



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 6, 2017*

## **Lehner makes 37 saves in Sabres' 4-0 win over Senators**

By Jonah Bronstein

Associated Press

February 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Robin Lehner relied on his knowledge of his former team to earn his first shutout of the season.

Lehner made 37 saves, Kyle Okposo scored his 16th goal and the Buffalo Sabres beat the Ottawa Senators 4-0 on Saturday night to snap a three-game skid.

Lehner got his fourth career shutout. His first two came with the Senators, who traded him to Buffalo before last season.

"They are a smart team out there. Obviously, playing with them a little bit, I know their tendencies and where they are going to go," Lehner said. "I do a lot of pre-scout, a lot of thinking out there. That's a big part of my game, to try and see what's going to happen."

In five games against the Senators over the past two seasons, Lehner is 3-0-2 with a .961 save percentage and a 1.18 goals-against average.

The Sabres also got goals from Ryan O'Reilly, Sam Reinhart and Marcus Foligno. Jack Eichel had two assists.

"It's a big win, but the big piece is Lenny there," O'Reilly said.

Buffalo is 5-0-1 in its last six home games and has earned a point in seven straight games against Ottawa.

The Senators closed out a three-game road trip with their fourth loss in six games.

"They outplayed us for most of the game and we didn't deserve it," forward Zack Smith said. "We threw a lot of pucks at the net, but I don't think we were there enough."

Mike Condon allowed four goals on 25 shots before getting pulled in the third period. Condon was making his 18th straight start, and coach Guy Boucher said he took him out to get backup Andrew Hammond some playing time, not because he was displeased with Condon's performance.

Okposo gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead with 9:49 left in the first period. He received a pass from Justin Falk in the left corner, held off defenseman Marc Methot as he skated to the left slot and flipped a backhand into the far corner.

O'Reilly scored his 10th to make it 2-0 with 3:09 remaining in the second. Stationed in the right slot, O'Reilly redirected Rasmus Ristolainen's wrist shot from the point past Condon.

Lehner made 13 saves in the second period. His best stop came in the final minute when he skated out of the crease and reached back to glove a hard wrist shot by Mike Hoffman.

Reinhart knocked in the rebound of his own missed shot 5:53 into the third period for his 11th goal of the season. Foligno slid a wrist shot under Condon's pads with 9:09 remaining after Eichel intercepted Dion Phaneuf's clearing pass. Eichel also assisted on Reinhart's goal.

Lehner had 16 saves in the third period, including five on a Senators' power play.

"He played phenomenal tonight," O'Reilly said. "All year, he's been one of the most consistent players."

NOTES: The Senators were last shut out by Washington on Jan. 7 and had scored 42 goals in the 11 games since. ... Sabres D Josh Gorges returned after missing 12 games with a hip injury and had an assist on Okposo's goal. D Jake McCabe was also back in the lineup after being out five games due to a shoulder injury. ... D Zach Bogosian (ribs) and F William Carrier (knee) were scratched after getting hurt in Buffalo's 2-1 loss to the Rangers

on Thursday. ... Buffalo recalled F Justin Bailey on Saturday and sent F Cal O'Reilly to the minors. O'Reilly cleared waivers on Friday. ... Buffalo is 8-0-0 this year when Eichel has two or more points.

Up Next:

Senators: Host St. Louis on Tuesday to start a four-game homestand.

Sabres: Begin a stretch of five games in seven days at New Jersey on Monday.

## **Devils, Sabres both attempting to climb back into race**

Associated Press

February 5, 2017

Both the Buffalo Sabres and New Jersey Devils, who face off against one another Monday night at the Prudential Center, are within striking distance of a playoff spot in the tight Eastern Conference. Both are in need of an exceptionally strong push to pass a slew of teams still ahead of them in the standings, however.

The Sabres (21-20-10) are tied for last place in the East with 52 points, yet are only seven points behind the eighth-place Philadelphia Flyers in the conference. They picked up at least one point in five of their last seven games (4-2-1) following Saturday's 4-0 shutout victory over the Ottawa Senators.

"We want to get to our best," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said on Saturday. "We want to get where we're a good team every night."

The Devils (22-21-10) are two points better than the Sabres, and that much closer to the final playoff spot in the East. Like Buffalo, the Devils have played better of late, picking up points in seven of their last 10 games (6-3-1) after skating to an impressive 5-1 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday night.

However, what stands out the most about New Jersey's recent play is how lopsided their home and road splits have been.

While the Devils have won their last six road games, they have not won on home ice since Jan. 2, posting an 0-5-2 mark in that span.

"We have to be a good road team and a good home team, just be a good team period," said Devils right winger Kyle Palmieri.

Monday's contest is the start of a five-game home stand for the Devils, and a stretch where they play eight of their next nine games at the Prudential Center, a building that has seen New Jersey win just once in its last ten home contests (1-7-2).

The good news for New Jersey is that its long dormant offense is waking up. The Devils have scored 12 goals in their last three games overall, and have recorded four or more goals in four of their last eight games.

"We are generating more chances, and when you're getting chances you start feeling better about your game," said Palmieri, who has ten goals in his last 21 outings. "You start to feel more confident out there to make plays and have the puck on your stick."

On Saturday, the Devils scored five goals for only the fourth time this season. Taylor Hall, who had not scored a goal in the previous seven games, netted a pair, and Travis Zajac scored for the first time in ten games.

The contributions came from everywhere Saturday as Jacob Josefson recorded his first goal of the season, and defenseman Seth Helgeson scored the first goal of his National Hockey League career.

Like New Jersey, the Sabres have struggled offensively most of the season, as well. Both teams have scored 125 goals, just one more than the Florida Panthers, who have the fewest goals in the conference.

Saturday was a feel-good win, though, for the Sabres as four different players scored, Jack Eichel had a pair of assists, and Robin Lehner made 37 saves for his first shutout of the season.

"We've all been working hard, but we just haven't had results," Marcus Foligno said to the team's web site after scoring his ninth goal Saturday. "It's nice to have results lately."

Two important defensemen returned to the Sabres lineup following injury absences, as well. Josh Gorges missed 12 games due to a hip injury, and Jake McCabe was back after sitting out the previous five contests with a shoulder issue.

The Sabres defense corps is now almost back to full strength, though Zach Bogosian will not play against the Devils because of a rib injury.

"It's nice to be playing better, but I've got to be honest, every two points we get is a really good feeling" said Lehner. "We want that feeling to continue."

## **After impressive win, Sabres' goal is to build on it**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 4, 2017

Maybe, just maybe, the Sabres finally get it.

There wasn't a lot of hooting and hollering after Saturday's 4-0 shutout of Ottawa. There certainly could have been. It was a needed victory against a division opponent, a win filled with solid goaltending, balanced scoring and acts of camaraderie.

But after it ended, Buffalo's players paused and said it doesn't mean much if they don't do it next game.

"We kind of had a talk after," defenseman Jake McCabe said in KeyBank Center. "We'll have these couple of good games, and then we'll go away from what makes us successful for a couple games. At this point in the season, we cannot have that."

A brutal loss to end January coupled with the prospect of 11 games in 18 days seems to have made Buffalo realize a few things. The first is it can't have repeats of the 5-2 loss in Montreal. The second is the season is far from over.

"We got outplayed in Montreal, just dominated, and that was kind of a spark for us to come back and start working hard again," center Ryan O'Reilly said. "We used that to fuel us, and we've got to keep that mindset of every time we come to the rink we're angry and we want to be better, we're not satisfied.

"When we do that, we find ways to win games. That will get us back to where we want to be, and that's in the playoffs."

During the Sabres' season-long bouts of inconsistency, the playoffs seemed like a pipe dream. Now? Not so much.

There are 31 games left, and 10 are against Atlantic Division foes. So in nearly one-third of the games, Buffalo can make up ground. Third-place Boston is six points up with four extra games played, though the Sabres still have to chase down Toronto, Florida and Detroit.

They play the Maple Leafs three times, Florida and Tampa Bay twice, and Detroit, Ottawa and Montreal once.

"You look at our conference, it's crazy," said Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner, who put up a 37-save shutout. "There's 30 games left, and there's a lot that can happen. It's not like it's 15, 20 points down.

"We need to get more consistent, and that's every period. We believe in each other, but we also recognize our flaws right now. One, two big wins, then going two losses, it's not going to cut it if we want to make a push."

The first thing Lehner said in response to the victory was, "Yeah, but ..."

"It's a big win for us and it's a good two points, but there's still things we need to work on," he said. "We want to be a better team. We want to be a more consistent team."

As Lehner said, that's a period-to-period challenge. Buffalo had a great first and a good third. The Senators had their way in the second – a big reason they finished the game with a six-minute edge in zone time – but Lehner shut the door and O'Reilly provided a late goal.

