



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 21, 2017

Special teams give Sabres fond farewell at The Joe

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 20, 2017

DETROIT -- There's not a lot of deep analysis needed to dissect the Buffalo Sabres' 2-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings here Monday night in their final game at Joe Louis Arena.

After going 0 for 4 on the power play in their three games in California, the Sabres went 2 for 2 on goals from Jack Eichel and Matt Moulson. They also went 4 for 4 on their penalty kill. The result was their first two-game winning streak in more than a month.

"We talk about winning the special teams battle every game," said Moulson, who added to his team lead with his 11th power play goal of the season. "We did a good job with that tonight."

Added Eichel: "We weren't too happy with the power play out West so it's nice to get a couple."

Eichel scored in the first period on a one-timed wrist shot off a Ryan O'Reilly feed for his 21st goal of the season. Moulson's 14th was also aesthetically pleasing.

The Sabres work the tip drill in the slot on the power play regularly in practice and executed it perfectly on Tyler Ennis' feed in the slot to Moulson, who deflected it through Petr Mrazek's legs.

"I knew what he was thinking on that one," Moulson said of Ennis, who notched his first point in 12 games. "He was kind of looking at me. I just got open for him and he made a great play."

The Sabres reclaimed the NHL lead on the power play at 24 percent for the season with their 14th multi-goal performance. Moulson said the Sabres' confidence is rooted in their familiarity with each other and the plans of first-year assistant coaches Bob Woods and Tom Ward to get players in the right spots on the ice.

"Offensively, the power play is what makes us go," Moulson said.

The Sabres entered the game 29th in penalty killing but were perfect in four chances in this game, allowing just six shots on goal. They've killed off 11 of their last 12 penalties. Rasmus Ristolainen, Zach Bogosian, Jake McCabe, Brian Gionta and Josh Gorges all piled up more than three minutes of penalty killing time, with Kane and Gorges combining for seven of Buffalo's 16 blocked shots.

"The penalty kill was great today," said goalie Robin Lehner, who made 34 saves. "I had two or three good shots on four penalties. Ryan O'Reilly won good faceoffs, everybody had good clears and got it down the ice."

Eichel got a chance on one Detroit power play and also spent the bulk of the last minute on the ice with the Wings playing 6 on 5 with the goalie out. Eichel also used back pressure and pure hustle to break up a 2-on-1 Wings rush in the first period.

"It seems like I take a lot of heat for my defensive play and I don't think it's as bad as people say," Eichel said. "I'm just trying to work on it and get better."

"I thought he was really good in those situations," noted coach Dan Bylsma. "He's playing an all-around solid game and I thought this was one of his better ones.":

Eichel said he's working hard to build the coaches' trust in him on the defensive end of the ice.

"It's something I want to build in my game so I can become a more complete player," he said. "It's more opportunity on the ice. It gets you in the game. I'd like to become a regular on our penalty kill. I think I can bring a lot to it. To have them be able to put me out there at the end of the game is good."

The Sabres finished 14-23-6 at the Joe, winning their last two and putting together their first winning streak in the old barn since 1981. Afterward, Eichel talked about last year's chance meeting and photo with Gordie Howe a few months before Mr. Hockey died at age 88.

"That was pretty memorable, pretty cool being able to meet Mr. Hockey last year and get a picture with him," Eichel said. "Definitely a special moment. Pretty cool being able to score here a couple times. It's such a historic building when you walk in and think about some of the guys that have walked in this room, sat on that bench and played here. It's pretty special."

Bylsma said he'd likely take home a souvenir of some sort and cracked a smile when reminded his final trip ended in a 2-1 win -- just like Game Seven of the Stanley Cup final here in 2009 when he directed the Pittsburgh Penguins to victory.

"I had a moment by myself this morning just taking a deep breath of the smell of the Joe, the sights and some of the memories," he said. "I certainly enjoyed it stepping off the ice tonight. ... I'll have something in my pocket on the way out the door."

Memories abound at The Joe in Sabres' final visit

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 20, 2017

DETROIT -- For all his years in hockey as a player and coach, no night stands out for Dan Bylsma more than June 13, 2009.

The Buffalo Sabres coach was back in Joe Louis Arena for the final time Monday night and admitted each visit here over the last eight years has brought him flashbacks to the night his Pittsburgh Penguins won the Stanley Cup. In Game Seven of the '09 Cup final, the Penguins held on for a 2-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings, with Marc-Andre Fleury diving to his right to make a save on Wings defenseman Nicklas Lidstrom just before the buzzer to preserve the Penguins' first title since 1992.

