



Buffalo Sabres

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Quick blanks Sabres again, leads LA Kings to 2-0 victory

By Greg Beacham

Associated Press

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — Although the Los Angeles Kings are behind in the playoff race after a tumultuous seven-game homestand, they're not out of it as long as they can keep piling up victories.

Jarome Iginla and rookie Adrian Kempe scored in the third period, and Jonathan Quick earned his first shutout of the season in the Kings' 2-0 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

The Kings haven't given up on their playoff hopes despite sitting four points behind St. Louis for the final wild card spot in the Western Conference. Back-to-back losses earlier in the week, including a 3-1 loss to the Blues, allowed St. Louis to surge ahead with just 11 games to play, but the Kings have enough games left against their playoff rivals to keep them in the thick of the race — with a lengthy winning surge, of course.

"It's that time of year, right?" asked Dustin Brown, who had two assists. "We've just got to find ways to grind points out."

After getting two late goals as a reward for grinding through two scoreless periods, Los Angeles still failed to gain postseason ground with its latest blanking of Buffalo, since the Blues won 4-1 at San Jose at the same time.

In his 43rd career shutout, Quick made 26 saves while shutting out the Sabres for the third time in eight career appearances against Buffalo. The former Conn Smythe Trophy winner has allowed more than two goals just once in seven starts since returning from a 4 1/2-month injury absence.

Robin Lehner stopped 34 shots for the Sabres, who have lost six of seven and 10 of 12. Buffalo was shut out for the first time since Nov. 7 at Boston.

The Sabres are getting used to this fate at Staples Center: Their last four games in downtown LA have ended in 2-0 losses.

Buffalo hasn't scored a road goal against the Kings in more than 263 minutes of play.

"It was a game exactly like we thought it was going to be," Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma said. "It was going to be a hard-fought game. It was going to be a battle for every inch of ice. We were in that battle. It's just a sign of how tough it is against a playoff-caliber team."

Iginla connected 36 seconds into the third for his 622nd career goal on a slick pass across the crease from Anze Kopitar. The goal was Iginla's third in seven games with the Kings, who acquired the 39-year-old veteran from Colorado two weeks ago for the playoff push.

"Coming to a new team, you definitely want to find ways to help out," Iginla said. "I've got a great shot here. I'm going to keep working at it. There's room for improvement, but it feels good."

Kempe then got his second career goal with 5:20 to play, beating Lehner from a tough angle after Brown kept the play alive.

The Sabres lost 4-1 at San Jose on Tuesday in the opener of a four-game road trip that includes all three California clubs. Buffalo is wrapping up what's almost certain to be its sixth consecutive non-playoff season.

NOTES: Buffalo D Justin Falk sat out with a calf injury, and F Justin Bailey missed his first game since Feb. 2 due to a foot injury. D Tyler Fedun returned from the minors to fill in for Falk in his first game with the Sabres since Feb. 12, while F Hudson Fasching made his first appearance for Buffalo since Oct. 30, when he incurred a groin injury that kept him out for nearly three months. ... Brown got his 500th NHL point with an assist on the opening goal. The former captain has spent his entire career with the Kings. He had played the past 13 games without an assist. ... Los Angeles outshot the Sabres 25-11 during the first two periods.

Kings crown Sabres but Lehner gets his say

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2017

LOS ANGELES -- You want brutal honesty in the Buffalo Sabres' dressing room, you go right to goaltender Robin Lehner. No cliches, no coddling, no covering up. It's the unvarnished view, as unsightly as it might be.

Lehner was strong on the ice Thursday and to the point again afterward following the Sabres' 2-0 loss to the Los Angeles Kings in Staples Center. It was a game available for the taking, as the Kings scored both their goals in the third period to snap a scoreless tie, but one that featured an embarrassing start for the Sabres.

The Kings crowned the Sabres on the shot counter, 15-2, in the first period and the Sabres still had just six shots on goal with the game 35 1/2 minutes old before finally creating some offensive push.

Buffalo put together 20 shots on goal over the final 24 1/2 minutes, including 15 in the third period. The final count was 36-26 for the Kings as the Sabres dropped their second straight out West and were shut out here for the fourth straight time.

