



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Kane proving he can score in different ways for the Sabres

By Amy Moritz
The Buffalo News
January 30, 2017

MONTREAL -- Mention to Evander Kane that he's scoring more goals around the net, he smiles and shrugs his shoulders.

Going to the net is nothing new for the forward. But the clip at which he's been scoring for the Buffalo Sabres certainly is.

Kane has 14 goals in his last 25 games, making him the most productive Sabre since Dec. 3.

"I mean, I've always gone to the net so I can't really say it's something new," Kane said Monday afternoon in Bell Centre as the team held its first practice after the NHL All-Star break. The Sabres face the Montreal Canadiens Tuesday night. "I think I can score goals in a lot of different ways – going to the net, using my shot, finishing plays in tight. I am just playing right now the way I know I'm capable of playing. I've done it before. I kind of went through an injury couple of years. If I can stay healthy and continue to feel good with my body, I feel like I can do this at a consistent rate."

That consistency rate is what's turning heads.

Kane was goalless through the his first 12 games of the season, which included 11 games after suffering four cracked ribs in the season opener.

It took Kane some time to find his offensive groove, but he has. And he's done it at even strength. Kane leads the team with 13 even-strength goals.

Some more streak numbers:

- Kane has nine points (five goals, four assists) in his last nine games.
- Kane has points in his last three games (two goals, four assists).
- In the period since scoring his first goal of the season on Dec. 3 against Boston, he is tied for fourth among all NHL skaters in goals (14) and leads the league in even-strength goals (13).

The Sabres last game in Dallas provides a good example of what Kane has been able to do offensively. His first goal was a product of using his speed along the wing to beat the defense down the ice, charge to the net with the puck and use his shot to score. His second goal was a shot from the blue line, using linemate Brian Gionta as a screen.

"You look at his goal against Dallas when he's a straight line like that, moving his feet up and down the wing, he's a tough guy to stop," Gionta said of Kane's first goal. "Those are the assets that we have to kind of highlight for him."

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said that in the last scoring streak for Kane he has seen "a speed game, a powerful game, a power-forward type of game from Evander. One of the things and one of the reasons why he's scoring at a high clip here at even strength is that he's gotten them around the net. It's not just the great shot that he does have. He's gotten them in and around the cage. ... He's gotten pucks by going to the cage, getting rebounds in that area and it's tough to do, it's tough to score five-on-five in this league."

And here's the other interesting Evander Kane scoring fact: His shooting percentage is at a career-best 11.5 percent for the season, 15.1 percent in the last 25 games.

His best shooting percentage for a season was 2011-12 when he recorded a 10.5 percentage with 30 goals. Meanwhile last in Buffalo he shot 7.4 percent with 20 goals in 65 games.

For Kane, the statistic can be read many different ways, but at heart it shows what he needs to do to be successful, and what he's never really shy about -- shooting the puck. In his last nine games he's averaging 4.6 shots a game including a season-high eight against Nashville on Jan. 24.

"It's kind of like plus-minus in a way," Kane said when asked about his shooting percentage stat. "You can step on the ice, take three strides and be a minus on that shift. So it's kind of all relative but I look at my first four games and how many shots I had and it wasn't up to the level that I've had through times when I've scored consistently. I feel like the last 25 games I've been having three, four, five, six, seven, eight shots a game. That means I'm getting opportunities. That means I'm playing the way I need to play and if I get six or seven shots a game, the odds of me scoring a goal, I like my chances. That's kind of my mindset."

Sabres Notebook: Refreshed and ready for final regular-season push

By Amy Moritz
The Buffalo News
January 30, 2017

MONTREAL -- If the Buffalo Sabres had a bad taste in their mouths from the way the last game in Dallas ended, well, it wasn't showing on the ice at Bell Centre late Monday afternoon.

The team practiced in Montreal in advance of Tuesday's game here against the Canadiens.

When last we saw the Sabres, they had three goal reviews go against them in Dallas in a 4-3 loss to the Stars. It halted a three-game winning streak for a Buffalo team which still views the playoffs as a possibility. And the locker room was not happy.

