of those will go in. I won't try it that often but maybe another time."

The moxie isn't missing from Ennis' game but there's plenty to work on. Ennis played the first 12 games of the season, with one goal and one assist, before suffering the groin injury, which required surgery and two months out of the lineup. His post-game self analysis was that he was still rusty, and needed to work on his speed and his patience.

"There's still an extra step, a little more jump, a little more pop in my skating," Ennis said when asked what was still rusty. "And then just hanging on to it and making plays. Things go quickly out there."

In the first period, Jake McCabe took advantage of a bad clearing attempt by Jamie Benn, who threw the puck down the middle and right onto McCabe's stick. The defenseman buried the shot for his first career power-play goal.

"We've all been there," McCabe said. "I'm sure I've made a pass like that, too. Just lucky enough to capitalize on it and hopefully get the monkey off my back and there's more to come."

Goal scoring, or lack thereof, is the monkey McCabe referred to. That was McCabe's fifth career goal and first since scoring March 29, 2016, in Pittsburgh.

"I was pressing early in the season and stopped worrying about it and concentrated on my defensive play," McCabe said.

Speaking of the bad play by Dallas captain Jamie Benn, the forward had some harsh words for his own play and body language. Just before the end of the second period, Benn was so frustrated he broke a stick over his knee on the ice, then took out two more on the bench.

When asked to assess his game, he responded: "Pretty bad. That's taking it easy on myself, too. I wish I could say how I really feel but it's probably not good for TV."

"I think it's contagious and it runs through the team," Benn said about his play and demeanor. "So I definitely need to do a better job with body language and definitely my play on the ice."

Dallas head coach Lindy Ruff said he has concerns about Benn.

"I do. He's struggled for a period of time," Ruff said. "Obviously, his struggles out there were easy to see. He's fighting through his energy but he's in the lineup so you've just got to assume he's ready to go and I do. I see the frustration. It's hard. ... It almost seemed every time he had the puck, something bad happened."

The Sabres were in dangerous here-we-go-again territory early in the second period when the Dallas Stars scored a goal to tie the game, 2-2. But Bylsma challenged the call for offsides. The review showed that Patrick Eaves was off-side prior to the goal and the tally was taken off the board.

"The good news is our video coach Adam Nightingale immediately called that one in and said it was no goal," Bylmsa said. "I think it brought a breath of fresh air for our team to not have that go in and get back to playing a game which we were playing really well."

Quick hits: Sabres 4, Stars 1

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
January 16, 2017

It didn't take long to see which Sabres team was playing Monday. It was the good one.

Buffalo scored with just 19 seconds off the clock, propelling the home team to a 4-1 victory over Dallas. Buffalo has won three straight in KeyBank Center, with the latest easing the sting of two straight losses on the road.

The Sabres improved to 17-17-9 overall and 8-3-2 against the Western Conference. Jack Eichel scored twice.

Welcome back: Tyler Ennis, who missed 30 games because of sports hernia/groin surgery, needed just 19 seconds to remind fans what he can do. Dallas defenseman John Klingberg twice turned the puck over in his zone, handing it to Ennis. The winger stepped to the right faceoff dot and sent a top-shelf laser past Kari Lehtonen.

Doubling up: The first power-play goal of Jake McCabe's career gave Buffalo a 2-0 lead with 7:26 left in the first. The Sabres again took advantage of Dallas' sloppiness. The Stars' Jamie Benn passed the puck directly to McCabe in the slot, and the defenseman fired high for his first goal in 10 months.

On the board: Despite being outplayed in the opening period, the Stars exited with just a 2-1 deficit. Radek Faksa forced a turnover in the Buffalo zone, then got in the right spot. Jiri Hudler's shot hit the post and bounced off Faksa in the crease with 4:46 left.

Near misses: The Sabres came out flying, taking 13 shots in the first. Lehtonen stopped two point-blank chances by Eichel and heard Ryan O'Reilly hit the post. Buffalo thought it had a goal when Eichel drove to the net to draw a penalty, with Taylor Fedun burying the rebound. But officials denied the goal as Faksa touched the puck before Fedun.

Eichel had five shots and seven attempts in the opening period. After two periods, he had already set a career high with nine shots.

Eichel gets it: The Sabres center deserved to be on the score sheet, and he got there with 7:07 gone in the second. The power play struck again. Lehtonen stopped Rasmus Ristolainen's slap shot and two net-front whacks by Sam Reinhart. Rather than take a third shot, Reinhart pushed the puck to his left. Eichel easily deposited for his ninth of the season.