Lehner's view in the crease was as good as any to see what was going on. The Sabres missed passes breaking out of their zone, as usual, and didn't develop any semblance of a forecheck in the Los Angeles zone until the third period.

"You can't come into a building like this and expect to play 10 minutes of good hockey. Sorry to be honest, you're just not going to win games," Lehner said in calm, measured tones. "We can't wait for them to score the first goal and wake up. It's not how the game is played. They're a good, solid, big team and they're going to shut you down. We had a couple of shots, a couple of chances but they kept us to the outside."

The Kings won the game on 39-year-old Jarome Iginla's goal 36 seconds into the third period and got insurance on 21-year-old Adrian Kempe's tally with 5:20 left. In between, the Sabres pressed for a tying goal but were stopped by goaltender Jonathan Quick.

"It's frustrating to see," Lehner said. "When we turn it on in the third we play really good. We've got to play that way full games. You can't just put out the skates the first two periods and expect to come out with a win by making a late push."

Lehner is certainly holding up his end. Since relieving Anders Nilsson in the second period of Saturday's win over Columbus, he's stopped 95 of 101 shots for a .941 save percentage.

Evan Rodrigues led the Sabres with five shots on goal and centered the team's best line, between Marcus Foligno and Hudson Fasching. Of course, if a line two-thirds comprised of players who spent most of the year in Rochester is Buffalo's No. 1 trio, the Sabres have quite a problem on their hands.

Jack Eichel had two shots on goal -- and both came in the final 1:37 of the game. Sam Reinhart also had two and one was a flip shot from outside the blueline in the first period. Ryan O'Reilly had no shots on goal and only one attempt while going 17-5 on faceoffs. But he was also on the ice for both goals.

"I've got to generate more," said O'Reilly, now without a goal in five straight games. "I've got to compete better. Not good enough."

The Sabres are 2-8-2 in their last 12 games and their playoffs hopes are essentially gone. You might say they're playing out the string for the final 11 games but Lehner doesn't buy that theory.

"At the end of the day, it's up to each and every one of us," he said. "This is a business. You've got to come out and play. Otherwise, you get replaced. It's simple. It doesn't matter if we're in or out. Everyone needs to be playing for their jobs. It's a privilege to play in this league. You've got to earn it. We all have to decide if we're going to help each other make a good last impression these last 11 games left."

"If you just pack it in, there's a lot of eyes, a lot of eyes looking and people see. And it's pretty obvious. If we want to stay in this league, you better get your head on straight."

Embattled coach Dan Bylsma certainly agreed.

"That's our job as professionals to do that," said Bylsma. "The games we've got left, the opportunities we have, we have to play just like we were in a playoff race, just like we were in the hunt. That's the job of all of us going down the stretch."

By a lot of metrics, shot numbers are ugly

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2017

LOS ANGELES -- The Buffalo Sabres haven't had the puck nearly enough this season, with classic statistics as well as analytics making the point clear. Their challenge Thursday night was a team that has mastered possession over the last few years.

The Sabres never figured they would be near the bottom of the NHL in possession numbers this year but that's where they are. They entered their game against the Los Angeles Kings ranked 29th in Corsi percentage in 5-on-5 play at 46.9 percent. Only Arizona was worse at 45.8. The Kings, meanwhile, led the league at 55.25.

The Sabres were 24th last year in Corsi, a measure of your shot attempts against the total attempts in the game. And while it's true shot attempts are at the mercy of arena stat crews, you can certainly draw conclusions from teams ranked high or low in the statistic.

Center Ryan O'Reilly, the workhorse who leads NHL forwards in ice time, knew the Sabres were struggling but had no idea of the actual numbers until he was told about them after practice Wednesday.

"That's disappointing for sure," O'Reilly said. "I didn't think we'd be that low and that's certainly not what we want. Maybe we're throwing the puck away too easy when we get it. We're going to the right areas but we're just a split-second behind and it can show the way we get hemmed in.

"Once we stop thinking and gain some momentum we start to play hockey. Win your battle, trust your instincts and you start to generate more."

