



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres Notebook: Avalanche limp into Buffalo

By Amy Moritz
The Buffalo News
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The Buffalo Sabres have not won back-to-back games in February. Their best chance presents itself Thursday night.

The Sabres host the Colorado Avalanche at 7:30 p.m. in KeyBank Center. Buffalo is fresh off a third-period rally which gave them a 3-2 win against the Senators in Ottawa on Tuesday.

The Avs, meanwhile, aren't doing so well. They lost their fourth straight game on Thursday, a 3-2 setback to the Devils in New Jersey.

The numbers get worse for Colorado. The Avs are 2-8 in their last 10 games. They are 8-18-1 on the road. They have a minus-75 goal differential. They've won just 15 of their 54 games this season and are in last place in the NHL – by 13 points.

At this rate, Colorado is on pace for 49 points. That would be the second-lowest point total in the three-point era. The 1999-00 Atlanta Thrashers hold that record at 39.

Asked after Tuesday's loss if there was any good to come out of it, Colorado coach Jared Bednar told reporters, "There's really no good coming out of any games unless you're digging in and finding a way to get points. We fought hard at times but I just think we were lacking some jump in our step here today."

While all signs point to a golden opportunity for the Sabres to string together two wins, the team has been consistently inconsistent. They have not won back-to-back games since winning three straight overtime games from Jan. 20-24 against Detroit, Montreal and Nashville.

The Sabres earned back-to-back points with an overtime loss at the New York Rangers on Feb. 2 followed by a win against the Ottawa Senators on Feb. 4.

Expected to be in the Avs lineup Thursday are former Sabres Mikhail Grigorenko and Nikita Zadorov. Both players were part of the trade in June 2015 that brought Ryan O'Reilly to the Sabres.

Grigorenko played for the Avs when the team visited Buffalo last season, picking up an assist in a 4-1 Colorado loss.

Zadorov was with the organization's American Hockey League affiliate at the time.

This go-round, they're both on the roster.

"I missed the game there last year," Zadorov told the Denver Post. "I'm going to be excited to play there this year. It's a good memory. I have a few friends on their team and it's going to be a great matchup to play against guys I know."

Zadorov has 10 assists in 53 games this season for the Avs. He played 67 games with Buffalo over two seasons with four goals and 12 assists.

Grigorenko played 68 games for the Sabres over three seasons with six goals and eight assists. He has 18 points (six goals, 12 assists) in 51 games for the Avs this season.

"I think I need to shoot more and not overcomplicate things," Grigorenko told the Denver Post. "I think sometimes with shooting position, I try to look for a better place and hesitate a little bit. It's been tough on our team this year. We're all struggling a little bit and we don't have the confidence to put the puck in the net. I think most of us need to shoot more and for me, that's always the thing. Everybody is always telling me that. I know that. I'm trying to."

The Sabres were off on Wednesday, which meant no updates on forward Evander Kane, who missed Tuesday's game in Ottawa with an illness. ... The Sabres have a 1-10-2 record on Thursdays. ... Kyle Okposo has points in seven straight games, his longest streak since tying his career-best eight-game streak from Dec. 17, 2013 to Jan. 2, 2014. ... Jack Eichel has 15 points in his last 15 games while Sam Reinhart has five points in his last five games.

Why don't the Sabres show up on Thursdays?

By Jerry Sullivan
The Buffalo News
February 15, 2017

You have to love the Mailbag. It's fun, it's provocative, and sometimes it's downright enlightening. Sure, there are some mean souls and vicious trolls out there on Twitter and email. I'll admit, I'm an easy man to despise.

But a lot of the feedback I get from readers is brilliant. A good Mailbag question informs and entertains. It makes everyone around it better, like a good point guard.

Anyway, this week's opening question blew me away. But first, I'm sorry to report the Mailbag will be off next week and maybe longer due to vacation and college basketball. Maybe I'll squeeze one in during the MAAC Tournament.

On to the Mailbag:

Steven Pagallo asks: With the Sabres' dismal record on Thursday 1-10-2, what do you think they have going on Wednesday? That seems really odd.

Sully: Wow. I checked it twice and Steve is right. Heading into Thursday's home game against Colorado, the Sabres are 1-12 on Thursdays this season. That's worse than their record in shootouts! More than a third of their losses have come on Thursday.