Eichel scored his 10th into an empty net with 9.3 seconds to play.

Buffalo improved to 6-0-1 this season when Eichel scores.

Coaching win: Dallas appeared to tie the game, 2-2, just 1:38 into the second period. Patrick Eaves cost himself the goal. He tipped home a shot by defenseman Stephen Johns, but the Sabres' Dan Bylsma issued a coach's challenge. Replays showed Eaves was offsides on the scoring play, and the goal was taken off the board.

Goalie win: Buffalo netminder Robin Lehner, who missed three games because of the flu, won his second straight start. He made 31 save to improve to 10-12-5 this season.

Oh, snap: Benn showed his anger in the final minute of the second. First, he snapped a stick over his knee after a whistle. He got more lumber when he got to the bench, and he promptly snapped that one, too.

Brothers in arms: The Sabres recalled center Cal O'Reilly from Rochester prior to the game. He skated in the middle of left wing William Carrier and Matt Moulson. Ryan O'Reilly centered for Ennis and Kyle Okposo. Eichel was between Marcus Foligno and Sam Reinhart. Zemgus Girgensons was in the middle of Evander Kane and Brian Gionta.

Nicolas Deslauriers was the healthy forward scratch.

Counting the house: The Sabres announced a sellout of 19,070 tickets sold for their Martin Luther King Day matinee.

Next: The Sabres boarded the bus following Monday's game and headed across the border to Toronto. They visit Auston Matthews and the Maple Leafs on Tuesday night.

Sabres beat down the Stars 4-1

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 16, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres get two goals from Jack Eichel and bounce back from a two-game losing streak with a 4-1 win over the Dallas Stars at the KeyBank Center. The Sabres now improve to 17-17-9 on the season and will next play on Tuesday night in Toronto against the Maple Leafs.

Scoring:

1-0 Sabres - Tyler Ennis beats Kari Lehtonen blocker side to put the Sabres on the scoreboard first.

2-0 Sabres - Jake McCabe scores on the powerplay after a Stars giveaway.

2-1 Sabres - Radek Faksa (DAL) is credited with a goal after a shot from Jiri Hudler goes off the goal post and re-directs into the net off of Faksa's leg.

3-1 Sabres - Jack Eichel scores on the powerplay to put the Sabres back up by two goals.

4-1 Sabres - Eichel scores his second of the game into the empty net late in the third period.

Game Notes:

Tyler Ennis makes his return to game action after missing the past 30 games after surgery for a mid-body injury. Ennis' first period goal was his first goal since October 25th when the Sabres played the Philadelphia Flyers.

Jake McCabe's goal is his first goal of the season, and his first goal since March 29, 2016 against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Sabres challenge an early goal from the Stars for being offside and Buffalo is successful.

Jack Eichel finished the day with a career-high 10 shots on goal.

1st Period:

Goals:

0:19: 1-0 BUF - Tyler Ennis (2) - Unassisted

12:34: 2-0 BUF - Jake McCabe (1) - Unassisted - PP

15:14: 2-1 BUF - Radek Faksa (6) - Jiri Hudler (4)

Penalties:

7:12: DAL - Brett Ritchie (2 min. - High Sticking)

11:17: DAL - Radek Faksa (2 min. - Hooking)

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 13; DAL - 9

2nd Period:

Goals:

7:07: 3-1 BUF - Jack Eichel (9) - Reinhart (19), Okposo (16) - PP

Penalties:

5:17: DAL - Too many men on the ice (2 min.)

14:33: BUF - Brian Gionta (2 min. - Hooking)

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 8 (21); DAL - 11 (20)

3rd Period:

Goals:

19:50: 4-1 BUF - Jack Eichel (10) - Unassisted

Penalties:

None

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 7 (28) ; DAL - 11 (32)

Goaltending:

BUF: Robin Lehner - 31 saves

DAL: Kari Lehtonen - 25 saves

Power Plays:

BUF - 2 for 3

DAL - 0 for 1

From the locker room: Sabres-Stars

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 16, 2017

Jake McCabe:

"I thought we played a pretty solid 60 minutes. [The Stars] are a team that can score two or three goals in a period no problem. They're a high-flying team that can skate and make plays. I thought we did a good job in the neutral zone containing them and managing the puck and not turning it over to play to their hand of transition. It was a good game, and it was nice to see us get a coach's challenge. We haven't gotten many of them right."