At 5-on-5, the Sabres have yielded 3,310 shot attempts, or 47.28 per game. Only Arizona (3,449) and the New York Islanders (3,412) have given up more. In terms of strict shots on goal, the Sabres have been outshot in 45 of their first 70 games this season and entered Thursday last in the NHL in shots on goal against at 34.2 per game. They were 16th in shots for at 30.2 and 22nd in goals with 177.

"We've gone through stretches and phases where we've been better at it but it's really on both sides of the puck having to defend too much, and giving up possession of the puck has been a big thing to cause," coach Dan Bylsma said before the game. "Same with us getting to the offensive zone and not being able to possess it. That's where we're good, where we create offense but it's not something we've been able to do with any consistency."

The Sabres were outshot, 41-23, in Tuesday's 4-1 loss in San Jose and the attempts were also lopsided (74-50). They have been outshot by 10 or more shots 20 times this season, but have managed to go 9-7-4 in those games thanks mostly to stellar play from goaltenders Robin Lehner and Anders Nilsson.

Tuesday's contest was the 10th time in 12 games the Sabres have yielded at least 30 shots on goal -- and the 26th time in 29 games the count has finished at 30 or more. One factor has been the inability of the Buffalo defense corps to carry the puck or make crisp passes to get it out of the defensive zone.

"Possession is talked about more having it in the offensive zone," Bylsma said. "But the biggest aspects of possession are transitioning the puck and moving it up the ice. That's really on both the defensemen and the forwards."

Defenseman Taylor Fedun joined the Sabres for the game after being called up from Rochester to replace Justin Falk, who is nursing a calf injury. Fedun drove to Toronto to escape the snow that enveloped Rochester and took a direct flight here, arriving just after the team's optional morning skate ended. The Amerks game Wednesday against Binghamton was postponed by the weather.

"It was pretty bad. The snow had slowed up finally a couple hours before I left," Fedun said. "The past 48 hours have been pretty crazy. Our game got canceled because there was a travel ban. Getting out of parking lots in spaces, there was so much wind and the snow banks built up so it was crazy."

The Sabres headed down the freeway for Anaheim immediately after the game and will face the Ducks Friday night at 10 p.m. Eastern in their final game of the season against the Western Conference. The Ducks beat Buffalo, 5-2, Feb. 9 in KeyBank Center.

"This is really one of the tougher swings in hockey with these three teams in four nights," O'Reilly said of the Sharks, Kings and Ducks. "They're all heavy teams. They're all strong. They've all had success in the league recently. They're veterans. They always play the right way and there's never an easy battle."

Former Buffalo defenseman Brayden McNabb was a healthy scratch for the Kings for the third time in the last four games. He has two goals, two assists and a plus-4 rating in 38 games this season.

Sabres winger Hudson Fasching, acquired along with Nic Deslauriers in the 2014 trade for McNabb, played his first NHL game since Oct. 30 after his recall from Rochester on Monday. Justin Bailey sat out after taking a shot to the foot on Tuesday.

Quick Hits: Kings 2, Sabres 0

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2017

LOS ANGELES -- Forget winning a game at Staples Center. The Buffalo Sabres can't even score a goal in the gargantuan home of the Los Angeles Kings.

The Sabres were shut out for the fourth straight time here Thursday night, suffering a 2-0 loss that was their second straight on their Western road trip. Oddly enough, all four of the losses have been by that 2-0 score.

Buffalo's last goal here was scored by former captain Craig Rivet during the third period of a shootout loss in 2010. Total time without a Sabres goal in the building: 263 minutes, 53 seconds.

The Los Angeles win made it 14 straight victories in the series for the home team when the game is played in an NHL arena. Buffalo won as the "road" team during a 2011 NHL Premiere Series meeting in Berlin.

Both Los Angeles goals came in the third period, by Jarome Iginla at 36 seconds and Adrian Kempe at 14:40. Jonathan Quick got the shutout as the Kings outshot Buffalo, 36-25.

The Sabres fell to 2-8-2 in their last 12 games overall and have lost six straight on the road.

