



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

February 7, 2017

Sabres, Lehner go up against hot Sharks

Associated Press

February 6, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Robin Lehner has been terrific in net for the Buffalo Sabres in recent games, but he's sure to have his hands full on Tuesday night when the San Jose Sharks come to town.

The first-place Sharks (33-17-3) have won eight of their last 10 games, with their only regulation loss coming Jan. 26 to Edmonton.

The Sabres (21-21-10) are 4-3-1 in their last eight games and have lost two straight, but the record would be much worse if it weren't for some heroic efforts from Lehner.

The goaltender made 37 saves in a 2-1 loss to New Jersey on Monday, 37 saves in a 4-0 win over Ottawa on Saturday and 42 saves in an 2-1 overtime loss to the New York Rangers on Thursday.

"He played phenomenal (in the win over the Rangers), and I think all year," Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly said after the win over New York. "He's been one of the most consistent players. He's given us a chance so many times."

In 35 games this season, Lehner has a 13-14-6 record, a .923 save percentage and a 2.53 goals-against average.

One of Lehner's best saves of the season came in the win over Ottawa, his former team. Shortly before the end of the second period, the goaltender came far out of his crease and extended his arm to make a spectacular glove save on Senators left winger Mike Hoffman.

The Sabres were unable to give Lehner any offensive support in Monday's one-goal loss to New Jersey. Tyler Ennis scored the lone goal in the third period for the Sabres, who were affected by Evander Kane's three separate minor penalties during the game.

The Sharks are coming off a 3-2 shootout loss to the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday but have been exceptional for the past month -- and the entire season, for that matter. San Jose had a six-game win streak in January and sits comfortably at the top of the Pacific Division.

"You are able to feel good about both your game and the team's game," said Sharks veteran winger Patrick Marleau, according to the team's website.

Marleau is coming off a personal accomplishment to remember. In a 4-1 win over the Vancouver Canucks on Feb. 2, Marleau picked up his 500th career goal. He became the first player in Sharks franchise history to score 500 goals. He ranks 44th in NHL history.

"When you hit a mark like this, you just start thinking about everybody who's kind of helped you along the way," Marleau said, according to the team's website. "Playing with one club and playing with a lot of guys for a lot of years on this team, it means a lot to share that with them and see how happy they are for you. Things are going good now. We're on a roll. It couldn't come at a better time."

Defenseman Brent Burns lead the Sharks in points with 55 (22 goals, 33 assists) and was named the NHL's third star for the month of January. Joe Pavelski is second in scoring with 46 points (17 goals, 29 assists).

Devils end 7-game home losing streak on contested Zacha goal

By Tom Canavan

Associated Press

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Coming out of the All-Star break, New Jersey is starting to play like a team that wants to get back to the playoffs for the first time since the 2011-12 season.

The Devils are 3-0-1 since the break after stopping a seven-game home losing streak with a 2-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Monday night.

"It's something we talked about before the game," said coach John Hynes, whose team will be off for the next five days and then play seven of its next eight games at the Prudential Center. "It's nice to get the air out of the balloon on that one."

It was New Jersey's first win at home since Jan. 2.

"It's important but more important is the way we played tonight," said Cory Schneider, who made 22 saves. "You can't always guarantee a win no matter how well you play, but I thought we did a lot of things really well and we deserved to win in my opinion and we got rewarded."

Pavel Zacha provided the game-winner with a contested power-play goal with 7:27 remaining. Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma argued that Adam Henrique interfered with Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner, who finished with 37 saves.

Mike Cammalleri took a shot from the right point and Lehner could not glove on the high shot because Henrique appeared to hit the base of his glove with his stick.

"It's a puck above the crossbar," Bylsma said. "Robin goes up to catch it and their guy puts a stick into it and I think prevents Robin from catching the puck."

Lehner said Henrique touched his glove but he felt it was not enough to have the goal overturned. He was more upset with the Sabres' performance.

"Schneider had an easy game today," Lehner said. "Like I said, it is up to us in this room to get things going and today we didn't get things going."

Henrique also scored a power-play goal for New Jersey, and Cammalleri had two assists. Tyler Ennis scored for the Sabres.

Badly outplayed in the first two periods, the Sabres tied it on a bad-angle goal. Ennis took a shot from the corner along the goal line and Schneider had it hit off his stick and go in the net with 11:21 left in regulation.

Buffalo nearly took the lead about two minutes later when Sam Reinhart had a deflection hit the post.

New Jersey went on the power play when Evander Kane was called for high-sticking Taylor Hall. Zacha got his sixth goal.

Kane also was in the penalty box when Henrique got his fourth goal in the last five games.