"A win's nice but it's been a rollercoaster ride. It's been up and down and we can't have that anymore. It's great to get wins, but we have to start stringing them here. It's nice to get this one and hopefully there's more to come here."

Tyler Ennis:

"I was pretty rusty to be honest. Warmups you have to get used to everything and the last couple of days I've been making sure I was reading up on the systems and getting used to everything. As soon as the game happens it's a quick game. I was fortunate to get a quick on there."

"I just have to be confident with the puck and make my plays, be creative. When I'm confident that's when I play my best. I got a goal early, but I was still pretty rusty and I can play a lot better."

Jack Eichel:

"[The Stars] are a high-octane team. They push the puck, they play with it, their [defense] likes to get up in the rush and make plays. We knew it would be important to put a lot of pressure on them and try to make it a tough game. We were able to get some odd-man rushes out of it and some quick transitions out of it. That's the way we need to play."

"It seemed like I had a lot of chances in the first [period], and I told myself that if I came out here and shot the puck a lot I think I'd get one. In the past few games I've been trying to be too cute on opportunities that I can fire it. You're not going to score unless you shoot it. I got rewarded with an empty-netter which was nice, and a tap in on a great play from [Sam Reinhart]."

Dan Bylsma:

"I think [Ennis] is getting his feet under him. You see it right off the hop, and it was not the only chance. There was a couple other plays that line made together that they were dangerous on. Could have had another couple goals, opportunities to score anyway. You hope that's just another air in the quiver to have on your team's offense. It's one we haven't had for most of this year."

"We're just trying to win every hockey game we can right now. Coming in form of a back-to-back here I think it was a test against a Dallas team with the way they play and how dangerous they are. It was a big test for us."

Sabres jump out to early lead, beat Stars

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 16, 2017

BUFFALO – Tyler Ennis' slick return to the Sabres will rightfully grab most of the attention from Monday afternoon's 4-1 win against the Dallas Stars.

The veteran scored 19 seconds into the Sabres' third straight win at KeyBank Center, then followed up later in the period by nearly scoring a crazy lacrosse-style goal.

But contributions throughout the lineup helped them end a two-game losing streak that was magnified by Friday's wretched 5-2 loss in Carolina.

The Sabres, a low-scoring team that often sits back, scored four goals for the fourth time in seven contests.

Center Jack Eichel scored twice, his ninth and 10th goals, ending a four-game drought. Defenseman Jake McCabe scored his first goal this season – "Got the monkey off my back," he said – and just the fifth of his career. Goalie Robin Lehner quietly made 31 saves.

"A win's nice, but it's been a roller coaster," McCabe said. "It's been up and down and we can't have that anymore. It's great to get wins, but we've got to start stringing them together."

Against the potent Stars, the Sabres dictated the pace before the capacity crowd of 19,070 fans.

"They're a high-octane team," Eichel said. "They push the puck, they play with it, the D like to get up in the rush and make plays. We knew it'd be important to put a lot of pressure on them and try to make it a tough game."

The Sabres made it tough early. Following Ennis' goal, McCabe intercepted Jamie Benn's clearing pass in the slot and scored on the power play at 12:34.

Radek Faksa cut it to 2-1 before the period ended. Dallas appeared to tie it early in the second period, but the Sabres challenged if the Stars were offside, and the goal was disallowed.

"Kind of a breath of fresh air to not have that go in and get back to playing a game we were playing really well in," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

The Sabres cruised from there. Eichel, who narrowly missed two earlier chances, scored late in the period, completing what Bylsma said was the team's best power play all season. Eichel, who had a career-high nine shots on goal, later sealed the game with an empty-net breakaway.

"It seemed like I had a lot of chances in the first," Eichel said. "I told myself if I came out here and shot the puck a lot I think I'd get one. I think in the past few games I was just trying to be a bit too cute ... and you're not going to score unless you shoot it."

By the end of the second period, Benn, one of the NHL's top talents and Dallas' captain, lost his cool, first smashing a stick on the ice, then breaking two more Bo Jackson-style across his leg on the bench.

"Pretty bad," Benn said about his play. "That's taking it easy on myself, too. I wish I could say how I really feel but it's probably not good for TV."

The Sabres, who often struggle to close out games, gave the Stars little during the third period.

"I just think we definitely managed the puck a little bit better for a full 60," Sabres winger Kyle Okposo said. "We really limited our mistakes, and when we made mistakes, it seemed like guys were covering up for other guys. We just always had guys thinking defensively."