A few days away from each other and the rink rid the Sabres of the bad mojo. They were energetic on and off the ice, refreshed for the final 35 game push.

"For me it's a nice break mentally more than anything just to get away from the rink," Evander Kane said. "When you come to the rink and you haven't been there in a while, especially on game days, it's a little more exciting if you're more fresh. I think it's a positive especially through a long, strenuous season to have those little breaks."

"Guys are able to get away from the rink, get your mind off of it and you get a little excited to come back and start playing again," said Jack Eichel who went home to Boston. "You look forward to it. You miss these guys. You miss being in the room, even just being away for a few days. You're here every day for so long that it feels a little bit weird. It's just nice to be back in the locker room and seeing all these faces every day and playing hockey. Back on the ice. You can't complain. You know we're in Montreal with a big game."

The Sabres have 49 points -- seven behind Philadelphia for the final Wild Card spot in the Eastern Conference, and seven points behind Boston for the third and final playoff spot in the Atlantic Division.

Montreal, meanwhile, leads the Atlantic with 65 points.

The jovial nature of practice was most evident when Sabres goaltending coach Andrew Allen made a save and was greeted with cheers and stick taps.

Allen was the second goalie in practice along with Robin Lehner. Anders Nilsson was missing from practice, but coach Dan Bylsma expects him back for Tuesday's game.

"Anders had some things to attend to back in Sweden and his flight should be getting in about right now," Bylsma said about 5 p.m. Monday. He also noted that Nilsson's was an excused absence.

Also missing was forward Kyle Okposo after playing in the NHL All-Star Game in Los Angeles. He will be in Tuesday's lineup.

As for injury updates on Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) Bylsma said "progressing and getting better. Both those guys are moving in the right direction. Not a particular day or date to say there's an end for them but both are doing better and improving and we'll know more by Wednesday or Thursday on both of the guys."

The Sabres announced a partnership with Bald for Bucks and Roswell Park Cancer Institute for February to raise money for cancer research and patient-care programs. Limited-edition t-shirts will be available for donors who contribute \$50. They will also have a chance to win autographed merchandise, tickets to Sabres games and meet-and-greet opportunities. Donations can be made online at Sabres.com/BaldForBucks or during home games at KeyBank Center in February. All money raised stays in Western New York.

Sabres emerge from break focused on playoffs

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 30, 2017

In eight years in the NHL, Buffalo Sabres winger Evander Kane said he has never seen the standings so crunched barely halfway through the season.

Following the three-day NHL All-Star break, the Sabres start the stretch run tonight at the Montreal Canadiens in seventh place, tied with the Detroit Red Wings for the fewest points in the Atlantic Division and Eastern Conference.

Still, with 49 points through 48 games, the Sabres, who have three contests in hand, trail the third-place Boston Bruins by seven points for the division's final playoff spot. Meanwhile, with one game in hand, the Sabres trail the Philadelphia Flyers by seven points for the last wild card spot.

"You win another three games in a row, you're probably sitting in the playoffs right now," Kane told reporters Monday after the Sabres practiced at the Bell Centre in Montreal.

The odds, of course, are still slim – sportclubstats.com pegs them at just 10.1 percent – the Sabres will roar up the standings and grab a playoff spot. But thanks to a 7-4-1 January, their most successful month this season, the Sabres have stayed in the mix.

"We've put ourselves in a position to do something after losing a lot of games that we needed," Sabres center Jack Eichel said. "We're still in a position to make a run. We just need to be rattling off wins here. We can't lose two in a row here."

Realistically, the Sabres must earn about 96 points or so to secure a playoff spot. Remember, they haven't won more than three straight games all season.

"We know we need to be on a 60-percent (point pace) from here the rest of the way out," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

But why might an unlikely run be doable? For the past four weeks, the Sabres, who have scored 3.3 goals a game this month, have been led by their biggest stars.