"We want to get to our best," coach Dan Bylsma said. "We want to get to where we're a good team every night. Whether we win or lose, we've got to learn what we can get better from and get better at."

There will be a lot of chances to learn lessons. Starting with Monday's game in New Jersey, the Sabres' run to their bye week features nine games in 14 days. Six of those are at home, where Buffalo is on a 5-0-1 run.

Maybe, just maybe, they realize their time is now.

"It's a tight race in the East now in general, and we need to keep putting teams behind us and chase the teams in front of us," McCabe said. "It's an exciting month for us to really show the league what we're capable of."

## **Mike Harrington: Patriot Way a model for Eichel**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 4, 2017

Growing up in Boston, Jack Eichel has seen a lot of winning in his 20 years. Just since he turned 5, the Red Sox snapped their much-ballyhooed curse to win three World Series, the Bruins ended a 39-year title drought to win the Stanley Cup in 2011 and the Celtics won their 17th NBA title in 2008.

But there's little question the most impressive run going in the four major sports is owned by the New England Patriots. Super Bowl LI against the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday will be their seventh in that span. Four other seasons ended in losses in the AFC Championship Game.

Eichel, as you would imagine, is an unabashed fan. He's been on the sidelines at New Era Field watching Tom Brady & Co. up close. But Eichel has advanced past pure fandom now. The professional athlete in him has been taking notes.

"I really take a lot from them," the Sabres center said as we chatted Saturday morning in KeyBank Center. "Look at their organization. First and foremost, there's nobody bigger than the team. They just traded their best defensive player away this year because he wanted too much money. Traded him in the middle of the season for a third-round pick and they're still in the Super Bowl? What does it say about their organization that you can do that?"

The reference is to linebacker Jamie Collins, who was sent to Cleveland for a third-rounder in October and was known to be complaining about wanting Von Miller money going forward. Not how the Patriots do it. It's not about the name on the back of the jersey.

"It's everything about them," Eichel said. "They're so detailed, so dialed in from the owner to the coach to all the players. They're all on the same page all the time, all prepared for the game in the right way. It's a winning attitude. They expect to win and there's nothing less than winning for them."

The Sabres, of course, have struggled mightily with the winning thing in recent years. Saturday's full-marks, 4-0 victory over Ottawa was just their 100th in the last 3 1/2 seasons. They've lost 197. That's a heap-ton of losing. General Manager Tim Murray made it a point to emphasize the need to keep improving a "winning culture" when he talked Thursday to both The News and WGR Radio in separate interviews.

Eichel agrees.

"We're working on that, really working trying to take steps in the right direction every day," he said. "Everyone brings their own experience to the team and we understand that. We just have to put it together for it to translate to wins on the ice.

"You can say all you want in the room, do all you want in here. If you don't go on the ice and play, then what is there? You have a mouth. It's important if you're going to be vocal, you have to go out there and play well. That applies to me, to everybody."

An organization like the Patriots, of course, has a massive target on its back. Deflategate has made the Pats as hated as the New York Yankees ever were in the late '70s or late '90s. Probably more.

"They do a really good job of keeping distractions out of their building and there's been a lot of them," Eichel said. "There's so many distractions in a league like that. Think of how big the NFL is, how big the Patriots are. It's the NFL. The number of distractions from day to day, week to week and season to season in their case. They find a way to always block them out. It's so admirable, to say the least."

Coach Dan Bylsma, a Michigan native who honed his craft in Pittsburgh, said he's no fan of the Pats as a team. But he certainly respects how they persevere too.

"I am a fan of what they've done and what they've built with their program, with their coach with great players like Tom Brady," he said. "It's the best of our time and it's lasted a long time with them building a culture of how they play, what they do. It doesn't really matter who they do it with. They get guys to come in, play the 'Patriot Way' and it's pretty remarkable to see their success over the period of time they've had."

Eichel was flying at stages of Saturday's game and said he's well past his high ankle sprain that cost him the season's first 21 games. The Sabres are 7-0-1 this year when Eichel scores a goal (losing only at Chicago in overtime) and 10-3-1 when he registers a point. He had two assists Saturday.

"I've felt good in the back to backs with the exception of the Islanders game," he said, referring to Buffalo's 5-1 clunker in Brooklyn two days before Christmas. "I don't think too many guys felt good that night. It was the end of a long run of games and a skid. Other than that, I've been good and I've done a good job preparing myself for the next game and getting my body ready."

Eichel scooted around Erik Karlsson to create a first-period opportunity for Marcus Foligno, fed Cody Franson for a good chance later in the period and undressed the Senators defense before shooting wide on a second-period rush. Eichel's pass to Sam Reinhart created the space for his fellow No. 2 overall pick to bang home the Sabres' third goal early in the third.

The Sabres improved to 5-0-1 in their last six games at home, which bodes well for a February that seems them here seven more times this month.

"We're playing more confident, showing that feeling," said Eichel, who has 13 points in his 14 home games this season. "We want to turn this place into a building that opposing teams don't like to come into and one we thrive in. You can't do that if you don't get results. You have to win before those things happen."

The Sabres return here Tuesday for a very intriguing showdown with defending Western Conference champion San Jose. Before that, they practice Sunday morning before heading to New Jersey for Monday's game against the Devils. Sunday night, by the way, is already filled on Eichel's calendar.

Said Eichel with a smile as sly as the one Brady likes to give: "I'm sure I'll find a TV somewhere."

## **Sabres notebook: Foligno ends his scoring drought**

By Amy Moritz  
The Buffalo News  
February 4, 2017

There have been a lot of zeros on the score sheet for Marcus Foligno lately. The winger has been on a line with superstars-in-the-making Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart but for 10 games he had no goals, not even an assist, to show for it.

That changed Saturday night as Foligno scored midway through the third period of the Buffalo Sabres 4-0 win over the Ottawa Senators in KeyBank Center.

The play started when Foligno went into the corner to forecheck, forcing Ottawa defenseman Dion Phaneuf to turn the puck over to Eichel. Eichel then fed Foligno, who was streaking to the net, and the winger snapped in the Sabres' fourth goal of the game.

And thus ended the 10-game drought for Foligno. More importantly, it gave him a point on the line with Eichel and Reinhart, relieving some pressure he felt to produce.

"I mean, you get put on a line with those guys and you need to perform with them and contribute," Foligno said. "I felt some pressure to perform and play a good game for those guys.

"You don't want to put too much pressure on yourself but yeah, I do feel like you're playing with two great players, players that are going to have amazing careers. This is a chance for me to contribute offensively, too. But I've got to remind myself that what I did tonight against Ottawa with the physicality and the fight and just simplicity of my game, it led to results. I can't toe-drag like Jack can but I've got to make sure that I'm giving him room and Sam room out there."

While trying to contribute offensively, Foligno also understands his role as a physical player. That included fighting Mark Borowiecki in the second period after the Senators' defenseman was a little too aggressive with Eichel. It also helped the Sabres energy, which was lacking in the second despite a 1-0 lead.

"It's something where Borowiecki was running down the boards, he does that a lot, he's a physical player but when you do that against Jack, something's got to be said," Foligno said.

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Sabres captain Brian Gionta is a native of the Rochester area, a soccer hotbed, and showed off his European football skills in the first period when he headed a puck at the blue line into the Ottawa zone.

"That was just where it was coming," Gionta said. "I was hoping it would come down earlier but it kept sailing so I had to improvise."

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It was the first game back for Sabres defensemen Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe.

And for coach Dan Bylsma the return of Gorges was welcomed, mostly so Gorges would stop his incessant insistence he was ready to play.

"If it were up to Josh he probably would have sat out 20 hours and not 20 days," Bylsma said Saturday morning. "He's been saying for a good portion of time that he's ready to play and could play and wants to play. His injury was one that he wasn't able to have any activity for a portion of time. In the last nine days he's returned to exercise and it's just a matter of him feeling comfortable on the ice to get back in there. Josh has been one miserable guy to be around. I didn't walk by him without him saying he was ready to play for 15 days."

Gorges, who picked up an assist on the first Sabres' goal, missed 12 games with a severely bruised hip which included a hematoma. That's what kept Gorges sidelined longer and what was frustrating for the defenseman, who last played on Jan. 5.

"This sort of injury was a difficult one because I didn't know how to deal with it," Gorges said, noting he was "feeling good for a while.

"Talking with the doctors, knowing what was going on, there was a risk to coming back too soon that just wasn't worth it. I understand that from a medical standpoint but as a player, you never want to hear that. You keep pushing and keep saying 'I'm ready, I'm ready.' It's good that the day finally came."

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Saturday was the first day that goaltenders were required to wear new, slimmer-fitting, pants as part of the NHL's desire to increase scoring by decreasing goalie equipment size.