Cammalleri sent the puck to Henrique behind the net and the center banked it off the skate of defenseman Cody Franson past Lehner, who shut out Ottawa in his last start.

Lehner kept the Sabres in the game in the first two periods, stopping 28 shots. The goaltender was at his best in the second period when the Devils matched their season high with 19 shots.

NOTES: New Jersey won all three games against the Sabres this season. ... Devils D Kyle Quincey was sidelined by an upper-body injury, only the third game he has missed. ... D Karl Stollery was recalled from Albany of the

AHL. ... The Sabres signed D Justin Falk to a \$600,000, one-year contract extension and claimed F Derek Grant off waivers from Nashville. He was assigned to Rochester of the AHL. ... New Jersey's other 19-shot period was against Carolina on Nov. 18.

UP NEXT

Sabres: Host San Jose on Tuesday night.

Devils: Play host on Sunday to San Jose, which will be ending a four-game East Coast swing.

Quick hits: Devils 2, Sabres 1

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. – Buffalo has established itself as a tough team to beat at home. The road is a different story.

The Sabres dropped their third straight on the road Monday, suffering a 2-1 loss to New Jersey. The Sabres fell to 2-6-1 in their last nine road games.

Buffalo is 1-3-1 in its last five overall. The Devils outshot the Sabres, 39-23.

Winner: The Devils survived a coach's challenge to take a 2-1 lead with 7:27 to go. Michael Cammalleri's point shot bounced off goaltender Robin Lehner's glove and popped in the slot. Pavel Zacha connected on the rebound.

Buffalo's Dan Bylsma challenged after it appeared Adam Henrique's stick hit Lehner's glove at the same time as Cammalleri's shot. The referees ruled it was a good goal, giving the Devils their second power-play tally. Evander Kane was in the penalty box for high-sticking.

Helmetless Part One: Devils defenseman Karl Stollery came flying down the blue line to crush Girgensons into the boards with 7:23 gone in the second. Stollery hit Girgensons high, and the Buffalo forward's helmet flew off as he fell to the ice.

Helmetless Part Two: Girgensons, nicknamed the "Latvian Locomotive," saw Stollery in his tracks a few minutes later. He returned the favor, hitting Stollery so hard into the boards that the defenseman's helmet popped off.

Taking the lead: Kane took exception to Stollery's hit, rushing toward the defenseman and starting a scrum. When officials untangled the pile, they gave Kane four minutes for roughing and doled out two minutes to New Jersey's Steven Santini.

The Devils took advantage of the power play with a head's up play by Henrique. He accepted a pass behind the net, saw the Sabres' Cody Franson at the top of the crease and promptly fired the puck off the defenseman's skate. It caromed into the net with 8:46 gone in the second.

New Jersey entered the game just 14-8-7 when scoring first, a winning percentage of .483 that ranked 28th in the NHL. Buffalo was 27th with a 13-6-6 record and .520 winning percentage.

Tie game: Tyler Ennis reached the score sheet for the third straight game, this time with a surprising goal to make it 1-1. The winger skated down the right side of the Devils' zone and ran out of room. He spun at the goal line and sent the puck to the net. It slid between the pads of New Jersey goaltender Cory Schneider with 11:21 to play.

Ouch: Jake McCabe and the corner of the glass combined to send Jacob Josefson to the dressing room early in the second. Josefson carried the puck with speed near his bench, and McCabe lined him up for a check. McCabe connected where bench ends and glass starts. Josefson's head bounced off the stanchion, and the forward dropped to the ice.

He was helped to the dressing room but returned later in the period.

Retribution: The Devils' Joseph Blandisi sent Tyler Ennis into the boards with a hard check early in the first period. Nicolas Deslauriers didn't like it, dropping the gloves with Blandisi for a bout that featured only a couple of punches thrown by Deslauriers.

Tough call, good call: Anders Nilsson served as the backup after entering the game with conflicting numbers. He is just 2-6-3 on the road this season with a .904 save percentage. However, he is 4-1-1 against the Devils with a .953 save percentage.

Lehner, meanwhile, entered the game with a 5-1-1 record and .928 save percentage in 2017. But he was just 1-4-1 in his first six appearances against the Devils, putting up a .906 save percentage. He was impressive this time.

Counting the house: The Devils announced 12,105 tickets sold, though the actual attendance in Prudential Center may have been half that number.

Next: Monday was the start of a busy week for the Sabres, who will play five games in seven days. They'll host San Jose on Tuesday and Anaheim on Thursday. Buffalo visits Toronto on Saturday and hosts Vancouver on Sunday.

