



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

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## **Eichel takes a selective approach to endorsement deals**

By Amy Moritz

The Buffalo News

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His face is all over the highlights, particularly when he's scoring game-winning goals in overtime that leave everyone in the room breathless. And Jack Eichel is certainly a central piece in the Buffalo Sabres' marketing scheme.

But the popular young forward could be smiling down on Western New York from countless more billboards and bus ads as well. His agents have fielded plenty of requests from businesses wanting to catch a bit of tailwind from Eichel's rising star. So far, he's only signed deals with three – Bauer, Tim Hortons and the sports drink BodyArmor.

The endorsement offers have been plentiful, but Eichel decided early on to take a methodical approach to the business side of his professional hockey career. The game comes first. The other opportunities will follow.

"In terms of the requests I told my agents last year that I wanted to keep it minimal my first year and we did that for the most part," Eichel said. "It was Bauer and Tim Hortons.

"The thing I always say and my agents always say to me, is that hockey drives everything. If you're playing well and things are going well for you on the ice then your marketing ability and your endorsements obviously will go through the roof. I just try to kind of let this drive that."

There are two things Eichel and his agents look at with endorsement deals – is it a good fit and how much time will it take?

The first order of business was his equipment deal. "Bauer is a company I've used my whole life. So it was a no-brainer for me," Eichel said.

NHL prospect Auston Matthews, now with the Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Sabres Jack Eichel are interviewed by Dave Fischer from USA Hockey at 716 during a Bauer hockey equipment event on June 23, 2016. (Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News)

Next came Tim Hortons.

"The Tim Hortons thing kind of came because obviously Tim Hortons is so big here in Buffalo and that opportunity presented itself and it was a great one," Eichel said. "I was able to jump on that."

But Eichel only jumps on opportunities that make sense to him, his career and representing the Sabres organization.

"If a certain company came we all know but was not really representative of Jack or his family or the Sabres, he would look at that and say 'I don't know if that's really me,'" said Peter Fish, Eichel's agent. "Money or not I don't think he'd want to do that. Using BodyArmor as an example, Jack had a fridge full of BodyArmor and I didn't even know this. I told him we got a call from Body Armor and Jack said, 'Oh I love that stuff. That's what I use anyway.' Stuff like that works out nicely."

And that's how Eichel ended up on a billboard on I-190 South touting the sports drink.

Aside from his three endorsement deals, Eichel also signed two memorabilia agreements, one with Leaf Trading Cards and another with Dave & Adams Card World, which is the authorized outlet for Eichel's public signings outside those conducted by the Sabres.

"Every new player who is a hot prospect will have the opportunity to have an autograph deal with a certain company," Fish said. "There are all sorts of people trying to sell his autograph so to do it with one company, that makes sense. The trading card deal, every athlete worth anything has that as well."

There was one key project initiated by Eichel – his apparel line Shine Gold, sold online and through Dave & Adams, which benefits Carly's Club at Roswell Park. But the rest of his endorsement deals are struck by his agent fielding requests and Team Eichel sorting through what they want to do.

"It's more or less companies calling me and us seeing if it's a good fit," Fish said. "Jack doesn't want to do something for money because if that were the case we'd have a ton of things going on right now."

Eichel's personal marketing includes aligning himself with products and businesses that reflect his own values and help him make meaningful connections in the community. He also understands the links among hockey success, image and financial opportunities.

"I think obviously you only have so much time in your career to really make money and build your image and I think hockey's a tougher sport to do so because of the culture," Eichel said, noting that hockey isn't as popular as football and basketball.

"It's just trying to have the opportunity to build yourself, your image and market yourself. Obviously hockey's a great game but it only lasts for so long so you want to create the best future for yourself. You work your whole life to play this game, you want to put yourself in a good position for after hockey."

## **Sabres Notebook: Nilsson an ambassador for You Can Play**

By Amy Moritz  
The Buffalo News  
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The Buffalo Sabres announced a partnership with You Can Play as part of the NHL's Hockey is for Everyone month.

But goaltender Anders Nilsson was already flying the rainbow flag. Well, technically he was wearing the rainbow flag. On the back of his mask.

Nilsson will be one of the ambassadors for the Sabres, who will host You Can Play Night on Tuesday, Feb. 7. The You Can Play Project was founded to advocate for inclusion, acceptance and respect of LGBTQ athletes in sports.

Nilsson was ahead of the NHL curve, deciding over the summer to sport a rainbow flag on the back of his hockey mask.