For Sabres' goalie Robin Lehner it wasn't a big deal. He's been wearing the new pants all season.

"Well I've had them all year since I got them," Lehner said. "I don't see any problems with them. After you use them a little bit they flatten out a little bit. I don't think it's going to be a big deal. It was not a big change. They're a little more rounded so you've got to squeeze your arms a little harder when it goes to the outside of our pants because it's not that flat edge that you had before that just kind of stopped the pucks but it's not a big change."

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The Sabres will host a screening of the film "Soul On Ice: Past, Present & Future" at 7 p.m. Feb. 15 at the Dipson Amherst Theater. Tickets are \$10 with proceeds benefiting Hasek's Heroes.

The film touches on the contributions of black athletes to hockey, primarily following Jaden Lindo as he works to reach the NHL. Former Sabres Tony McKegney and Grant Fuhr offer in-depth interviews in the film.

McKegney and fellow Sabres' alum Val James will be part of panel discussion after the film with director Damon Kwame Mason.

Tickets can be purchased at the Dipson Amherst Theatre ticket office or online at [Sabres.com/soulonice](http://Sabres.com/soulonice).

## **Quick hits: Sabres 4, Senators 0**

By John Vogl  
The Buffalo News  
February 4, 2017

One of these days, the Senators might hand Robin Lehner a regulation loss. It certainly wasn't going to be Saturday.

The former Ottawa goaltender continued to torment his old team, stopping 37 shots in the Sabres' 4-0 victory. Lehner improved to 3-0-2 against the Senators with a .961 save percentage and 1.18 goals-against average.

His efforts and balanced scoring allowed the Sabres to end an 0-2-1 skid. They improved to 5-0-1 in the last six games in KeyBank Center, 5-0-2 in the last seven against Ottawa and 21-20-10 this season.

Taking the lead: Kyle Okposo showed All-Star moves to give Buffalo a 1-0 lead midway through the opening period. He played keep-away against Sens defenseman Marc Methot below the goal line and along the boards. Seeing open space in the slot, Okposo cut to the front and put home a top-shelf backhand with 10:11 gone.

It was Okposo's 16th of the season and third against Ottawa.

Doubling up: The Senators took 11 of the first 14 shots during the second period, but it didn't matter as they couldn't score. On the 15th shot, Buffalo did. Rasmus Ristolainen sent a high shot from the blue line, and Ryan O'Reilly reached up to redirect the puck past goaltender Mike Condon.

Tripling up: Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart showed their uncanny knack for finding each other to give Buffalo a 3-0 lead. Eichel went around defenseman Dion Phaneuf deep in the Sens' zone, then put a no-look pass on Reinhart's stick. Condon stopped Reinhart's first attempt, but the right winger followed his shot and roofed the rebound with 14:07 to play.

Quadrupling up: Marcus Foligno pressured the Ottawa defense into a turnover, and Eichel gave his left winger the puck back. Foligno promptly deposited his ninth of the year and first in 11 games with 9:09 left.

That was the end of Condon's night, who was replaced by Andrew Hammond after allowing four goals on 25 shots.

Hot at home: O'Reilly has 12 points in his last 11 games in KeyBank Center. Eichel has 13 points in his 14 home games. Reinhart has 10 points in the last 10 games downtown.

Using his head: Soccer star Lionel Messi has nothing on Sabres captain Brian Gionta, who used eye-head coordination to dump the puck into Ottawa's zone. Ristolainen lofted the puck from deep in the Sabres' zone to the Ottawa blue line. Gionta stopped, waited for the puck to arrive and then hit it perfectly off the center of his helmet to continue the outlet play.

Gloving it: Lehner earned a partial standing ovation with 17.5 seconds left in the second, flashing the leather on Mike Hoffman. Lehner came far out of the crease to stone the winger, who had eight goals in his previous 10 games.

Enough: Eichel burned the Senators during his season debut in November, and the Senators were determined not to give him room. They played physical against the center, including a hit by Mark Borowiecki midway through the second. Sabres left wing Marcus Foligno had enough, engaging the Ottawa defenseman in a haymaker-filled fight.

Back on the blue line: The Sabres welcomed back defensemen Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe. Gorges, who'd missed 12 games, skated with Justin Falk. McCabe, who missed five games, skated alongside Cody Franson.

Defenseman Taylor Fedun was a healthy scratch, while Zach Bogosian missed his first game with a rib injury. He's day-to-day, coach Dan Bylsma said.

Forward swap: The Sabres recalled left wing Justin Bailey from Rochester and sent center Cal O'Reilly to the Amerks. Bailey took the lineup spot of William Carrier, who will miss a "little bit" with a knee injury, Bylsma said.

Bailey started on the fourth line with center Nicolas Deslauriers and right wing Tyler Ennis. He also took shifts in place of Matt Moulson alongside O'Reilly and Okposo.

Young guests: The Buffalo Jr. Sabres Pee Wee Major team, coached by former Sabres captain Craig Rivet, took part in a pregame ceremony and welcomed the NHL club to the ice. The Jr. Sabres are headed to Quebec for an international tournament.

Counting the house: The Sabres announced 19,070 tickets sold, their sixth sellout in 24 home games.

Next: Four of the Sabres' next five games are in back-to-back situations. They play Monday in New Jersey, then host San Jose on Tuesday. After hosting Anaheim on Thursday, they'll go to Toronto on Saturday and host Vancouver next Sunday.

## **Inside the Sabres: Expansion draft doesn't affect trade plans**

By John Vogl  
The Buffalo News  
February 4, 2017

The NHL trade deadline is approaching, and there's an added wrinkle that will affect the deals. The expansion draft won't impact the Sabres, though.

At least not yet.

The league is holding its expansion draft for the Vegas Golden Knights in June. There are rules regarding experience, contract status and number of players exposed at each position.

Several teams will have to make moves by the March 1 deadline just to become compliant for the expansion draft. Despite rumblings, Buffalo is not one of them.

First, the basics of the expansion draft:

\*Each team will submit a list of players that Vegas cannot select. The protected list can contain seven forwards, three defensemen and one goaltender; or eight skaters (forwards/defensemen) and one goalie.

\*All first- and second-year professionals, as well as unsigned draft choices, will be exempt from selection and will not be counted toward the protection limits.

\*Players with no-movement clauses must be put on the protected list.

In addition, the NHL says teams must expose at least one goalie who is under contract for 2017-18 or will be a restricted free agent. If the club elects to make a restricted free agent available, that goalie must have received his qualifying offer.

The Sabres have four goaltenders with NHL contracts: Robin Lehner, Anders Nilsson, Linus Ullmark and Jason Kasdorf. There's no way the Sabres will expose Lehner to Vegas after giving up a first-round pick to get him. Nilsson is not under contract for 2017-18, so he's not eligible. Kasdorf is exempt from the expansion draft as a first- or second-year professional.

That leaves Ullmark, and there have been eligibility questions about the goalie. He is in his second season with the Sabres, which seemingly puts him on the exempt list. However, because he played professionally in Europe in his 20s, that counts as additional experience. He is not a first- or second-year pro and can be exposed to Vegas.

Having Ullmark allows the Sabres to protect Lehner and meet the expansion criteria without trading for a goalie.

Here are the Sabres eligible for the exempt, protected and exposure lists:

\*Exempt as first- and second-year professionals – Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart, Alex Nylander, Hudson Fasching, Evan Rodrigues, Eric Cornel, Nick Baptiste, Vaclav Karabacek, Justin Bailey, Jean Dupuy, Brendan Guhle, Brycen Martin, Casey Nelson and Kasdorf.

\*Must be protected – Kyle Okposo, who has a no-movement clause.

\*Eligible for exposure – Ryan O'Reilly, Evander Kane, Matt Moulson, Tyler Ennis, Brian Gionta, Marcus Foligno, Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson, Nicolas Deslauriers, Cal O'Reilly, William Carrier, Justin Kea, Cole Schneider, Dan Catenacci, Rasmus Ristolainen, Zach Bogosian, Dmitry Kulikov, Josh Gorges, Cody Franson, Jake McCabe, Justin Falk, Taylor Fedun, Erik Burgdoerfer, Brady Austin, Lehner and Ullmark.

When Bogosian signed with Winnipeg in 2013, he had a no-movement clause that kicked in for the 2015-16 to 2019-20 seasons. According to a source, Buffalo chose not to honor that clause after acquiring him in February 2015, so the Sabres are not required to protect him.

Since trades will affect the players on these lists, we'll examine the Sabres' protection options closer to the expansion draft.

#### KANE AND THE NET

Kane is leading the Sabres in shots for the second straight season, entering the weekend with 132 shots on 179 attempts. He paced Buffalo with 271 shots on 362 attempts last year.

Although a common sight is Kane skating across the blue line and shooting from above the left circle, he was right Monday when he said, "I've always gone to the net."