What's even worse is that eight of the losses came at the KeyBank Center, where the Sabres have a schedule loaded with Thursday dates. They're better at home this season, but imagine if you could throw out Thursdays (sounds like a promotion). They're 1-7-1 at home on Thursdays, 12-3-3 on all other days.

So you do have to wonder. Are the best parties on Wednesdays? What occupies them after games on Thursday nights? Are they so eager for the weekend they lose focus? Could many of the players be thinking of rushing home to watch "Bones" or "Louie" on TV?

I hate to single anyone out, but it's fairly well established that Evander Kane likes to get out on the town. In seven home Thursday games this season, Kane has no goals and is a combined minus-8. Just a coincidence, I'm sure.

One thing you can be sure of: They'll beat Colorado at home Thursday night. When you draw attention to a streak, it almost always goes the other way. Bucky Gleason and I laugh about it all the time. Last year, I wrote that they were on pace for their worst home record ever. They won the next two. Last week, I pointed out that they were one win from their best home streak in five years.

Loss. I call it writing opinion at the margins. You generally noticed streaks when the law of averages is about to go the other way.

Plus, the Avalanche is the worst team in the league by far. They're last in goals for and against, and they haven't won a road game since before Christmas (wait, maybe that streak is the one that's about to turn). If the Sabres can't win this one, they should consider doing away with Thursday games altogether.

@ZBIV42 asks: Am I a bad person if I kinda want to see the Sabres ditch Disco Dan for Claude Julien (sooner rather than later)?

Sully: Another smart reader, and a somewhat prescient one. Zaphod sent that tweet a few hours before the Canadiens fired Michel Therrien and hired Julien -- who had been fired by the Bruins just one week before.

You're not a bad person for wondering if the Sabres would perform better with a different coach than Dan Bylsma. A lot of fans are having similar thoughts these days. Judging from the mumbling coming from around the team, I suspect some of the players are wondering the same thing.

But it's not Bylsma's fault that GM Tim Murray gave him a weak defense, which makes it hard to play the uptempo style that many fans and players like. I don't imagine Julien would work wonders with a defense that allows the most shots on goal in the league.

@sanford117 asks: *Do you think Lorenzo Alexander's Pro Bowl performance has put him outside of the Bills' price range?*

Sully: Yes. Alexander had the season of his life last season at 33. He was brought to Buffalo mainly to play special teams, but an injury to Shaq Lawson gave him a chance to start at outside linebacker and finish among the league leaders in sacks.

Despite his age, Alexander should get a nice bump from his \$885,000 salary of a year ago. His agent, Peter Schaffer, told Jason LaCanfora of CBS that Alexander will command a salary from \$5 million to \$10 million as a short-term free agent.

It's highly unlikely that the Bills will re-sign Alexander. They lack cap space and shouldn't be investing in older players when they're looking to rebuild for the long term. As our Jay Skurski pointed out, the Bills are going back to a 4-3 defense and Alexander isn't a good fit in the new scheme.

Alexander was a nice story last season, but he also faded late in the year when Rex Ryan's defense fell apart on numerous occasions down the stretch. He's not worth anywhere close to \$10 million a season, but I wish him well.

John Williams asks: *What do you think about the proposed rule changes for baseball? These include reducing the strike zone by 2 inches, not needing to throw 4 balls for an intentional walk, and starting any extra inning with a runner placed at second base.*

Sully: I know they're trying to speed up games, but I'm not ready to change the essential rules. Strikeouts have gone up every year for nearly a decade, but I'm not ready to shrink the strike zone. They want batters to swing more, but a smaller strike zone would result in more walks and prolong innings even more.

I don't like putting a runner on second to start extra innings, either. Sorry, but I'm a purist on that one. This isn't softball. It's nine-inning games that need to be shortened. Extra-inning games are a time-honored part of baseball and I'm one of those people who sees extras as a bonus.

As for not having to throw the four balls for an intentional walk, I'm all for it. Just motion to first and put the guy on. I'm still bitter about losing a big game in Babe Ruth League when our catcher was called for a balk during an intentional walk in extra innings.

