



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

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## **Rangers, Sabres look to avoid slow starts again**

Associated Press

February 1, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The New York Rangers and Buffalo Sabres are both looking to get back on track following particularly disappointing outings on Tuesday night.

On Thursday, the teams will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Buffalo in a nationally televised game.

The Sabres (20-20-9) went into the All-Star break in the midst of one of their best stretches of the season. Following three straight overtime wins and a hard-luck 4-3 loss to the Dallas Stars -- in which the Sabres saw two potential third-period goals disallowed in controversial fashion -- the Sabres were thinking they were well on their way toward a late-season playoff push.

Buffalo's first game out of the All-Star break, however, carried none of that momentum forward. The Sabres fell to Montreal 5-2 in a defeat that saw the Canadiens jump out to a 5-0 lead before surrendering two goals late in the third period to avoid the shutout. Max Pacioretty had a hat trick for Montreal.

"It's one game," Sabres center Jack Eichel said, according to the team's website. "It's a tough one but what are you going to do about it now? We ... play another game on Thursday so I think we put it behind us. We obviously know we didn't play well. I think it'll be important for us to go back to the drawing board, forget about this one, put it behind us. We know the way we have to play as a team to be successful."

Dmitry Kulikov and Brian Gionta scored for Buffalo.

"It wasn't as if it was 19 chances to zero," Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma said via the team's website. "We had plenty of opportunities, but we played into their speed game. They played a fast game, we handed them the puck and they capitalized on a lot of the chances they had."

The Rangers (31-18-1), meanwhile, can draw some inspiration from their attempted comeback against Columbus on Tuesday night. Like the Sabres, however, they fell into big hole that was ultimately too much to overcome.

New York was facing a 6-0 deficit after surrendering four goals in the second period but did score four goals in the third in the 6-4 loss.

"We have to understand it's such a big learning moment for us," Rangers center Derek Stepan told the team's website. "Teams are just too good to take a 10-minute stretch like that. You're going to get killed every time. We've got to stop doing that ... They made us pay in that 10 minutes."

Stepan is tied for the team lead in points with 38 (12 goals, 26 assists) alongside Mats Zuccarello (9 goals, 29 assists).

Thursday will be the third and final game between the two teams this season. Despite the difference in the standings, the Sabres won each of the previous two meetings. Buffalo picked up a 4-3 home win against New York on Dec. 1 and a 4-1 road win to open up the new year on Jan. 3.

## **Sabres look for home cooking after Montreal flameout**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 1, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres always start practice gathering by the boards with coach Dan Bylsma. There's usually chuckling, some stick taps, a little horseplay and idle chatter before the coach briefly goes over the day's plan.

There was none of that Wednesday. You could hear a pin drop in KeyBank Center. The players stood silently. Bylsma's voice wasn't loud but his face was stone cold and his words appeared stern and edgy.

He had good reason. The Sabres came off the All-Star break and dropped a complete stinkbomb Tuesday in Montreal, a 5-2 loss that saw them score both of their goals in garbage time when they were already down, 5-0. They're seven points out of a playoff spot, 15th in the Eastern Conference and 27th in the NHL.

But the Sabres haven't given up hope: They were 4-0 at home in January and 11 of their next 16 will be downtown as part of a jam-packed schedule the next four weeks. The stretch starts Thursday night against the New York Rangers and continues Saturday night against Ottawa.

Practice was a 55-minute workout full of 5-on-5 situations. With so many games, there will be very little practice time this month, so Bylsma took advantage of the opportunity Wednesday.

"We needed to get to work and improve on some things we didn't do well in Montreal," he said. "You don't have a ton of time to do it with the schedule we have, playing 12 games in 20 nights. I thought we had a good 20-minute segment of that practice where we really got to work on the things we needed to get better at."

The Sabres were blitzed by the Habs, turning the puck over with impunity and constantly getting caught out of position in their defensive zone to leave goaltender Robin Lehner little hope of saving the day.

"We have to throw that out the window," said winger Marcus Foligno, "because it was horrendous."

"That can't be how we play. That can't be who we are as a group," Bylsma said. "... That wasn't a good game from from the group but that's also not who we are as a group and how we play. There's got to be a rebound as to how we respond."

The Sabres have their bye week from Feb. 20-24 but have 11 games from Thursday through Feb. 19, with eight at home. Overall in February, they play nine of their 14 games here. They're 9-12-6 on the road this year but 11-8-3 at home, including 6-2 in their last eight. They're averaging 3.37 goals per game in that stretch.

