



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 5, 2017

Eichel spurred by new deal to transform Sabres into winners

Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW

October 5, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jack Eichel joined his Buffalo Sabres teammates in forming a circle around center ice to begin a pre-practice stretching routine Wednesday, when he suddenly felt Jason Pominville give him a nudge.

It was the veteran forward's polite way of congratulating Eichel a day after agreeing to an eight-year, \$80 million contract extension. It was also Pominville's way of inviting the team's 20-year-old franchise star to take his rightful place at center to lead the session.

"I was maybe not embarrassed by it all, but just staying humble," Eichel told The Associated Press, in noting he was honored by the gesture.

"It shows how much they care about me and that they were happy for me," he said. "It means a lot."

A day before Buffalo opens the season hosting Montreal, Eichel was the center of attention after signing the most expensive contract in franchise history. And he's eager to start paying back the faith and long-term commitment the team provided by locking him up through the 2025-26 season.

"It does motivate me to be the best player I can be and bring a winning team to this city," Eichel said. "It's really exciting times, and it's an organization that has belief in me. And I owe a lot to it, and I'm looking forward to achieving it."

That's what the Sabres are counting on in rewarding Eichel with a contract that's tied with Los Angeles Kings forward Anze Kopitar as the 10th richest contract in NHL history.

"One of the big reasons why I took this job in the spring was the excitement of being able to work with a young superstar like Jack Eichel," said general manager Jason Botterill, who took over in May after Tim Murray was fired. "The fact that Jack will now be a part of our organization here in Buffalo for the next nine years sets our organization up for success."

The contract extension doesn't kick in until next season once Eichel completes the three-year, entry-level contract he signed after being selected with the No. 2 pick in the 2015 draft — a spot behind Edmonton Oilers captain Connor McDavid.

The timing of the deal came as a slight surprise in being reached after negotiations had stalled. Eichel was willing to open the season without an extension before having a change of heart by informing his agents to accept the Sabres' offer.

Now he can focus on continuing to mature into a team leader both on and off the ice after Eichel acknowledged he's "proven nothing" during two "mediocre" seasons in which the Sabres failed to make the playoffs.

"I don't think it took a contract or whatever to force me to be a leader," he said. "It's my third year and I want to expect more out of myself."

The one thing Eichel won't land for now is the team's captaincy.

Botterill announced the Sabres won't name a captain this season to replace Brian Gionta, who was not re-signed this offseason. The role instead will be shared by several players, including Eichel.

Eichel's fine with that.

"Whether you wear a letter on your sweater or not, I think you can always be a leader," he said.

Eichel has shown flashes of being a dynamic offensive threat with his speed and play-making abilities. He led the Sabres with 24 goals as a rookie and had a team-best 57 points last year despite missing the first 21 games with a sprained left ankle.

It wasn't lost on Eichel that he was hurt exactly a year ago, a day before the Sabres opener.

“You learn a lot about going through adversity and I think that in many ways I’m better for it,” he said, reflecting back. “More than anything, I’m just excited to lace up my skates and play hockey tomorrow.”

His teammates are ready to follow.

“Even at his age, guys already look up to him,” Pominville said. “Hopefully, this will take a little bit of pressure away from him, where he doesn’t have to think about his contract, and just go out there and play.”

Pominville said he felt it was necessary to nudge Eichel into the middle of the group before practice, because it reflects the position the player has attained on the team.

“Obviously, he was probably a little embarrassed and shy, he didn’t want to go in there,” Pominville said. “But I think everyone wanted him to be there and it was the right thing to do.”

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Sabres acquire Redmond in trading Deslauriers to Canadiens

Associated Press

October 5, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The Buffalo Sabres have acquired defenseman Zach Redmond in a trade that sent forward Nicolas Deslauriers to the Montreal Canadiens.

The move involving two minor leaguers was made on Wednesday, a day before Buffalo opens the season by hosting Montreal.

Redmond is listed at 6-foot-2 and 212 pounds and was selected in the seventh round of 2008 draft by the then-Atlanta Thrashers. He has nine goals and 29 assists in 130 NHL games split between Montreal, Colorado and Winnipeg.

The Sabres announced Redmond will report to Rochester, their American Hockey League affiliate.

Deslauriers is a hard-hitting forward, who spent the past four seasons in Buffalo. He was demoted to Rochester last month after being the odd-man out once Buffalo claimed Jordan Nolan off waivers.

Deslauriers has 12 goals and 18 assists and 186 penalty minutes in 211 games.

Jack Eichel happy and humbled to be in Buffalo for the long term

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

October 4, 2017

Jack Eichel said he spent a good amount of Tuesday on the phone with his dad and his agents as the 20-year-old center came to a contract agreement with the Buffalo Sabres.

It wasn't just any extension. It was a mega extension. Eichel will be a Buffalo Sabre for the next nine years, signing an eight-year, \$80 million extension two days before the start of the regular season. It was the biggest contract in franchise history.

But he didn't tell his teammates right away.

In fact, they found out like the rest of us, via Twitter.

"I got texts from a few teammates just congratulating me and a few nice messages," Eichel said. "I was with Jake McCabe and Sam Reinhart sitting on the couch having dinner. I went outside to take a call from (Sabres owner Terry Pegula) and when I walked back in and sat down they looked at me and didn't say anything and started laughing."

There was plenty of laughter and smiling around KeyBank Center Wednesday afternoon as Eichel and Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill met with the media to discuss the deal.

Both player and management came from the same place — they wanted a long-term deal and they were hoping to get it done before the start of the season.

It was as amicable as contract negotiations can seemingly get.

"I thought the goal for both parties was to get a deal done," Botterill said. "I respected their side. They respected some of the concerns on our side. Leading up to the last couple of weeks, we were trying to get it done before the start of the season, which we thought that would be best for both parties. At the end of the day, there was compromise on both sides. It's a situation where we wanted to make sure four or five years from now Jack and his family are excited about being in Buffalo and comfortable with his contract."

Eichel is pretty comfortable with the contract, particularly with the length. Eichel, who was the second-overall pick by the Sabres in 2015, has made it clear that he loves Buffalo, wants to stay in Buffalo, and wants to win in Buffalo.

"I told my agents I wanted to be here for as long as I could and commit to this city and this organization. I think in terms of how long, it was set pretty quickly," Eichel said.

"This city means so much to me. I like to think that I mean a lot to the city as well," Eichel said. "This organization has been nothing but great to me since the first day I walked through the doors. They've given me every opportunity that I've wanted. The city the same way. People are good to me, they're good to my friends and family, so I have nothing but great things to say about Buffalo. I think I really owe it to them and I owe it to myself to do something special here with the group of guys we have here in the room and in the organization. It's really exciting times. It's an organization that has believed in me and I owe a lot to it."

It was an exciting time for his teammates as well, who are expecting him to play host to an elaborate, and expensive, celebratory dinner for the gang.

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Evander Kane ✓@evanderkane_9

Congrats to the guy on my right @Jack_Eichel11 on the HUGE new deal! Can't wait to set up the team dinner for ya. □□□□□ 🐾

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Pricey entrees aside, his teammates understand how special a player Eichel is, how dynamic he can be, and what his success means to the success of the group. On the cusp of his 21st birthday, Eichel is already a leader by actions, even if those actions need a little boost.

At Wednesday's practice in HarborCenter, veteran Jason Pominville, himself a former captain, nudged Eichel into the center of the circle to lead the team stretch.

"He should be there," Pominville said. "I think everybody was kind of telling him to go in there and just give him a push to go in there. I think it's important. Obviously, he's probably a little embarrassed and shy. He didn't want to go in there. I think it was the right thing to do."

While the length and size of the contract make him a leader by default, Eichel said he was already preparing to take a bigger leadership role this season, with or without a contract and with or without an official captain or alternate captain designation. The contract may be a motivator, but it's not much extra pressure. And as Ryan O'Reilly pointed out, even if there was extra pressure, Eichel has already shown a degree of mastery over it.

"There is," some pressure of a big contract, O'Reilly said. O'Reilly knows about big contracts. In 2015 he signed a seven-year, \$7.5 million per year deal with the Sabres. "But I think that pressure is something you want with it. He's a guy that's handled all the pressure he's had so far and he's going to continue to handle it well. He's a superstar."

His poise through the negotiations and his performance through training camp already earned him praise from first-year head coach Phil Housley.

"He handled it quite well. I'm just speaking on experience being in his position, playing under those circumstances. It's always in the back of your mind, obviously," Housley said. "Is there some weight off his shoulders? I think so. I think he can really focus on his game right now moving forward."