Breaking the ice: Iginla put the Kings up period with a great dual effort. He outworked the Sabres down low and directed the puck toward the net with one hand. Breaking away from traffic, he then snuck behind Ryan O'Reilly, Zach Bogosian and Cody Franson, taking a pass from Anze Kopitar and easily tapping to the puck in to Lehner's right.

Getting breathing room: Lehner was about to freeze the puck but Dustin Brown swooped in to take it away from him. A few seconds later, Kempe got the puck in the right circle and beat Lehner with a quick shot off the goal post.

Milestones: Brown also assisted on Iginla's goal to earn his 500th NHL point. Iginla's goal was No. 622 of his career.

Close calls: The Sabres pressed in the third, with Jack Eichel fanning on a loose puck just to Jonathan Quick's right and Brian Gionta tapping the puck wide on a pass from Tyler Ennis during a 2-on-1 break.

Scoreless first period: The Kings outshot Buffalo, 15-2. Yes, 15-2. Buffalo's first shot was a flip by Sam Reinhart from outside the blueline after 5:40 of play and the other coming from Evan Rodrigues. Reinhart and Matt Moulson both skated down the left wing and cranked shots off the goalpost to the right of Quick.

Scoreless second period: The Sabres were better, especially in the last seven minutes or so. The shots were 10-9 for the Kings, although Lehner still had to be sharp on several plays. Jonathan Quick.

No old friends: Former Buffalo defenseman Brayden McNabb was a healthy scratch for the Kings. So was winger Jordan Nolan, the son of ex-Buffalo coach Ted Nolan.

Up next: The Sabres wrap up the Western portion of the trip Friday at 10 p.m. Eastern in Anaheim. They return home and they hit the road again to play Monday in Detroit before hosting Pittsburgh on Tuesday.

Breathe Sabres fans, breathe

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

March 16, 2017

If I had any hair left, I'd be pulling it out. The tough times for Buffalo sports fans feel like they will never end. The Sabres were supposed to help but now they're just adding to the misery. The Blue and Gold are about to miss the playoffs for the sixth straight season and the 11th time in the last 15 years. This will mark 10 years since the Sabres last won a playoff series.

The rebuild has gone from drive last season to neutral this season. Buffalo is on pace to finish with 80 points after ending with 81 last season.

But there's no need to freak out and proclaim the tank and rebuild has been a massive failure. I understand why you might since Buffalo sports fans tend to have a doom and gloom approach and for good reason. While the Sabres have been sub par for most of the last 10 years, the Bills post season drought is at an unfathomable 17 seasons.

I wasn't expecting a playoff berth from the Sabres this season but I was expecting them to be in serious contention down the stretch and yet here they are playing out the string. I was thinking at least 85 points and another step in the right direction.

Instead, the Sabres are playing their worst hockey of the season. They have the look of a team trying to get their coach fired. General Manager Tim Murray has taken a patient approach to this campaign, at times waiting for his roster to be healthy so he could get a true evaluation of what he had assembled. Clearly(I hope) Murray can see he still has work to do this spring/summer, with the heavy lifting coming on defense.

There's a difference between this team needs to get better and waving the white flag while declaring the Sabres plan has been a complete waste of time. As Aaron Rodgers would say "relax".

There are some pieces in place on offense including 20 year old Jack Eichel who is on a point per game pace in his second year and is ranked in the top 10 in the NHL in points per game.

21 year old Sam Reinhart(43 points in 68 games) has already topped his point total from last season(42 in 79 games). Kyle Okposo was brought in to help the offense and he has with 19 goals(3rd on the team) and 43 points(tied for 3rd most).

Evander Kane is doing what Murray hoped Kane would do when the GM made that big trade with Winnipeg. Kane has been the Sabres best goal scorer at even strength, where the team still struggles to score enough goals. Ryan O'Reilly has had another good, across the board season but of late it sure looks like he's been worn down by too much usage. O'Reilly leads all NHL forwards in ice time.

There are some positive signs from young guys who could provide help next season like Justin Bailey and Evan Rodrigues. Perhaps other youngsters like Nick Baptiste, William Carrier and Alex Nylander will contribute on a full time basis.