"We've been a hard team to play against," Bylsma said. "Not necessarily physically ... We've played a fast game, a game to the offensive zone and been a tough team to handle at home, and that's really where we've had our success in our games and had our success, whether it's home or the road."

"It feels like we've played a lot on the road this year," Foligno said. "We're scoring goals at home. The last four have been good teams coming in but our confidence has been high, our power play has been hot. We just have to make sure we're continuing that."

The Sabres' January perfection at home included solid performances in wins over Philadelphia and Dallas, a three-goal third period in a comeback win over Winnipeg and a rally that produced an overtime victory over Detroit. They scored 15 goals in the four games.

"We have to keep playing with high energy at home," said defenseman Zach Bogosian. "We've had some pretty electric wins in here of late and you want to make that continue."

"We have good confidence at home," added goaltender Anders Nilsson. "The fans were great here in January and that definitely helps. We need all the support they can give us. The way they got it going really helped us."

Nilsson is one Sabre who seems to benefit from the home cooking more than anyone on the roster. At home this year, he's 6-1-1 with a 1.84 goals-against average and .946 save percentage. On the road? he's 2-6-3/3.20/.904.

"I haven't even thought about it that much honestly," Nilsson said. "It's a team game and we've been playing much better hockey at home than on the road. That's really a huge part of it right there.

"The team has really helped me. I prepare the same way. Morning skate at home, morning skate on the road. It's a team game. We have a better record at home so I'll have a better record at home."

## **Bogosian looks to rebound from minus-5 disaster**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 1, 2017

Of all the players in the Sabres' dressing room who might want to flush away Tuesday's mashing in Montreal, defenseman Zach Bogosian has to be at the top of the list.

Bogosian was on the ice for all of the Habs' goals in their 5-2 beatdown of Buffalo and his minus-5 rating was the worst of his 507-game NHL career. Bogosian and defense partner Cody Franson were minus-8 in the game before coach Dan Bylsma mercifully broke them up in the third period. Bogosian played the rest of the way with Justin Falk and Franson went with Taylor Fedun.

The Sabres rotated defensemen at practice Wednesday so it's uncertain what the pairs will look like for Thursday's visit by the New York Rangers.

The Sabres don't list a record for the worst rating in a single game but there's certainly a chance Bogosian owns a piece of that mark now. The NHL record is minus-7, shared by Chicago's Doug Wilson in 1993 and equaled by former Sabre Chris Butler while playing for Calgary in 2012.

"It is what it is and I know that," Bogosian said. "You respect what happened because it wasn't good in any way but you have no choice but to throw it in the rear view and get ready for tomorrow night."

Bogosian and Franson had been a relatively strong pair for Buffalo in recent games. During the Sabres' three straight January overtime victories, Bogosian compiled a plus-4 rating and scored the winning goal in the Jan. 21 game in Montreal. But he's now minus-7 in his last two games to drop to a team-worst minus-13 for the season.

"That's not who Zach is as a player," Bylsma said. "That's not how he's played for us over the past seven, eight, nine, 10 games for us."

Captain Max Pacioretty had a had trick in the game, the first by a Montreal player against the Sabres since Tomas Plekanec connected for three goals on Feb. 29, 2008.

"We don't have much time to dwell on it," Bogosian said. "We're right back at it tomorrow night. We play 82 games for a reason. We don't take what happened last night lightly. You have to come out the right way tomorrow night. It will be a good challenge for us."

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The Sabres and Rangers come into Thursday's game off similar Tuesday meltdowns in their return from the All-Star break. The Rangers fell behind, 6-0, in Madison Square Garden before rallying in an eventual 6-4 loss to Columbus.

Goaltender Henrik Lundqvist was pulled for the fourth time this season – all at home – after giving up three goals on 14 shots. The 34-year-old has put up career-worst in goals-against average (2.78) and save percentage (.905) but coach Alain Vigneault said after practice Wednesday that Lundqvist would get the start here Thursday.

Buffalo has won both meetings this year and three straight overall against the Rangers. And that comes on the heels of a nine-game losing streak to the Blueshirts, the longest one they had endured against them since entering the NHL in 1970.

The Rangers entered Wednesday's play second in the NHL in scoring at 3.38 goals per game but have managed just four in two games against the Sabres. Buffalo rallied for a 4-3 win here on Dec. 1 on two third-period goals by Jack Eichel and posted a dominant 4-1 victory Jan. 3 at MSG.