"Game Seven in here and the four hours after Game Seven in that dressing room were my most memorable as a coach for sure," Bylsma said Monday in the hours before Buffalo's last game in the rink everyone in hockey circles calls "The Joe."

"I kind of have stapled in my brain the last five seconds. Pretty much every time I step on that bench, I'm holding my breath for Lidstrom at the side of the net and Fleury's save. I always have those kind of flashback memories every time I step back in here. To me, this was the ultimate destination point for playing hockey."

Bylsma is a Michigan guy. The first NHL game he saw was here, a visit in the early 80s by the Wayne Gretzky-led Edmonton Oilers. He watched college hockey here and played for Bowling Green here.

"The top-seeded team always got the dressing room we're in right now -- which you thought at the time was the Taj Mahal," said a laughing Bylsma. "It's not quite that. When I walk in there, that was the dressing room to have."

The arena opened as the replacement to Olympia Stadium on Dec. 27, 1979, completed at a cost of \$57 million and named after the iconic heavyweight boxer and Detroit native. It will be replaced this fall by the \$733 million Little Caesars Arena, about a mile uptown. It is technically the second-oldest rink in the NHL although New York's Madison Square Garden (1968) was completely renovated the last three years.

Joe Louis came along at a lean time for the Detroit franchise, which did not win a seven-game playoff series from 1966-1986 but finally started to hit prosperity. In 1995, the Red Wings made their first Stanley Cup final in 40 years but were swept by New Jersey. The Wings broke through in 1997, ending their 42-year Cup drought by beating Philadelphia, with captain Steve Yzerman taking the Cup from Commissioner Gary Bettman in front of a roaring home crowd that watched the Wings complete a four-game sweep.

The Wings' 1998 Cup clincher was in Washington, and their 2008 victory came in Pittsburgh. But their 2002 victory under Scotty Bowman in Game Five over Carolina was also at the Joe.

The most famous moments other than victories involved Gordie Howe. Mr. Hockey was feted by a roaring standing ovation that lasted several minutes when he was introduced prior to the 1980 NHL All-Star Game. When he died last June, Howe's body was put in state for a public viewing on the ice that lasted for more than 12 hours and was attended by thousands.

One of the arena's entrances is named after Howe and his statue is one of several in the arena concourse. The building oozes with history, particularly in the area around the Red Wings' locker room. There are black and white pictures of the franchise's legendary players over the current Wings' lockers, with former Wings and Sabres goalie Roger Crozier joining Terry Sawchuk and Mike Vernon where the current goalies reside.

Photos of the team's 11 Stanley Cups are high at one end of the room. When players head to the ice, they go past plaques dedicated to the team's Hall of Famers and walk under a sign that reads, "Greatness is a Daily Choice" and look straight into murals of the stars from the 1997, 1998 and 2002 Cup champs.

"It's my second year and almost every day I have to pinch myself I play here," said Red Wings center Dylan Larkin. "I look right across from my seat and I see Nick Lidstrom's and Steve Yzerman's faces and it says 'Stanley Cup champions'. Everywhere you look it's history and reminders of the great players that came before."

After Monday's game, there are just six games left before the building heads for the wrecking ball. It will close with a final weekend April 8 against Montreal and April 9 against New Jersey.

"I thought I had a lot of people coming my first year to want to come to a game to see me play," Larkin said. "This last month has been pretty crazy with people wanting to come to see the Joe. It's already hard to find tickets."

As for other events, Joe Louis Arena is one of the most famous college hockey venues in the Midwest. It's hosted concerts, wrestling, arena football and WNBA and NBA playoff games when there were schedule conflicts at other venues.

It was the site of the 1980 Republican National Convention, when Ronald Reagan was nominated en route to winning his first term as President. It was also the site of the 1994 U.S. Figure Skating Championships, most notable for the Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan soap opera that saw Kerrigan attacked in the warmup arena next door at Cobo Hall.

The Sabres haven't had that much success in the building or really been a part of many major moments. One reason, of course, is the Red Wings spent many years in the Western Conference so the teams have never met in a playoff series.

The Sabres' first regular-season overtime decision was here, a 6-5 loss on Oct. 26, 1983 on a goal by then-rookie Steve Yzerman. Their most significant win was a 3-2 shootout triumph on Oct. 13, 2006, which came one day after Buffalo was struck by the October Surprise storm and was part of the team's 10-0 run to start the season.