"I have some friends who are gay and I thought the least I could do for them was put the flag on my helmet," Nilsson said. "Hopefully I can contribute and raise some awareness. Hopefully it means something to some people. I feel the most important thing is to help out the younger ages. No one should have to quit any sport. They should be able to play hockey and soccer, football, whatever it is. It's great the league is doing something and it's great our team is doing something next week. It's a big step forward."

Nilsson will be part of a public service announcement supporting the You Can Play Project along with Brian Gionta, Ryan O'Reilly and Dan Bylsma. The game will also feature a video on Harrison Browne, a forward for the Buffalo Beauts of the National Women's Hockey League.

Nilsson's hope is that the message reaches area youth to provide support and encouragement for their participation in sport.

"We're in 2017 right now and it shouldn't have to be such a big thing," Nilsson said. "But I think it's also good that it gets a lot of attention. The guys show it doesn't matter what sexuality you have. I mean if you can play hockey you can play hockey or soccer or whatever sport there is. I think it's important to reach out to kids at the younger age so we can get them to continue to play sports and know they don't have to quit."

At the Feb. 7 game against the San Jose Sharks, Gay & Lesbian Youth and the Pride Center of WNY will have tables set up in the 100 Level pavilion. The Buffalo Sabres Foundation will be donating \$5,000 to both of those organizations.

Some Sabres players will be using Pride Tape on their sticks during pregame warm-ups in support of the evening. Each stick will be auctioned online at [sabres.com/auctions](http://sabres.com/auctions) beginning at 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 7. Proceeds from the auction, which ends on Sunday, Feb. 12 at 9 p.m., will benefit You Can Play.

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Cal O'Reilly cleared waivers on Friday. The Sabres put the forward on waivers Thursday and he went unclaimed by another NHL team. That gives the Sabres the flexibility to assign him to the Rochester Americans.

In 11 games for the Sabres he has one assist and is a minus-6.

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The Sabres host the Ottawa Senators in KeyBank Center Saturday night. The Senators come to town after a 5-2 win against the Tampa Bay Lightning in Florida on Thursday. The Sens are 6-2-2 in their last 10 and sit in second place in the Atlantic Division with 60 points.

"Right now, the league is so close that you need to try and keep separation with the other guys, especially with divisional teams," Senators coach Guy Boucher said after the win in Tampa. "We want to be better against teams from," the Atlantic Division "so that's a good start from us."

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The hockey world is mourning the death of Jeff Sauer. He passed away on Thursday at the age of 73.

Sauer was the head coach at the University of Wisconsin for 20 years, producing two national championships, three NCAA Men's Frozen Four appearances and 12 NCAA tournament berths.

He was in his sixth season as the head coach for the U.S. National Sled Hockey Team. During that span, Team USA had 48 wins, five overtime wins, two overtime losses and 11 losses. The program reached the championship of every major international competition and won titles in seven major events.

Buffalo Sled Hockey had a moment of silence for Sauer as it hosts an International Elite Sled Hockey tournament at HarborCenter. Saturday's games feature USA Warriors vs. Kitchener at 9:45 a.m., with Buffalo playing Columbus at 12:45 p.m. The championship game is at 12:45 p.m. Sunday.

## **Justin Falk grateful for time with Sabres**

**By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 3, 2017**

BUFFALO – On Wednesday, after almost three months of commuting back and forth to Rochester, Sabres defenseman Justin Falk moved his family into an extended-stay hotel here.

For Falk, who has shuttled between the NHL and minors for years, having his wife and two children close by, of course, offers some comfort.

“That helps ... just to have a little sense of feeling at home,” said Falk, who said he sometimes made the 75-mile drive three times in a day.

Nine years into his pro career, Falk hasn’t found an NHL home yet. Counting two stints with the Minnesota Wild, the Sabres are his fifth organization in five seasons.

But Falk, 28, might have a future with the Sabres, who host the Ottawa Senators tonight at KeyBank Center. The veteran has fit in nicely, providing critical depth while becoming arguably their biggest surprise.

“When you get a chance to play at this level, where you’re not guaranteed it everyday, it really makes you put things in perspective and stay in the moment and prepare and be mentally ready to play each game,” Falk said Thursday. “I think that’s a good thing for guys like that in that situation of where they’re not only desperate for the season but they’re desperate to play for their careers.”

The Sabres assigned the 6-foot-5, 222-pound Falk to the AHL when rookie Casey Nelson beat him out for the seventh defense spot out of training camp.

His stint with the Rochester Americans lasted only 10 games.