According to a website that tracks and graphs shots (<https://dtmaboutheart.shinyapps.io/ShotCharts/>), Kane has been within 35 feet of the net – below the top of the circles – on 60.4 percent of his shot attempts since coming into the NHL in 2009. He has been within 20 feet – between the faceoff dots – 33.4 percent of the time.

The percentages had dipped through his opening 120 attempts this year. He took 50.8 percent within 35 feet and 25.8 percent within 20 feet. According to the site, 90 percent of Kane's goals have come from below the top of the circles.

The winger is on pace for 25 goals. That would be Kane's highest total since scoring 30 times for Winnipeg in 2011-12.

## **Spot on Sabres' top line is there for the taking**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 5, 2017

There's a prime piece of real estate available in Sabreland. It's on the left side of Buffalo's last two All-Stars.

"I'd like to see someone grab it," coach Dan Bylsma said Sunday.

It'll be up to Tyler Ennis, Matt Moulson or Justin Bailey to do it. All three earned shifts with center Ryan O'Reilly and right wing Kyle Okposo during Saturday's win over Ottawa. All three could see time there Monday when the Sabres visit New Jersey.

Of course, if someone performs well enough, the others won't get a chance.

"I'd like one of those guys to grab hold of that spot and not let it go," Bylsma said in KeyBank Center.

Based on practice, Moulson will again start as the left winger on the O'Reilly line. He got seven shifts in that spot Saturday. Ennis slid onto the line for seven shifts, while Bailey had two with the All-Stars.

"We're mentally prepared for that," Moulson said. "That's how it's been over the last two years. You want to be out there and contribute, just be ready when you are called."

The call can create anxious moments. It doesn't matter if the player is a veteran or rookie. There's a burst of energy when your name is called for the top line, an instant of deflation when someone else is told to hop over the boards.

"Everybody's competitive," Ennis said. "Everybody that plays hockey wants to be on the top line. There's a good, healthy competition. I think every line's been contributing, playing well and playing hard.

"You've just got to make sure you're playing well every shift. You can't take a shift off. That's the situation that it's in. You've got to go prove yourself every shift."

Ennis' scoring ability can earn him shifts in the offensive zone. He has one goal and two assists in his eight games since returning from sports hernia/groin surgery.

Moulson, meanwhile, has the two-way game to earn time in close games or when Buffalo wants to close out a team. He got the majority of his time with O'Reilly during the first and third periods against Ottawa. Moulson has just one goal in the last 10 games and two in the past 22.

"Right now a lot of times it's situationally based," Bylsma said.

The wild card is Bailey. The rookie is on his third call-up of the season, and he's grown each time. He started with center Nicolas Deslauriers and Ennis, but he got the two shifts with O'Reilly and three with Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

It paid off. Bailey was plus-2. He was on the ice when Okposo opened the scoring and also when Reinhart made it 3-0.

"I just feel like it's a privilege to play with those guys," Bailey said. "Those are guys that keep the puck in the offensive zone for the entire shift, so I think anytime you get a shift with them, you want to make the most of it."

Bailey scored his first NHL goal during his previous recall, which lasted seven games. After being sent to Rochester, he continued to dominate the American Hockey League. He has 11 goals and 14 points in 13 games.

"It was just motivating," he said of the previous stay. "You get a taste, and anytime you get a taste you want to do your best to stick.

"Going back down there, I just continued to play with speed. The more I played with speed, the more I had chances. I'm starting to figure out down there what it takes to be successful, so I've just got to find those things that transfer up to here. Hopefully, I'll have the same success."

Bailey has the speed edge over Moulson and a physical advantage over Ennis. In fact, Bylsma says, Bailey has an advantage over a lot of guys. The coach wants him to realize it.

"He needs to recognize the speed that he has is a weapon, and it's a weapon against pretty much every defenseman he's going against," Bylsma said. "When you have the ability to skate like he does, you should be using it every time and every chance you can to exploit pretty much anyone he's playing against."

## **Sabres Notebook: Happy returns for defense; Grant waived**

By John Vogl  
The Buffalo News  
February 5, 2017

Inserting one player after an injury layoff can create anxious moments. The Sabres had two defensemen come back after long breaks.

Thanks to the forwards, there was nothing to worry about.

An impressive first period by Buffalo on Saturday allowed Jake McCabe and Josh Gorges to ease into the action. By the time the 4-0 victory over Ottawa was complete, they'd combined for one assist and a plus-3 rating.

"Fortunate enough, our forwards were awesome in the first period," Gorges said Sunday. "We got to play a lot of shifts in the offensive zone, and you just start to feel yourself again. You don't have to do too much, so it was a good way to ease into it.

"The team played great. It was fun."

Gorges had missed 12 games with a hip ailment, while McCabe was out for five games with a shoulder injury. Heading into Monday's game in New Jersey, they feel like they haven't missed a shift.

"I really liked how they jumped back in," coach Dan Bylsma said in KeyBank Center. "Both guys, with our practice schedule the way it goes, we just don't get a lot of time to have practices. They've been skating on their own the last few days, and to toss them both back in there, I don't think either of them missed a beat."

Bylsma's only qualm was McCabe was a little too aggressive. There were several skirmishes, including a significant one with Evander Kane and Ottawa's Chris Wideman and Mark Borowiecki, and McCabe hopped in despite the shoulder problem.

"He jumped in there in the ruckus at the end of the game when Evander jumped in there, and I'm trying to pull Jake out of there," Bylsma said. "There was one earlier in the game, and I was like, 'Get out of there.'

"Jake was really good, really solid. Simple with his game, but I thought he played a real strong game."

The Sabres brought seven defensemen to New Jersey, with Zach Bogosian staying home. He is day-to-day with a rib injury.

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Sabres General Manager Tim Murray said last week he is in the market for a fourth-line center. He has a chance to bring back his original one.

Nashville placed Derek Grant on waivers Sunday. The Predators claimed him off waivers from Buffalo last month. He has one assist in six games with Nashville but has been a healthy scratch since Jan. 22.

Because the Sabres lost Grant on waivers, they get the first chance of reclaiming him.

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Bylsma once again commended left wing Marcus Foligno for an impressive night Saturday. Foligno forced a turnover that turned into his goal, and he fought Borowiecki after the Senators repeatedly took shots at center Jack Eichel.

"Last game is a great indication of what Marcus is providing," Bylsma said. "In the first period, he had five net fronts that were scoring chances for somebody else but were the result of him going through and driving through and being at the net.

"It was pretty clear in the game in the first period that they were going after Jack and targeting Jack. That was Marcus' response to them doing that, and it was a real good one. It says a lot about your team when you have guys that are willing to step up and make that statement. I thought our team responded real well to it."

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The Sabres practiced without William Carrier. The left winger will miss a "little bit" with a lingering knee injury.

"It's a wear-and-tear injury for Will," Bylsma said. "Probably bone bruise would be the best description of what he's dealing with in his knee."

## **Lehner and Sabres shut out Ottawa 4-0**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 4, 2017

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Robin Lehner made 36 saves and four different players scored for the Buffalo Sabres in their 4-0 win over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday night at KeyBank Center.

### First Period

17:32 - Brian Gionta gets creative early on and uses his head/helmet to knock the puck into the offensive zone. The captain has had a very nice rebound year for the Sabres. I think he was one of the more consistent players in the first half of the year.

13:11 - Jake McCabe makes a really bad turnover in the Sabres end, and it nearly cost the team as a shot from the slot was directly on goal. Buffalo is going to need big things out of McCabe and Josh Gorges now that they are back and healthy.

12:43 - Buffalo has a quick burst in the offensive end, and surprise, surprise, Jack Eichel was right in the middle of it. His skating and vision were on display right there as he carried the puck from one side of the ice to the other below the goal line.

9:49 - SABRES GOAL. Kyle Okposo does it all himself with a delayed penalty call upcoming. His backhand shot goes over Mike Condon's shoulder and into the top corner of the net to give Buffalo the lead. 1-0 BUF.

6:21 - This has been a very good period for the blue and gold. They are showing passion and effort as they continue to move the puck through the Ottawa zone. Buffalo holds an 8-4 edge in shots, and it could even be more.

1:44 - Okposo's stick gets up high on an Ottawa defender and he heads to the penalty box for two minutes or less. It would be a big boost to the team if they can hold the lead and head into the locker room up a goal.

End of Period

### Goal Summary

BUF: 10:11 - Kyle Okposo (16) (Justin Falk, Josh Gorges)

OTT: none

### Penalty Summary

BUF: 17:53 - Kyle Okposo (2 min., high sticking)

OTT: none

### Shots on Goal

BUF - 10, OTT - 8

### Second Period

14:45 - Just one total shot on goal so far this frame. Buffalo is doing a very nice job of keeping the play to the outside and not letting Ottawa get a quality scoring chance in front of Robin Lehner.