Maybe Buffalo's most infamous moment here was the line brawl the teams staged two days before Christmas in 1987 involving goaltenders Tom Barrasso and Greg Stefan. Somehow, Yzerman ended up brawling with Buffalo tough guy Kevin Maguire as his teammates came to his aid. An incensed Bob Probert punched the mask off Barrasso and hit a prone Maguire in a pileup, earning a one-game suspension.

"It's pretty cool. So much history here and you're sad to see it go," said Sabres forward Marcus Foligno. "Maybe you won't miss the dressing room aspect on the visitors side but there's emotion for guys who've played here many times."

Marcus Foligno was not yet born when he his father played the first 2 1/2 years of his NHL career with the Red Wings before getting traded to the Sabres in 1981. Mike Foligno, now a scout for the Vegas Golden Knights, was a first-round pick of Detroit in 1979.

"He talked about the games here and the emotion in this arena, the packed nights he played in," Marcus Foligno said. "He's been scouting around and when he comes here he said he has a lot of memories for it. It's definitely one of the special rinks in NHL history."

Quick Hits: Sabres 2, Red Wings 1

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 20, 2017

DETROIT -- Jack Eichel and Matt Moulson scored power-play goals and Robin Lehner made 34 saves as the Buffalo Sabres held on to beat the Detroit Red Wings, 2-1, Monday night in their last game in Joe Louis Arena.

It was the second straight win for the Sabres, who entered the game 3-8-2 in their last 13 contests and had not won consecutive games since taking three straight Feb. 14-18.

Rare run vs. Wings: The Sabres are 3-0-1 against Detroit this season and won three straight over the Wings for the first time since the 1988-89 season. They finished 14-23-6 all-time at the Joe, winning their final two appearances in the building that will close for hockey April 9 after 38 years. The Sabres had no winning streaks here since taking their first five games here from Feb. 16, 1980 to Dec. 12, 1981.

A debut on the blueline: With the Sabres dealing with four injuries among defensemen, the Sabres recalled Casey Nelson from Rochester and gave 23-year-old Brady Austin the first recall of his NHL career. Austin, a seventh-round pick in 2012, has played 199 games for the Amerks the last three years. The 6-foot-4 Austin has two goals and seven assists for the Amerks this year in 61 games.

Austin said his mother and two brothers made the six-hour drive from Bobcaygeon, Ont., to watch his debut. Austin was paired with Zach Bogosian while Nelson skated with Jake McCabe.

"It's a dream come true," Austin said. "You have to stick with things, keep working, play the systems we've been taught down there and good things can happen.

Revolving door on the blueline: Austin is the 12th defenseman to play for the Sabres this season. Last year, they only needed one recall on the blueline and that was a one-game stint for Chad Ruhwedel. It's been quite a bit different this year, with Austin joining Nelson, Justin Falk, Taylor Fedun and Erik Burgdoerfer in getting the call from Rochester while Brendan Guhle also got an emergency recall from junior.

Eichel Alert: Jack Eichel netted his 21st of the season to open the scoring at 10:59 of the first period. It came 29 seconds after Mike Green went off for hooking. Eichel one-timed home sweeping wrist shot off a Ryan O'Reilly feed for his ninth power play goal of the season.

Power play specialist: The Sabres went up, 2-0, at 8:59 of the second as Matt Moulson directed Tyler Ennis' pass through Petr Mrazek's legs for his 14th goal of the season -- and team-high 11th on the power play. Moulson is tied for seventh in the NHL in that category. It was Ennis' first point in 12 games.

Cutting the deficit: Tomas Tatar got Detroit within a goal at 12:35 of the second, tapping in Green's goalmouth pass.

No playoffs here: For the first time in 25 years, the Red Wings are not going to make the playoffs and it will end the longest active postseason run in North American professional sports.

"It's really hard to be consistent in this league, certainly like that," said Sabres winger Marcus Foligno. "That's special. They built a dynasty here. ... they've always had that Detroit Red Wing attitude, the model of being a skill team that works hard. This barn has seen a lot of playoff hockey and it's what makes it so special and this franchise so special."

Up next: The Sabres start a three-game homestand Tuesday night against Pittsburgh in KeyBank Center. The Penguins will be without Evgeni Malkin (upper body) for the second straight game. After that one, the Sabres finally get some down time, with no game until Saturday's visit by Toronto.

Sabres recall Brady Austin, Casey Nelson from Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 20, 2017

BUFFALO – The Sabres, down four defensemen to injury, recalled Brady Austin and Casey Nelson from the Rochester Americans this morning.