They'll have to do that again in tonight's road tilt against the upstart Toronto Maple Leafs.

The game should mark the first-ever NHL meeting between young American stars Eichel, 20, and Leafs rookie Auston Matthews, 19, one of the league's top talents just 41 games into his career.

The Arizona-raised Matthews has 21 goals and 37 points, slick numbers that tie him with Winnipeg's Patrik Laine for the rookie lead.

The Leafs, the league's worst team last season, have won eight out of the last 10 games, vaulting up to a playoff spot.

"It's a good test for us," Eichel said. "Toronto's been really hot lately. We've just got to go up there and play some of the way we did (Monday)."

Late turnovers, penalties lead to shootout loss

By Jourdon LaBarber

Associated Press

January 16, 2017

BUFFALO – In Monday afternoon’s warm-ups, Sabres winger Tyler Ennis said he felt “rusty.” Sitting out 30 straight games following groin surgery, of course, will do that.

So the team’s longest-tenured player could’ve been forgiven if he didn’t showcase some of his usual creativity and speed for a period or two against the Dallas Stars.

Then on Ennis’ first shift since Nov. 7, he pounced on John Klingberg’s errant pass, skated a few strides into the right circle and wired a shot high into the far corner by goalie Kari Lehtonen.

Just 19 seconds had elapsed into the Sabres’ 4-1 win inside KeyBank Center.

“That’s how I planned it, so that was nice,” a smiling Ennis said told a throng of reporters. “That was a good feeling when that went in.”

Ennis, however, wasn’t done utilizing his slick skill set.

With about three minutes left in the first period, he grabbed the puck behind the net and had time and space. Ennis then lifted the puck onto his backhand, raised his stick to the crossbar and quickly tried tuck it in like a lacrosse shot.

The puck fell off, but Ennis appeared to have a stunned Lehtonen beaten.

“I wish that went in,” Ennis said. “I had some room. Pretty frustrated, but maybe one day one of those will go in.”

The move – Michigan’s Mike Legg made it famous by scoring with it in 1996 – shocked Ennis’ teammates on the bench, Sabres center Jack Eichel said.

“We didn’t see it, notice it, at first and we were kind of looking around, ‘Did he really try to do that?’” Eichel said. “He said he kind of just blacked out and tried it. But that’s the element that he brings, that element of creativity and he keeps the opposing team on their heels.”

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said: “That was just kind of a revelation, a flash of his skill.”

It also showed how quickly Ennis generated some confidence in just his 36th game since the start of 2015-16, a season that ended early because of a concussion.

“To have enough presence of mind to try it in a game when there’s grown men out there trying to crush you, just shows you kind of where the comfort level he’s at,” Bylsma said.

Bylsma and Ennis, 27, said the move often works in practice. Ennis said Florida goalie Roberto Luongo stopped his only other attempt at scoring a lacrosse-style goal.

“Third time’s the charm, hopefully,” Ennis said.

Ennis skated 12 minutes, 52 seconds in his 13th game this season, mostly beside center Ryan O’Reilly and Kyle Okposo.

Ennis, a three-time 20-goal scorer, only has two goals this season.

“I just got to be confident with the puck and make my plays, be creative,” he said. “When I’m confident, that’s when I play my best. I got a goal early, but I was still pretty rusty. I can play a lot better.”

Ennis said his energy held up.

"My wind was good," Ennis said. "Energy-wise, I felt really good. I just got to get back in the flow of things."

xxx

With no fourth-line center on the roster, the Sabres recalled center Cal O'Reilly on Monday morning. O'Reilly, 30, has eight goals and 34 points in 34 AHL games with the Americans this season. He played four NHL games earlier this season, scoring the shootout winner in the Sabres' 2-1 win Nov. 19 against Pittsburgh.

"A guy who can step in and play up and down the lineup, can play the power play, solid centerman in the middle of the ice, can take draws," Bylsma said of O'Reilly. "It's good to have."

To make room for O'Reilly, the Sabres scratched winger Nick Deslauriers, who had played nine straight games.

xxx

Sabres center Sam Reinhart registered his 19th assist on Eichel's first goal against the Stars, equaling his assist total from last season in 36 fewer games.