Matt English asks: *On a scale of Tom Brady to the Buffalo Sabres' 2nd Periods ... what are your thoughts on Donald Trump's awkward handshakes?*

Sully: Forget big-league baseball games. The inordinate length of Trump's handshakes is a much more pressing issue for the nation. Did you that 19-second shake with Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe last Friday? I've seen entire Stanley Cup playoff handshake lines that took less time.

Oh, sorry. I forgot us sports writing simpletons aren't supposed to delve into politics.

Lou Speranza asks: *Who do you think will disappear 1st in Jacksonville; Coughlin, Caldwell, or Marrone? Something has to give, right?*

Sully: Why, because they have an actual command structure with a proven football man at the top? I suppose Caldwell would rather operate without a boss looking over his shoulder, but if Coughlin isn't overbearing, it can work.

My money is on Doug Whaley disappearing before any of those three guys.

Buffalo Ball Buster asks: Do you think you will retire when Brady retires?

Sully: Like Brady, I expect to continue for at least another five years and torment you for as long as I'm able.

Bylsma must feel ominous winds over the Atlantic

By Jerry Sullivan
The Buffalo News
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On consecutive Tuesdays, two veteran NHL head coaches lost their jobs. On Feb. 7, the Bruins fired Claude Julien. One week later, on Valentine's Day, the Canadiens whacked Michel Therrien -- and replaced him with Julien.

Montreal is leading the Atlantic, six points ahead of Boston. The Bruins are six ahead of the Sabres in the division. This cannot be reassuring to Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma, whose team has underachieved and whose players seem unhappy with his grinding style of hockey.

NHL coaches have the worst job security in sports. Once the team isn't "responding," management begins looking for someone to inspire the troops. Montreal GM Marc Bergevin used a trinity of cliches, saying the Habs needed "a new energy, a new voice, a new direction."

The Pegulas aren't likely to can Bylsma this soon after failing with Rex Ryan. But if the Sabres struggle, and if the players (especially Jack Eichel) keep muttering about the system, Bylsma won't be long for Buffalo. If first place can get you fired, maybe the Sabres should raise the standard, too. Let's hope he makes it past Tuesday.

Sabres heavyweight Nick Deslauriers wants to fight

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
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BUFFALO – Sabres winger Nick Deslauriers can't hide the disappointment in his voice discussing his difficulty finding fight partners this season.

The Sabres' top heavyweight has only fought three times in 29 appearances entering tonight's tilt against the hapless Colorado Avalanche at KeyBank Center.

"I've been trying to get some," Deslauriers said Saturday in Toronto. "I haven't got that many fights."

Deslauriers, 25, didn't fight until Jan. 10, his 19th game after a knee injury sidelined him five weeks. As a fourth-liner with a limited skill set and short ice time, Deslauriers' main job is to create energy and spark his teammates.

If Deslauriers, who considers himself a throwback, can't scrap, his value significantly decreases. He has zero points this season and has become a regular healthy scratch in the last month.

"I know my role," he said. "It doesn't happen a lot. I think I still have a little bit of (the) 'back in the days hockey' (attitude) that I love getting in fights. It's not an easy job. It's a thing for me, I'm not a goal scorer. I know how to bring energy. That's one part that I can bring."

Luckily, Deslauriers has ignited the Sabres twice in his last four games, fighting twice. His marathon bout last Thursday with Anaheim's Jared Boll, the NHL's co-leader with 12 fights, was one of the league's strangest this season.

"That was probably one of my longest ones and the most ice covered," Deslauriers said. "Those are the ones I want to be in. I'm happy it happened."

Deslauriers and Boll dropped their gloves above the left faceoff circle in the Anaheim zone. But neither landed a punch for about 25 seconds. Instead of just going at it, they put up their fists and sized each other up.

They finally started throwing punches at center ice. The fight ended – it was basically a draw – just inside the Buffalo zone after about 70 seconds.

"He's a tough customer," Deslauriers said. "I fought him once last year. It was more of a technique fight, a little bit more. It was a long one. It was good. I think it made me feel a little bit better, too."

"That's a big test for me, not having a lot of fights this year and going against one of the toughest guys in the league. It felt good."

The fight lifted Deslauriers' spirits.

"It's kind of like a goal scorer, you score a couple of goals, you get that boost up a little bit," he said. "That was one for me. It was good timing, too. The second period, we've been flat lately."