Austin, 23, will almost certainly make his NHL debut in tonight's road tilt against the Detroit Red Wings. Meanwhile, Nelson, 24, has already made 16 appearances with the Sabres.

The 6-foot-4, 230-pound Austin has two goals, nine points, 36 penalty minutes and a minus-10 rating in 61 games with the Amerks this season, his third with the AHL club. The Sabres drafted him in the seventh round, 193rd overall, in 2012.

Austin would be the Sabres' first seventh-rounder to play for them since winger Mark Mancari, a 2004 pick.

The 6-foot-1, 190-pound Nelson has four goals, 13 points, 22 penalty minutes and a minus-19 rating in 45 contests with the Amerks. The college free agent made the Sabres out of training camp. He played nine games earlier this campaign, recording zero points.

The Sabres made the recalls because defensemen Taylor Fedun (foot) and Cody Franson (unspecified) were injured in Friday's 2-1 shootout win in Anaheim. Justin Falk (bruised calf, two games) and Dmitry Kulikov (upper body, seven games) are also hurt.

All four players are day-to-day, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said Sunday.

Just like that Sabres' Jack Eichel is NHL's most productive player

By Kevin Allen

USA TODAY

March 20, 2017

Even after returning from a high ankle sprain this season, it took Jack Eichel more time to feel 100%. (Photo: Charles LeClaire, USA TODAY Sports)

DETROIT – In the NHL, recovery time of a high ankle sprain is measured in loss of games plus aftershocks.

Buffalo Sabres center Jack Eichel didn't play the first 21 games of the season because of the injury and then needed an extended period to shake off the pain and feel normal in his skating stride.

"Was it another 20 games?" Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma says. "It's a long time you deal with that injury."

Even Eichel, 20, is unsure when he finally felt as he did in the preseason. "I think I'm 100% right now. But you can definitely still feel it," Eichel said.

The only certainty about Eichel's recovery is that the ankle was strong enough by Feb. 1 to allow him to start playing like one of the NHL's most dominant young stars.

With 28 points in 23 games since then, he has been the league's most productive player. He ranks 61st in the NHL scoring race, but his .96 points per game rank 11th among players with 50 or more games played.

"He is a guy who can have the puck on his stick seemingly most of the game or most of the time he's on the ice," Bylsma said.

Based on how he's played the past seven weeks, it's easy to believe Eichel could have been a top-10 scorer this season if not for the injury.

"He's leaps and bounds ahead of where he was last year at the start of the year," Bylsma said. "And that's not just in his offensive game. It's in his whole game."

Bylsma said that if Eichel, who has 20 goals and 29 assists for 49 points in 51 games, finishes the season playing at a point-per-game pace it would constitute "a pretty remarkable season."

His play since Feb. 1 is a reminder why he was able to challenge Connor McDavid to be the first overall pick in 2015. It was clear by the summer that McDavid was No. 1, but it was also clear that Eichel was a wondrous consolation prize.

"(Eichel) is learning to use that dynamic speed he has in almost every game," Bylsma said.

Detroit Red Wings forward Dylan Larkin played with Eichel in the U.S. National Team Development Program and watched Eichel refine his skill.

"When he has a bad shift or a bad period, he has the ability to turn it on and to say to himself, 'I'm going to use my talent and work ethic to beat you,' " Larkin said. "You've seen that this year. When he had his tough injury, he has come back and statistically been the best player in the league. He's going to be a superstar."

It's been a frustrating season for Eichel. He saw signs of his promise and the Sabres' potential, but a 1-5-2 stretch in March has made the Sabres a longshot for the playoffs.

"We want to be a playoff team and I want to play in the playoffs and get a taste of it," he said. "It's tough when you don't get there."

Eichel-led Sabres beat Red Wings 2-1 on power-play goals

By Larry Lage

The Associated Press

March 20, 2017

DETROIT (AP) — Jack Eichel is making up for lost time, closing his injury-shortened season strong.

Eichel scored on a power play in the first period, giving him a team-high 50 points in 52 games, to help the Buffalo Sabres beat the Detroit Red Wings 2-1 on Monday night.

He made his 21st goal possible in the first period by knocking Detroit defenseman Nick Jensen off the puck behind the net and skating back out to the top of the left circle, where his one-timer got past goalie Petr Mrazek. Eichel also helped Buffalo's penalty-killing efforts.

"There's a lot more to his game than just the offensive stats," Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma said. "I think he's starting to play an all-around game."