"It's going to feel like a nine-day week with the amount of games we've got," Bylsma said.

Arguments aside, Sabres simply weren't good enough

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. – The Sabres didn't like some of the penalties they got. They may have an argument. They didn't like that New Jersey got away with apparent penalties. Again, it may be a legitimate beef.

But as Robin Lehner aptly pointed out Monday night, that's not why the Sabres lost to New Jersey, 2-1.

"We didn't call today – not that that was an excuse because I think we had a poor game," the goaltender said.

Indeed, the Sabres again flopped after a big victory. New Jersey outshot the Sabres, 39-23, and that's a solid indicator of how lopsided it was.

"We didn't have any chances, not from what I saw at least," Lehner said in Prudential Center. "As I've said, as we've said, it's up to us in this room to get things going. We didn't get things going."

The Sabres took just six shots in the opening period. They took just six in the third, getting their lone goal when Tyler Ennis' last-ditch spin and shoot slipped between Cory Schneider's pads.

"None of them were anything dangerous," Lehner said. "Even the goal was kind of lucky. It's not the push we want."

Meanwhile, the Sabres let the Devils swarm Lehner and the Buffalo net.

"In the second period I feel like I saw a lot of – forget scoring chances – a lot of Grade A chances," Lehner said. "They kind of took over in the second. Again, it's not how we want to play."

Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma credited the Devils with nine scoring chances and six Grade A opportunities during the second period.

"We put too much on Lenny's shoulders," Sabres center Zemgus Girgensons said.

It should definitely be noted that both of New Jersey's goals and 14 of its shots came during four power plays. The Sabres, meanwhile, had one shot on one power play. They didn't have any power plays during Saturday's 4-0 victory over Ottawa.

"We've got one power play over the last two games," center Jack Eichel said to no one in particular from his locker stall. "Are you telling me they didn't have anything to call?"

The Sabres' power play ranks fifth in the NHL at 22.1 percent, so maybe a chance would have made a difference. Buffalo didn't do enough to earn another chance.

"We didn't generate a lot of offense," Bylsma said. "We didn't generate a lot of things. We didn't get a lot of power plays in the game. On the one opportunity we had, I don't think we did a good job of taking the chances that were there for us."

"They really did a good job in the second period of hemming us in. We played a lot of D-zone against them in that stretch of time."

The turning point during the second was a four-minute roughing penalty to Evander Kane. The Sabres left winger started a scrum after watching Girgensons absorb a helmet-losing hit. Those ruckuses usually end up with an even number of penalties, but Buffalo got an extra one.

New Jersey took advantage to open the scoring.

"I don't necessarily agree with all the calls," Bylsma said.

After Ennis tied it with 11:21 to play, Kane again went to the box for high-sticking Taylor Hall. The Devils took advantage with 7:27 left.

"PK can give you momentum or it can kill your momentum," Girgensons said. "We've just got to bear down on the PK and be better."

They've got to be better everywhere. It starts with Tuesday's home game against San Jose.

"I don't think we played that well," Lehner said. "We've got to keep taking a look at our game and get better."

Sabres Notebook: Falk gets security; Grant reclaimed

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. – Justin Falk has played for six teams during the past three years. With that kind of nomadic lifestyle, it doesn't make sense to put down roots during the season. Falk, his wife and their two children under age 3 have been living in an extended-stay hotel.

"Luckily, the pool's heated so we're able to get out of the room for a little bit and burn some energy with the kids in the water," the Sabres defenseman said Monday. "It's a fun time for us as a family, but it can get a little tight quarters in the little hotel room."

With a new contract, the Falks can finally look for something roomier.

Buffalo has signed the defenseman to a one-year extension worth \$650,000. It matches the one-year deal he signed prior to this season.

"The position I've been in the last few years of my career, nothing's guaranteed," Falk said before facing New Jersey in Prudential Center. "It's pretty day-to-day, week-to-week with your time in the NHL, so you put your best foot forward. For them to appreciate what I bring to the table with my element and style and commit back to me was great."

Buffalo signed the 28-year-old in July as a depth defenseman, and he's turned into a regular on the injury-riddled blue line with 36 games played.

"It's great for him, great for us," coach Dan Bylsma said of the extension before praising the 6-foot-5, 222-pounder's physical play. "That's something that he's done real well for us and something that he's going to do going forward."

Although Falk is nearing the threshold for expansion-draft exposure rules (40 games played), the signing wasn't an expansion necessity. Buffalo already had Rasmus Ristolainen, Josh Gorges, Zach Bogosian and Jake McCabe under contract for next year. The Sabres can protect only three defensemen (unless they opt for the eight-skater route, which would force them to expose additional key forwards). Still, the signing gives them more options.