12:13 - Just like that Ottawa has five quick shots on goal and are hemming the Sabres in their own zone. It has been sloppy the last few minutes. The changes, the passes, just plain sloppy.

8:46 - This period has quickly turned into the Senators period, despite a quick start by the Sabres. The team has just one shot on goal and it came quickly.

7:52 - Not sure which team needed the wake up more, but Marcus Foligno and Mark Borowiecki drop the gloves and halt play. "Moose" got the better punches in before the linesmen jumped in.

2:53 - SABRES GOAL. You could not ask for a much better deflection than what Ryan O'Reilly pulled off on the Rasmus Ristolainen shot from the point. The puck changed directions on the drop of a dime and jump starts the Buffalo offense. 2-0 BUF.

End of Period  
Goal Summary

BUF: 16:51 - Ryan O'Reilly (10) (Rasmus Ristolainen, Tyler Ennis)  
OTT: none

Penalty Summary

BUF: 12:08 - Marcus Foligno (5 min., fighting)  
OTT: Mark Borowiecki (5 min., fighting)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 7 (17), OTT - 13 (21)

Third Period

16:36 - Gorges goes off for hooking as he is called for getting his stick up around the hands of an Ottawa player off of a defensive zone face-off. Big spot here for Buffalo to keep this a two-goal game.

14:07 - SABRES GOAL. Sam Reinhart does not give up on the play and a second chance opportunity makes it a three-goal lead for Buffalo. Jack Eichel was right in the middle of the play for the team. It was a nice bounce back play after being dominated in their own end for much of the stanza. 3-0 BUF.

9:09 - SABRES GOAL. Marcus Foligno does it all himself, and the forward is rewarded with his ninth goal of the season. Mike Condon should have stopped the shot that was low along the ice, but he cannot and he is relived by Andrew Hammond for the remainder of the night. 4-0 BUF.

End of Game  
Sabres 4, Ottawa 0

Goal Summary

BUF: 5:53 - Sam Reinhart (11) (Jack Eichel). 10:51 - Marcus Foligno (9) (Jack Eichel)  
OTT: none

Penalty Summary

BUF: 3:24 - Josh Gorges (2 min., hooking). 13:22 - Evander Kane (2 min., roughing). 13:22 - Evander Kane (10 min., misconduct)  
OTT: Mark Borowiecki (2 min., roughing). 13:22 - Mark Borowiecki (10 min., misconduct)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 9 (26), OTT - 16 (37)

## **The Sabres' goalies are good with the new pants**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 4, 2017

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- All National Hockey League goaltenders must be wearing the new smaller pants. Robin Lehner got his early and has been wearing them all season while Anders Nilsson said, "I've had them for about a week I'd say. I got in them as soon as we got back from the break, so I feel comfortable in them right now."

Some coaches and goalies around the NHL aren't happy that the change came in the middle of the season, but Dan Bylsma isn't that bothered by it, "For us, Robin's been in them the whole year and Anders has been in them quite a bit, so for us, it's been pretty much the whole year, so it's not a big adjustment."

The NHL has been trying to make goaltending equipment smaller to help increase scoring. Bylsma said, "I think forever and a day, goaltenders are trying to find ways to stop the puck and I'd like them to continue to do that. At the same time as a shooter, you know when you see a guy's glove and there's some attachments to it that could be argued don't have much to do with safety, I like streamlining a little bit."

Making the pants smaller isn't the end-all. Bylsma said, "You can look at the 60 different pants in our league from guy to guy and you can see guys wear their pants differently. Maybe for comfort, maybe for other reasons and to streamline them, I don't really have an issue with."

Anders Nilsson chirped in, "Both yes and no. I don't think all the answers is to score more goals, it's not to make the equipment smaller, it's a big part in how the game is played and different reasons to why you don't see a lot of goals in certain games, but on the other hand, I still think there's some room to make the equipment smaller too. As Robin says it's not the equipment that should make the save, it's the goalie and I agree on that 100 percent, so I think there's definitely some room to make the equipment smaller, but it can't be on the cost that you're going to see injuries."

Robin Lehner has been very consistent on this topic. He said, "I think they should make things smaller, it's the goalie underneath that's going to make the save, it's not the equipment on top. There's only so much they can do, but hopefully they'll change the chest protectors and that would be it."

The pants were supposed to be ready last September, but with so many manufacturers, they couldn't get it done. Nilsson seems to think the pants will be fine after an adjustment period, "There's a little difference, the legs are more rounder and the biggest difference I felt was around the hips, where they're a lot tighter and sits a lot closer to your body, so you have to squeeze a little harder with your arms to prevent those pucks from sneaking in between the arms and the hips, so it's definitely an adjustment for us goalies."

I thought Nilsson might object to having to get used to new equipment in mid-season, but he said, "No, honestly for me that doesn't matter. Every goalie knew about this and knew that this change was going to happen. We thought it was going to happen before the season started, but for different reason it didn't and I've had these pants sitting here for about two months, so we got a heads-up about four weeks ago, so every goalie had more than enough time to get used to the pants."

Lehner has never been worried about the change because he got his pants right away, "I got my pants in the beginning of the year and I've used them since."

"It's not a tremendous difference, so I'm fine with them. They just rounded them out a little bit, they're not as flat in front. Mine are not smaller, I'm a pretty big guy, so pucks can squeak through a little easier. It hasn't been a big change for me, it's just the shape of the pants is a little more round and pucks don't tend to stick to them as easy."

Bylsma said Will Carrier's knee injury is being called a bruise. Zach Bogosian watched Sunday's practice from the bench, but isn't skating yet.

## **Sabres goalie Robin Lehner shuts out Senators**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 4, 2017

BUFFALO – Robin Lehner, of course, always downplays it. Still, it's hardly a secret the Sabres goalie loves facing his former team, the Ottawa Senators.

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma has mentioned the twinkle Lehner gets in his eye. And the Swede's statistics against the Senators illustrate the tilts mean a little more.

Clearly, Lehner, who was traded to the Sabres for a first-round pick in 2015, wants to prove the Senators made a huge mistake by dishing him to an Atlantic Division rival.

Lehner dazzled again Saturday in the Sabres' 4-0 win against the Senators, making 37 saves for his first shutout this season and the fourth of his career.

"Yeah, it's nice, for sure," Lehner said. "But I'm over it. This is the team I like. This is the team I play for. You know, it's history."

Lehner possesses some scintillating numbers – 3-0-2 with a 1.18 goals-against average and a .961 save percentage – in seven games against the Senators.

Lehner made his slickest stop with 17.5 seconds left in the second period, snaring Mike Hoffman's shot from the left circle with a quick glove.

"There's a lot of focus in Robin when he knows he's facing not only the Senators, but a lot of guys he considers friends on the other side of the ice," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly believes facing your old team gives "a little more firepower."

"He's been one of the most consistent players," O'Reilly said. "He's given us a chance so many times. It's nice to see him beat his old team like that in a shutout. He played phenomenal tonight."

In ending their three-game losing streak, the Sabres won their fifth home game in six tries and extended their point streak at KeyBank Center to six games.

Start to finish, Saturday's win, the Sabres' 21st this season, was one of their most balanced efforts of 2016-17.

Kyle Okposo opened the scoring 10:11 into the contest, skating through the slot before backhanding a shot high over Ottawa goalie Mike Condon.

O'Reilly followed 16:51 into the second period, tipping Rasmus Ristolainen's point shot in from beside the net.

Before that goal, the Sabres had played a poor second period before the capacity crowd of 19,070 fans.

"We want to be a better team," Lehner said. "We want to be a more consistent team. We came out and had a good first but then in the second we let go a little bit. We have to get more consistent. And that's every period.

"We believe in each other. But we also recognize our flaws right now. One two big games and then go and two losses is not going to cut it."

O'Reilly said: "We got to keep that beginner's mindset every time we come to the rink we're (ticked) off and we want to be better, we're not satisfied."

A second period in which the Sabres got outshot 13-7 didn't satisfy them.

"Guys were a little upset with each other," O'Reilly said. "We regrouped. We said we got to come out, we got to work, we got to get back to winning battles. It's amazing when we do that and we play simple, we seem to find a way to win games."

Sam Reinhart scored 5:53 into the third period, connecting on Jack Eichel's slick backhand from behind the net.

Marcus Foligno, who fought Mark Borowiecki in the second period sticking up for Eichel, finished the scoring at 7:51 off an Eichel pass, his first goal in 11 games. With nine goals this season, Foligno's just one short of his career high he set in 2015-16.

"(Foligno) gets a big fight, we're able to score a couple goals in the third, our goalie stepped up for us and we win a game against a divisional opponent," Eichel said.