Eichel, the No. 2 pick in the 2015 draft, missed the first 21 games this season with an ankle injury. He has at least one point in 15 of his last 17 games.

Matt Moulson scored on a power play in the second period, adding another goal to the tally for one of the NHL's best teams with an extra skater.

"Our power play has been great all year," Eichel said. "But we've had a couple bad games in a row, so it was nice to get those two."

Robin Lehner made 34 saves for the Sabres, who have won two straight for the first time in more than a month. They have an opportunity to pass sixth-place Florida in the Atlantic Division to end a three-year string of finishing seventh or eighth in the eight-team division. Buffalo hasn't made the playoffs since 2011.

Tomas Tatar scored in his third straight game, pulling Detroit within one midway through the second.

The Red Wings had power plays early and late in the third period but failed to take advantage of their opportunities to tie the game, falling to 0 for 4 with an extra skater.

"That's in the end the difference in the game," coach Jeff Blashill said.

It has also made a difference in the season, making Detroit one of the worst teams on the power play and in the standings.

The last-place Red Wings are five points behind Buffalo in the division. They're moving closer toward being mathematically eliminated from the postseason for the first time since 1990. Detroit had won two straight, giving it a chance to win three in a row for the first time in two months — and third time this season — to hold onto its slim hopes of rallying into the playoffs.

"If you count how many points we can get, it's going to be hard," Red Wings captain Henrik Zetterberg acknowledged. "We've got to win out and a lot of teams have to do really bad. Even though it's not officially over, it's going to take a lot for us to make it."

Mrazek stopped 28 shots for Detroit.

NOTES: Buffalo D Brady Austin made his NHL debut and D Casey Nelson played for the first time in nearly two months, getting ice time because the Sabres scratched four defensemen due to injuries. ... The Red Wings scratched forward Darren Helm with a lower-body injury. He might be cleared to play Friday night at home

against Tampa Bay. ... Detroit forward Tomas Nosek made his season debut after making his NHL debut last year and playing in six games. Red Wings forward Mitch Callahan was assigned to the AHL's Grand Rapids Griffins. ... Bylsma, who is from Michigan, said he was leaving with something in his pocket to remember his last trip to Joe Louis Arena. The storied venue is being replaced next season by a new arena.

UP NEXT

Sabres: Host the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday.

Red Wings: At the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday.

Sabres Hold Off Red Wings 2-1

WGR 550

March 20, 2017

Jack Eichel and Matt Moulson both scored power play goals and Robin Lehner made 34 saves to lift the Sabres over the Red Wings on Monday 2-1. The win marked Buffalo's second in a row following Friday's shootout victory in Anaheim. Lehner was strong down the stretch, especially in the 3rd period, stopping all 18 Detroit shots. Brady Austin, making his NHL debut, played 15:37 with 3 shots on net.

Scoring

- A power play one-timer from Jack Eichel opened the scoring at 10:59 of the 1st period. O'Reilly fed Eichel who wasted no time in firing a laser by Petr Mrazek for his 21st of the season and the 1-0 Sabres lead.
- Buffalo's second power play goal of the evening came nearly midway through the 2nd on Matt Moulson's 14th. Moulson slipped Tyler Ennis' pass into the net to put the Sabres up by a pair.
- Tomas Tatar got Detroit on the board at 12:53 of the 2nd with his 21st of the season.

1st Period

Goals

10:59 - BUF - Jack Eichel (21) (PPG) (Ryan O'Reilly, Rasmus Ristolainen)

Penalties

6:50 - BUF - Jack Eichel (2 min., high sticking)

10:30 - DET - Mike Green (2 min., hooking)

2nd Period

Goals

8:59 - BUF - Matt Moulson (14) (PPG) (Tyler Ennis, Jake McCabe)

12:53 - DET - Tomas Tatar (21) (Henrik Zetterberg, Mike Green)

Penalties

8:42 - DET - Tomas Tatar (2 min., tripping)

9:38 - BUF - Jake McCabe (2 min., hooking)

3rd Period

Goals

None

Penalties

3:45 - BUF - Josh Gorges (2 min., hooking)

13:25 - BUF - Brady Austin (2 min., hooking)

Goaltending

BUF - Robin Lehner (34 saves, 35 shots)

DET - Petr Mrazek (28 saves, 30 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 2 of 2

DET - 0 of 4

5 Observations: Sabres top Red Wings 2-1

By Matt Bove

WKBW

March 20, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - The Buffalo Sabres last game at the historic Joe Louis Arena will go down as a victory, knocking off the Detroit Red Wings 2-1. It's the Sabres second straight win after losing five of their previous six games.