Mike Harrington: With a letter or not, new deal locks in Eichel as the captain

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

October 4, 2017

Connor McDavid is already wearing the "C" in Edmonton. In Toronto, the Leafs are going without a captain this season so they can clearly anoint Auston Matthews to the role next year. It sounds like the same thing is going on in Buffalo.

There are always several leaders on any hockey team and it's easy to wonder if we make too much over who the actual captain is. That guy is the one who can go talk to the referee when there's a quibble and is often left to deal with the media after an ugly loss when nobody else wants to. (Poor Brian Gionta saw this corner a lot more after losses than wins the last three years.)

But the captain is not the only one who speaks in the locker room when times are tough. He's just the one who gets the most attention.

There was no jersey presentation to Jack Eichel Wednesday afternoon when he spoke for the first time about his eight-year, \$80 million extension that was signed Tuesday night. General Manager Jason Botterill, in fact, provided the definitive answer that coach Phil Housley wouldn't give up earlier in the day: The Sabres are going to start the season without a captain. And while they may revisit the issue a few times, it says here they might go the route without one.

So be it. But let's be clear: Eichel is going to be the next captain of the Blue and Gold. Whether we're talking next week, next month, next summer or next season, this contract locks it up.

He's signed through 2026 — which sounds like eons from now — as the face of the franchise. Everyone else has to line up behind No. 15.

"Whether you wear a letter on your sweater or not, you can always be a leader," Eichel said. "That's kind of the mindset I try to take. I don't necessarily need to have a 'C' or 'A' to be myself in the room, be a leader, speak up when needed or do the things I would do as a leader on the team."

It's pretty clear this group knows who will bring their bacon — and cover the tab for a giant team dinner that's going to take place at a road locale to be announced.

Early in practice Wednesday at HarborCenter, all the players dropped to their knees to open their daily stretch except for Jason Pominville. The 34-year-old, back with a franchise he first played for in 2004, skated behind Eichel and drove his stick into Eichel's back from behind to shove him into the center circle — as the leader of the stretch.

There were guffaws all over but it was clear everyone knew what that moment meant, too.

"He should be there," Pominville said. "I think everyone was kind of telling him to go in there so I gave him a push to go in there. Obviously he was probably a little embarrassed and shy and didn't want to go in there. I think it was the right thing to do."

"He's a superstar," added Ryan O'Reilly, one of the biggest voices in the locker room. "He's handled himself very maturely and that's tough to do at a young age. He's the leader of this team and we're all really excited for him. He's the guy that's going to help us do something special here for sure. He's a massive, massive part of it."

Botterill talked about how leadership will be a collaboration on this team and he's got a nice group to put the weight on, with veterans like O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo and younger players like Eichel and Rasmus Ristolainen. And don't forget Housley's clear and surprising endorsement of Evander Kane's role in the leadership group Monday as well.

But it's all going to come back to Eichel. He's played this entire situation perfectly since the summer and made all the right statements every time he was poked and prodded about it when he returned to town in late August.

Things reached a climax Tuesday night, when he took a congratulatory phone call from owner Terry Pegula to wrap up the biggest deal in franchise history.

"When you finally agree to a contract like that it's pretty emotional," Eichel said. "Just thinking about everything you've gone through your whole life, being able to agree to something like that, everything your family has done for you, it was a pretty special moment."

Eichel has quickly forged a relationship with Botterill, who was brought in five months ago to piece together a fractured organization. Botterill came in from Pittsburgh with a great reputation in replacing Tim Murray but had to quickly earn the trust from the key players. The way he handled this process with Eichel right from the time it opened on July 1 had to be impressive to all involved.

"I want to commit to him the same way he's committed to me," Eichel said. "It means a lot to build this relationship."

The season starts Thursday against Montreal. Eichel will now have no distraction over his head. Even as he insisted the contract wouldn't be one, you had to wonder. No worries now.

"It's huge for the city, for the team, for himself," Pominville said. "He can just worry about playing. For what he means to the team and the city is pretty amazing. For him and the team to commit to him in that way and Terry and Kim Pegula to is pretty amazing to see.

"He's said from the start he wanted to be here and he'll definitely be here for a while. Everyone is really, really excited for him."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Jack Eichel/ Jason Botterill/ Jason Pominville/ Mike Harrington/ Ryan O'Reilly/ Terry Pegula

Bucky Gleason: Pegula leading way as Bills, Sabres change course

The Buffalo News

By Bucky Gleason

October 4, 2017

Terry Pegula was characteristically elusive Wednesday when he began retreating toward the elevators after the news conference announcing Jack Eichel's eight-year contract extension worth \$80 million. It was vintage Pegula, who never has been comfortable with the limelight.

Right when he appeared content with politely declining an interview request and continuing about his business, the owner of Buffalo's two major professional sports franchises made a quick and unexpected U-turn.

"What do you want to ask me?" Pegula said, briefly interrupting an attempt from a public relations man to whisk him away. "Do you want to ask me about Jack Eichel?"

The truth was there were a few items to address in addition to getting the young franchise player of his hockey team locked up through 2025-26. The contract will allow the Sabres to open the season Thursday against the Canadiens without worrying about the potential for a nagging distraction.

But there was more to discuss, much more, considering all the positive energy funneling into the Bills and Sabres over the past week. In a three-day span, the Bills improved to 3-1 and were alone in first place in the AFC East, and the Sabres made the biggest financial commitment to a player in franchise history.

It was a rare opportunity for him bask in the glow of accomplishment, no matter how brief.

"We're in it for the long term," Pegula said. "It is a process. We've been working hard and trying to build."

Pegula had been knocked around like a piñata at various times during the process and justifiably so. He made several dubious management decisions shortly after purchasing the Sabres that contributed to them becoming an unsightly mess. The Bills' long and dreaded playoff drought continued for two more seasons under his watch.

For all the upgrades to their facilities, Kim and Terry Pegula should have installed a gold-plated revolving door. They spent an estimated \$60 million in buyouts and severance packages to cover hiring mistakes and other personnel blunders, from Ville Leino with the Sabres to Rex Ryan with the Bills.

Six months ago, the two franchises were in shambles. You knew it was bad earlier this year when Pegula started holding news conferences with regularity. He fired Ryan and cleaned house with the Sabres, kicking Tim Murray and Dan Bylsma to the curb, before returning to the Bills and dismissing Doug Whaley.

Amid the chaos, he granted Sean McDermott unprecedented power in the football department even though McDermott had never been a head coach. For a while, Pegula had two franchises, one coach and no general managers before hiring first-time GM Brandon Beane based largely on the advice of McDermott.

Added up, Pegula owned two dysfunctional teams that were going nowhere. The Bills looked so bad that many didn't entertain the possibility of them winning this season and instead directed their attention toward the 2018 draft. The Sabres made so many changes that you wondered if they would ever get their house in order.

Remember the old punchline: Go Bills ... and take the Sabres with you.

Now?

The past week has served as a shining moment in Pegula's tenure as an owner. Sure, fans celebrated when he purchased the Sabres in 2011 and the Bills three years later. The region cheered when he helped reshape the waterfront. But he was applauded mostly for what he did for Buffalo while getting ripped for his work with the Bills and Sabres.

For the first time since he showed up with lofty aspirations and no idea how to reach them, Pegula has provided reasons for genuine optimism about his teams. It's amazing how quickly a few unexpected victories for the Bills and a smooth contract negotiation with the Sabres can change the tone.

When he was told as much Wednesday, and he was reminded he had been criticized often over the years, and much came from me, he refused to acknowledge his worst days were behind him. An ordinary guy at heart, he proceeded with the same cautious optimism expressed in every gin mill in town.

"It's early in the football season," he said, "and the hockey season hasn't started, so ..."

So don't get too excited.

Pegula knows success, even by meager standards, can be fleeting. He's still finding his way as an owner but appears to have surrounded himself with competent people in both organizations. The likes of former cronies such as Ted Black and Joe Batista seem something from the distant past.

With football people making football decisions and hockey people making hockey decisions, Pegula can do what all owners should: Provide financial and emotional support while getting out of the way so others can do their jobs. Pegula seems more comfortable now than ever as an owner.

"With the people running both organizations, yes," he said. "We're definitely more comfortable. We help when we can, but we've got pretty competent people."

Who knows? Maybe the Bills' impressive start can carry over to the Sabres, who have stumbled out of the gate for four straight seasons. At least they're assured Eichel — the young backbone of their franchise — will remain for the long haul. Pegula called the signing "a special moment" Wednesday.