"We've done a good job of negating their long play and their speed on two accounts," Bylsma said. "Our forwards have been on top of their plays and with us putting pressure on their defenders to not be able make those long

plays, not be able to flip pucks up the ice. We've had success and had opportunities because of that going the other way.

"We also have to realize they're a team like us. Coming back from the break, they got it handed it to them a little bit. ... A similar spot as us. Probably very disappointed the way they played and trying to have a bounceback game."

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The most notable line move Bylsma made at practice was his demotion of winger Tyler Ennis to the fourth line with Cal O'Reilly and William Carrier. Matt Moulson took Ennis' spot with Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo.

Ennis has one goal in six games since his return from hernia surgery, and that came 19 seconds into his return Jan. 16 against Dallas. Ennis has been minus-1 in each of the last three games. He played 16:05 Tuesday after being limited to just 9:43 in the previous game, the Jan. 26 loss at Dallas. Dogged by injuries, Ennis has just five goals in 41 games over the last two seasons.

"He's got to take whatever minutes he gets and do a lot more with what he's bringing," Bylsma said. "So regardless of whether he's playing next to Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo or whether it's power play, that's his challenge."

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Bylsma said defensemen Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) both skated on their own Wednesday. It was Gorges' third straight day on the ice and McCabe's first. Gorges is closer to returning to practice with the team. There is no real timetable for either to return to game action.

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There were 98 goals in 13 NHL games played Tuesday, a robust average of seven per game that proponents of offense would certainly like to see more often. The Sabres' 5-2 loss in Montreal was right on that average.

According to ESPN's John Buccigross, that's the most goals in a single day since teams combined for 103 on Jan. 23, 1993. Nine teams scored at least five goals that night; the Sabres were 4-3 losers at Quebec.

## **Sabres try to pick up the pieces from Montreal**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 1, 2017

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres spent most on Tuesday's game mismanaging the puck and giving it right to the Montreal players for goals. Zach Bogosian and Cody Franson both were living a nightmare all night long. It got so bad, the pair had to be split up by the third period. Bogosian was on the ice for all five of the Canadiens goals and Dan Bylsma said a bounce back on Thursday is a must, "I'm looking for that for the whole team. That can't be how we play, that can't be who we are as group and Zach's part of that. That's not who Zach is as a player and that's not how he's played for us over the past 7 to 10 games."

"That wasn't a good game from us, that wasn't a good game from the group and that also is not who we are as a group and there's got to be a rebound to how we respond tomorrow night."

Sometimes on a coaching staff the head coach rips the team down and then the assistant coaches come in and take the players individually and pull them back up. Bylsma said, "My message was probably a little more stern to the team and they're coming in and picking up the pieces and helping out the guys and in a big way. You lean on Tom, Terry and Bob to step in and get the guys back on track individually."

There's no question Tyler Ennis looked faster and quicker in Montreal, but it didn't translate into playing a good game. By the time the night was over, he was on out there with Cal O'Reilly. Against Dallas his minutes were reduced to 9:43. Dan Bylsma expects more from number 63, "He's gotta take whatever minutes he gets and do a lot more with what he's bringing, so regardless of whether he's playing next to Ryan O'Reilly or Kyle Okposo or whether it's power play, that's his challenge."

Both Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe are back on the ice again. Bylsma gave an update, "Both skated today on conditioning skates. Jake saw the doctor this morning and got moved to skating."

"Josh has skated the last three days and is going to see the doctor this afternoon and he's to the point where he could be given a good report from the doctor and could be working back to playing when he skates."

Wednesday's lines were:

Moulson R.O'Reilly Okposo  
Foligno Eichel Reinhart  
Kane Girgensons Gionta  
Ennis C.O'Reilly Carrier

## **Sabres feeling comfortable at home**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 2, 2017

BUFFALO – Very quietly, after years of ineptitude on home ice, the Sabres have recently morphed into a strong team at KeyBank Center, winning four straight games.

Of course, four consecutive home victories isn't overly impressive. But for the Sabres, who haven't finished above .500 at home since 2012-13, the streak represents progress.

It also gives them some hope. With each loss, their slim playoff chances decrease. But tonight's tilt against the New York Rangers kicks off a stretch in which the seventh-place Sabres play 11 of the next 16 games at home.

"It's big for us, especially the situation we're in now," Sabres defenseman Cody Franson said Wednesday. "We're in a dogfight, and to have that advantage of playing at home and having the shorter end of the travel stick is definitely beneficial to us. We got to make sure we take advantage of it. That's what good teams do in these situations."