## **Sabres notes: Josh Gorges returns; Nick Deslauriers stays at center**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 4, 2017

BUFFALO – The badgering has finally stopped. Josh Gorges is healthy, back playing after a hip injury cost him 12 games. So Sabres coach Dan Bylsma can walk by the defenseman again without getting an earful.

“Josh has been one miserable guy to be around,” Bylsma said Saturday morning. “I don’t walk by him without him saying he’s ready to play, and that was about 15 days ago.”

Gorges, 32, played in Saturday’s 4-0 win against the Ottawa Senators inside KeyBank Center, his first action since Jan. 5. Meanwhile, defenseman Jake McCabe, 23, also returned after a shoulder injury sidelined him five games.

For Gorges, a proud, hard-nosed veteran, sitting out was excruciating.

“If it was up to Josh, he probably would’ve sat out 20 hours and not 20 days,” Bylsma said. “He’s been saying for a good portion of time he’s ready to play and could play and wants to play. His injury is one ... he wasn’t able to have any activity for a portion of time.”

Gorges said: “It’s been a tough last month.”

What happened? Gorges developed a hematoma, “an abnormal collection of blood outside of a blood vessel,” according to medicine.net, in his hip.

“In all my years of playing hockey, I’ve never heard of anybody having this injury,” Gorges said.

Gorges said he “didn’t know how to deal with” the injury. In the beginning, he said he was in too much pain to move.

“The last two weeks the pain subsided, but I was still in a position where I couldn’t really do much,” he said. “They didn’t want to have me doing any type of training, working out, skating that might aggravate it, irritate it, make it blow up again.”

Gorges said he felt healthy and normal.

“As good as I felt, there was something wrong inside,” he said.

Talking to his doctors, Gorges decided the risk of coming back early wasn’t worth it.

“I understand that from a medical standpoint, but (as) a player you never want to hear that,” he said. “You keep pushing, say, ‘No, I’m ready.’”

Gorges kept getting pushed recently by rehab coach Dennis Miller, who dresses in full gear and replicates game situations with some rigorous workouts.

“He’s the best I’ve seen at getting you ready not just to get back in shape, but to get back to playing hockey,” Gorges said.

Gorges mostly played with Justin Falk on Saturday. Both players registered an assist on Kyle Okposo’s first-period goal.

Even with Gorges and McCabe back, the Sabres’ blue line is still banged up. Defenseman Zach Bogosian suffered a muscle/rib injury in Thursday’s 2-1 overtime loss to the New York Rangers and is day-to-day, Bylsma said.

The Sabres also scratched defenseman Taylor Fedun.

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After playing center for the first time Thursday, defenseman-turned-winger Nick Deslauriers is ready to tackle another position for the Sabres.

"I'm waiting to see if I need to stack the pads in practice soon, just to have that on my resume," the versatile Deslauriers joked Saturday morning. "Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad to be like that."

Deslauriers became a winger in 2013-14 after starting his career as a defenseman, a move that helped him crack the NHL for the first time later that season.

"I'm used to changing positions quite a bit," said Deslauriers, who has been scratched regularly in recent weeks.

Deslauriers had never played center until Thursday, when Bylsma, with no other options, inserted him in the middle of the fourth line.

"I didn't get tested that much, so I don't really have an output on being a centerman." said Deslauriers, who played a career-low two minutes, 46 seconds over only five shifts Thursday.

Deslauriers played sparingly as a center again Saturday.

"It's probably the hardest minutes you can play in a hockey game," Deslauriers said of playing so little. "You got to stay focused. It's not the minutes you want to be playing that low, but sometimes you get put in those situations. (They're) pretty much critical.

"If you make a mistake, it might cost you the game. So that's why you have to be a little bit more focused than everybody else and just keep it simple."

xxx

Sabres rookie winger William Carrier will be sidelined "a little bit" with a knee injury, Bylsma said. To replace him, the Sabres recalled winger Justin Bailey from the Rochester Americans prior to the game.

Bailey, 21, has 19 goals and 29 points in 39 AHL games this season, including 11 goals in his last 12 contests. The Williamsville native has one goal in 10 NHL appearances this season.

The Sabres sent center Cal O'Reilly, who cleared waivers Friday, to the Amerks on Saturday.

## **Sabres' Marcus Foligno utilizing talents beside Jack Eichel**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 4, 2017

BUFFALO – Considering Marcus Foligno just scored his first goal in 11 games, his target number might seem a little high. After all, the Sabres winger endured an offensive drought following a promotion to a scoring line beside slick center Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

But Foligno, who has nine goals, one short of his career high set last season, wants to score 15 times this campaign.

"With 31 games left, it's doable, very doable," Foligno, who's on a 14-goal pace, said Sunday inside KeyBank Center. "That's my goal. You set goals for yourself in the offensive zone. Fifteen, it's realistic right now."

It's realistic, in part, because Foligno, 25, has developed chemistry beside Eichel and Reinhart, the team's two young offensive stars.

While the line couldn't score much before Saturday's 4-0 win against Ottawa – Eichel assisted on late goals from Foligno and Reinhart – it averaged seven or eight even-strength chances over a five-game stretch, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

"The number of scoring chances that they've gotten is (an) elite number," Bylsma said after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road tilt against the New Jersey Devils.

Saturday's game, Bylsma said, "is a great indication of what Marcus is providing."

The 6-foot-3, 228-pound Foligno helped generate opportunities by using his speed and muscle and getting to the net. Bylsma counted five times in the first period Foligno reached the crease for a scoring chance.

"Result of him going though and driving through," Bylsma said.

Eichel, 20, and Reinhart, 21, have spent most of the last year together, "so in terms of chemistry and reading off each other," Eichel said, "we know fairly well what each other are going to do."

Foligno's role as their left winger is simple.

"Got to be physical, open up space for Jack and Sam and make them feel as comfortable and let them play with confidence," Foligno said.

Still, Foligno wants to add his own flair to the line.

"I can't just be simple," he said. "Jack and Sam are really creative. I got to make sure that I can do a nifty pass here and there. I got to hold on pucks. ... You can't just dump it in and chase those guys all the time. They're more of a skill set, so you want to play a skill game with them."

Foligno, of course, also must occasionally protect the talented youngsters. Mark Borowiecki kept trying to agitate Eichel early Saturday.

"It was pretty clear in the first period that they were going after Jack and targeting Jack," Bylsma said.

So 12:08 into the second period Foligno fought Borowiecki. The tenacious scrap helped ignite the Sabres, who were struggling through the period.

"He's always got my back out there, and I know that," Eichel said. "It means a lot to me that he would do that. He sparked our team. He sparked the building a bit."

Foligno said: "Don't want to call it policing of the game, but you want to show that you're physical, you're tough, you can push back. We had a push back in the third."

After Reinhart scored, Foligno helped created his own goal by forechecking tenaciously and forcing a turnover to Eichel deep in the Ottawa zone.

The goal, Foligno's first since Jan. 10, provided some relief.

"I'm a guy who's been put on that line to create space and time for them," Foligno said. "You're not getting results, it does put pressure on you a bit. So a game like (Saturday's) helps the confidence."

But Foligno still possessed some confidence. He hasn't scored this regularly in almost five years, when he began his career with six goals and 13 points during a torrid 13 game-stretch late in 2011-12.

"I'm back at that position," he said, "where I feel I can contribute offensively."

## **Sabres' Zach Bogosian out Monday; Predators waive Derek Grant**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 4, 2017

BUFFALO – Some quick updates from KeyBank Center, where the Sabres practiced this morning following Saturday's 4-0 win against Ottawa:

– Defenseman Zach Bogosian, day-to-day with a muscle/rib injury, won't accompany the team to New Jersey for Monday's tilt against the Devils, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. Bogosian hasn't skated since getting injured Thursday.

– Rookie winger William Carrier, out with knee injury, has a bone bruise, Bylsma said.

"It's a wear-and-tear injury for Will," he said.

– Could former Sabres center Derek Grant be coming back to Buffalo? Nashville, which claimed Grant from Buffalo on Jan. 11, waived him again today.

The Sabres have been using winger Nick Deslauriers as a fourth-line center for a few minutes a game and moving his wingers up to other lines to receive more action.

Right now, the Sabres don't have much of a fourth line.

Grant has one assist in six games with the Predators. He had three assists in 35 contests with the Sabres.

The 26-year-old has zero goals in 81 NHL appearances.

## **5 Observations: Sabres shutout Senators 4-0**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

February 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - The Ottawa Senators finished with 11 more shots than the Buffalo Sabres, but Robin Lehner was perfect and turned away all 37 of the shots he faced, lifting the Sabres to a 4-0 shutout win.

Five observations from Saturday's win:

Locked in Lehner

Robin Lehner has stopped 79 of the last 81 shots he's faced. You're not going to lose many games when you get that kind of goaltending. On Saturday, Lehner faced 37 shots and stopped every single one of them to secure his first shutout of the season and fourth of his career.