It also gives the Falks the option to settle into the area.

"I've enjoyed my time here and I'm thankful for the opportunity they're giving me," Falk said. "As much as this has been a great thing to happen to me, I can't forget about my wife and everything that she's done and stuck with me in the transition of five, six different teams in four or five years. You throw in two kids along the way, this is as much for her as it is for me."

A month after losing Derek Grant to Nashville on waivers, the Sabres reclaimed the center Monday. He was promptly assigned to Rochester. Whether he stays there is another matter.

Bylsma declined to elaborate on the claim, demotion or whether Grant will be back in Buffalo.

"That would be information privy only to me at this point and not to you," Bylsma said. "We got him today at noon. Being that only team that claimed him this time around, we could make that transaction that way."

The Predators waived Grant on Sunday, and Buffalo had the first option at getting him. Grant has no goals and four assists in 41 NHL games this season, including three assists in 35 games with Buffalo. He played in six games for Nashville but had been a healthy scratch since Jan. 22.

The Sabres are still king of NHL television, although 5 percent fewer people are watching.

SportsBusiness Journal has released TV ratings for 21 U.S. teams, and Buffalo is the No. 1 market for the second straight year. The Sabres are getting an average rating of 6.43, according to the report. Pittsburgh is second at 5.56.

SportsBusiness Journal reported the Sabres' ratings are down 5 percent from last season.

The Columbus Blue Jackets are the biggest risers, gaining 110 percent viewership to average a 1.97 rating. Anaheim is last with a 0.21 rating, though Carolina and Nashville did not supply numbers.

Sabres remain atop local television ratings

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

February 6, 2017

For a second straight season, the Buffalo Sabres remain as the top-rated National Hockey League team in the local television ratings in the United States.

According to the Sports Business Journal, the Sabres are averaging a 6.43 rating, which is five-percent lower than where the ratings were last season. Buffalo remains ahead of the Pittsburgh Penguins (5.56), St. Louis Blues (4.26), Minnesota Wild (3.91) and the Chicago Blackhawks (3.12) as they round out the top-five.

The six lowest-rated teams in the league are the Anaheim Ducks (0.21), Florida Panthers (0.27), New York Islanders (0.29), Arizona Coyotes (0.40), Dallas Stars (0.41) and the New Jersey Devils (0.41).

The Columbus Blue Jackets saw the highest ratings increase this season, as they now have a 1.97 rating which is a 110-percent increase from last season. The team that has suffered the highest decline in ratings is the Colorado Avalanche. The Avalanche currently holds a 0.73 rating, which is down 57-percent from last season.

From The Locker Room: Sabres-Devils

WGR 550

February 6, 2017

The Sabres offense couldn't get anything going in Monday's 2-1 loss at New Jersey. See what Dan Bylsma, Robin Lehner and Tyler Ennis had to say.

Dan Bylsma

"They did a good job in the 2nd period of hemming us in. We played a lot of d-zone against them in that stretch of time, and I think they had nine scoring chances in the 2nd period."

"We didn't generate a lot of offense. We didn't get a lot of power plays in the game, just the one. But the first opportunity we had, I don't think we did a good job of taking the chances that were there for us."

Robin Lehner

"We didn't have any chances. Not what I saw at least. Schneider had an easy game today. It's up to us in this room to get things going and today's we didn't get things going."

Tyler Ennis

"They kind of took it to us. They outplayed us in a lot of areas. We couldn't get much going. Their special teams was better than ours and that was probably the difference."

"They generated a lot in our end and we didn't get much in theirs. I think Lehner played really well for us, he gave us a chance. We're going to need a lot better effort [on Tuesday]."

Sabres reclaim Grant

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 6, 2017

Short Hills, NJ (WGR 550) -- The Sabres have reclaimed Derek Grant from Nashville and sent him to Rochester.

Grant played just six games for the Preds picking up one assist.

In 35 games with the Sabres he had no goals and three assists. Grant has played 81 NHL games and is still looking for his first goal.

The Sabres had 30 days or 10 games played to send him to Rochester without waiving him again.

With the injury to Johan Larsson and with Grant being claimed, Buffalo has been in a bind at center playing Nick Deslauriers there. Deslauriers had never played center before, but they're going to stick with that plan.

Join Schopp and the Bulldog at 6:00 for the pregame when they'll have Dan Bylsma, the starting goalie and hopefully newly signed Justin Falk.

Devils Stifle Sabres 2-1

WGR 550

February 6, 2017

Pavel Zacha's 3rd period goal proved to be the game-winner in the Devils' 2-1 victory over the Sabres on Monday. Robin Lehner stopped 37 shots in the loss.