Five observations from Monday's win:

Role Reversal

It has been more than two weeks since the Sabres outshot an opponent in the first 20 minutes of a game. Here's how their last six games have gone.

Monday at Red Wings

Sabres 13 shots -- Red Wings 5 shots

3/17 at Ducks

Sabres 8 shots -- Ducks 9 shots

3/16 at Kings

Sabres 2 shots -- Kings 15 shots

3/14 at Sharks

Sabres 9 shots -- Sharks 20 shots

2/11 vs. Blue Jackets

Sabres 6 shots -- Blue Jackets 12 shots

2/10 at Blue Jackets

Sabres 8 shots -- Blue Jackets 14 shots

2/7 vs. Flyers

Sabres 10 shots -- Flyers 16 shots

Needless to say, it was a very good start for the Sabres on Monday, especially when you consider how slow they've been out of the gate lately. Until the final few minutes of the period, the Sabres controlled play but escaped with only a 1-0 lead.

Power-play party

The Buffalo Sabres power-play is once again the best in the league, scoring on 24% of their attempts this year. Their power-play prowess proved (oh hey alliteration) to be the difference once again against Detroit, capitalizing on both of their attempts [Eichel, Moulson].

After the game, Eichel told Pierre McGuire of NBCSN that their success this year has been from keeping things simple and getting pucks to the net.

Update: Jack Eichel is still very good at hockey.

And speaking of Eichel, since February 4 (home vs. Senators) no player has more points than Jack Eichel [29 points]. On Monday he added his 21st goal of the season on a cannon from the wall on the Sabres first power-play of the evening.

Sure, that's cool, but what even more impressive was everything that led to the goal. A few minutes earlier Eichel was actually the player who drew the hooking penalty after Detroit defenseman Mike Green couldn't get the puck off his stick.

Once on the power-play, Eichel carried the puck past center ice, dumping it into the corner. He then beat the defender to the corner and won a battle, sending the puck to the point. A few seconds later Eichel was on the wall and just like that the Sabres had a 1-0 lead. Yes, Eichel has been scoring at a ridiculous rate, but he's doing so much more.

Another solid effort between the pipes

While the Sabres have struggled lately their goaltenders have been very solid. Robin Lehner was once again impressive against the Red Wings, stopping 34 of Detroit's 35 shots, including a perfect 18-for-18 in the third period.

Both Lehner and backup Anders Nilsson have had games where they've struggled, but more often than not they've kept the Sabres in games. Sabres head coach Dan Bylsma has turned to Lehner on a few back-to-back games this season but after a stellar game against the Anaheim Ducks on Friday I'd imagine Nilsson gets the nod on Tuesday against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

'Sammy' Reinhart *could* easily have 25 goals.....

Reinhart already has one more point this year [43p, 16G, 27A] than he did last season [42p, 23p, 19p] in seven fewer games played. While he has seven fewer goals, he's had plenty of chances, which makes you think he's getting into the right areas.

Monday was a perfect example when Reinhart missed two golden opportunities on the same shift in the first period. Obviously you'd like to see the 21-year-old forward capitalize on those chances, but eventually, they'll start going in.....or at least they should.

For a young guy who isn't huge Reinhart spends a lot of time in the dirty areas of the ice in front of the net, which is nice to see. He may never dazzle you with offensive production but Reinhart will surely be a consistent contributor for years to come.

***Bonus* Evan Rodrigues has been really impressive.**

Once again Evan Rodrigues made his case to be on this team for the remainder of the year and the start of next season. He doesn't do anything super flashy, but he's responsible in his own end of the ice while still providing an offensive spark when in the offensive zone.

Buffalo Sabres Alums deliver hot meals to elderly & sick

By Justin Moore

WKBW

March 20, 2017

SOUTH BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Two Buffalo Sabres Alums, Darryl Shannon and Derek Smith delivered a car load of hot meals to the sick and elderly in South Buffalo.

It was part of Meals on Wheels for Western New York's annual "Champions for Meals" event. It gives clients a chance to meet local celebrities and government officials.

"You get a pretty neat feeling when you meet a lot of these people. You find a lot of new friends and you can tell you're really helping them," Smith said.

Mrs. Ruth was one of the clients receiving a chicken parmesan meal. She was once on the giving end, as an employee and volunteer. She's now retired and a supporter of President Donald Trump. However, she's now concerned about possible cuts to federal grants that states use to fund Meals on Wheels. Mrs. Ruth had a message for the president.