And it was.

Eichel is a terrific player who should get better with experience and more talent around him. He sounded like he welcomed more leadership responsibilities and heightened expectations. Let's not forget that he's only one player and watches two-thirds of the game from the bench, but keeping him should add stability.

In fact, nobody of consequence in either organization is going anywhere for the foreseeable future. It's another good sign and refreshing change that could translate to more winning.

You can only hope that the once-bumbling franchises will follow the lead of their owner: Right when it looks like they're intent on marching in a familiar direction, they'll make a U-turn and respond.

Sabres Notebook: Sabres will not name a captain to start the season

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

October 4, 2017

He signed the biggest contract in Buffalo Sabres history. He is, for all intents and purposes, the face of the franchise. But will Jack Eichel be the Sabres captain?

Not yet.

Actually, no one will. At least not in advance of Thursday night's season opener against the Montreal Canadiens in KeyBank Center.

"I will not be naming a captain to start the season off here," Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill said Wednesday afternoon. "We'll see how things progress from that standpoint. ... We're very comfortable with our leadership group we have here. Jack's a big part of it. We also don't need Jack to take over the room or take over the organization.

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"To be honest, I don't think that happens very much anymore. I think successful teams have a collaborative model. Just like coaches, you can't have one voice. You have to empower your assistant coaches. Within the locker room I think it's important it's a group effort and having young players like Jack and (Rasmus) Ristolainen be a part of that group, but also with veteran players like Jason Pominville and Kyle Okposo leading the charge. We feel very comfortable with our leadership group."

Eichel said he has challenged himself in his third year as pro hockey player to step up and be a leader, and that comes regardless of official designations.

"Whether you have a letter on your sweater or not, I think you can always be a leader," Eichel said. "It's kind of the mindset I try to take. I don't necessarily need a 'C' or an 'A' to be myself in the room, be a leader, speak up when needed or do the things I would do as a leader on the team. That's obviously up to the team and the coaching staff. For me, I just try to be myself every day."

There are plenty of options available for first-year head coach Phil Housley when it comes to the official leadership in the room. And Pominville, who was a captain with the Sabres in 2008 and again from 2011 to 2013, knows that the letter shouldn't change the player.

"It's definitely a lot of emotion, a lot of pride for sure, but for me, I always felt that the most important thing is you don't change what you were named for so just be yourself," Pominville said. "Keep doing the things that have led to you being named and don't go out and try to be a hero because you have a letter on your jersey. Just do your thing and guys will respect that. I think the guys that have letters in the room, whether it's preseason or last year, are just being themselves and not trying to overdo things but at the same time get the respect from the guys with hard work. When they have something to say, just say it because you know guys will listen for sure."

* * *

The Buffalo Sabres added some depth to the blueline in Rochester on Wednesday, acquiring defenseman Zach Redmond from the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for winger Nicolas Deslauriers. Redmond will report to the Amerks, who open their season at home Friday night against Syracuse.

The 6-foot-2 Redmond, who is 29 years old, had five assists in 16 games last year for the Canadiens and four goals, 14 assists in 26 games at St. John's of the AHL.

A former seventh-round pick of Atlanta in 2008, Redmond has appeared in 130 NHL games over five seasons with Montreal, Colorado and Winnipeg, posting nine goals and 29 assists. He has 29 goals and 100 points in 190 career AHL games.

Deslauriers had no goals and two assists for the Sabres in 42 games last season and had just cleared waivers to head to Rochester. He played 211 games for the Sabres the last four years since being acquired in a 2014 trade with Los Angeles, collecting 12 goals, 18 assists and 186 penalty minutes.

* * *

The show is for real Thursday night as the Buffalo Sabres open the season against the Montreal Canadiens in KeyBank Center.

It will be the first regular season game for Phil Housley and the former Sabre defenseman is optimistic.

"I'm excited. I think our group is in a great place right now. I think they're prepared. Now we've just got to go execute. Obviously we have to have a good start. Montreal's a very good team," Housley said. "But personally I'm excited and can't wait for tomorrow. I'm sure I won't get a lot of sleep but I'm just excited about this group. I know this camp, the results weren't there but I just see the work being put into it and we have continue to focus on that and on proving ourselves day in, day out."

* * *

Former Sabre Cody Franson signed a one-year deal with the Chicago Blackhawks. Franson went to Hawks training camp on a professional tryout contract (PTO) after ending last season with no contract. The defenseman played the last two seasons with Buffalo, scoring seven goals with 29 assists.

"Once we made the decision to come to Chicago, you had to wrap your head around no job security, nothing like that," Franson told The Athletic during training camp. "Just that in itself puts a little extra pressure on you. Going into camp, you're always going in fighting for spots, staking your claim in the lineup, trying to make sure you're on the power play or whatever type of player you are, if you're a penalty killer making sure you're in that mix. So, there's a little extra going into it with no contract.

* * *

Fans at KeyBank Center can catch their Uber ride at the Uber Zone, located at the corner of Washington and Scott Streets. New Uber users can use the promo code BUFFALOSABRES2017 for \$15 off their first ride.

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Want to find the speediest concession spot or least-crowded restroom? There's an app for that.

WaitTime Technology is now part of the updated My One Buffalo app. WaitTime uses sensors to monitor KeyBank Center's concession stands and the traffic outside its restrooms to provide real-time updates.

Teammates' reward for Eichel's new deal: Massive dinner tab will be on No. 15's plate

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

October 4, 2017

NHL teams are well-known for often dining together as a group on the road -- and sticking the entire bill on one player. Sometimes they'll throw everyone's credit card in a hat and draw one, with the unlucky "winner" picking up the tab.

And sometimes, the lucky recipient of a big-money contract has to spend on his teammates first before he can spend on himself. It sounds like Jack Eichel has that in his future with the Buffalo Sabres.

Chatter in the dressing room about the new deal today quickly turned to how good the eight-year, \$80 million deal will taste.

"I can't WAIT for this dinner. I cannot wait for this," a smiling Jason Pominville said in the KeyBank Center when asked for his reaction.

Center Ryan O'Reilly had a very methodical approach in mind.

"He's the leader of this team and we're all really excited for him," O'Reilly said of Eichel. "He's the guy that's going to help us do something special here for sure. He's a massive, massive part of it."

But first, Eichel may have a massive, massive bill to deal with.

"It's going to be real nice," O'Reilly said. "I'm definitely very excited for that. We're going to do some research, look at the schedule, when's a nice time, a nice city for it. We'll try to find the most expensive thing we can."

"I've been on a few of these dinners. They're usually not too modest with their orders," Eichel said later in the day during his news conference to announce the deal. "I'm not really sure where they want to do it or when they want to do it but I'll gladly treat the guys. I obviously wouldn't be in this position if it wasn't for them."

Eichel joked that he only had one caveat and that concerned linemate Evander Kane.

"I'll gladly take them to dinner and let them order up," Eichel said. "Just keep Kaner off the wine."

Shortly after the news conference ended, Kane congratulated Eichel on Twitter and said, "Can't wait to set up the team dinner for ya" before closing his message with a series of emojis that included a helicopter, boat, popping champagne cork with glasses and a wad of money with wings.

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Evander Kane ✓ [@evanderkane_9](#)

Congrats to the guy on my right [@Jack_Eichel11](#) on the HUGE new deal! Can't wait to set up the team dinner for ya. 🚁 🚤 🍾 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷

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Told about a New York City establishment that sells pizzas with 24-karat gold leaves, foie gras, truffles and dollops of caviar for \$2,000 a pie, O'Reilly got wide-eyed.

Deadpanned O'Reilly: "I'll have to mention it to him."

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Matthew Bové ✓ [@Matt_Bove](#)

Ryan O'Reilly is going to make sure Jack Eichel takes the team somewhere nice. @ByBuckyGleason suggests \$2,000 pizza.
HmMMMM.

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Story topics: [Buffalo Sabres](#)/ [Jack Eichel](#)/ [Jason Pominville](#)/ [Ryan O'Reilly](#)

Key Private Bank partners with Sabres

The Buffalo News

By Matt Glynn

October 4, 2017

Key Private Bank has signed a multiyear agreement to be the official wealth management partner of the Buffalo Sabres.

Terms were not disclosed. The deal includes branding opportunities inside KeyBank Center, and experiences with the team for clients and prospective clients.

The deal is in addition to one KeyBank has as the official bank of the Sabres and naming rights to its arena.