Scoring

Adam Henrique opened the scoring with a power play goal at 8:46 of the 2nd period. Henrique's pass out front from behind the net deflected off Cody Franson's skate and into the net.

Tyler Ennis netted the game's second goal, tying the game 1-1, spinning and whipping a shot through Cory Schneider's pads for his 3rd goal of the season.

Pavel Zacha fired a loose puck past Lehner late in the 3rd, giving New Jersey the lead for good. The call was reviewed for goaltender interference, but the goal was allowed to stand.

Game Notes

Ennis' goal gave him three points in his last three games (1 G, 2A), his first three-game point streak since 11/5/15-11/12/15.

The win marked New Jersey's first at home in seven games -- the Devils had been winless at the Prudential Center since January 3.

Robin Lehner has stopped 120 out of his last 124 shots.

1st Period

Goals

None

Penalties

6:39 - NJ - Joseph Blandini (5 min., fighting)

6:39 - BUF - Nicolas Deslauriers (5 min., fighting)

7:32 - NJ - Ben Lovejoy (2 min., high sticking)

2nd Period

Goals

8:46 - NJ - Adam Henrique (15) (PPG) (Pavel Zacha, Michael Cammalleri)

Penalties

3:59 - BUF - Dmitry Kulikov (2 min., tripping)

7:23 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., roughing)

7:23 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., roughing, served by Nicolas Deslauriers)

7:23 - NJ - Steven Santini (2 min., roughing)

3rd Period

Goals

8:39 - BUF - Tyler Ennis (3) (Kyle Okposo, Justin Falk)

12:33 - NJ - Pavel Zacha (6) (PPG) (Damon Severson, Michael Cammalleri)

Penalties

4:55 - BUF - Justin Falk (2 min., holding)

11:52 - BUF - Evander Kane (2 min., high sticking)

Goaltending

BUF - Robin Lehner (37 saves, 39 shots)

NJ - Cory Schneider (22 saves, 23 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 0 of 1

NJ - 2 of 4

Sabres claim Derek Grant off waivers

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 6, 2017

BUFFALO – The Sabres reclaimed center Derek Grant off waivers from the Nashville Predators today and sent him to the Rochester Americans.

Grant started the season with the Sabres, playing 35 games. But Nashville grabbed the 26-year-old on waivers Jan. 11, and he played six games with the Predators, who waived him Sunday.

Grant offers the Sabres, who struggled to replace him, a fourth-line center. They have been using winger Nick Deslauriers for a few minutes a game in the spot. Cal O'Reilly, Grant's replacement, was waived last week and sent to the AHL.

Grant, whose strong preseason earned him a roster spot, has zero goals and four points in 41 games this season. He has never scored an NHL goal in 81 appearances.

He thrived in the AHL last season, scoring 27 goals and 46 points in 36 contests with the Stockton Heat, the Calgary Flames' affiliate.

Sabres sign Justin Falk to extension

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 6, 2017

BUFFALO – The Sabres have signed defenseman Justin Falk to a one-year, one-way contract extension worth \$650,000, the team announced this morning.

Falk has provided valuable depth as the Buffalo blue line has endured a rash of injuries. The 28-year-old has played 35 games, compiling three assists, 17 penalty minutes and a plus-4 rating.

The Sabres signed Falk to a one-year, two-way contract July 1. He started the season with the Rochester Americans before being recalled in early November.

On Thursday, 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.”

5 Observations: Sabres fall to Devils 2-1

By Matt Bove

WKBW

February 6, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - With a win, the Buffalo Sabres had an opportunity to leapfrog two teams in the standings. Instead, they fell into a tie for last place in the Eastern Conference with a 2-1 loss to the New Jersey Devils.

Five observations from Tuesday's loss:

Lehner turned away 37 of the 39 shots he faced on Tuesday night but it wasn't enough to earn his second straight win.

In his last three games, he's stopped 116 of the 120 shots he's faced, yet he only has a 1-1-1 record.

Let's be real -- this is the best Lehner has played during a three-game span all season, but the Sabres haven't capitalized because of a lack of scoring. One goal in two of the past three games isn't going to cut it.

Shoot.The.Puck

So why aren't they scoring more?

They aren't shooting the puck enough.

On Tuesday the Sabres managed only 23 shots, 16 less than the Devils.

In the third period, the Sabres finished with only seven shots. That can't happen, especially when you enter the period down a goal.

Buffalo's only goal of the evening came on a weird 'spin-o-rama' shot from Tyler Ennis. Kudos to him for throwing something at the net and getting rewarded for it. When you're having a hard time scoring, pucks to the net is usually the best remedy.