As I said, the biggest problem is back on the blue line. There are two players worth keeping going forward in Rasmus Ristolainen and Jake McCabe. Murray needs to overhaul the rest of the group although I'm not expecting it since I'm not sure who would take Zach Bogosian and Josh Gorges off their hands.

There were very encouraging signs from Brendan Guhle during the pre-season and a brief three game emergency call up back in December. Hopefully he wins a job in the top six coming out camp but its not out of the question the Sabres will want him to get some seasoning in the AHL.

I don't know anything about Viktor Antipin but if he is signed, I'd hope/expect a 25 year old defenseman who has spent five seasons playing in the KHL would be here in the regular rotation.

I'd expect Murray to venture into the trade market in hopes of landing a top four defenseman. It might cost the Sabres Evander Kane but I'm not sure how they'd be able to fit a long term, big money extension for Kane along with other deals that will have to be made down the road.

I know it hasn't been fun and the suffering has taken longer than some of you anticipated. Toronto zooming past the Sabres this season has only made matters worse and ratcheted up the heat on Murray and Bylsma, assuming the latter is back as head coach next season.

But sometimes you need to take a breath and not let the emotional baggage of being a Buffalo sports fan make you believe all hope is lost.

R-E-L-A-X

Sabres prospect Brendan Guhle ready for NHL duty

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 17, 2017

Brendan Guhle's splendid play over the past four months starring for the junior Prince George Cougars helped convince his coach, Richard Matvichuk, the Buffalo Sabres' top defense prospect is ready for the NHL.

Guhle, 19, skates with so much composure during his 25 to 30 minutes of ice time, Matvichuk said, he brings calmness to his teammates. The 2015 second-round pick has also morphed into an offensive force, scoring 12 goals and 28 points in 30 contests with the first-place Western Hockey League club.

But something else tells Matvichuk, a veteran of 15 NHL seasons, Guhle is ready to join the Sabres next season.

"He's a very respectable young man," Matvichuk, a former defenseman, told the Times Herald by phone Monday. "He's mature for his age. You can tell that he's ready to be a pro. You can look at other 19-year-olds, you kind of think, 'Ah, is he ready? Ah, maybe not.'

"This is a guy that ... holds himself like a professional, he dresses like a professional. He's ready to make that step. He really is."

Guhle, who played his first three NHL games as an emergency recall in December, is expected to join the Sabres for regular duty next season, something he probably should've enjoyed this campaign.

It can be argued the Sabres, whose blue line is their Achilles' heel, made a huge mistake sending Guhle back to the WHL in October.

"He's an elite player at this level," Matvichuk said. "There's a reason why he's played the games he has in the National League just because of his ability. He is that good."

Matvichuk hopes those elite talents keep buoying the Cougars, who have home ice advantage in the playoffs for the first time since 1999-00. The final weeks of Guhle's junior career promise to be exciting.

"I've only ever played nine playoff games (in four seasons)," Guhle said by phone. "I've only ever made it five games deep in a series."

A long playoff run would cap a season Guhle said has been "pretty nuts."

Following another impressive NHL training camp, Guhle nearly made the Sabres for the second straight year. In fact, just days before the season opener, it appeared they would keep him – the collective bargaining agreement allows a nine-game look – for a bit.

Instead, Guhle rejoined the Prince Albert Raiders, one of the WHL's worst teams. Matvichuk and the Cougars, meanwhile, wanted him badly. They got him in a trade Nov. 18.

"They knew I wanted to go somewhere where I could win," Guhle said of the Raiders. "They were generous enough to do that."

Guhle had barely settled in with the Cougars when the Sabres, down three defensemen, summoned him. No one seemed to know Guhle was allowed to be recalled.

Matvichuk told a stunned Guhle he was going to the NHL.

"The expression on his face is something I'll never forget," he said.

Guhle looked comfortable with the Sabres, showcasing his speed, an element their defense sorely lacks.

"I think maybe I played pretty well, definitely had a lot of fun while I was up there," Guhle said. "They gave me good feedback, so it's positive."

Still, Guhle doesn't think he has already locked up a roster spot for 2017-18.

"I don't want to tell myself I'm ready and then come in next fall and be like, 'What the heck? What happened?'" he said.