Eichel roommate Sam Reinhart: 'It's motivation to join him for the next couple years'

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

October 4, 2017

Sam Reinhart lives with Jack Eichel in a waterfront townhouse and is certainly happy his roommate has a new contract extension that kicks in next season.

It was a lock that Eichel was going to get a new deal at some point. It's not so assured that Reinhart will be getting any big money. His entry-level deal expires after the season and General Manager Jason Botterill said over the summer he wasn't interested in negotiating an extension with Reinhart prior to this season.

Reinhart is clearly in a show-me campaign if he wants to get any sort of large payday going forward, but was nonetheless happy for Eichel.

"It's nice, really nice," Reinhart said. "It's motivation to join him for the next couple of years. It's going to be there at the end of the year. Honestly, I'm not really thinking about it at all. I find myself as an offensive player and will try to show that on this team, whether I'm playing as a third-line center or with Jack on the wing."

Reinhart echoed others in the dressing room by pointing out Eichel has gone about his business in training camp without any talk about a potential new deal.

"I'm sure it's a weight off his shoulders to get it over with," Reinhart said. "In terms of a day to day basis in here and at home, he hasn't talked about it once. He hasn't let it affect it him or anybody. I know that for a fact because I see him 12 hours of the day every day."

Reinhart had 17 goals and a career-high 47 points last season but was suspended late in the season for being late to a team meeting in Columbus, and was not nearly as engaged in the offense as he was during his breakout 23-goal campaign in the 2015-16 season.

He's expected to start the season back at center, in the middle of the third line with Zemgus Girgensons and Seth Griffith on his wings.

"One mistake I've made in the past is viewing switching center as a demotion," Reinhart said. "That's not the way to be looking at it at all. This is an opportunity for me to get another line going, get another line on the scoresheet every night playing with some good players. I'm looking at it completely different with a fresh mentality and I'm excited about it."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Jack Eichel/ Sam Reinhart

Andrew Galarneau: Hey Jack Eichel, I hear you're looking for a table for 20

The Buffalo News

By Andrew Z. Galarneau

October 4, 2017

Dear Jack,

Word is that you are looking to take your teammates out to dinner to celebrate your signing a contract worth the gross domestic product of a smallish Third World nation.

In times such as these, you may be urged to patronize the usual suspects, like Tempo, Buffalo Chophouse, Bacchus, Russell's, Salvatore's and the Western Door. Places serving some of the finest steak and seafood around. Places where at the end of the meal, the check arrives accompanied by the complimentary sound track of an armored car backing up.

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Ryan O'Reilly is going to make sure Jack Eichel takes the team somewhere nice. @ByBuckyGleason suggests \$2,000 pizza. Hmmmm.

12:41 PM - Oct 4, 2017

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I would not propose to sway you from those choices. As the designated eater of The Buffalo News, I would propose to only make sure you are aware of some options that may have escaped your attention.

Chez Ami, 210 Franklin St., the luxurious restaurant in the new Curtiss Hotel, has a valet lot that already draws Maseratis like ants to honey. Better yet, it has a rotating bar that seats 20. Do you know 20 guys who would like to have a couple pops?

Ristorante Lombardo, 1198 Hertel Ave., has been around longer than any others on this list, but Mick Jagger was there the last time he was in town. Mick Jagger? He's a singer with the, oh never mind.

Patina 250, 250 Delaware Ave., has a private dining room big enough for a scrimmage, and a tomahawk steak that will make you realize how big cows really are, listed on the menu as "for two," which means Robin Lehner could make it an appetizer then use the bone for a toothpick.

Sear, 200 Delaware Ave. (review coming next week), also has a private dining room, super-premium Wagyu-genetics beef and a wine list that your French-speaking teammates should appreciate. I hear the 2005 Chateau Petrus (\$4,800) is magnifique.

Allen Burger Venture, 175 Allen St., would be my suggestion if the squad wants to take it easy on your wallet. Magnificent burgers, terrific draft beer from near and far, and a whiskey collection significant enough to repel the best attempts to drink it dry. No lobster or Chateau Lafite Rothschild, but great music and, oh yeah, it's run by an actual rock star.

Send restaurant tips to agalarneau@buffnews.com and follow @BuffaloFood on Instagram and Twitter

Eichel happy to remain in Buffalo for the next nine years

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

OCTOBER 4, 2017

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The wait for a new contract extension is over.

The Buffalo Sabres and forward Jack Eichel came to terms on an eight-year contract extension on Tuesday night worth \$80 million. The Sabres made the extension official on Wednesday afternoon, holding a press conference at the arena that featured Eichel, along with Sabres general manager Jason Botterill.

Eichel of course was ecstatic, "This city means so much to me and I like to think I mean a lot to this city as well. I think I really owe it to them and I think I owe it to myself to do something special here."

"I couldn't be more excited about the future in Buffalo. Both sides wanted to get a deal done. The Pegulas have a lot of faith in me."

Ryan O'Reilly sits just two lockers away from Eichel. He was happy for his teammate, "It's great news, it's something that I was hoping would get done before because you never want that to be something lingering or something he's focusing on while playing."

O'Reilly signed a seven year, \$52.5 million dollar deal so he knows what's it's like to try to live up to the money. O'Reilly said, "There is, but I think it's something you want with it. You know what you're getting yourself into and he's a guy that's handled all the pressures so far and he's going to continue to handle it well. He's a superstar and it's just what he does."

Jason Pominville is new to this group of Sabres. He's been playing on a line with Eichel and he said, "It's huge for the city, for the team, for himself, but as far as what he means to the team and to the city and what he's brought has been pretty amazing."

"He fits really well. He's such a big part of the team, he's going to play every situation, he's relied on to produce and he'll score some big goals, he'll be a leader on the team and even at his age, guys already look up to him."

Pominville knows about signing contract extensions and the pressure money can bring. He doesn't think it will change Eichel, "I know he might put a lot of pressure on himself, but hopefully this will take a little bit of the pressure away from him where he doesn't have to think about his contract, he can just go out there and play."

Housley won't rule out Bogosian for Thursday

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

OCTOBER 4, 2017

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The lines and the defensive pairings all stayed the same during Wednesday's practice. Zach Bogosian and Justin Falk did not practice. Phil Housley claims he doesn't know if Bogosian will be able to play on Thursday, but he hasn't practiced all week.

It's starting to look like Matt Moulson and Josh Gorges will be the healthy scratches for Thursday's opener. Housley said a player like Gorges must be patient, "He's in a position right now where he's really got to focus on every day, you know practices until he gets his opportunity."

"He's an experienced guy, a veteran that knows how to play the game and when his opportunity comes, make the best of it, so we're going to rely on Josh in that respect."

Housley was also tight lipped on if he'll name a captain or not, "We're going to evaluate that today, we might have something tomorrow, but obviously we're going to have to have captains tomorrow in our lineup and we're going to evaluate that today and we'll see where that leaves us tomorrow."

Jack Eichel has signed a contract extension that will pay him \$80 million over eight years. Phil Housley was an 18-year old first round pick and signed his deal, but he said it wasn't for that kind of money, "It wasn't what he's getting," Housley said with a laugh. "All remember is the first contract I signed as a rookie. It was the summer of '82 and I was excited. It was a great experience to get signed and be a big part and have a big impact on the organization."

We'll bring you the Eichel press conference live on WGR Sports Radio 550 beginning at 2 p.m.

Sabres sent Deslauriers to Montreal

WGR550

Brayton Wilson

OCTOBER 4, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres open up the 2017-18 season on Thursday against the Montreal Canadiens, but not before the two teams swing a minor trade on Wednesday.

Buffalo has traded veteran winger Nicolas Deslauriers to the Canadiens in exchange for right-handed defenseman Zach Redmond.

Deslauriers, 26, has spent parts of the last four seasons with the Sabres after being acquired from the Los Angeles Kings on March 5, 2014. In 211 games with the Sabres, Deslauriers scored 12 goals and 30 points.

Deslauriers was assigned to the Rochester Americans on Sunday after clearing waivers. He will report to to Montreal's AHL affiliate, the Laval Rocket.

Redmond, 29, was originally drafted in the seventh round of the 2008 NHL Draft by the Atlanta Thrashers. He has appeared in 130 NHL games since the 2012-13 season, scoring four goals and 18 points. Last season, Redmond split time with Montreal and St. John's while dealing with injuries.

Redmond will report to the Americans to add to a defense corps that already includes Nathan Paetsch, Taylor Fedun, Casey Nelson, and Brendan Guhle among others. The Amerks will open their season on Friday when they host the Syracuse Crunch at Blue Cross Arena.