Reinhart has three goals and 13 points in the last 13 contests.

xxx

Despite a shaky outing in Friday's 5-2 loss in Carolina, Sabres goalie Anders Nilsson still has some strong overall numbers – 7-5-4 with a 2.58 goals-against average and a .924 save percentage – in 16 games. But Nilsson's home and road statistics vary wildly. On the road, he's just 2-4-3 with a 3.17 and a .903 in nine outings. At home, however, he's 5-1-1 with a 1.84 and a .947 in seven games.

Those numbers might mean goalie Robin Lehner will start again in tonight's road tilt against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

xxx

Stars coach Lindy Ruff, who led the Sabres from 1997 until 2013, on returning to Buffalo for the fourth time: "It's still special, but we're years away from it now."

5 Observations: Ennis, Sabres top Stars 4-1

By Matt Bove

WKBW

January 16, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - During the third period, a sold out KeyBank Center crowd started a good old fashioned wave -- and while I'm not a fan, I get why they did it. On Monday Buffalo Sabres fans had a lot to be happy about with the home team knocking off the Dallas Stars 4-1.

Five observations from Monday's win:

Oh hey Tyler Ennis

It took Tyler Ennis 19 seconds to have his presence felt.

What an absolute snipe....

Ennis has been sidelined for more than two months after undergoing groin surgery in November. Before getting hurt Ennis played in 12 games with a goal and an assist.

During that stretch, there was no denying that the 26-year-old struggled — but you have to wonder if he was playing with an injury. Before the season expectations for Ennis were high after a 2015-2016 season plagued with injuries but obviously, the injuries woes trickled into this season.

His return provides a spark offensively and adds some much-needed depth to the Sabres lineup and that was very apparent on Monday. Pairing Ennis with Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo should help Ennis in his own end, which has been his bugaboo in the past.

Also, this was the most amazing thing that's happened in the history of mankind.

How much better does the Sabres lineup look with a William Carrier — Cal O'Reilly — Matt Moulson fourth line? I'm a big fan of a team having the ability to roll four lines and not pay the price offensively. The aforementioned trio isn't an explosive offensive group but they are by no means incompetent.

In the first half of the year, it was easy to forget about the injuries or use them as an excuse. We're now starting to see what the lineup was supposed to look like, at least in theory.

What power play struggles?

You know what's the best way to spark a power play unit? Face-off against an abysmal penalty-kill unit and below average goaltender.

On Monday afternoon the Sabres took advantage of the Stars problems — converting on two of their three power plays with goals from Jake McCabe (we'll get back to this) and Jack Eichel. Both the first and second unit showed some nice pressure and ability to cycle the puck, so at the very least it's a step in the right direction.

Ask and you shall receive

Get this (I apologize to those of you who read Friday's observations) before Monday the Sabres had four goals from defensemen this season. 41 NHL defensemen currently have more than four goals — so the entire Sabres defensive core was being outscored by 41 dudes.

That can't happen.

But on Monday everything changed because A DEFENSEMEN SCORED A GOAL! It was like a scene out of a movie or any other NHL hockey game — Jake McCabe got the puck and his shot went into the net and the fans went wild.

Crazy, right?

Math tells us that the Sabres now have five goals from defenders (Ristolainen 3, Franson 1, McCabe 1) in 43 games. That's still brutal and is something that will need to change for the Sabres moving forward. You can't rely on defensemen to score every game — but every once in a while (like today) is surely a big help.

Keep it going

This is how 2017 has gone thus far

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Pretty streaky if you ask me. Yes, there's still plenty of games left to be played but the Sabres need to go on a run.

Tomorrow they have an opportunity to knock off the Toronto Maple Leafs, a rival who they happen to be chasing in the standings. If the Sabres have any chance of making the playoffs they'll need to string together some wins ASAP.

Ennis scores 19 seconds into return, sparks Sabres win

By Nick Wojton

The Daily News

January 16, 2017

BUFFALO – The Buffalo Sabres are in need of a quick turnaround this season.

How about 19 seconds fast?

Tyler Ennis missed nearly two months because of a groin injury and while struggling off the ice with the injury, the 26-year-old struggled on the ice during the first 12 games of the season prior to being injured, recording only a goal and an assist in that time.

It took only 19 seconds into his return on Monday against the Dallas Stars at KeyBank Center to reach the same goal total he put together in 12 games earlier this season as the winger intercepted a John Klingberg pass up the boards and from the top of the circle Ennis stepped in and fired a high shot past Kari Lehtonen (25 saves).

"Yeah that's how I planned it," Ennis said of his quick start.

But the play didn't go as expected and came as quite the surprise to Ennis, who said he felt rusty in warm ups.