"Please think of the lower income people, not always the rich," Mrs. Ruth said.

Meals on Wheels serves more than 900,000 hot dinners to homebound Erie County residents every year. That's not including the 250,000 meals to seniors who are mobile enough to get to feeding sites.

Meals on Wheels receives funding from a variety of sources. A big portion comes from federal government funds trickled down to the states. Representatives of the program are pushing congress to keep that funding in place, and they're asking the community to volunteer and donate.

Sabres ride special teams past Red Wings

By Dave Hogg

NHL.com

March 20, 2017

DETROIT -- Robin Lehner made 34 saves, 18 in the third period, and Jack Eichel and Matt Moulson each scored a power-play goal to help the Buffalo Sabres to a 2-1 win against the Detroit Red Wings at Joe Louis Arena on Monday.

The Sabres (30-31-12) went 4-for-4 on the penalty kill in their second consecutive win.

"The guys were great in front of me all night. I think I only faced two or three tough shots on their four power plays," Lehner said. "Even when they had all those shots in the third period, they weren't getting great chances and everything was cleared out in front of me."

Tomas Tatar scored for the Red Wings (28-32-11), who lost for the first time in three games.

"The game was special teams tonight, obviously," Detroit coach Jeff Blashill said. "They had two power-play goals, and we didn't get any in four chances. That is the difference in a lot of games in this league."

It was the final game at Joe Louis Arena for the Sabres. The Red Wings will play at Little Caesars Arena beginning next season.

"I had a moment by myself this morning where I just took in the sights and all the memories," said Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma, who coached the Pittsburgh Penguins to a 2-1 victory in Game 7 of the 2009 Stanley Cup Final in Detroit. "I'll have a souvenir in my pocket when I walk out of here tonight."

The Sabres took a 1-0 lead when Eichel scored at 10:59 of the first period, 29 seconds after he drew a hooking penalty on Red Wings defenseman Mike Green.

Eichel took a pass from Ryan O'Reilly at the top of the right faceoff circle and beat goalie Petr Mrazek with a wrist shot for his 21st goal.

"I didn't see it," Mrazek said. "There was a guy in front of me and I tried to look on the blocker side, and he had a quick release."

Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen got his NHL-leading 24th power-play assist on the goal.

Moulson made it 2-0 when he scored with a backhand off a Tyler Ennis pass for Buffalo's second power-play goal at 8:59 of the second period, 17 seconds after Tatar was called for tripping O'Reilly.

Eleven of Moulson's 14 goals have come on the power play.

"We know that our power play has been carrying us all year, and we work hard at it," he said. "Tyler and I practice that play all the time, and when he glanced over, I knew what he was thinking."

Tatar pulled Detroit within 2-1 at 12:53 of the second, tapping in Green's pass for his third goal in two games.

Buffalo defenseman Brady Austin, playing his first NHL game, took a penalty with 6:35 to play in the third, but the Sabres limited the Red Wings to two low-percentage shots.

Mrazek made 28 saves.

Goal of the game

The Sabres made four passes in six seconds on their first power play, with O'Reilly making the last one to a wide-open Eichel at the top of the faceoff circle for a one-timer that went through a Sam Reinhart screen and over Mrazek's shoulder.

Save of the game

Austin found himself in space with an open lane to the net for his first NHL shot, but Mrazek kicked the puck away with his left skate at 10:26 of the first period.

Highlight of the game

With Green's reputation as a scorer, Lehner couldn't leave the post to cut down his passing angle to Tatar, who scored his fourth goal in three games. "He throws a lot of pucks at the net from bad angles, so I couldn't give him a gap. That gave him enough room to slide the pass to Tatar," Lehner said.

Unsung performance of the game

Moments after his first-period goal, Eichel raced back to disrupt Henrik Zetterberg's pass to Gustav Nyquist on a 2-on-1 break. "I don't think my defense is nearly as bad as people think, and it is a part of my game that I'm really working to improve," Eichel said.

They said it

"I've never even tried a shot in this league before, but I thought it was open. I just didn't get enough wood on it." -- *Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner on his failed attempt to score into an empty net*

"We had a lot of chances on the power play, but we couldn't put the puck in the net. Give their goalie some of the credit for that." -- *Red Wings forward Tomas Tatar*

Need to know

Eichel is the first Sabres player with at least 50 points in his first two NHL seasons since Christian Ruutu in 1986-87 and 1987-88. ... Zetterberg assisted on Tatar's goal and has 29 points (six goals, 23 assists) in his past 24 games.