Sabres' Jack Eichel ready for duties that accompany contract

Olean Times Herald

By Bill Hoppe

October 5, 2017

BUFFALO – Jack Eichel wouldn't go on his own. So when the Sabres convened for their post-practice stretch at center ice, veteran Jason Pominville nudged the young star into the circle.

The scene inside HarborCenter was fitting. Eichel, in his first skate since signing an eight-year, \$80 million contract extension Tuesday, surrounded by his teammates, leading them in the stretch.

Eichel, 20, has been the face of the franchise for two years. But thanks to his mammoth new deal, the largest in team history, the slick center is expected to be the Sabres' undisputed leader.

The Sabres, who open the season tonight at KeyBank Center, are Eichel's team now and at least through 2025-26.

"He should be there (leading)," Pominville said Wednesday after the Sabres prepared for the Montreal Canadiens. "I think everybody was kind of telling him to go in there ... just give him a push to go in there. I think it's important."

Sure, Eichel might've reluctantly gone into the circle, but after two seasons, he wants more responsibilities. The former second overall pick wants to be the guy.

"With or without a contract, that was my goal coming into camp, be a leader, be a guy that people can rely on and try to push our team and the organization to the next level," Eichel said during a news conference to discuss his extension. "I want to be that person. I want to take on more responsibilities."

While Eichel said late in the summer he was willing to play the final season of his entry-level contract without a new deal, he and the Sabres seem relieved it's finally done.

"It's huge for the city, himself, the team," Pominville said. "He can just worry about playing."

Sabres coach Phil Housley, a 21-year NHL veteran, knows it wasn't easy for Eichel to focus on hockey during training camp.

"Is there some weight off his shoulders? I think so," Housley said. "I think he can really focus on his game right now moving forward."

He added: "He handled it quite well. I'm just speaking on experience being in his position, playing under those circumstances. It's always in the back of your mind."

Eichel, of course, acknowledged he will be earning a lot. But more than money convinced him to make the longest commitment he could under the collective bargaining agreement.

"It was pretty obvious both sides wanted eight years," Eichel said. "I told my agents I wanted to be here for as long as I could."

Since arriving in town just over two years ago, Eichel has consistently talked about his appreciation for the city, its people and the support the organization has given him.

"This city means so much to me," he said. "I like to think I mean a lot to this city as well. This organization has been nothing but great to me since the day I walked in the doors, have given me every opportunity I wanted."

Naturally, the pressure on Eichel will be immense. When the contract kicks in for the 2018-19 season, his yearly average will be higher than some of the NHL's biggest names, including Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin.

Housley said he saw "a spirited young man" practicing Wednesday. Living up to the contract, he said, won't be a burden for Eichel, who has 48 goals and 113 points in 142 NHL appearances.

“He’s just got to go about his business,” Housley said. “We got to try to put him in positions to succeed. I just want him to come to the rink and enjoy himself.”

Eichel’s contract has \$15 million in signing bonuses, according to The Athletic’s Pierre LeBrun. He gets \$7.5 million in 2020-21 and \$7.5 million in 2022-23.

The Sabres started talking to Eichel’s agents in the summer, general manager Jason Botterill said. Talks then heated up during camp.

“Leading up to the last couple weeks, we talked about the possibility of trying to get it done before the start of the season would be best for all parties involved,” Botterill said. “At the end of the day, I think there was compromise from both sides.”

With the deal done, Eichel’s first order of business might be treating his teammates to a lavish dinner.

“I can’t wait for this dinner,” Pominville said.

Eichel has already been on a few team dinners.

“They’re usually not too modest with their orders,” he said.

He added: “I’ll gladly treat the guys.”

Sabres notes: Nick Deslauriers traded to Canadiens for Zach Redmond

Olean Times Herald

By Bill Hoppe

October 5, 2017

BUFFALO – Winger Nick Deslauriers' four-year career with the Sabres is over.

The Sabres traded Deslauriers to the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday for defenseman Zach Redmond.

The Sabres then sent Redmond, 29, to the Rochester Americans. The Canadiens meanwhile, assigned Deslauriers, 26, to the Laval Rocket, their AHL affiliate.

The 6-foot-2, 212-pound Redmond has nine goals, 38 points and 48 penalty minutes in 130 career NHL games with the Canadiens, Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche.

The Sabres waived Deslauriers last week and sent him to the AHL. The popular Deslauriers, the Sabres' top fighter for years, has 12 goals, 30 points and 186 penalty minutes in 211 NHL games.

Fourth-line winger Jordan Nolan's arrival on waivers last week spelled the end for Deslauriers.

The Sabres open the season tonight against the Canadiens at KeyBank Center.

xxx

General manger Jason Botterill said Wednesday the Sabres "will not be naming a captain to start the season off."

"We're very comfortable with the leadership group," he said.

Sabres coach Phil Housley said earlier Wednesday the captaincy would be evaluated later in the day.

"We might have something tomorrow, but obviously we're going to have to have captains tomorrow in our lineup," he said.

Players will be wearing letters, perhaps on a temporary basis.

The Sabres didn't re-sign former captain Brian Gionta.

xxx

Expect two 33-year-old Sabres veterans to sit tonight.

Defenseman Josh Gorges and winger Matt Moulson practiced as extras Wednesday.

Gorges was never a healthy scratch in his first three seasons with the Sabres, who revamped their blue line in the offseason, adding more speed.

"He's in a position right now where he's got to focus on practices until he gets his opportunity," Housley said of Gorges.

"He's an experienced guy and a veteran guy that knows how to play, and when his opportunity comes, make the best of it."

xxx

Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian, out since suffering a lower-body injury in Friday's preseason finale, hasn't been practicing and is likely out tonight.

Still, Housley said Bogosian is day-to-day and making progress.

"Really good encouraging things you hear from our athletic trainer," he said.

Sabres add another veteran defenseman for Amerks via trade

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

By Leo Roth

October 4, 2017

The Rochester Americans allowed 240 goals last season, tied for sixth most in the American Hockey League. All-Star goaltender Linus Ullmark faced a league-high 1,678 shots in the 55 games he played.

But help is on the way.

Having already added four new veteran defensemen for Rochester, the parent Buffalo Sabres added a fifth on Wednesday through a trade that sent forward Nicolas Deslauriers to the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for defenseman Zach Redmond.

Redmond was assigned to the Amerks, where he joins newcomers Nathan Paetsch, Andrew MacWilliam, Conor Allen and Barry Goers, other veterans with healthy AHL résumés. Returning defensemen include Taylor Fedun, who logged 27 games with the Sabres, Casey Nelson and prospect Brendan Guhle, a 2015 second-round draft pick who joins the team full time.

“It’s a big year for him and it’s important to get off to a good start,” coach Chris Taylor said of Ullmark. “Last year he had a lot of shots, but with our veteran defense right now, we don’t want to give up as many shots, and he can be in control so that he can play back-to-back games. Same with (Adam) Wilcox. Two good goalies and pushing each other and that’s what we want internally so they’re both ready to play.”

Along with organizational depth, Redmond can supply some scoring punch.

In 190 regular-season AHL games for various organizations, he has recorded 100 points on 29 goals and 71 assists. He has 4-15 — 19 in 35 playoff games. He has 38 points and is a plus-11 in 130 career games with three NHL teams.

The 6-2, 212-pounder split time between Montreal and the St. John’s IceCaps last season. The Traverse City, Michigan, native played for Team USA in the 2015 World Hockey Championships.

Deslauriers, 26, acquired in a March 2014 trade with Los Angeles, skated the past three seasons with the Sabres and played in 211 games overall (12-18 — 30). He had no goals and two assists in 42 games last season.

Deslauriers was a late training camp cut and was slated for Rochester after clearing waivers.

Sabres season preview: 5 things the Sabres must do to make the playoffs in 2017-18

Batavian Daily News

By Nick Wojton

October 5, 2017

BUFFALO – The Buffalo Sabres had high expectations prior to last season, only to fall on their faces.

The Sabres finished with a 33-37-12 overall record which was good for 78 points. The only team in the Eastern Conference to finish with fewer points was the New Jersey Devils. Those results cost the jobs of head coach Dan Bylsma and general manager Tim Murray.

Out with the old and in with the older... kind of.

New head coach Phil Housley and new general manager Jason Botterill are both former players with the organization. Botterill's job, as many GMs, will be to keep the big picture in mind, but Botterill has made moves in his short time in Buffalo to improve the team in the short term as well.