"I saw Ryan (O'Reilly) going backdoor, I wanted to pass it to him but he got taken away," Ennis said. "It was a good feeling when it went in."

As the game continued, Ennis then tried a nifty move behind the Dallas net, when he lifted the puck off the ice with his stick, balancing the puck on the blade, and tried wrapping it in over Lehtonen's shoulder in a lacrosse-type effort.

The opening was there, but the puck fell off the end of Ennis' stick just at the last second.

"I wish that one went in. I had some room," Ennis said. "Maybe one day."

Jack Eichel, who had two goals (empty net) in the game wasn't on the same line as Ennis in the contest, said the team on the bench was just surprised with the attempt as the fans in the crowd.

"Did he really try that?" Eichel said of the bench's reaction.

Despite the surprise, Buffalo head coach Dan Bylsma wasn't all mad by the attempt.

"(Ennis) pulls off that lacrosse move often. To have the prescience of mind to do it in a game, shows where his comfort level is at," Bylsma said.

Ennis' return could be a spark Buffalo needs to turn around their season as they pass the midway point of the 2016-17 year.

Currently in seventh-place in the Atlantic Division, the Sabres sit five points behind the Toronto Maple Leafs for the the third and final playoff position from the division. Buffalo (17-17-9) visits Toronto (20-13-8) on Tuesday evening.

Along with a goal from Ennis and two from Eichel, Jake McCabe netted a goal on the power play.

Radek Faksa scored for Dallas at the end of the first period to make it a 2-1 game.

Robin Lehner made 31 saves in the net for the Sabres.

Tyler Ennis sparks Sabres to win against Stars

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

January 16, 2017

BUFFALO -- Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into his return to the lineup and Jack Eichel scored two goals to help the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-1 win against the Dallas Stars at KeyBank Center on Monday.

Ennis missed the past 30 games after groin surgery on Nov. 10 and gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead. He skated up the right wing and took a shot from the faceoff circle that beat Stars goalie Kari Lehtonen over his right shoulder for his second goal of the season.

"It felt great," Ennis said. "I was pretty rusty, to be honest. Warm-ups, you got to get used to everything. Last couple days, I was reading up on the systems and making sure I got used to everything... I saw Ryan [O'Reilly] going backdoor. I eventually wanted to pass to him. He kind of got taken away. ... [I] tried to go top blocker."

Eichel gave the Sabres a 3-1 lead 7:07 into the second period when he scored on a rebound of a shot in front by Sam Reinhart that beat Lehtonen. Reinhart has three goals and 10 assists in his past 13 games.

Eichel added an empty-net goal with 10 seconds left in the third for his 10th goal. He also had an NHL career-high 10 shots on goal.

"I told myself if I came out here and shot the puck a lot I think I'd get one," Eichel said. "I think in the past few games I was just trying to [be] too cute and [get] opportunities that I can fire it and you're not going to score unless you shoot it. I get rewarded with an empty-netter, which is kind of nice, and a tap in on a great play from [Reinhart]."

The Sabres (17-17-9) won for the first time in three games. The Stars (18-19-8) have lost two straight and six of their past eight games (2-5-1).

Jake McCabe's power-play goal made it 2-0 with 7:26 left in the first period. McCabe picked up a turnover by Stars forward Jamie Benn in the high slot and beat Lehtonen high to the right corner for his first goal of the season.

Stars forward Radek Faksa cut the lead to 2-1 with 4:46 left in the first. Forward Jiri Hudler's shot went off the post and the puck bounced off Faksa and past Sabres goalie Robin Lehner for his sixth goal of the season.

The Stars appeared to tie it 1:38 into the second when a shot by defenseman Stephen Johns deflected past Lehner but Sabres coach Dan Bylsma challenged the play was offside. After review, it was found Stars forward Patrick Eaves was in the zone ahead of the play and nullified the goal.

"I think it's just bearing down and making the right plays," Benn said. "We're all good players in here and can make plays. It's just up to us mentally to make those plays and make the right ones."

Goal of the game

Ennis' goal was a perfectly placed shot over Lehtonen's blocker.

Save of the game

Lehner made 31 saves and helped keep the Stars from getting back into it with a clean save against defenseman Esa Lindell with 7:51 left in the third.

Highlight of the game

Ennis also nearly scored on a lacrosse-style goal from behind the net with the puck on the blade of his stick with just over 3:00 left to go in the first period, but the puck rolled off at the last second.