"I feel like I'm getting in the groove and the team is helping me out with rebounds, too," Lehner said on the Sabres broadcast after the game.

Lehner's play, especially early, was a big reason why the Sabres had the lead after 40 minutes. All night he just seemed like he was locked in and wasn't getting beat. He made plenty of nice saves, controlled his rebounds and just looked comfortable between the pipes.

His prettiest save came late with an absolutely beautiful flash of the leather. In Buffalo's last two games Lehner has looked very sharp -- that's certainly a good sign for the Sabres.

Best friends

Rachel and Monica

Matt Damon and Ben Affleck

Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart

On Saturday these two were on fire. They seemed to find each other at the perfect times and created countless Sabres chances.

Ridiculous skill alert!

It's not like this is something new, but on Thursday against the Rangers the duo was average, so this was definitely a nice bounceback performance.

"We just need to keep building on this," Eichel told reporters after the game. "[We] have to have a good practice tomorrow and go to New Jersey and take care of business."

The Sabres need these two players to produce and on Saturday they did that and some.

Helluva start

Now that's how you start a hockey game. In the first period, the Sabres only scored one goal, but it realistically could've been 3-0 nothing after the first 20 minutes.

Jack Eichel came out of the gate flying and had one of the best shifts you'll see, aside from the whole scoring a goal thing. Eichel started the rush with a nice juke move to beat Erik Karlsson wide, sliding a pass to the front of the net.

Marcus Foligno wasn't able to connect on the pass, but have no fear, Eichel out-muscled the defender and kept the puck in the zone. He then dumped it off to Sam Reinhart, who gave it right back, only for the shot to hit the pipe.

But wait, there's more -- Eichel then regained possession and found Reinhart alone in front, who was stoned by Senators goaltender Mike Condon. It was a phenomenal shift by the entire line.

It by no means was a perfect period, but this shift was a really nice example of the pressure that the Sabres managed to apply for most of the period.

Sloppy second

If you only looked at the box score for the second period it wouldn't look outrageously lopsided, but anyone who watched Saturday's game knew that it was all Senators for most of the period.

That being said, the Sabres turned things on late in the period and scored on a Ryan O'Reilly redirection to take a 2-0 lead. Ottawa finished with a 13-7 shot advantage in the middle frame, but with five minutes left they were outshooting Buffalo 10-1. Yeesh.

Buffalo turned things on late, but they were lucky to escape the period with a lead. Hey, sometimes it's better to be lucky than good.

Return of Bailey, Gorges and McCabe

MCCabe returned to normal form -- he made one sloppy mistake but he's a really solid all-around defender.

Bailey really does add speed and versatility to the lineup. For a while, Bailey played with Eichel and Reinhart due in part to a few rough shifts from Marcus Foligno. Bailey did have one really bad giveaway in the Sabres zone that led to a nice chance by the Senators.

Gorges also had an all-around solid game and made a nice play on a Senators odd-man rush to break up a cross-ice pass. Unfortunately for Gorges, the puck bounced off his body and went to a different Sens forward, but Lehner was able to bail him out. Gorges took a penalty in the third period but it was a pretty ticky-tack call.

I thought both played well in their respective returns to the lineup.

## **Robin Lehner, Sabres shut out Senators**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

February 5, 2017

BUFFALO -- Robin Lehner made 37 saves, and four players scored to lift the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-0 win against the Ottawa Senators at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

Lehner had 16 saves in the third period for his first shutout of the season, fourth of his NHL career and first against his former team.

"It is a big win, but the big piece is [Lehner] there; [Lehner] gave us a chance all game," Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly said. "Without him playing the way he did, it would have been a much different story."

The shutout was Lehner's second with the Sabres, first since he made 38 saves in a 4-0 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Feb. 19, 2016.

"It's nice, it's always nice, but I have got to be honest, every two points we get is a really good feeling, every win we get," Lehner said. "We've been in some stretches where we haven't been consistent enough, some stretches where we haven't scored goals, some stretches where me and [Anders] Nilsson wish we came up with some more saves. But wins right now is a really good feeling."

The Sabres (21-20-10) ended a three-game losing streak. The Senators (27-17-6) went 1-2-0 on their three-game road trip.

Kyle Okposo gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead with 9:49 left in the first period on a strong individual effort after taking a pass from Josh Gorges, who returned to the lineup after missing 12 games with a hip injury.

O'Reilly made it 2-0 with 3:09 left in the second period when he tipped a shot by defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen past goalie Mike Condon for his 10th goal.

Sam Reinhart made it 3-0 5:53 into the third period. After receiving a pass from Jack Eichel, Reinhart's initial shot was stopped by Condon, but he gathered the rebound and scored his 11th of the season.

Marcus Foligno scored to make it 4-0 with 9:09 left in the third after he received a pass from Eichel and shot it past Condon. Andrew Hammond replaced Condon following Foligno's goal and made one save; Condon had 21 saves.

"I felt some pressure needing to perform and play a good game for those guys," Foligno said. "Jack and Sam have been working hard, we've all been working hard, but we just haven't had results, and it's nice to have results."

### Goal of the game

Okposo, using his body to shield the puck from Senators defenseman Marc Methot, skated along the right-wing boards toward the blue line from below the goal line before cutting to the slot to beat Condon with a backhand inside the left post.

### Save of the game

Lehner gloved Ottawa center Derick Brassard's shot 3:40 into the third period after he used his chest to stop his initial one-touch shot up high off a pass from below the goal line from Mark Stone with the Senators on the power play.

### Highlight of the game

Lehner made a glove save on Ottawa forward Mike Hoffman with 18 seconds left in the second period.

## Unsung performance of the game

Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe had a plus-1 rating and two blocked shots in 18:48 of ice time, including 1:15 on the penalty kill, after missing five games with a shoulder injury.

## They said it

"[Sabres goalie Robin Lehner] played really well. We had enough shots, that wasn't the issue, but we didn't pay the price in front of the net. He played well, but we definitely didn't pay the price in front of him, and a goalie that size that's doing it that well, you can't expect to score goals if you're not doing that. ... There was no traffic in front of him. There was not enough fight there." -- Senators coach Guy Boucher

"Any [former] team you get a little more firepower. [Lehner] played phenomenal tonight (and) I think all year. He's been one of the most consistent players. He's given us a chance so many times. It's nice to see him beat his old team like that in a shutout. He played phenomenal tonight." -- Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly

"That's the way we're approaching every game. We want to get to our best. We want to get to where we're a good team every night." -- Sabres coach Dan Bylsma

## Need to know

Buffalo is 5-0-1 in its past six home games. ... The Sabres are 16-3-1 when Eichel has at least two points in his two NHL seasons, including 8-0-0 this season.

## What's next

Senators: Host the the St. Louis Blues on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET; RDS2, TSN5, FS-MW, NHL.TV)

Sabres: At the New Jersey Devils on Monday (7 p.m. ET; MSG+, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

## **Lehner makes 37 saves in shutout win over Sens**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

February 4, 2017

Robin Lehner insists he holds no grudge against the Ottawa Senators. It's now been a season and a half since he was acquired by the Buffalo Sabres from his original organization in exchange for a first-round pick, and while he still has friends on the other side, he says he's left that trade in the past.

Still, Dan Bylsma has spoken before about the twinkle he sees in his goaltender's eyes when he suits up against his former team. Lehner's brought his best in games against Ottawa, and he did so again in a 37-save, 4-0 shutout of the Senators at KeyBank Center on Saturday night.

Lehner improved to 3-0-2 in seven career appearances against his former club, with a .961 save percentage and a 1.18 goals-against average.

"It's nice, for sure," Lehner said. "But I'm over it. This is the team I like and this is the team I play for. That's history."

Lehner entered the game coming off one of his best performances of this season against the New York Rangers on Thursday, a game in which he made a season-high 42 saves only to see the team lose 2-1 in overtime.

He was just as impressive on Saturday as he was in that game, only this time he got the run support he needed and then some. Kyle Okposo and Ryan O'Reilly scored a goal apiece in the first and second periods respectively, and Jack Eichel fed Sam Reinhart and Marcus Foligno for goals in the third.

While the Sabres generally played a strong game defensively, there were some lapses. Buffalo was dominated early in the second period, at one point being outshot 8-1. They came out of that period with a 2-0 lead thanks to Lehner's ability to come up big when called upon.

He did it with his pad, like on this save against Tom Pyatt early in that second period.

He also did it with his glove, like on this shot from Mike Hoffman, who'd scored a total of four goals against Buffalo in three games already this season.