Sabres winger Tyler Ennis said: "We got to treat every game as a playoff game from here on out."

Overall, the Sabres are 11-8-3 at home. Their recent run includes two scintillating third-period comebacks and two 4-1 triumphs.

Not surprisingly, the normally quiet home patrons have reacted to the excitement, consistently making noise for perhaps the first time in years.

After years of being beaten down by losing, the fans love having something positive to cheer about. The Sabres hadn't won four straight home contests since December 2014.

"It's a lot of fun to play in front of these fans here," Franson said. "They're passionate people. ... They've been waiting for change for a long time. We're trying to give them that change. They're responding. We really feed off the crowd when it gets going. That extra bit of momentum in tight situations in games is something we feed off."

The Sabres haven't played here since beating Detroit in 3-2 in overtime Jan. 20, a contest in which Ryan O'Reilly tied the game late before Kyle Okposo's winner.

"We've played a fast game, a game to the offensive zone and been a tough team to handle at home," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "That's really where we've had our success in our games and had our success, whether it's home or the road."

The Sabres, however, have been struggling on the road, where they've lost two straight games, including Tuesday's wretched 5-2 loss in Montreal, arguably their worst setback all season.

"(Tuesday's) game we have to throw out the window because it was horrendous," Sabres winger Marcus Foligno said.

Bylsma said: "We got beat badly."

No kidding. The Canadiens led 5-0 before the Sabres scored two late goals. The game, by any measure, was a trouncing.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian, whose play had surged in recent weeks, was a stunning -5. The NHL record is minus-7. Bylsma broke up the Bogosian-Franson duo late in the game.

"That can't be how we play," Bylsma said. "That can't be who we are as a group. Zach's part of that. That's not who Zach is as a player. That's not how he's played for us over the past seven, eight, nine, 10 games."

Bylsma made one notable move Wednesday, putting Ennis on the fourth line beside center Cal O'Reilly and William Carrier. Winger Matt Moulson moved up beside center Ryan O'Reilly and Okposo.

Ennis has one goal – he scored it 19 seconds into his return – in six games after missing two months following groin surgery.

"He's got to take the minutes he gets and do a lot more with what he's bringing," Bylsma said.

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At 31-18-1, the high-scoring Rangers are one of the Eastern Conference's best teams. But the Sabres have handled them well this season, beating them 4-1 on Jan. 3 in New York and roaring back from a two-goal deficit to win 4-3 at home Dec. 1.

"We've done a good job of negating their long play and their speed on two accounts, with our forwards being on top of their plays and with us putting pressure on their defenders to not be able to make those long plays, not be able to flip pucks up the ice," Bylsma said. "We've had success and had opportunities because of that going the other way."

Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist, one of the NHL's best for years, has shown strong signs of graying this season, compiling the worst numbers of his 12-year career. After getting yanked from Tuesday's 6-4 loss to Columbus, the 34-year-old Swede is 21-13-1 with a 2.78 goals-against average and a .905 save percentage.

The league-average save percentage is .912, according to [hockey-reference.com](http://hockey-reference.com).

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Bylsma said injured defensemen Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) are progressing. Gorges skated for the third time Wednesday. McCabe received clearance to skate in the morning.

Gorges planned to see a doctor Wednesday, Bylsma said.

"He's to the point, given a good report by the doctor, (he) could be working back to playing with his skates," Bylsma said.

## **Sabres look to bounce back vs. Rangers**

By Jonah Javad

WGRZ

February 1, 2017

The NHL All-Star break ended Tuesday night in Montreal, but the Buffalo Sabres didn't get the memo - losing to the Canadiens, 5-2.

Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian finished with a +/- of -5. The offense couldn't get anything going until garbage time in the 3rd Period. As a result, the Sabres failed to gain ground in the Wild Card chase.

"We're all unsatisfied right now," said Sabres forward Marcus Foligno after practice Wednesday. "We're a little bit ticked off. Coming off the break a bit rusty, but no excuse."

"We really have to put the pedal down. We have to play more urgent. Obviously [Tuesday] night's game we have to throw out the window because it was horrendous. We got chances to make up ground here and we got to focus on the next one."

"I just think the games we've won, we played with a lot of energy and played the way we know we're capable of playing," added Bogosian.

"I'm looking for that for the whole team," said head coach Dan Bylsma. "That can't be how we play. That can't be who we are as a group. There's got to be a rebound with how we respond tomorrow night."

The Sabres look to bounce back Thursday night when they host the New York Rangers. Buffalo hasn't lost at home since December, going a perfect 4-0 in the month of January.