Don't get me wrong, the Sabres are finding the back of the net far more than they were at the beginning of the season, but they've had a bit of a rough stretch.

'Mini' drought

Jack Eichel hasn't scored since his gorgeous OT goal against the Predators two weeks ago.

No, I'm not going to be the guy that says he's the problem because he's not, but the Sabres will need him to start scoring soon. Almost every goal scorer goes through these 'mini' droughts and Eichel is no exception.

Realistically, he could probably have three or four goals during the span, they just aren't going in. If he keeps doing what he's doing he'll score soon.

Another clunker of a second period

The Sabres just can't seem to figure out the second period. On Tuesday the Devils out-shot the Sabres 19-11 in the middle frame, but really controlled play and limited Buffalo's chances in the first 15 minutes of the period.

The second period has been a problem for the Sabres all year and the numbers speak for themselves.

Buffalo's season long goal differential: -18

Buffalo's second-period goal differential: -18

They need to be better in the second period if they're going to make a push.

Especially poor special teams

New Jersey scored both of their goals on the power play and finished the night 2-for-4 with the man advantage.

Both goals came after penalties by Sabres forward Evander Kane. The first penalty I don't have a huge problem with, Kane stood up for his teammate after Zemgus Girgensons got rocked in the second period. However, the second penalty can't happen. Some will say it was unlucky that his stick flew up into the air and hit Taylor Hall's face, but Kane has to play smarter there and control his stick.

Kane is one of the Sabres better penalty killers, so when he's in the box the Sabres have an even harder time containing the opposition.

Bove: Signing Falk now gives the Sabres expansion draft options

By Matt Bove

WKBW

February 6, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - The Buffalo Sabres announced on Monday that the team has agreed with defenseman Justin Falk to a one-year, \$650,000 contract extension.

Falk, 28, has played in 35 games with the Sabres this season registering four assists.

During his career, Falk has appeared in 206 games with the Sabres, Rangers, Blue Jackets and Wild.

Bove's thoughts:

This extension is about two things:

1-- Falk has played well when called upon. He's not flashy and he doesn't provide much offensively, but he's played a solid game in his own end, especially for someone who didn't start the year in the N.H.L. Falk has been asked to do a lot with so many injuries on the blue line and he's done a nice job.

2 -- The one-way extension doesn't kick in until next year, but if Falk plays five more games this season (40 games) he'll be eligible for the expansion draft. Essentially, from the way that I understand things, signing Falk now gives the Sabres more options when it comes to the players the organization chooses to expose. Every team has two options: they can either protect:

A) seven forwards, three defensemen, and a goaltender

Or

B) eight total skaters and a goaltender

So why do this now if you're General Manager Tim Murray? It gives the organization flexibility if they want to make more moves at the trade deadline. Assuming Falk plays five more games, the Sabres could expose five defenders in the expansion draft, allowing them choose option B.

I still don't know what option the Sabres will select, it's too early to say. This move doesn't cost them much but could make things easier for them this summer.

The rules for this expansion draft are confusing, I'll be the first to admit that, so here's a link to further explain how the rules work.

Pavel Zacha powers Devils past Sabres

By Mike Morreale

NHL.com

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. -- Pavel Zacha scored his first NHL game-winning goal to give the New Jersey Devils a 2-1 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at Prudential Center on Monday.

The 19-year-old rookie broke a 1-1 tie in the third period when he scored off the rebound of a Michael Cammalleri shot at 12:33 with Sabres forward Evander Kane in the penalty box for high sticking.

Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma challenged the goal, claiming New Jersey forward Adam Henrique interfered with goalie Robin Lehner, but it was upheld, and the Devils ended a seven-game losing streak at home.

"I saw the rebound and was lucky enough it went right on my stick, so I just tried to shoot it right away," Zacha said. "The goalie didn't know where the puck was; I tried to surprise him."

Henrique scored in the first period for the Devils (23-21-10). Schneider is 3-0-1 in his past four starts.

"It's that time of the year where everyone ramps their game up, and we have to find a way to do that consistently," Henrique said. "We had a big 5-1 win [at the Columbus Blue Jackets] on Saturday, and we had to find a way to carry that over at home and against the Sabres."

The Devils won consecutive games for the first time since they won three straight Jan. 13-17.

"It was important to win at home, but more important was the way we played," Schneider said. "You can't always guarantee a win no matter how well you play, but I thought we did a lot of things well and deserved to win."

Lehner made 37 saves for the Sabres (21-21-10), who are 1-3-1 in their past five games.