The brief exposure to the NHL, Matvichuk said, helped Guhle, who's an "offensive threat every time he steps on the ice here."

"They put him in a role where he almost had to play more of a defensive situation but use his skating to his ability," he said. "When he got back here, it was like a switch went off knowing that he has to play a full 200-foot game to be successful – his puck retrievals, his first pass.

"When he got here, everything was just automatic. It was just great."

Guhle said: "It wasn't difficult to adjust again."

Guhle, however, had difficulty adjusting to his first long-term injury, an ankle problem that sidelined him 28 days, he said.

"That was my first injury that kept me out over a week or two," he said. "It was pretty different. It was definitely weird not going on the ice."

Guhle looked sharp in his return March 3, scoring a career-high four points in the Cougars' win. He has already equaled last season's point total in 33 fewer games.

"A good situation for me, a lot of good opportunities," Guhle said. "I was fortunate to get traded to a good team like this."

Story notes:

Matvichuk on why Guhle's offensive talents have grown in Prince George: "It's the way he skates, his ability to get up and down the ice. We kind of play a high-tempo that we want our defensemen to join the rush as that fourth attacker every time we can. His first three strides are explosive that he's up in the rush. Knowing, as a coach, you kind of give a guy like that a little extra leeway."

Matvichuk on Team Canada leaving Guhle off its World Junior Championship roster in December: "Very surprised. For me, he's an elite player at this level, one of the best in our league. Not sure if it was because the record in Prince Albert, what it was. It was shocking for me."

Sabres recall Taylor Fedun to replace Justin Falk

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 17, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres today recalled defenseman Taylor Fedun to replace Justin Falk, who recently bruised his calf blocking a shot, coach Dan Bylsma told reporters in California.

Fedun, 28, played 25 games with the Sabres earlier this season, compiling seven assists. The Princeton product has five goals and 23 points in 29 appearances with the AHL Rochester Americans.

The Sabres will also be without winger Justin Bailey for tonight's road tilt against the Los Angeles Kings. The rookie blocked a shot in Tuesday's 4-1 loss in San Jose. Winger Hudson Fasching will move in, the rookie's first NHL appearance since Oct. 30.

5 Observations: Kings take down Sabres 2-0

By Matt Bove

WKBW

March 17, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Since rattling off a three-game win streak the Buffalo Sabres have lost 10 of their last 12 games including a 2-0 loss to the Los Angeles Kings on Thursday evening. Remember less than a month ago when we were talking about the playoffs?

Here's a fun stat to kick things off -- the Sabres haven't scored a goal at Staples Center since 2010. Memories.

Five observations from Thursday's loss:

Defensive breakdowns

If you look at the box score and see the Kings had **only** two goals you might think "Well the Sabres defense must've played pretty well."

Ehh, not exactly.

Robin Lehner was fantastic and bailed the Sabres defenders out of some sticky situations. Perhaps their worst mishap came on the Kings first goal when three Sabres players failed to clear the zone, allowing Los Angeles forward Jarome Iginla, the ageless wonder, an easy goal.

On LA's second goal of the evening, the Sabres got caught chasing the Kings and Adrian Kempe made them pay. The goal came right as a Sabres penalty expired.

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The good news: The Sabres recorded progressively more shots as the game went on.

The bad news: After two periods they had only 11.

Buffalo finished the night with 26 shots, which isn't absolutely terrible, but it's not good either when you allow 36 to your opponent. The Sabres applied pressure late but just couldn't beat Kings goaltender Jonathan Quick, who was great in his own right on Thursday evening.

Robin the Kings

Lehner did everything he could and then some against the Kings on Thursday, stopping 34 of Los Angeles' 36 shots.

Lehner was the Sabres best player for the second game in a row, keeping the Sabres alive until the very end, despite being dominated in both shots and shots attempted.

For whatever reason, Lehner has taken a lot of criticism from fans this season. While at times it has been fair to be critical, more often than not, Lehner has played very well. He was stellar on Thursday.

Hudson Fasching has a beard now and it's very fitting

It has been a tough season for 21-year-old Hudson Fasching but on Thursday he reminded Sabres fans what he brings to the table. After an injury-riddled season kept Fasching sidelined for months the Sabres forward returned to the lineup for the first time since October.