Unsung performance of the game

Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen had a game-high 26:33 of ice time and five blocked shots. He also helped set up Eichel's first goal.

They said it

"[Ennis] has been skating a lot for quite a long time trying to work his way back from this injury. He pulls that lacrosse move off quite often [in practice]. To have enough presence of mind to try it in a game when there's grown men out there trying to crush you just shows you kind of where the comfort level he's at." -- Sabres coach Dan Bylsma

"I think we were a little bit stunned on the bench. We didn't notice it at first and we were kind of looking around, 'Did he really try to do that?' [Ennis] said he kind of just blacked out and tried it. But that's the element that he brings; that element of creativity and he keeps the opposing team on their heels." -- Sabres center Jack Eichel

"He's struggled for a period of time. Obviously his struggles out there were easy to see. He's fighting through his energy, but he's in the lineup so you've just got to assume he's ready to go and I do. I see the frustration. It's hard. I actually had to bump him down and see if we could free the other guys up a little bit. It's been a tough year for him." -- Stars coach Lindy Ruff on captain Jamie Benn

Need to know

The Sabres are 8-3-2 against the Western Conference this season. ... Reinhart matched his assist total from last season (19) with his assist on Eichel's goal.

What's next

Stars: At the New York Rangers on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; SN, SN1, TVA Sports, MSG, FS-SW+, NHL.TV)

Sabres: At the Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET; SNO, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Tyler Ennis nearly pulls off lacrosse move for Sabres

NHL.com

January 16, 2017

Tyler Ennis scored 19 seconds into his return to the Buffalo Sabres lineup Monday, but it was the goal he didn't score that people will be talking about.

Ennis picked up the puck lacrosse-style from behind the goal and nearly beat Dallas Stars goalie Kari Lehtonen during the first period in Buffalo.

"I wish that went in. I had some room. Pretty frustrated, but maybe one day one of those will go in," Ennis said. "I practice it all the time and it works. Sometimes in practices and warm-ups I'm always kind of flicking pucks around with my stick and having fun with it. I tried it another time against Florida and Luongo stopped it so, third time's the charm, hopefully."

Ennis had missed Buffalo's previous 30 games while nursing a sports-hernia injury. He must have been practicing his trick shots while out of the lineup.

"I think we were a little bit stunned on the bench. We didn't see it, notice it, at first and we were kind of looking around, 'Did he really try to do that?'" Sabres teammate Jack Eichel said. "He said he kind of just blacked out and tried it. But that's the element that he brings; that element of creativity and he keeps the opposing team on their heels."

"He pulls that lacrosse move off quite often (in practice)," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "To have enough presence of mind to try it in a game when there's grown men out there trying to crush you, just shows you kind of where the comfort level he's at."

Ennis' off-beat shot attempt harkens memories of Mike Legg's lacrosse-style goal for the University of Michigan against Minnesota in the 1996 NCAA West Regional Final, perhaps the greatest such goal of all-time.

Legg pulled that move again and scored from center ice when Michigan celebrated the 20th anniversary of its national-championship team in October.

Eichel, Ennis power Sabres to win over Stars

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

January 16, 2017

Jack Eichel felt he had been trying to do a bit too much with his scoring opportunities as of late, so he came into the Buffalo Sabres' matchup with Dallas Stars on Monday afternoon with a simple mindset: shoot the puck.

It paid off. Eichel took 13 shot attempts, including a career-high 10 shots on goal, and scored twice in Buffalo's 4-1 win over Dallas. It was a good all-around game for the Sabres, one that featured a dramatic return for Tyler Ennis and a 60-minute performance in which the Sabres stuck to their game plan to stymie a fast Stars offense.

But the story begins with Eichel, whose performance was an ideal example of the many ways he can impact a game. He'd already taken seven shots by the time he scored to extend Buffalo's lead to 3-1 on the power play in the second period, and he was rewarded again when he outraced the pack to score an empty-net goal in the waning seconds of the game. The goal was his 10th of the season.

"I told myself if I came out here and shot the puck a lot, I think I'd get one," he said.

"I think in the past few games, [I was] just trying to be a little too cute on opportunities I can fire it and you're not going to score unless you shoot it."

It wasn't only shooting and scoring where Eichel excelled on Tuesday. He put his speed on display at several points of the game, including once on a drive through the neutral zone and to the net in the first period that drew a hooking call against the Stars' Radek Faksa. It was on that power play when Jake McCabe scored Buffalo's second goal, his first of the season.