Henrique, who turned 27 on Monday, scored a power-play goal in the second period to give the Devils a 1-0 lead at 8:46.

The Devils went 2-of-4 on the power play and have scored at least one power-play goal in four of the past five games.

"We're jumping on second and third opportunities with the man-advantage," Henrique said. "That's been the difference-maker lately: getting pucks and bodies to the net."

Tyler Ennis tied it 1-1 when he scored 8:39 into the third off a spin move along the goal line, beating Schneider just inside the right post.

Goal of the game

Lehner got his glove on Cammalleri's high wrist shot from the top of the left faceoff circle, and Zacha quickly shot the rebound from just below the left hash marks for his sixth goal of the season, fourth on the power play.

"[Henrique] touched my glove a little bit, but I don't think it was that significant," Lehner said. "It's hard to argue if he doesn't have his stick there if I get it clean or not. Maybe. Maybe not."

Save of the game

Schneider made a chest save against Sabres center Jack Eichel on a one-timer from the top of the left circle 5:35 into the first.

Highlight of the game

Ennis scored his third of the season when he beat Schneider with a low shot through the five-hole from a tough angle. "Once he curled up, I just kind of squared up ice a little bit looking for a late guy he might hit with a pass," Schneider said. "He whipped it on net, and I was caught in an awkward spot. It was completely my fault to not follow that through and stay with him. When you win, though, you tend to forget about those ones easily."

Unsung performance of the game

Devils defensemen had 15 blocked shots, led by Andy Greene and Steven Santini, who each had four.

They said it

"We need our best players to be our best players. I think a lot of us didn't like the first half to our season in terms of the guys who have been here and who were counted on. Some guys have really stepped up and we've gotten good depth performances too. [Pavel Zacha] has really stepped it up on that line with Jacob Josefson and Stefan Noesen. They have contributed, and it seems like everyone is settling into a role." -- Devils goaltender Cory Schneider

"We didn't have any chances, not with what I saw. Schneider had an easy game. Like I said, it is up to us in this room to get things going, and tonight we didn't get things going." -- Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner

Need to know

Eichel played 19:52, had three shots on goal and was 1-for-8 on faceoffs. ... The Devils will not play the next five days. ... Henrique has four goals and seven points during a five-game point streak. ... New Jersey center Travis Zajac was 11-for-14 (78 percent) on faceoffs, including 4-for-4 against Eichel.

What's next

Sabres: Host the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; MSG-B, CSN-CA, NHL.TV)

Devils: Host the San Jose Sharks on Sunday (12:30 p.m. ET; SN360, SN1, MSG+, CSN-CA, NHL.TV)

Hard work pays off for Falk with mid-season extension

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. - If there's one thing that Justin Falk has learned during his eight professional seasons, it's that nothing in this business is guaranteed. The defenseman has played 224 NHL games for four different organizations. He's played 189 AHL games during that same span.

When he was a free agent this summer, he and his agent looked at Buffalo and examined the Sabres' depth chart and the interest that was being shown. What they saw, in Falk's words, was a chance to get some games in and simply get a look.

Thirty-five games later, Falk and the Sabres agreed to a one-year contract extension on Monday morning worth \$650,000.

"Pretty exciting few days for myself and my family," Falk said prior to Buffalo's game in New Jersey. "First time it's ever happened, something like this for me to get an extension or a contract during the season and not just in the summer."

If there's been any silver lining to the injuries that have plagued Buffalo's defensive corps this season, it's been the admirable job that players that Falk and Taylor Fedun have done to fill in. Falk impressed coaches in the preseason, and he got his first regular-season look with the Sabres on Nov. 11. He's been in Buffalo ever since.

In his 35 games, Falk has averaged 13:11 of ice time with an even rating and four assists. He prides himself on a simple, reliable game, and that's been precisely what the Sabres have needed after losing usual starters to various injuries throughout the season.

"Great for him, great for us," Bylsma said of the extension. "I think he's really added depth to our defensive corps and stepped in, almost played 40 games now and did a really good job for us. He did a real good job for us in our last game in our win against Ottawa playing big, strong, physical. It's something he's done real well for us and going to do going forward."

The job security that comes with a mid-season contract extension is especially welcome for a father of two young children. Falk's oldest child turns 3 at the end of March; his youngest was born in August. Together with his wife, the family has been living in an extended-stay hotel since coming to Buffalo.

"I've been very blessed," Falk said. "As much as this is a great thing to happen to me, I can't forget about my wife and everything that she's done and stuck with me and transitioned [through] five, six different teams in four or five years and you throw in two kids along the way and births and all that. This is as much for here as it is me."