Kane has six goals in 12 games this month and 14 goals in his last 25 outings. Eichel, who scored the overtime winner in last Tuesday's 5-4 come-from-behind triumph in Nashville, has six goals and nine points. Top center Ryan O'Reilly has two goals and 11 points in 11 games. Winger Sam Reinhart has nine points. Ace defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has cracked the 28-minute mark six times this month.

"Part of the success we've had in the last 15 games has been our best players stepping up, really taking control of our team, taking control of our game," Bylsma said. "You've seen that from Ryan. You've seen that from Jack. You've seen that from Evander."

"Going forward, if we're going to be a successful team, it's going to be those guys pulling the weight."

Eichel has pulled the most weight. Since returning from a high left ankle sprain Nov. 29, the second-year star has transformed Buffalo's offense from one of the NHL's worst into one of its most potent. The Sabres have scored 79 goals in 27 games with Eichel, giving them the league's 11th-best offense in that span.

"(There's) an increase in the goal output, but also I think we've been a harder team to play against and been able to play with good teams the way we want to play, which is in the offensive zone and playing that direction and playing that hard," Bylsma said. "We've scored more goals as a result of it, seen us come back in games."

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Winger Kyle Okposo, the Sabres' lone NHL All-Star, was excused from Monday's practice as he traveled back from Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, backup goalie Anders Nilsson missed the session because he returned home to Sweden during the break for personal reasons, Bylsma said. He was expected back later Monday.

Bylsma also said injured defensemen Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) are "doing better" and the team will know more later in the week.

Canadiens appear healthier going into game vs. Sabres

The Associated Press

January 30, 2017

MONTREAL -- A new week kicked off with some good news for the Montreal Canadiens.

As the team reconvened Monday afternoon after the NHL's All-Star break, its once overflowing clinic was suddenly a little emptier, with David Desharnais (knee), Greg Pateryn (ankle) and Andrei Markov (groin) all full participants in a regular team practice.

All sidelined since early to mid-December, anywhere from one to all three could be good to go when the Canadiens host the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday night at the Bell Centre.

Desharnais appeared to be the closest to a return, skating on the team's third line with Sven Andrighetto and Andrew Shaw at practice.

"Having two or three extra days off before coming back definitely helps when coming back from an injury," he said. "I feel ready. I'll let (the medical staff) know that and it'll be their decision."

With Markov and Pateryn inching closer to returns and the acquisition of Nikita Nesterov from the Tampa Bay Lightning, things are getting crowded on the Canadiens' once-battered blue line.

Nesterov will make his Montreal debut against the Sabres; Zach Redmond was placed on waivers Monday to make room for him on the roster.

"He gives us a little more depth, which is important," Canadiens coach Michel Therrien said. "Especially with all the guys we have coming back, he'll up the level of internal competition and coaches always love that."

The reinforcements will come at a good time for Montreal (29-14-7), which has alternated wins and losses for the better part of January. And while the team remains atop the Atlantic Division with 65 points, the Ottawa Senators are putting the heat on, sitting seven points back with three games in hand.

Alex Galchenyuk, who has been out since regravating a knee injury in the last meeting against Buffalo on Jan. 21, will be out until at least the weekend.

The Sabres overcame a third-period deficit to secure an overtime win over Montreal in that last meeting, one of three straight overtime victories for Buffalo (20-19-9) before falling to the Dallas Stars in their final game before the break.

Three goal reviews went against the Sabres in that game, which left a bitter taste in their mouths. But after the three-day break, the team was ready to get going again after a practice in Montreal.

"For me, it's a nice break mentally more than anything just to get away from the rink," Evander Kane told The Buffalo News. "When you come to the rink and you haven't been there in a while, especially on game days, it's a little more exciting if you're more fresh. I think it's a positive especially through a long, strenuous season to have those little breaks."

Kane has been one of the hottest Sabres of late, recording nine points (five goals, four assists) in his last nine games. His 14 goals this season are second on the team to only Kyle Okposo. Thirteen of those have come at even strength to lead all Sabres.