With injuries ravaging the Sabres’ blue line for months, Falk, who was recalled in early November, has become a regular, playing 34 games.

“My style of defenseman is if you’re being unnoticed, then maybe that’s a good thing,” said Falk, who has three assists and averages 13 minutes, 10 seconds of ice time an outing.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Falk has “been outstanding.”

“When we signed Justin, we thought he would be a depth guy for us,” he said. “We thought he would be a guy who would come up and play. He’s been all that and more coming up and playing some big situations and not just kind of filling in.

“He’s been in some minute situations and playing up and down the defensive pairings and really kind of been a real nice addition in terms of stability on the back end.”

Falk could keep providing some stability. While defensemen Josh Gorges (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) are close to returning, Zach Bogosian suffered a mid-body injury in Thursday’s 2-1 overtime loss to the New York Rangers.

Bylsma had no update on Bogosian following the game. The Sabres were off Friday.

Given defense depth is critical, especially at this time of year, if the Sabres assigned Falk to the Amerks, he could get claimed on waivers.

Falk is used to moving around. He has never played more than 47 NHL games in a season. Last year, after some regular duty with the Columbus Blue Jackets, he went back to the AHL in early February. He won a Calder Cup with the Lake Erie Monsters in June.

"By no means has my career been easy," Falk said. "I've been a player and a person that's had to work for something in his career and not always had the easy road and bounced around quite a bit with different teams, never giving up on the dream to play in the NHL."

Falk, who signed a one-year, two-way contract July 1, won't complain about that dream. Yes, constantly driving down the New York State Thruway can be a grind. But to him, it comes with the territory.

"It's crazy, because you see little kids around the rink, and I was that little kid who wanted to play in the NHL," Falk said. "If I'm going to complain about something like that, a bit of a drive, a bit of a situation, then that's not right."

"I'm fortunate and happy to be here, glad to be here. By no means do I take things for granted. I play each day, each game, to leave it all out there to try to survive another day."

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Sabres center Cal O'Reilly cleared waivers Friday. The veteran is still on the NHL roster.

## **Bogosian question mark as Sabres host Senators**

The Associated Press

February 3, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Buffalo Sabres were unable to recapture their overtime magic on Thursday, but they came awfully close in a thrilling 2-1 overtime loss to the New York Rangers.

The Sabres (20-20-10) will look to get back on track at home against the Ottawa Senators on Saturday at 7 p.m.

Just before the All-Star break, the Sabres rattled off three overtime wins in a row. Against the Rangers, Buffalo forced overtime on Cody Franson's goal with 5:31 remaining in regulation.

The Sabres had two quality chances in the extra session -- Henrik Lundqvist extended his pads to rob Kyle Okposo on a 2-on-1 and Evander Kane put a hard shot off the post one minute later -- before ultimately falling on Chris Kreider's game-winner.

The Sabres had 37 shots while goalie Robin Lehner made 42 saves for Buffalo.

"I thought we did a lot of good things," Franson said. "I thought this was a pretty good bounce-back game for us."

One question mark heading into Saturday's game against the Senators is the status of defenseman Zach Bogosian, who was injured with 4:40 remaining in the first period after taking a hit to the boards by rookie Jimmy Vesey and did not return.

It was yet another setback to Buffalo's defense, which has been saddled with injuries and setbacks all season.

"It definitely plays a part, especially when it's a guy like Bogo," Franson said. "Bogo's been a horse for us. He's played very well."

Ottawa (27-16-6) is coming off a 5-2 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Thursday night, which snapped a two-game losing streak. Mark Stone had two goals and Erik Karlsson had three assists in the victory.

"We wanted to get back to our defensive game and we came in against a very offensive team and gave up 21 shots," Senators head coach Guy Boucher said, according to the team's website. "To me that was the main thing. We got offense on top of that and we wanted to play 60 minutes and we did so that makes me happy. And Erik was just unbelievable."

On the season, Karlsson has a team-best 44 points (8 goals, 36 assists) in 49 games.

The win over the Lightning was a special one in particular for Boucher. It was his first game in Tampa since he was let go by the Lightning on March 24, 2013. He coached the team for four seasons (2010-13).

"Well, it was great to come back here, an organization that gave me a lot, me and my family," Boucher said, according to the team's website. "It was a good day."

The Sabres have held a small edge over the Senators this season. Buffalo has won two of three games (a 2-1 victory on Nov. 5 and a 5-4 win on Nov. 29) while falling in a shootout at home on Nov. 9.