Early in the game, Fasching made his presence felt, knocking Kings defender Drew Doughty to the ice. A few seconds later Doughty retaliated with a cross-check and just like that the Sabres were on the power play. Mission accomplished, Mr. Fasching.

It was a very strong effort from start to finish for Fasching. Heading into the season a lot of people, myself included, were really excited to see what Fasching could do in a full season. It looks like we'll have to wait another year to get the answer, but if he keeps playing like he did on Thursday he's not going back to Rochester.

But wait, there's more

Just when you thought the Fasching praise was done.....

The Foligno-Rodrigues -Fasching line was the Sabres most effective trio against Los Angeles. Here's your crazy stat: In the third period, the line generated four (!) scoring chances on one shift. Up until that point, the entire Sabres team only had six scoring chances.

It would be nice to see if this combination could stick together for a few more games and build off their success against the Kings.

Quick, Kings shut out Sabres

By Forrest Lee

NHL.com

March 17, 2017

LOS ANGELES -- Jonathan Quick made 26 saves to help the Los Angeles Kings to a 2-0 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Staples Center on Thursday.

The Sabres have been shut out in their past four trips to Staples Center. All four games ended 2-0.

Jarome Iginla and rookie Adrian Kempe scored for the Kings (34-29-7), who remain four points behind the St. Louis Blues for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Western Conference. The Blues defeated the San Jose Sharks 4-1 on Thursday.

"We're a team that was trying to get some more speed in our lineup, so that gives us another fast player," Kings coach Darryl Sutter said about Kempe. "He's [20] years old. I'm not going to get too philosophical, but he's got a lot to learn about the game, I think. Just think about the two goals we scored -- the oldest player on our team scored a goal and the youngest player scored a goal. Hopefully, in between, we can flip a little bit around and somebody else will score next game."

Dustin Brown had two assists to give him 501 points for his NHL career.

Quick got his first shutout of the season and the 43rd of his NHL career. In eight games against the Sabres, Quick has three shutouts.

Robin Lehner had 34 saves for Buffalo (28-31-12).

Iginla scored 36 seconds into the third period on a pass from Anze Kopitar to beat Lehner for his third goal since the Kings acquired him from the Colorado Avalanche on March 1. Iginla has 11 goals this season.

Kempe scored with 5:20 remaining. It was his second goal of the season.

"It was a big goal and a great feeling," Kempe said. "It was a tight game, we were up 1-0, so it was great to have a goal. It's a good feeling for me too."

The Kings outshot the Sabres 15-2 in the first period.

"I think we struggled to get our legs in this game and they played a hard, heavy game and got us back on our heels," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "We had a couple of long shifts in the defensive zone and they were pouring it on."

Goal of the game

Kopitar got the rebound of a shot by Brown and slipped a pass behind two Buffalo defenders to Iginla, who scored from inside the left faceoff circle.

Save of the game

Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian lost the puck to Kings forward Trevor Lewis in the Buffalo zone. Lewis passed to Andy Andreoff, who shot from the slot, but Lehner made a pad save at 2:46 of the second period.

Highlight of the game

Brown cleared the puck from the grasp of Lehner after a shot by Kempe and passed it back to Kempe, who beat Lehner from the right faceoff circle.

Unsung performance of the game

Kings defenseman Derek Forbort had three blocked shots and four hits in 21:54.

They said it

"I thought the first period was a really good period for us. We had good chances, good shots, and at that point you just want to not let them hang around. They started pushing back a bit in the second [period] and made it a little bit closer. -- Kings forward Jarome Iginla

"I thought it was a game exactly how we thought it was going to be. It was going to be a hard-fought game, it's going to be a battle for every inch of ice. We were in that fight. Our guys were in that fight." -- Sabres coach Dan Bylsma

"I thought it was good. It was a tough start with a mistake and a bad bounce there. Towards the end we were creating [chances], but again, you just have to do it for a full 60 [minutes], it's not good just to do it for five or 10 minutes." -- Sabres forward Ryan O'Reilly on the third period