Face-off is at 7:30 p.m. Thursday night at the KeyBank Center.

## **Kulikov feeling well, hoping to build on first goal**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

February 1, 2017

Dmitry Kulikov said the number hadn't exactly been weighing on him, but it was in the back of his mind. Going into Tuesday's game in Montreal, Kulikov had yet to score a goal as a Buffalo Sabre. His last goal came on April 15, 2016, in the playoffs for the Florida Panthers.

As a defenseman playing top minutes, Kulikov's primary concern is holding down his own end and moving the puck quickly up the ice. He only scored one goal in 73 regular-season games for Florida last season, and his career high in a season is eight.

Still, he felt he wanted to contribute more offensively, so while his goal late in a 5-0 game against Montreal on Tuesday - a shot from the blue line that saw its way through traffic - might not have meant much in regard to the outcome of the game, it did mean something to him.

"I think it's the kind of goal that doesn't really matter in the game situation but I think for me, personally, it was good to get it out of the way," Kulikov said.

Kulikov has played three games since returning from a 12-game absence caused by an injury to his lower back. He sustained the injury when he crashed into a bench door during a preseason game in October, cutting his preseason short and forcing him to miss the season opener. The same injury also forced him to miss a 13-game stretch beginning in mid-November.

When he returned this time, he said it was the best he's felt all season. He's made the decision along with the team not to participate in most morning skates from here on out - instead, he'll use the mornings to take care of his body - but three games later, he smiled when asked if he was still feeling well.

"It's been pretty good," he said. "I'm not going to lie, it's been holding up and feeling good."

Kulikov's played big minutes since returning; the 22:47 he skated in Montreal on Tuesday was the lowest of the three games he's played. In fact, in 23 total games this season, his average ice time of 22:34 is a career high.

"He's dealt with a tough injury ... He wasn't feeling 100 percent," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "That's something he's dealing with going forward, probably with every game that he plays. He's getting his feet back underneath him, getting his timing, getting his defensive play back underneath him the last three games and we need him to be at his best."

Kulikov pointed to the nature of his goal on Tuesday - a shot on net that simply found its way in from the blue line - as an example of why he feels he, and Buffalo's defensive unit as a whole, needs to shoot the puck more. Doing so, he said, will create more chances for bounces to go in Buffalo's favor.

If shooting more does become an outcome of scoring on Tuesday, his goal might end up being more impactful than it seemed.

"I don't know," Kulikov said. "They say when they come, they come in bunches so hopefully it'll give me some confidence."

### Medical report

Bylsma said that defensemen Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe both skated on their own on Wednesday morning. Gorges has missed the last 11 games with a hip injury, while McCabe has missed three games with an injured shoulder.

"Jake saw the doctor this morning and got moved to skating so we saw him get on the ice and his rehab is progressing hopefully," Bylsma said. "Josh, he skated the last three days, conditioning skate today and he's going

to see the doctor this afternoon. He's at the point where he could be, given a good report from the doctor, could be working back to playing when he skates."

#### Wednesday's practice

The Sabres came into practice on Wednesday looking to quickly put their loss in Montreal behind them as they prepare to host the New York Rangers on Thursday night. It will be the first of nine home games for the Sabres in February, as opposed to four on the road. They won all four of their home games in January.

In other words, the time for the Sabres to make up their deficit in the Eastern Conference standings is now.

"We're in a situation where we have to win 60 percent of our points, 65 percent of our points," Bylsma said. "That's the situation we were in going into the game in Montreal and that's the situation we're still in after that game. We got beat in that game, we got beat badly in that game. We have to learn from it, we have to get better in certain areas, but we also have to turn the page or turn and look toward the next game against the Rangers and now there's [33] games left where we have to focus on getting that number of points the remainder of the way."

Tyler Ennis and Matt Moulson switched line at practice, while Nicolas Deslauriers skated both as a forward and a defenseman.

Here's how the full lineup looked at practice:

26 Matt Moulson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo  
82 Marcus Foligno - 15 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart  
9 Evander Kane - 28 Zemgus Girgensons - 12 Brian Gionta  
48 William Carrier - 19 Cal O'Reilly - 63 Tyler Ennis

Defensemen: 77 Dmitry Kulikov, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 47 Zach Bogosian, 6 Cody Franson, 41 Justin Falk, 38 Taylor Fedun, 44 Nicolas Deslauriers

40 Robin Lehner  
31 Anders Nilsson