Eichel was also reliable in the faceoff circle, where he won a career-high 13 draws in 19 attempts.

He was noticeably comfortable having been reunited with Sam Reinhart as his linemate. Reinhart had a memorable game himself, setting up a number of chances throughout the night with passes through traffic in the offensive zone. He earned the primary assist on Eichel's power-play goal, twice jamming the puck off the pad of Dallas goalie Kari Lehtonen before sliding the puck across the crease to Eichel.

That assist was Reinhart's 19th in 43 games this season, already matching his rookie total from all of 2015-16.

"Obviously I think he's taken that next step just with his confidence playing with the puck," Eichel said. "He's been a lot more physical I think, not as much without the puck but with it, just making it harder on the opposing team to take it away from him. He makes a great play on that goal and he's able to just push it over to me for an empty net."

As a team, Eichel felt the Sabres corrected most of the areas that had plagued them in losses at Tampa Bay and Carolina. Buffalo went 2-for-3 on the power play - which coach Dan Bylsma said might have been their best performance of the season - 1-on-1 on the penalty kill and, perhaps most importantly, they were able to protect their lead after scoring first.

The Sabres knew Dallas thrived off speed and a tendency to make long plays up the ice, so they focused on sustaining pressure in the offensive zone to force turnovers when the Stars tried to be aggressive. It worked right away, with a strong forecheck by Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo leading to a goal for Ennis 19 seconds into the game (more on that below).

Dallas only bested the Sabres once, when a takeaway at the blue line turned into a goal for Faksa with 4:46 remaining in the first period. Patrick Eaves did appear to tie the game in the second period, but his goal was called back after a successful coach's challenge for an off side entry.

Robin Lehner was sharp in his return from a three-game absence due to the flu, stopping 31 shots.

The win snapped a two-game losing streak for the Sabres, but it wasn't quite enough to satisfy Eichel.

"It's a good team win," Eichel said. "We just need to build off of it. It needs to happen again tomorrow night."

Ennis scores in return

Perhaps even more amazing than the fact that Ennis scored 19 seconds into his return from a 30-game absence is the fact that he nearly made an even more memorable play in the second period. It was the type of creativity that those who have followed Ennis' career have become accustomed to: he carried the puck behind the net, lifted it into the air on his backhand and attempted to flip it into the corner of the net from behind.

Eichel said the players on the bench didn't immediately realize what Ennis had attempted to do. When they did, he said, Ennis simply told them he "blacked out and tried it."

"He's been skating a lot for quite a long time trying to work his way back from his injury, and he has tried, he actually pulls that lacrosse move off quite often," Bylsma said. "To have the presence of mind to try and do that in a game where there was grown men out there trying to crush you, it just shows kind of where the comfort level he's at, the ease he's at."

Ennis said in recent days that he's at his best when he's playing with confidence, a point he reiterated after the game on Monday. To that end, his early goal certainly couldn't have hurt. Okposo picked up the puck in the offensive zone off of a Stars turnover and quickly passed back to Ennis, who skated alone down the right wing. Ennis initially looked to feed O'Reilly, but instead shot to the far side and scored.

Seeing Ennis smile after that goal was a welcome sight for his teammates. He's been out since undergoing groin surgery on Nov. 10 after being limited to just 23 games last season due to multiple injuries, including a season-ending concussion.

"I think he's just getting his feet underneath him, really, too," Bylsma said. "But you see it right off the hop, and that was not the only [time]. There was a couple other plays that that line made together that they were dangerous on. They could've had another goals, opportunities to score anyways. You hope that's just another air in the quiver to have in your team's offense."

Ennis concurred that there's another level of "pop" his skating can still reach, and admitted he felt a bit rusty of to begin the game. But the goal he scored was a good start, and the one he didn't, well, trying again will give him something to look forward to.

"I wish that one went in," Ennis said. "I had some room so, pretty frustrated, but maybe one day one will go in."

Up next

The Sabres will conclude yet another back-to-back set when they meet the Toronto Maple Leafs at Air Canada Centre on Tuesday night. It will be the second of five meetings between the two teams this season, with Toronto having won the first game in Buffalo 2-1 on Nov. 3.

"It's a good test for us. Toronto's been, obviously, really hot lately," Eichel said. "We've just got to go up there and play similar to the way we did tonight and we should be successful."

Coverage on Tuesday begins at 7 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 Maple Leafs at 7:30.