Falk will play his 36th game of the season in New Jersey on Monday. The last time he reached that number of games in a single season was 2012-13 with Minnesota. So, what's changed to make him stick around?

According to Falk, not much.

"I go out there every day, the position I've been in the last few years of my career, nothing's guaranteed," he said. "It's pretty day-to-day, week-to-week, your time in the NHL so put your best foot forward."

"For them to appreciate what I bring to the table and my element and style of defenseman and for them to be able to commit back to me was great."

Sabres struggle to generate offense in loss to Devils

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

February 6, 2017

NEWARK, N.J. - For the third time this season, a meeting between the Buffalo Sabres and the New Jersey Devils on Monday night represented an opportunity for the Sabres to shrink a tight gap between the two teams in the standings. And, for the third time, it was the Devils who came out on top.

You can point to a number of factors when trying to explain Buffalo's 2-1 loss at Prudential Center. You can question whether or not Evander Kane deserved a double-minor when he stuck up for Zengus Girgensons in the second period, a penalty that led to New Jersey's first goal, or you can question whether or not a third-period coach's challenge for goalie interference should've gone in Buffalo's favor. You can wonder whether the Sabres deserved more than one power play on a night the Devils had four.

Robin Lehner acknowledged all of these factors, but for him, the game boiled down to something much simpler.

"They played good. I don't think we played that well," the Sabres goaltender said.

In a game that was chippy right from the moment Nicolas Deslauriers fought Joseph Blandisi early in the first period, things escalated when Karl Stollery knocked the helmet off of Girgensons with a hard check into the boards (Girgensons would later do the same thing to Stollery). The hit prompted Kane to retaliate against the Devils defenseman, and Kane ended up receiving four minutes for roughing while New Jersey's Stephen Santini only served two.

Adam Henrique banked a puck off of Sabres defenseman Cody Franson and into the net on the ensuing power play to give the Devils a 1-0 lead 8:46 into the period.

Girgensons said he didn't believe that Kane deserved the extra two minutes for his actions, and Sabres coach Dan Bylsma seemed to agree.

"Evander's going in there for his teammate," Bylsma said. "That's something we like to see.

"I don't necessarily agree with all the calls tonight," he said later.

Henrique's goal came on New Jersey's second power play of the night. The Devils were on their fourth power play when Pavel Zacha scored the game-winning goal on a rebound in the third period, breaking the 1-1 tie that the Sabres had earned a few minutes prior thanks to a spin-o-rama goal from Tyler Ennis.

Bylsma challenged for goalie interference when it appeared a New Jersey stick made contact with Lehner's glove as he attempted to catch the initial shot, freeing the puck and creating the rebound opportunity for Zacha. Officials ruled otherwise.

"It's a puck above the crossbar, Robin goes up to catch it and their guy puts his stick into it and I think prevents Robin from catching the puck," Bylsma said. "Yes, the puck gets spit back out and there's a second shot so there's no interference on the second shot but without the stick there, I think Robin catches the puck."

Lehner said he agreed with the decision to challenge the play, but he wasn't willing to blame the goal on the contact made with his glove.

"He touched my glove a little bit but I don't think significantly," he said. "It's hard to argue if he doesn't have his stick there, [whether] I get it clean or not. I don't know. Maybe, maybe not."

Lehner turned in yet another strong outing, following up his 37-save shutout of the Ottawa Senators on Saturday with 37 saves against the Devils. The Sabres simply weren't able to establish their game in the offensive zone, particularly in the second and third periods.

On the night, Buffalo was outshot 39-23.

"They really did a good job in the second period of hemming us in and we played a lot of D-zone against them in that stretch of time," Bylsma said. "I think they had nine scoring chances in the second period."

"I think we gave them too much," Girgensons said. "We put too much on Lenny's shoulders today. He could've been the difference for us ... He made some great saves for us, we've got to play better for our goalie."

Ennis extends point streak

Ennis tied the game in typical Ennis fashion with 11:21 remaining in the third period. He carried the puck deep into the defensive zone, spun off the body of New Jersey's Stollery along the goal line and tossed the puck toward the net, beating Cory Schneider between the pads.

The goal was the third of the season for Ennis and his second in nine games since returning from a groin injury. He now has points in three straight games (1+2).

"I'm just trying to get better every day," Ennis said. "With every opportunity I get I've just got to make the best of it and keep capitalizing on opportunities."

Up next

The Sabres are back home on Tuesday to host the reigning Western Conference champion San Jose Sharks. It will be "You Can Play Night" at KeyBank Center, advocating for "inclusion, acceptance and respect of LGBTQ athletes in sports."

Coverage 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 at 7 p.m.