Still, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Deslauriers was a "little bit worse for wear" after the fight. Bylsma scratched him the next two games before winger Evander Kane's illness opened up a spot for Tuesday's 3-2 win in Ottawa.

Deslauriers went after Senators defenseman Dion Phaneuf and challenged him to fight late in the first period. Their gloves stayed on, but the twin roughing penalties took one of the Senators' best players off the ice.

Some opponents clearly want no part of the 6-foot-1, 216-pound Deslauriers, one of the NHL's most underrated fighters. Perhaps he can't fight regularly because he intimidates opponents.

"He switches (hands)," said Sabres winger Marcus Foligno, who has a team-high eight fights. "He's strong. He's smart in fights and he can definitely throw it hard. He's a treat to watch."

Fighting, of course, has significantly decreased over the years. The NHL averaged .60 fights a game in 2009-10, according to hockeyfights.com. That number has dwindled to .31 this season, although it's up from .28 last season, according to the site.

What has happened?

"It's more of a skill game, fast-paced," said Deslauriers, who fought five times in 70 games last season. "This is hockey now."

He added: "Now you have to be able to play hockey and fight. You can't just be a fighter. I think it's going to stay like this. Let's hope it doesn't get less than that."

Notes: The Sabres had Wednesday off. ... How bad is the Avalanche? The league's worst team ranks 30th in points, goals scored, goals against and goal differential, which is a stunning -73. Arizona, the second-worst team, is -44. ... The Sabres are 1-10-2 on Thursdays this season.

Five potential assets for the Sabres as they approach trade deadline -- #5 Cody Franson

By Matt Bove

WKBW

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - As the N.H.L. trade deadline rapidly approaches the Buffalo Sabres find themselves in an interesting situation.

Will they buy or sell at the deadline? Who could be on the move if the Sabres are active?

These are some of the questions we'll address in the weeks leading up to the deadline while counting down five Sabres skaters that could be on the move.

Pending Free Agents:

UFA - RW - Brian Gionta -- 57GP: 12G, 15A, 27P (38-years-old)

UFA - D - Dmitry Kulikov -- 31GP: 1G, 1A, 2P (26-years-old)

UFA - D - Cody Franson -- 51GP: 3G, 13A, 16P (29-years-old)

UFA -C - Cal O'Reilly -- 11GP, 0G, 1A, 1P (30-years-old)

UFA - D - Taylor Fedun -- 25 GP, 0G, 7A, 7P (28-years-old)

UFA - G - Anders Nilsson -- 20GP -- 9-7-4, 2.67 GAA, .922 sv%

RFA - LW - Marcus Foligno -- 57GP: 9G, 7A, 16P (25-years-old)

RFA - C - Zemgus Girgensons -- 53GP: 6G, 7A, 13P (23-years-old)

RFA - C - Johan Larsson -- 36GP: 6G, 5A, 11P (24-years-old)

RFA - C - Evan Rodrigues -- 5GP, 0G, 1A, 1P (23-years-old)

RFA - G - Robin Lehner -- 39GP -- 15-16-6, 2.55 GAA, .924 sv% (25-years-old)

Sabres biggest needs:

Young players that can contribute beyond this season.

The Sabres desperately need help on the blue line and could benefit from adding two young defenders to round out their top-six next year.

On offense, the Sabres need another pure goal scorer to spread the wealth on their top-three lines. This season the Sabres have relied heavily on their first and second lines for scoring but good teams get contributions from at least their top three lines. Just look at the Pittsburgh Penguins last season.

On to our list of potential assets for the Sabres approaching the deadline:

#5 -- Cody Franson

Season summary:

Everyone seems to have a stance on Cody Franson and it's amazing how different those opinions can be. A few weeks ago someone who covers the Toronto Maple Leafs tweeted that Franson was the Sabres best defenseman. Twitter basically exploded.

Franson's currently sidelined after blocking a shot last week against the Anaheim Ducks. The injury isn't expected to be 'long-term' and Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma is planning on Franson returning sometime around the deadline.

What makes Franson so polarizing is his impressive numbers. In 51 games Franson has 16 points, the second most from a defender on the Sabres. What's even crazier is his -1 plus/minus rating. By no means is this a perfect stat, but Franson actually has a better plus/minus than Ristolainen (-3), Kulikov (-9) and Zach Bogosian (-13).