"I know him well," Lehner said, smiling. "Obviously playing with them a little bit I know a little bit of tendencies, a little bit where they're going to go. That's a little bit how my game is too, I do a lot of pre-scout, a lot of thinking out there. That's a big part of my game."

The shutout was Lehner's first of the season and the fourth of his career. It also snapped a three-game winless streak for the Sabres. As much as that zero on the score board might have meant for Lehner, that second part meant more.

"It's nice," Lehner said. "It's always nice. But I've got to be honest, every two points we get right now is a really good feeling. Every win we get. We've been on stretches, some stretches we haven't been consistent enough, some stretches we haven't scored goals, some stretches me and [fellow goalie Anders] Nilsson wish we came up with some more saves. Wins right now, it's a really good feeling."

### Eichel's play pays off

Eichel was long overdue for a point by the time he finally notched an assist on Reinhart's goal in the third period. On that play, he rushed through the neutral zone and over the blue line, carrying the puck past multiple defenders as he drifted down low. He then made a perfect pass back to Reinhart, who cleaned up his own rebound off Senators goalie Mike Condon.

The play was reminiscent of the first period that was had by the line of Foligno, Eichel and Reinhart, when they made several plays that could have made the highlight reel had they resulted in a goal.

"It seems like we've had a good amount of opportunities as of late and whether it's bounces or not bearing own or what not, just not getting any results," Eichel said. "It's nice to get rewarded a little bit there."

Eichel earned his second point after falling to his knees and passing to Foligno later in the period. Foligno scored the goal that gave Buffalo its 4-0 lead and chased Condon with 9:09 remaining. Andrew Hammond replaced Condon in the Ottawa net.

"I thought Jack's line in particular was good in the offensive zone, had opportunities, had multiple opportunities," Bylsma said in reference to the first period. "You kind of want him to cash in. You want the hockey gods to be with you. You're playing the right way, you're playing in the offensive zone and you eventually just want it to translate into goals. It did in the third period."

#### An unsatisfying second

It's odd to hear following a 4-0 victory, but the first thing that both Lehner and O'Reilly brought up when speaking after the game was their dissatisfaction with the way the team played in that lopsided second period, even after O'Reilly was able to tip in a Rasmus Ristolainen shot to make the game 2-0.

O'Reilly said it was addressed during the intermission, and that played a part in Buffalo's two-goal third.

"I think in between the intermission after the second, not any one of us was happy with it even though the score was what we wanted," O'Reilly said. "We weren't happy, guys were a little upset with each other and we regrouped. We said we've got to come out, we've got to work, we've got to start winning battles. It's amazing, when we do that and we play simple we seem to find a way to win the game."

Players also pointed to Foligno's fight with Mark Borowiecki midway through that second period as a turning point for the team. Foligno took exception when he thought Borowiecki took a run at Eichel along the boards.

"I don't know if the guy took a run at me or not but it seemed like he did," Eichel said. "Whenever you have a teammate that comes to your back, it definitely means a lot and it seems like he does that a good amount. It says a lot about him as a teammate, that he's a guy that you want to have on your side. I think he just picks our bench up."

"It was an appropriate and a good response from Marcus, getting in there," Bylsma added. "It wasn't the first time that they had targeted Jack in the game and I thought it was a good move by Marcus to get in there. It did lift the team and it should've lifted the team."

#### Okposo notches No. 16

Okposo opened the scoring for the Sabres 10:11 into the contest, posting up on Marc Methot along the boards and spinning to free himself as he cut to the middle of the ice. Once he arrived in the slot, he buried a backhand shot past Condon for his team-leading 16th goal. Watch for yourself:

If you feel like you've seen that spin move before, you have.

#### Up next

The Sabres will begin a back-to-back set with a road game against New Jersey on Monday night. It will be the third and final game between the two teams this season, with Buffalo looking to avoid being swept in the season series.

The following night, the Sabres will return home to KeyBank Center to host the reigning Western Conference champion San Jose Sharks.

Coverage on Monday begins at 6:30 p.m. with the Tops Pregame Show on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops between the Sabres and Devils at 7 p.m.

## **McCabe, Gorges made impact in return to lineup**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

February 5, 2017

For as good as Robin Lehner was in Buffalo's 4-0 win over Ottawa on Saturday, the performance from a defensive unit that was as healthy as it's been in quite some time also shouldn't be lost. The Sabres saw both Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe return from injury.

While Lehner did make a couple of saves worthy of the highlight reel, and Ottawa did tally 37 shots on the night, Buffalo's six-man unit for the most part was able to limit the quality of the Senators' chances.

"We played a pretty good game," defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen said. "I didn't think they had too many scoring chances. The other games we played before, the other teams had more scoring chances. We played alright."

Neither McCabe nor Gorges seemed to have skipped a beat despite having missed time, skating 18:48 and 16:04 of ice time, respectively. Both players were also steady presences on the penalty kill on night it went 2-for-2.

After the game, Dan Bylsma spoke about the element of physicality that was missed with those two players out of the lineup, and it was recognized by their teammates as well.

"Georgie's a guy who's not afraid to go out there and block a shot, no matter who it is, and put his body on the line," defenseman Cody Franson said. "Caber's a lot of the same way. They both try to be very physical, they play hard along the walls and they do a good job of trying to take the middle of the ice away on teams. When you have two guys like that who you can insert into your lineup, who keep the offensive players honest on the other team, I think it's a big help."

Meanwhile, Dmitry Kulikov is continuing to grow more comfortable as he distances himself from the 12-game absence caused by an injury to his lower back. He's been playing on the top pair alongside Ristolainen, and on Saturday he skated a team-high 25:23.

"We still have a lot of room to improve," Ristolainen. "We haven't played that many games in a row together so now we're building that chemistry and then we'll hopefully get it going better. But yeah, it's going alright so far. We play a lot of minutes so we've got to lead the team."

The Sabres are still without Zach Bogosian, who did not skate on Sunday and remains day-to-day with a rib injury. But if the other defensemen can finally remain healthy, Saturday was a strong start for the new pairs.

### Spot on top line still up for grabs

Matt Moulson started the game on Saturday playing alongside Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo, but he wasn't the only player to see time at that spot. Justin Bailey and Tyler Ennis both saw multiple shifts on the top line as well, and all three players skated between nine and 12 minutes of ice time.

All three also saw extra time playing alongside either Jack Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly when those two centermen were double shifted at times to fill in for Nicolas Deslauriers on the fourth line. Bylsma said he's like to see one of those players find a permanent home on the top line, and excelling alongside either Eichel or O'Reilly is a way to do that.

"I'd like to see someone grab it," Bylsma said. " ... I'd like one of those guys to grab a hold of that spot and not let it go."

### Foligno clearing space for Eichel and Reinhart

The line of Marcus Foligno, Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart hadn't been scoring at even strength as of late when they entered the game on Saturday, but they had created enough scoring chances to convince Bylsma to keep them together. Those chances finally turned into points against Ottawa, when Eichel fed both Reinhart and Foligno for third-period goals.

"I know that line hasn't been on the score sheet as a 5-on-5 in some time, but the number of scoring chances that they've gotten is in the elite number," Bylsma said. "When you get to seven or eight scoring chances at even strength a game, which is what I think they've been averaging over the last five games, they haven't scored but that's the type of production you want."

Foligno's goal was his first in 11 games, but Bylsma used Saturday as an example of how he's able to create offense without showing up on the score sheet.

"In the first period last night he had five net fronts that were scoring chances for somebody else but a result of him going through, driving through and being at the net," the coach said. "That's a real big indicator of what he does provide for that line."

#### New pants not a concern for Sabres goalies

Goalies in the NHL were required to wear new, streamlined pants beginning on Saturday, but it clearly had no effect on Lehner as he completed a 37-save shutout. That might be because, as Bylsma stated on Sunday, Lehner's been wearing those new pants all along.

"I think last night was the official start but Robin's been in them the whole year and Anders has been in them quite a bit," Bylsma said. "You can, I guess, look on 'NHL Today' and find out that this was the official day but for us it's been going on that way for pretty much the whole year so it's not a big adjustment for our goalies."

#### Sunday's 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  
56 Justin Bailey - 44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 63 Tyler Ennis

77 Dmitry Kulikov - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
29 Jake McCabe - 6 Cody Franson  
4 Josh Gorges - 41 Justin Falk

40 Robin Lehner  
31 Anders Nilsson

## **Late turnovers, penalties lead to shootout loss**

By Jourdon LaBarber

The Buffalo News

February 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — A judge will dismiss the charges against Buffalo Sabres forward Evander Kane stemming from scuffles with women in a bar if he stays out of future trouble.

The arrangement is contingent on the 25-year-old player avoiding legal issues for the next six months. Kane didn't speak during or after his brief appearance in a Buffalo court. Kane's lawyer says Monday's action doesn't include an admission of guilt, and Kane still denies the allegations.

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