Housley on the other hand might hold the keys to immediately improving the team with a change of coaching styles from his predecessor. With that, here are five things the Sabres must do this season to make the playoffs for the first time since 2011:

Bubble wrap these guys: Jack Eichel had 57 points in 61 games played last year. He netted 24 goals. Great numbers, if the season he was 61 games long. It's not, it's 82. Eichel twisted his ankle just before opening day last season, causing a big blow to the team's outlook prior to even playing a game. Along with Eichel, winger Kyle Okposo (19 goals, 26 assists) was held to 65 games with winger Evander Kane (28-15) only playing 70. It's a long season and guys will take their bumps and bruises, but let's just hope for less of them.

New-look defense needs to be upgrade: Prior to last season, the top concern for the Sabres was the blue line. That remains the same, but the team has made their share of additions this offseason. Marco Scandella and Nathan Beaulieu were added in trades while Russian free agent Victor Antipin was signed. The likes of Zack Bogosian and Josh Gorges still will see playing time but in a better suited role as a last pairing or depth. Top returners include Rasmus Ristolainen and Jake McCabe. These new guys need to be what they were brought into be: an upgrade.

Depth needs to score: As prior mentioned, Eichel had 57 points last year despite missing 21 games to start the year. Eichel's total led the team. That's expected, but others need to contribute, particularly depth forwards. New additions to the depth ranks include former Sabre Jason Pominville and Benoit Pouliot. Pominville and Pouliot join depth forwards such as Johan Larsson (6-5), Matt Moulson (14-18) and Zengus Girgensons (7-9) who will need to put up more points to help the likes of Eichel, Okposo, and Ryan O'Reilly (20-35).

Reinhart needs to be a top pick: Sam Reinhart is often compared to his best bud in Eichel because they're both top picks. Specifically, they were both drafted second overall. Reinhart had 17 goals and 30 assists in 79 games. That's pretty good, but not good-to-great. For the position he was drafted in, the Sabres need him to consistently contribute more. He won't be Eichel, but he still leaves a little more to be desired.

More from Lehner: The crease has been Robin Lehner's for the past two seasons. Lehner's numbers have been pretty good. Last season he put up a .920 save percentage and 2.68 goals against average. But to this point, Lehner hasn't really stolen many games for the Sabres. There's games when you need your goalie to just be good, but others he can steal them for you. A team that has just that little bit extra, has a goalie that gives just a little bit extra. Buffalo improving their penalty kill, which was the 25th-best in the NHL with a 77.6 conversion rate, will help his numbers too.

Eichel's big extension with Sabres makes sense for both sides

Auburn Citizen

Justin Ritzel

October 5, 2017

Jack Eichel is going to be in Buffalo for a very, very long time.

Nine years to be exact. The 20-year-old center agreed on an eight-year, \$80 million contract with the Sabres Tuesday. The new deal makes him the highest-paid player in team history.

Eichel will play out the final year of his rookie contract which earns him \$925K for the 2017-18 season. His new deal kicks in for 2018-19.

Eichel is the latest young star player to receive big money before reaching restricted free agency. Edmonton's Connor McDavid, who was selected with the No. 1 overall pick in 2015 before the Sabres grabbed Eichel No. 2, agreed on an eight-year extension in July that will count for \$12.5 million against the cap after this season.

Unlike McDavid, Eichel has no major awards in his cabinet. He has yet to play in a playoff game. Despite that, the Sabres were comfortable committing major bucks to their young franchise center who finished with 57 points in 61 games last season.

Eichel was one of the few bright spots on an otherwise dreary Sabres season. Buffalo played prehistoric hockey under Dan Bylsma in 2016-17 — perfectly content to play slow, conservative hockey.

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That will change under new head coach Phil Housley, who comes from a system with the Nashville Predators that emphasises quick transitions and aggression. That style should help Eichel exponentially.

Still, there is an element of Eichel's contract that is projecting forward. There's some risk and reward to that approach — when his contract kicks in, Eichel will be tied for the fifth-highest cap hit in the league (Los Angeles' Anze Kopitar also counts for \$10 million a year). This deal is larger than Alex Ovechkin's, Sidney Crosby's and Evgeni Malkin's.

But if Eichel continues to grow and challenges for a scoring title every year, the contract will be a bargain. Eichel's agent, Peter Fish, admitted that he advised Eichel to wait until next summer to negotiate a new deal because that could mean more money, but his client wanted to get something done now that wouldn't hinder the Sabres' salary cap going forward.

And all things considered, Buffalo is in decent shape money-wise looking ahead. The entire core of the team — Eichel, Ryan O'Reilly, Kyle Okposo and Rasmus Ristolainen — are locked in long term. There's enough flexibility in upcoming years, especially with Evander Kane (\$5.25 million) and Josh Gorges (\$3.9 million) coming off the books, that the Sabres can still add impact players.

This contract is a big deal (pun intended) for Buffalo. The Sabres have lacked a true franchise-caliber player ever since Dominik Hasek was traded in 2001, but Eichel has already filled that void. With his future no longer in question, Sabres management can focus on building a supporting cast that is capable of getting Buffalo back to the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Sabres, Eichel feel they reached “the perfect deal”

WKBW

Matt Bove

Oct 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Jack Eichel never thought he'd be in the position he's in. Just a few weeks shy of his 21 birthday, Eichel signed the richest contract in the history of the Buffalo Sabres organization, agreeing to an eight-year contract extension worth an average of \$10 million per season.

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Eichel joined by his parents, along with Jason Botterill & the Pegula's #Sabres @WKBW

2:26 PM - Oct 4, 2017

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"I just look forward to being a part of this city for the next nine years and all the successes we're going to have," Eichel said in his opening remarks on Wednesday. "I want to bring so much excitement to this team, this organization, and this city. Our team is heading in the right direction and I couldn't be more excited for the future here in Buffalo."

Takeaways from Wednesday's media conference:

Who will be captain?

We thought we got a hint as Wednesday's practice ended with Eichel breaking down his teammates at center ice. But not so fast. Sabres general manager Jason Botterill was asked point blank if the team will name a captain this season.

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I'll just leave this here. Eichel leads team stretch as practice ends & Housley yells "call them in". Eichel then breaks the team down @WKBW

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"We will not be naming a captain to start the season off here, we will see how things progress from that standpoint." Botterill responded. "We're very comfortable with our leadership group right now that we have here and Jack is a big part of it."

Botterill went on to add that successful teams have several leaders in their locker room. When asked if he saw himself as a captain, Eichel echoed those comments saying that you don't need a letter on your jersey to lead.

Buffalo was the plan all along

Eichel made it very clear during Wednesday's press conference that he always wanted to be in Buffalo. He admitted that he was open to playing the season without a new deal but is happy to be under contract for the next nine years.

"I think right from the get-go it was pretty obvious that both sides wanted eight-years," Eichel said. "I told my agents I wanted to be here for as long as I could and commit to this city and this organization."

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The \$80 million man #Sabres @WKBW

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Eichel added that he left the negotiations to his agents and said it's his job to focus on hockey.

"We wanted to make sure that four or five years from now Jack and his family were very excited about being in Buffalo and being comfortable with the contract," Botterill added. "Woke up this morning; I think both sides are excited about the situation so to me it was a perfect deal."

The best is yet to come

Both Eichel and Botterill were adamant that the future in Buffalo is bright. Botterill even said at the beginning of the press conference that Eichel was one of the reasons why he took the GM job in the first place.

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Eichel reiterates that there's a different feeling in the locker room and almost a new found optimism about the upcoming season @WKBW

2:18 PM - Oct 4, 2017 · Buffalo, NY

Eichel: “I wanted to be here as long as I could”

WIVB

By Nick Filipowski

October 3, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – After signing an eight-year \$80 million extension — the largest contract in franchise history — Sabres star forward Jack Eichel said he got emotional.

“It’s been a whirlwind for me the last 24-hours,” Eichel said. “Sitting here I don’t think I ever imagined this, ahead of my 21st birthday in a few week that’d I have this opportunity – to play hockey for a living.”

“It’s a bit overwhelming. Not the contract itself. When you finally agree to a contract like that, it’s pretty emotional just thinking about everything you’ve gone through you’re whole life and everything your family has done for you.”

“We wanted to make sure four to five years from now Jack and his family were excited about being in Buffalo and very comfortable with the contract,” GM Jason Botterill added. “I think the agency felt the same way from the Buffalo Sabres side. We came to an agreement there yesterday and I woke up this morning and both sides are very excited about the situation. So to me it was a perfect deal.”

The 20-year-old admitted he tried to “keep himself together” as he went to dinner with Sam Reinhart and Jake McCabe, who they found out about the contract like fans did — through social media.