Need to know

Kopitar has 10 points (three goals, seven assists) in his past 10 games. ... Iginla is three goals behind Joe Sakic (625) for 15th on the NHL all-time list. ... Buffalo has a scoreless streak of 263:53 in its past four games at Staples Center. ... Los Angeles has scored three or fewer goals in seven of its past eight games. They defeated the Washington Capitals 4-2 on March 11 at Staples Center, but the final goal was into an empty net. The Kings are 4-2-2 during that span. ... Sabres forward Hudson Fasching played his first game since sustaining a groin injury Oct. 30. ... Los Angeles played the final of a seven-game homestand (4-2-1). ... Buffalo ranked first in the League in power-play percentage (23.6) entering the game. They were 0-for-2 against Los Angeles.

What's next

Sabres: At the Anaheim Ducks on Friday (10 p.m. ET; PRIME, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Kings: At the Calgary Flames on Sunday (9:30 p.m. ET; SN1, SNW, FS-W, NHL.TV)

Fasching, Fedun to enter lineup in Los Angeles

By Jourdon LaBarber

Buffalo Sabres

March 16, 2017

LOS ANGELES - When Taylor Fedun finally walked into the visiting dressing room at Staples Center on Thursday morning, the first question asked of him was one usually reserved for small talk on an elevator: "So, how was the weather?"

Fedun was able to trade the wrath of Winter Storm Stella for sunny California, but not before making a late-night drive from Rochester - where the conditions were so bad that the Amerks had to cancel their game on Wednesday - up to Toronto, and then taking a direct flight to Los Angeles on Thursday morning.

Just as Fedun arrived at the arena, his alma mater, Princeton, fell to Notre Dame on the final shot in the opening game of the NCAA Tournament back in Buffalo. The Sabres, meanwhile, were finishing up their optional morning skate, meaning Fedun wouldn't be getting on the ice.

Needless to say, it had been long 24 hours.

"At least I'm here early enough that I can have some down time and I'm not hopping off the plane and getting right into it," Fedun said. "It can always be worse."

Fedun will step into the lineup in place of an injured Justin Falk when the Sabres meet the Los Angeles Kings at Staples Center on Thursday night. It will be his 26th game of the season for Buffalo, but his first since Feb. 12. Fedun has seven assists in 25 NHL games this season and 23 points (8+15) in 29 games for Rochester.

On offense, meanwhile, Hudson Fasching will enter the lineup in place of Justin Bailey. Bailey missed practice on Wednesday due to an injury sustained while blocking a shot in San Jose the night before, but did participate in the morning skate on Thursday.

It will be Fasching's first NHL action since Oct. 30, when a groin injury that had been affecting him since training camp worsened to the point where he was forced to leave early in a game against Winnipeg. The injury has flared up at times since then, limiting him to just 25 games in Rochester.

Still, we know the type of player Fasching can be from his seven-game stint with the Sabres at the end of last season. Coach Dan Bylsma describes him as a power forward who is good along the boards and can command the puck in the offensive zone. His size and style make Fasching an ideal fit against the Kings, the team that drafted him back in 2013.

"They're a very structured team," Fasching said. "They're big, strong, so yeah, for me kind of coming right back in their face [with] big, strong hockey is kind of what I'm looking to do."

"It's a game he fits right into," Bylsma said.

Having made the playoffs in six of the last seven seasons, the Kings currently sit four points back from the second wild card spot in the Western Conference. They've lost their last two games, including a shootout loss to Arizona at home on Tuesday night.

Robin Lehner will get the nod in net for the Sabres, while Jonathan Quick is expected to start for the Kings.

Coverage on Thursday begins at 10 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 Kings at 10:30.

Projected lineup

9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 12 Brian Gionta
26 Matt Moulson - 15 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart

82 Marcus Foligno - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 52 Hudson Fasching
44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 28 Zemgus Girgensons - 63 Tyler Ennis

Defensemen: 29 Jake McCabe, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 4 Josh Gorges, 6 Cody Franson, 47 Zach Bogosian, 38
Taylor Fedun

40 Robin Lehner
31 Anders Nilsson