"A speed game, a powerful game, a power-forward type of game from Evander," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma told The Buffalo News when asked what he has seen from Kane during his successful stretch. "One of the things and one of the reasons why he's scoring at a high clip here at even strength is that he's gotten them around the net."

"It's not just the great shot that he does have. ... He's gotten pucks by going to the cage, getting rebounds in that area, and it's tough to do, it's tough to score five-on-five in this league."

Kane is finding his game at a good time for a playoff-hopeful Sabres squad.

Buffalo, at 49 points, sits seven points back of both the second wild-card spot -- held by the Philadelphia Flyers, with five teams in between -- and third place in the Atlantic Division, currently held by the Boston Bruins.

Carey Price, fresh off his appearance as Atlantic Division captain in the All-Star Game, will get the start for Montreal. Robin Lehner is expected to get the nod for Buffalo.

The two goaltenders matched highlight-reel saves in their last meeting.

Sabres' Ennis still working to get to full speed

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 30, 2017

Montreal, QC (WGR 550) -- Tyler Ennis has only been able to score one goal since returning from groin surgery five games ago. If you watch Ennis skate, you can tell it's still bothering him as he's not up to his speed. Dan Bylsma said, "It's still a process for Tyler getting back in and getting back up to speed. A huge part of his game is his skating, his agility and his acceleration and he's still working to gain that."

"It's going to be a process for him in doing so the next couple of weeks and I think you've seen that jumping into that line and has shown spurts of excitement and what he can do in the offensive zone, but we've also seen that he's still not up to 100 percent with his skating and that will be a process for him."

Ennis played with the injury before surgery and has just two goals in 17 games. The winger said, "Personally I've got to get going a little bit, I've got to play a little better, I've got to contribute."

Ennis has said all along that he's not at 100 percent yet. He knows that part of it isn't going to happen overnight, "It's probably going to be a while, so I've got to play through it."

Even though the Sabres have been averaging 2.93 goals per game over their last 27 games and are 7-4-1 in 2017, many fans feel Bylsma has no idea how to construct lines. The lines have actually stayed pretty much the same in January which works out to 3.33 goals per game. Bylsma said, "We have had the three lines really being consistent over the last stretch of games and I think you've seen the response from those guys in terms of how they've played and we've gotten contributions from all three lines and Ryan and Kyle have really been a force for us the last three or four games."

The overall play has improved since the calendar changed to 2017. Ennis said, "We still take it game by game. We have to make a jump in the standings and you don't really find out who the really good contenders are or who the good teams are until after the All Star break, so we're doing a good job now of finding our team, coming together and our lineup is starting to look like it should've at the start of the year."

Going into the break the Sabres point percentage was .510. In the Eastern Conference that's tied with Carolina and better than Tampa Bay, Detroit and New Jersey.

The Sabres had many things go against them in Nashville and Dallas, but the team never gave up. They won in Nashville and lost in Dallas thanks to three goal reviews that went against them. Ennis said they're starting to get that panic out of their game, "Definitely, it wasn't just Nashville, but the couple of games before that we've come from behind or scored late to tie it and won in overtime, so that's definitely a confidence builder because we've tried to grow every day this season."

Coming out of the All Star break teams couldn't practice until 3:30. I'll have another update after practice.

The Sabres are back from the All-Star break

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 30, 2017

Montreal, QC (WGR 550) -- The Sabres had their first practice after the break without Anders Nilsson, Jake McCabe, Josh Gorges and Kyle Okposo. Okposo didn't have to be in Montreal for practice because of the All-Star Game.

Nilsson had an excused absence. Dan Bylsma said, "Anders had some things to attend to back in Sweden and his flight should be getting in soon."

Gorges and McCabe are not on the trip. Bylsma said both are getting closer, "They're progressing and getting better and both those guys are moving in the right direction."

The team is still trying to get past a bunch of teams to get into the playoffs. In the east, Buffalo must still get by three of four teams, Toronto, Florida, Boston or Ottawa to get in. In the conference it's those teams along with Philadelphia and the Islanders. Brian Gionta said, "I haven't looked at it since Dallas, but if you look at it at four points or five points, it's not that much to make up, but when you're fighting with six teams, it's a lot harder to do."