What's next

Sabres: Host the Pittsburgh Penguins on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; MSG-B, ROOT, NHL.TV)

Red Wings: At the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET; SNE, RDS, FS-D, NHL.TV)

Special teams power Buffalo in final game at The Joe

By Chris Ryndak

Buffalo Sabres

March 20, 2017

DETROIT - Two-for-two on the power play. Four-for-four on the penalty kill. That's what it took for the Buffalo Sabres to leave Joe Louis Arena for the last time with a victory.

In their last game ever at The Joe, the Sabres received power-play goals from Jack Eichel and Matt Moulson to beat the Detroit Red Wings 2-1 on Monday.

Robin Lehner anchored the penalty kill, making 34 saves, including six while shorthanded, to reach the 20-win plateau for the first time in his career.

The result also marks the first time the Sabres have won consecutive games at Joe Louis Arena since they won each of their first five games there from Feb. 16, 1980 to Dec. 12, 1981. Now they'll have to start a new streak at Little Caesars Arena next season as The Joe is closing its doors when the season comes to an end.

After Buffalo took a 2-0 lead midway through the second, the Red Wings upped the ante and controlled play for a good chunk of the rest of the game.

"We were composed for the rest of that period, the last six, seven minutes, whatever it was," Lehner said. "They came out in the third and they obviously were going to have a push. They have good players on that team and I think we did a good job defensively, helping me out for rebounds and seeing the puck."

The Sabres power play has been great all year and both of their units proved to be difference makers Monday night. They entered the night second in the NHL behind Toronto, but the perfect performance against Detroit will put them at 24.0 percent on the season and back on top.

"I thought we played a real good first period - jumped on them, had some opportunities. But it was the power play that cashed in to give us the lead and again in the second period," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I thought they probably played their stretch of hockey in the first 10 minutes of the second, but we got the power-play opportunity, got up 2-0 and the kill had to come up a number of times, and especially in the third period to solidify the win."

Buffalo killed off two penalties in the third, including one late to secure the two points.

"The penalty kill was great today. I think I ended up having two or three shots, maybe, on four penalties," Lehner said. "From Ryan [O'Reilly] winning good faceoffs to everyone getting good clears, and getting it down the ice and a good forecheck up ice, I think it was a great job today."

Eichel also saw some time on the penalty kill and was on the ice at the end of the game as the Red Wings pressured with the extra attacker.

"It's something I obviously want to build in my game, become a more complete player," he said. "It's more opportunity on the ice, it gets you into the game and I'd like to become a regular on our penalty kill. I think I can bring a lot to it so I'm just trying to prove to the coaches that I belong on the penalty kill and that you can trust me."

Scoring summary

Eichel netted his 21st goal of the season - and team-leading 50th point in his 52nd game - to open the scoring with 9:30 remaining in the first period. On the power play, Eichel one-timed a pass from O'Reilly from the left faceoff circle and beat Mrazek with some help from a screen by Sam Reinhart in front.

Eichel now has seven points (4+3) in eight career games against Detroit.

With a secondary assist on the goal, Rasmus Ristolainen recorded his seventh career assist at Joe Louis Arena. Those seven points tie him with Danny Gare and Pierre Turgeon for fifth in franchise scoring at The Joe. Gilbert Perreault is the Sabres' all-time leading scorer at Joe Louis Arena with 14 points (8+6) in 10 games.

Buffalo struck again on the power play with a power-play goal from Matt Moulson 8:59 into the second. He scored his 11th power-play goal of the season, tying for seventh-most in the NHL and most by a Sabre since 2010-11 (Thomas Vanek and Drew Stafford).

Tomas Tatar made it 2-1 when he redirected in a feed from Mike Green with 7:07 to go in the middle frame. However, the Sabres closed the door the rest of the way.

A strong debut

Defenseman Brady Austin made his NHL debut, getting engaged right from his first shift when he laid a hit on Justin Abdelkader. One of only four seventh-round picks in the 2012 NHL Draft to dress in an NHL game, Austin played 15:37 and registered three shots on goal.

"I thought he played real well, moved the puck up and north, out of trouble a number of times for our guys," Bylsma said. "It was a credit to Brady. He was good in the game."

Check back Tuesday morning for Brian Duff's video recap which will have more on Austin's first game.

Up next

It's another back-to-back set as the Sabres host Pittsburgh on Tuesday at KeyBank Center. The Tops Game Night pregame show kicks off at 6:30 p.m. on MSG.