Personally, I think he's played better as the year has gone on, but he really had nowhere to go but up. His best hockey came when paired with Jake McCabe, but the McCabe and Ristolainen pairing is just too solid to be messed with.

It's no secret that Franson has his flaws, but he's also been asked to do a lot more than expected due to all the injuries on the blue line. If Franson played in a more limited role I'd imagine the criticism and takes wouldn't be nearly as hot when his name is brought up.

Why he could be moved:

Franson could be an attractive addition to a team with an already solid blue line in the case of an injury. He can step in and play 18 minutes a night without issue and help most teams second power play unit.

Remember when the Sabres traded Mike Weber to the Washington Capitals? It was a move by a good team to add some depth for a playoff run. I can absolutely see something similar happening with Franson.

Possible return:

Don't expect a king's ransom if the Sabres send Cody Franson to greener pastures. I'd bet General Manager Tim Murray would be content with a third round pick. Weber was traded for a third, but the Sabres retained some of his salary. If Franson isn't part of the plan for next year then the Sabres should get something for him, instead of just letting him walk in July.

'Soul On Ice' explores journey of black hockey players

By Amy Moritz

The Buffalo News

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Tony McKegney felt lucky to be drafted by the Buffalo Sabres. Western New York was bound to be a good place for him to make his National Hockey League debut. They had the Buffalo Bills. They had the Buffalo Braves. They were accepting of professional athletes of color even if hockey was still played predominately by white Canadian men.

"In my journey I was very lucky to go to Buffalo. If I went to some other place, like Atlanta, my experience would have been very different," said McKegney, who was drafted by the Sabres in 1978 and played his first four NHL seasons in Buffalo. "I was very well accepted in Buffalo by comparison. I thought the people of Buffalo had the experience of having black football players coming from other areas to play in Buffalo and the same with basketball players. I just felt like I was very fortunate to go to a place like Buffalo. It was really welcoming to me."

That welcoming experience has not been universal for black hockey players which is why McKegney was on his way to Buffalo Wednesday morning. The veteran of 912 NHL games is part of a new documentary "Soul on Ice: Past, Present and Future" and was part of a screening and discussion Wednesday at the Amherst Dipson Theatre. Proceeds benefitted Hasek's Heroes).

The heart of the film is the story of 21-year-old Jaden Lindo as he chases his dream to play in the NHL. Lindo, a native of Brampton, Ont., was drafted in the sixth round by the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2014. This season he is playing for the Sarnia Sting in the Ontario Hockey League.

The film features in-depth interviews with current and former NHL players including Wayne Simmonds, McKegney, Grant Fuhr and Val James.

The legacy of hockey players of color in the NHL begins with Willie O'Ree. He became the first black NHL player when he suited up for the Boston Bruins against the Montreal Canadiens on Jan. 18, 1958.

When McKegney came around 20 years later, he understood his experience was profoundly different.

"His story is pretty special," McKegney said of O'Ree. "To do that in a time when he basically was in a different hotel and had trouble just riding on a bus, it's amazing to think about what he went through. Compared to my situation, I was treated royally by the people of Buffalo. I did run into some racial things in certain arenas, but it was certainly very minute in comparison to what Willie O'Ree went through."

By the time McKegney played in the NHL, he was able to open even more doors for younger players and create some level of acceptance for young black players who could point to McKegney and his contemporaries as success stories.

"One of the nicest things I hear from young people is they felt because I was there playing they felt they could be accepted in hockey," McKegney said. "Again, it was an oddity for a young kid when I first started playing in the late '70s. I got a lot of feedback from people in Canada that they were accepted in the school yard or outdoor rink because they could point to me as being a person of color playing in the National Hockey League. That's the biggest compliment for me."

That legacy continues a generation later.

Canisius senior goaltender Charles Williams remembers growing up in Detroit, Mich., and attending a Willie O'Ree hockey program called "Hockey in the Hood." There may not be many black NHL players, Williams noted, but most give back to their communities to help create opportunities for others to play.

"I think it's great that the African-American players in the NHL do a lot," Williams said. "I think that means a lot to the African-American community. The little things they do mean a lot in the long run.