"From top to bottom, having pretty much six to seven teams in the mix, that's a lot. You have over half your conference pushing for playoff spots."

The team practiced for about an hour. Rules that are part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement say teams can't practice until 2:00 after of the break. Buffalo flew to Montreal first and then practiced at 3:30.

Will Carrier jumped into Okposo's spot with Ryan O'Reilly and Tyler Ennis. The other lines were,

Foligno Eichel Reinhart
Kane Girgensons Gionta
Deslauriers C.O'Reilly Moulson

Kulikov Ristolainen
Bogosian Franson
Falk Fedun

Many players just use the break to rest and to be with their families. Robin Lehner did just that, "Yes, it wasn't much, just stayed home, went to Disney on Ice with the kid, just took a few breaths."

With the way Lehner played in Montreal last week, chances are good he'll get the start on Tuesday.

Make or break time for the Sabres

By Matt Bove

WKBW

January 30, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - No matter what happens against the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday night, the Buffalo Sabres will finish January with a winning record. It wasn't a perfect month, but it was a step in the right direction.

Since flipping the calendar into 2017 the Sabres have averaged 3.33 goals per game. Going back further, in Buffalo's last 27 games the team has averaged 2.93 goals per game, more than a goal per game better than they averaged in the first 21 contests of the season.

That Jack Eichel kid is pretty good, eh?

The Sabres, however, are still on the outside looking in when it comes to the playoff chase and will need to leapfrog several teams in the last three months of the season. *I don't love their chances, but at the same time, I don't think a playoff push is impossible.*

One big obstacle the Sabres will have to deal with down the stretch: their 11 back-to-back games left on the schedule. Buffalo has 34 remaining games, so almost a third of their games from here on out will be played on short rest.

For some perspective, the Sabres have played eight back-to-back games in the first four months of the season. Buffalo's 19 back-to-back games are the most in the National Hockey League.

Let's look at the numbers, shall we?

As of Monday, Jan. 30 the Sabres are **seven** points out of the final wild-card spot, currently held by the Philadelphia Flyers. However, Buffalo has played two fewer games.

In the Atlantic Division, the Sabres are also **seven** points behind the Boston Bruins (56 points, 52 games played) and **nine** points behind the Ottawa Senators (58 points, 47 games played).

Essentially, the Sabres (49 points) along with the Toronto Maple Leafs (55 points), Florida Panthers (52 points), Tampa Bay Lightning (50 points) and Detroit Red Wings (49 points) are fighting for two division playoff spots and possibly one wild card spot.

While not impossible, I can't see an aforementioned team catching the Canadiens (first place in Atlantic, 65 points) or the New York Rangers (first wild card spot, 63 points).

That leaves three 'realistic' playoff spots as possibilities for the Sabres.

When you add the teams from the Metropolitan division into the mix things get really messy. Basically, every team in the Eastern Conference has a chance at a playoff spot -- so the Sabres best opportunity will come within the division.

Toronto has looked very good lately, so they'll likely be a team competing for one of the Atlantic spots. Ottawa has also played very well, with a 6-2-2 record in their last ten games. To secure a division playoff spot Buffalo will not only have to pass the teams ahead of them, but they'll also have to pass either the Maple Leafs or the Senators.

The good news: Buffalo has two games left against Ottawa and three games remaining against Toronto.

The bad news: Both teams have a game in hand and a pretty sizable points lead.

Moral of the story -- the Sabres had a nice January, but they'll need an even better February if they're going to make up any ground. Fortunately, the Sabres have nine home games next month at KeyBank Center, where they sport an 11-8-3 record.

It's not going to be an easy road, but the Sabres are still very much in the mix.

Sabres look to carry momentum out of break

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

January 30, 2017

MONTREAL - Three days were enough for the Buffalo Sabres to put their game in Dallas on Friday - a 4-3 loss in which three video reviews went in favor of the Stars - behind them, but Jack Eichel did carry one lesson back from that game as Buffalo returned from the All-Star break.