“I’m just really grateful that the organization, the Pegula family and the city put their trust in me like that. It means a lot to me and my family to be sitting here today accepting this offer,” he said.

“I tried to hold it all in because I was going to teammates house for dinner and they ended up finding out on twitter,” Eichel added. “They looked over to me and started laughing. It was kind of awkward, but there was a lot of emotion. I don’t think it’s still hit me completely. It’s crazy to think about it.”

When he first reported to training camp, Eichel was adamant he hadn’t proved a thing and after what he called back-to-back mediocre seasons. On the eve of the season opener he’s ready to lead the franchise back to respectability.

“This city means so much to me and I like to think I mean a lot to this city as well. This organization been nothing but great to me since the first day I walked through the doors and given me every opportunity I’ve wanted,” he said.

“I think I owe it to them and to myself to do something special with the group of guys that we have in the room. It’s an organization that believes in me and I look forward to achieving all that.”

While the focus is on the opener against Montreal on Thursday, the first order of business for the now \$10 million dollar man — treating his teammates to a feast.

“It’s going to be real nice. I’m really excited for that,” Ryan O’Reilly joked with reporters after practice. “We’re going to have to look at the schedule, the city and find a nice time for it. We’re going to try and find the most expensive thing we can.”

“I’ve been on a few of these dinners and they’re usually not too modest with their orders. I’m not sure where they want to do it or when they want to do it. I’ll treat the guys. I wouldn’t be in this position if it wasn’t for them. Just keep (Evander Kane) off the wine.”

Naming a captain: Head Coach Phil Housley told reporters they’d evaluate who would be captain leading up to the season opener. GM Jason Botterill told reporters on Wednesday there will not be a captain when the Sabres begin the season on Thursday.

“We will not name a captain,” he said. “We’ll continue to have discussions. We’re very comfortable with our leadership group here, and Jack’s a big part of it. Successful teams have a collaborative model.”

“I want to expect more of myself and I said the same thing after my first year. You just gain more experience. You’re a little more comfortable in the room. You have a little more respect from your peers,” Eichel added. “For me, it just means coming to the rink everyday trying to be a professional, trying to work hard and if you do that, guys will follow and that creates a good culture.”

Culture change: Speaking of culture — Eichel was asked why he’s more excited about starting the season this year as compared to years past. He made it clear — Botterill, Housley, and some of the new additions have helped change the culture.

“Everyone is older and more experience. I think the culture is moving in a great direction right now. Being around the team, I know we haven’t had the most successful preseason in terms of wins and losses, but the mindset of players, the mood in the room is better. We’re taking it day by day and trying to get better every day. If we do that, we’re going to put ourselves in a good position at the end of the season.”

Importance of centerman: Sam Reinhart was moved back to center during training camp in an effort to provide additional scoring opportunities for the Sabres, who struggled to produced 5-on-5 last year. Botterill addressed that on Wednesday.

“That’s one of our strengths of our organization right now. Having Jack, (Ryan) O’Reilly and Reinhart through the middle and having so many other players that can play center. Then also having other players that can play center. If you look right now, we have Girgensons on the wing and Larsson on the wing. The entire league is looking for more centerman and we have the luxury of having some very good centerman here. I’m a strong believer in building down the middle. The fact we have those assets here and in our organization is a strength for us.”

Sabres deal for a defenseman

WIVB

Mike Courtney

October 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – The Buffalo Sabres have acquired defenseman Zach Redmond from the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for forward Nicolas Deslauriers. Redmond will report to the Rochester Americans.

Redmond split time between Montreal and the AHL's St John's Ice Caps last season. He had 5 assists in 16 games with the Canadiens and 18 points in 26 games with St John's. He was originally drafted by the Atlanta Thrashers in the seventh round of the 2008 draft. Redmond has 38 points in 130 NHL games for Montreal, Colorado and Winnipeg.

Four thoughts ahead of the 2017-18 season

WIVB

By Nick Filipowski

October 4, 2017

1) Start off on the right foot

So often last year the Sabres lacked any jump or energy in the first period. A lackluster opening period led to trouble in the second and by the time they got their act together in the third, it was usually too little too late.

New year – same issues throughout the preseason.

“I think just our starts in general haven’t been very good,” Housley told reporters following their 3-1 loss in the preseason finale to the Islanders. “I remember at Penn State where we came out and we were ready. So, we have to address that and that’s all about preparation.”

“I don’t know what happened last year. I’m not concerned about that. I’m looking forward here. Those things, they’re going to change,” the head coach added. “They have to. You look at all the games we’ve played in the preseason, we’ve only scored the first goal once, so you know how important those starts are.”

Sam Reinhart, who is playing out the final year of his rookie deal, echoed similar sentiments.

“We have to demand more, we have to expect more of this group. We have to be ready for Thursday night.”

Reinhart was one of the players that turned in a disappointing season a year ago. Sure, his point total was up, but his energy and effort seemed to lack at times.

If he returns to similar form from his rookie year – where he showed grit and determination – even if he doesn’t wear a letter on his chest, he could be a leader with his effort and actions on the ice.

2) Where is the scoring going to come from?

The Sabres ranked 24th last season with 199 goals, with 57 of those tallies coming courtesy of the best power play unit in the league.

How will the power play perform with a new head coach, philosophy and system? Is it realistic to expect they’ll be tops in the league again?

We know this: If you can’t score 5-on-5 – you’re going to have problems.

Even with Phil Housley implementing a new aggressive approach (with jumbled lines mind you) Buffalo only scored 12 goals in six exhibition games. They were shutout once and scored one goal in games against Toronto and New York.

“It starts with the shot mind set. I think that’s the way you create offense,” Housley told reporters Monday. “We’ve had it one game up to this point. I think if you continue to do that, things will open up and players will realize the puck is going there and that’s where we get those second and third opportunities. We just have to continue to hammer that message.”

For what it’s worth: The Bills offense struggled in the preseason and now everything is fine (maybe?) following a 3-1 start.

Evander Kane was the best 5-on-5 scorer for the Sabres a year ago, ranking first on the team and 16th in the league with 25 even strength goals.

Only five other guys hit double figure:

Jack Eichel – 14

Kyle Okposo – 12

Marcus Foligno – 12 (now with Minnesota)
Ryan O'Reilly – 11
Brian Gionta – 11 (currently unsigned)

That's not an inspiring list.

After bad starts and bad games, O'Reilly was the first to admit he "needed to better."

He's not wrong — but the time for talk is over.

Many analysts expect Eichel to be a point per game producer and even finish in the top 10 in scoring.

30-35 goals isn't out of the question for Eichel but he needs to improve his even strength output.

Sure, he missed 20 games and still nearly produced at point per game pace. We all know a healthy Eichel is a better Eichel.

3) Will the defense improve?

This isn't just a discussion for the guys on the blueline, but for everybody on the roster.

Nobody played two-way hockey a year ago and Robin Lehner took the brunt of the bad vibes backstopping the worst defensive team in the league.

There is reason to get excited with the defense jumping into the rush and helping generate offense but if nobody is willing to backcheck things aren't going to get any better.

Yes, Rasmussen Ristolainen gives up the blue line and allows entry into the zone a lot.

He'll get somewhat of a reprieve skating alongside Marco Scandella (hip), while the additions of Viktor Antipin and Nathan Beaulieu should also help this unit improve.

Better team defense, better blue line play could lead to more of DJ Kool and a lot less groaning.

4) Bold Prediction

Buckle up. We're about to go to crazy town.

Robin Lehner wins between 33-37 games.

NHL.com predicted him to win 26 games earlier this summer and there is no way 26 games is good enough for a No.1 goaltender or to get a team to the playoffs.

If Lehner stays healthy there is no reason he shouldn't play a minimum of 55 games.

What could that lead to? 33-17-5 record (71 points)

The leaves 27 games for Chad Johnson to be the dependable backup he's prove he can be.

Taking his production over the last four seasons, including his 22-win campaign two seasons ago in Buffalo, Johnson has averaged 16 wins per year.

A 16-8-3 mark would be nearly identical to the season he had with the Bruins during the 2013-2014 season.

That gets the Sabers an additional 35 points.

Quick match: That's 106 points. HELLO PLAYOFFS!

Back to reality.

What are reasonable expectations? 75-80 points? 81-90?

Can Buffalo compete with Montreal? Toronto? Tampa Bay in the Atlantic?

95 points was the threshold for teams in the Eastern Conference to make the playoffs last year.

The Sabres finished 33-37-12 las season which was good for 78 points and last in the division.