"I was just enjoying the moment, skating with the guys," Williams said of participating in O'Ree's weeklong camp. "A lot of guys, they don't have a whole lot. They looked at me and I was playing Triple-A at the time and they were saying 'Oh look at this kid. He's doing this and that.' That meant a lot to me. It kind of brings me back. I know I have to work hard every day because I know there are some guys who may not have that opportunity to continue to play because of money and all that kind of stuff."

Money may be the biggest road block for athletes of color choosing hockey. It can cost upwards of \$5,000 per year for a youth player.

"The one thing you have to remember is that hockey is not a cheap sport to play," McKegney said. "Equipment is very expensive. Ice time is very expensive for the average person. For a young black person it's so much easier to pick up a basketball and a pair of running shoes and go to a public court. Hockey is not cheap to play."

While families are finding ways to make it work financially, individual players are working to overcome the racial slurs which continue to follow them through rinks across North America.

"I know a lot of younger players playing today or have since retired that were thinking about quitting the game because of the verbal abuse they received," McKegney said. "They didn't turn back. They stayed with it and continued on although there some rough times for a lot of younger people in hockey rinks because of verbal abuse thrown upon them stands."

Nevertheless, they persisted. Today there are more than 30 players of color in the NHL and the sport that was once 98 percent Canadian has diversified in large part thanks to an increasing European influence. And, McKegney notes, all it will take is one breakout superstar of color to potentially change the face of hockey in sweeping ways.

"I think hockey can be a brutal sport from a lot of angles but I think the Europeans came in and the Americans came in ... and the numbers changed into more of a global sport," McKegney said. "That changed of a lot for the good. I just think one day that one player that's a Michael Jordan-type athlete that gets introduced to hockey, that's going to be a superstar player in the NHL will change things. More people will be exposed to the game."

Sabres aim for elusive consecutive wins vs. Avs

The Associated Press

February 15, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Back-to-back wins have been hard to come by for the Buffalo Sabres, but they'll have a prime opportunity to buck that trend when the struggling Colorado Avalanche come to town.

The two teams will square off on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in a nationally televised game.

Following goalie Robin Lehner's rant on Sunday -- when Lehner criticized his teammates for not following the coaches' gameplan in a 4-2 loss to the Vancouver Canucks -- the Sabres (24-23-10) responded accordingly on Tuesday in a 3-2 win over Lehner's former team, the Ottawa Senators.

Lehner made 39 saves in the victory and youngster Justin Bailey scored the game-winner 7:38 into the third period.

"We knew that the game was right there, we had been doing good things all night," Bailey said, according to the team's website. "We just stuck to our game plan."

The key for Buffalo now will be to build off of a win. The Sabres haven't recorded consecutive wins since Jan. 20-24 -- a three-game win streak -- and have traded wins and losses over their past eight games.

Instead of making a push toward the playoffs, the Sabres are five points out of a wild-card spot.

"We're not satisfied at all," center Ryan O'Reilly said, according to the team's website. "It's one game and we have to string a bunch together here. Our consistency has been terrible and we're not happy by any means here. We have to prove to each other every night that we're a team that can contend."

O'Reilly has been one of Buffalo's few consistent performers as of late, with five points (two goals, three assists) in his last five games.

Lehner has been remarkable in recent weeks and is the biggest reason the Sabres have any chance of making a late-season playoff push. He has a save percentage of .924 and a goals-against average of 2.55 this season.

This will be as good a time as any for the Sabres to change their inconsistent ways. The Avalanche (15-37-2) come to Buffalo on a four-game losing streak and are in the midst of a season-high five game road trip (with two games remaining, at Buffalo and at Carolina). Aside from two wins earlier this month, the Avalanche have lost 13 of their last 15 games and 18 of their last 21 games.

Colorado is coming off a 3-2 loss to New Jersey on Tuesday.

"I thought we were a little slow," Colorado coach Jared Bednar said, according to the team's website. "They were coming up with pucks, they were getting to the puck first most of the time, and that's why they carried the bulk of the play."

One positive for Colorado was the play of goaltender Jeremy Smith, who made his NHL debut after a lengthy career in the minors. Smith made 37 saves against the Devils.

"I thought he was fantastic, the best player by a country mile," Bednar said.