"I think that the consistency in our game is starting to come back but in terms of showing up every night and playing a full 60, I mean, I thought we still played a good game in Dallas and we still ended up with zero points," Eichel said from the dressing room at Bell Centre on Monday. "You can make that argument that we had a couple goals that were called back and this and that but the thing is we did have a 2-0 lead and weren't able to put them away and we end up losing a game."

When it comes to making a push for the playoffs as they begin the home stretch, the key word is consistency for Eichel and his Sabres teammates. It's something they've progressively gotten better at as they've continued to get healthier. Buffalo is 7-4-1 in January, already their best month with one more game to play.

Buffalo's forward group is as healthy as it's been all season with the exception of Johan Larsson, who's out indefinitely. Jack Eichel has scored 12 goals since returning in December, Evander Kane has scored 14 goals in his last 25 games after going scoreless in 11 games upon his return from cracked ribs and Ryan O'Reilly, who missed 11 games first due to an injury and then due to an appendectomy, has been healthy and in the lineup since Jan. 5.

With those key players all healthy and producing, the Sabres have scored 40 goals in 12 games this month, an average of 3.33 goals per game.

"I think you see coming into how we can play and how we need to play," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I also think we've been a harder team to play against and been able to play with good teams the way we want to play, which is in the offensive zone and playing in that direction and playing that hard and we've scored more goals as the result of it."

Having won three games in a row prior to the loss in Dallas, the Sabres find themselves exiting the break tied with Detroit, New Jersey, and Carolina with 49 points, fewest in the Eastern Conference, and yet still only seven points behind both Philadelphia for the second wild card spot and Boston for third place in the Atlantic Division. Buffalo has two games in hand on the Flyers and four on the Bruins.

Both Brian Gionta and Kane - 15 and eight-year veterans of the League, respectively - said the standings are as close from top to bottom as they ever remember seeing them. With that comes the potential for the Sabres to still make a push in spite of a slow start, but also the task of having to jump multiple teams to make up that ground.

"We can't dwell on the past," Eichel said. "We've put ourselves in a position to do something after, you know, losing a lot of games that we needed and we're still in position to make a run. You just need to be rattling off wins here. You can't lose two in a row at all. I think we need to go on a streak here and put ourselves in position to make a push."

The push begins when the Sabres play the Canadiens at Bell Centre on Tuesday night, with coverage beginning at 7 p.m. on MSG-B.

Kane looking to stay hot

As mentioned above, Kane scored 14 goals in 25 games heading into the break, including two in Dallas. That's an average of .56 goals per game which, stretched out over the course of an 82-game season, would put him on pace to score 45 goals.

Kane's career-high for goals in a season is 30, which he reached with Winnipeg in 2011-12. He pointed out the fact that he only played in 74 games in that season and also experienced an 11-game stretch without a goal, the point being that this level of production from him isn't unprecedented. It's simply a matter of staying healthy and staying consistent.

"I think I can score goals a lot of different ways," he said. "Going to the net, using my shot, finishing plays in tight. I think I'm playing right now the way I know I'm capable of playing, I've done it before ... If I can stay healthy and continue to feel good with my body I feel that I can do this at a consistent rate."

Monday's practice

Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) remained absent with their respective injuries, but Bylsma said that both defensemen are moving in the right direction and added that the team expects to have more of an update on Wednesday or Thursday.

Goalie Anders Nilsson had an excused absence as he traveled back from Sweden, while Kyle Okposo got the day off after representing the Sabres in the All-Star Game on Sunday.

Here's how the lines look at practice in Montreal:

63 Tyler Ennis - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 48 William Carrier
82 Marcus Foligno - 15 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
9 Evander Kane - 28 Zemgus Girgensons - 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 19 Cal O'Reilly - 26 Matt Moulson

77 Dmitry Kulikov - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
47 Zach Bogosian - 6 Cody Franson
41 Justin Falk - 38 Taylor Fedun

40 Robin Lehner