If Buffalo wins six of those overtime losses, their point total jumps to 84. If they somehow manage three more regulation wins throughout the course of the season that gives them 90 points.

Granted they'd still miss the playoffs under that scenario — it'd be easier to stomach than the product on the ice last season.

Better starts. Better results. Better hockey.

There are still plenty of unknowns as the season approaches but the Sabres should at least be playing meaningful hockey when February turns to March.

Anything less would be a disappointment.

Parking tips for Sabres home opener

WIVB

Kaley Lynch

Oct. 4, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – With the Buffalo Sabres season opener happening Thursday night, the City of Buffalo Parking Department offers the following suggestion for hockey fans who are planning to attend the 7 p.m. game.

Motorists are encouraged to park in city-owned parking ramps, with prices ranging from \$2 to \$10. The ramps closest to Key Bank Center are the One Seneca Ramp and the Adam Ramp. All of the city-owned parking facilities are located within walking distance of the light-rail on Main Street. For more information about the locations, [click here](#).

Reminder: street parking in the downtown central business district is free after 5 p.m. and on weekends, and a short walk to the light-rail.

City residents and visitors are encouraged to utilize other available means of public transportation to downtown Buffalo, including the light-rail on Main Street.

The NFTA has two park-and-ride locations along the metro rail line. The LaSalle Station parking lot has 732 free spaces, and just to the north of there, the University Station at UB South has another 312 spots. Drivers can park in those lots, pay a small fee and ride the metro rail all the way to Key Bank Center.

There will also be increased Buffalo Police Traffic Unit patrols in and around Key Bank Center.

The Sabres will get their home schedule started with the Montreal Canadiens for the second straight year and the fourth time in ten seasons. The top of Buffalo City Hall will be lit blue and gold from Oct. 4 to 8 p.m. Oct. 5 in recognition of the start of a new Sabres season.

Sabres acquire Redmond from Canadiens for Deslauriers

The Sports Xchange

October 4, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres acquired defenseman Zach Redmond from the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday in exchange for forward Nicolas Deslauriers.

Redmond, 29, will report to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

The 6-foot-2, 212-pound Redmond split time between Montreal and the AHL's St. John's IceCaps in his first season with the organization in 2016-17. He posted five assists in 16 NHL games and 18 points (four goals, 14 assists) in 26 games with the IceCaps.

Selected by the Atlanta Thrashers in the seventh round of the 2008 NHL draft, Redmond has appeared in parts of five NHL seasons, totaling 38 points (nine goals, 29 assists) in 130 games with Montreal, the Colorado Avalanche and the Winnipeg Jets. He recorded 100 points (29 goals, 71 assists) in 190 career regular-season AHL games, adding 19 points (four goals, 15 assists) in 35 AHL postseason contests.

A native of Traverse City, Mich., Redmond represented the United States at the 2015 IIHF World Hockey Championship, helping the team earn a bronze medal.

The 6-1, 215-pound Deslauriers will report to the AHL's Laval Rocket.

The 26-year-old Deslauriers, a third-round pick of the Los Angeles Kings in 2009, owns 30 points (12 goals, 18 assists) in 211 career NHL games since the LaSalle, Quebec, native made his debut in 2013-14 with the Sabres

News and notes from Wednesday's practice

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 4, 2017

As practiced opened and players began their stretch at HarborCenter on Wednesday morning, Jason Pominville took it upon himself to nudge Jack Eichel toward the center of the circle.

It was the team's first practice since Eichel signed an 8-year, \$80 million extension on Tuesday night, and Pominville thought it was only right.

"He should be in there," Pominville said. "I think I everyone was kind of telling him to go in there and giving him a push to go in there. I think it's important. He was probably a little embarrassed and shy, he didn't want to go in there, but I think it was the right thing to do. He did it and he did a good job."

[View image on Twitter](#)

[View image on Twitter](#)

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Jourdon LaBarber @JourdonLaBarber

Jason Pominville nudged Jack Eichel toward the middle, and we're underway at #Sabres practice.

11:01 AM - Oct 4, 2017

16 16 Replies 77 77 Retweets 260 260 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

Eichel will meet with the media along with Sabres owner Terry Pegula and general manager Jason Botterill at 2 p.m. The press conference can be seen live on MSG and on Facebook live, or heard on WGR 550.

In the meantime, here's some other news and notes from Wednesday's Sabres practice.

No decision on captaincy

Phil Housley will meet with his coaching staff on Wednesday to determine who will wear letters this season, and an announcement could be made Thursday. Housley said all options are on the table, including reserving the "C" and playing with three alternate captains.

Asked specifically about Eichel, Housley said that all players under consideration.

"All options are open," he said. "I'd like to talk to our coaching staff as they get back here today. I know that's one of the discussions we're going to have. We'll see at that point."

Sabres acquire Redmond

The Sabres acquired defenseman Zach Redmond from the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for forward Nicolas Deslauriers. Redmond will report to Rochester.

Redmond, 29, scored five assists in 16 games for the Canadiens last season and 18 points (4+14) in 26 games for their AHL affiliate in St. John's.

Deslauriers had been assigned to Rochester on Saturday. In four seasons with the Sabres, he scored 12 goals and 18 assists in 211 games.

Bogosian, Falk remain day-to-day

Defensemen Zach Bogosian and Justin Falk were again absent from practice, although Housley still did not rule Bogosian out for Thursday's season opener against Montreal. He'll be reevaluated Thursday morning.

Sabres acquire Redmond from Montreal

By Sabres PR

Sabres.com

October 4, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres today announced the team has acquired defenseman Zach Redmond from the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for forward Nicolas Deslauriers. Redmond will report to the Rochester Americans (AHL).

Redmond (6'2", 212 lbs., 7/26/1988) split time between Montreal and the St. John's IceCaps (AHL) in his first season with the Canadiens organization in 2016-17, posting five assists in 16 NHL games and 18 points (4+14) in 26 games with the IceCaps.

Selected by the Atlanta Thrashers in the seventh round (184th overall) of the 2008 NHL Draft, Redmond has appeared in parts of five NHL seasons, totaling 38 points (9+29) and a plus-11 rating in 130 games with Montreal, the Colorado Avalanche and the Winnipeg Jets. He has recorded 100 points (29+71) in 190 career regular-season AHL games, adding 19 points (4+15) in 35 AHL postseason contests.

A native of Traverse City, Michigan, Redmond also represented the United States at the 2015 IIHF World Hockey Championship, helping the team earn a bronze medal.

Eichel: I owe it to Buffalo to do something special here

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 4, 2017

From the time Jack Eichel first put on a Buffalo Sabres sweater, all he's ever wanted to be was a piece to the puzzle. That's what he said on the day of his draft, when the Sabres took him with the No. 2 pick back in June of 2015.

In the two years since, Eichel has been that and more to the city of Buffalo. He started a foundation here and developed a relationship with Roswell Park. He's scored game-winning goals and made highlight-reel plays that push the KeyBank Center crowd into bedlam. He grew through the adversity of his first major injury.

Through it all, one thing became certain. From the time Eichel first sat down with Jason Botterill this summer and his agents began contract negotiations with the Sabres, he let it be known that he wanted to continue being a piece to this puzzle for a long, long time.

On Tuesday night, Eichel got his wish. He and the Sabres agreed to an 8-year contract extension worth \$80 million, keeping him in Buffalo through the 2025-26 season.

"This city means so much to me, and I like to think I mean a lot to this city as well," Eichel said during a press conference on Wednesday. "This organization has been nothing but great to me since the first day I walked in the doors.

"... I have nothing but great things to say about Buffalo. I think I really owe it to them and I think I owe it to myself to do something special here with the group of guys that we have in the room and the organization and the people that are here now."

Jack Eichel Interview (10/4/17)

06:37 • October 4th, 2017

While both sides worked with the goal of getting a deal done throughout the process, Eichel had said as opening night drew closer that he'd be willing to play out the final year of entry-level contract. He left the negotiating for his agents, he said, leaving his sole focus on the ice.

In the end, Botterill said that both sides compromised to finalize a deal prior to the start of the season. Negotiations picked up on Tuesday until they finally came to an agreement while Eichel was eating dinner with teammates Jake McCabe and Sam Reinhart.

Eichel had been coy with his teammates about the deal, so when he walked outside to take a phone call he came back to find that McCabe and Reinhart had caught wind of the contract on Twitter. The pair laughed and congratulated him.

"When you finally agree to a contract like that, it's pretty emotional," Eichel said. "Just thinking about everything you've gone through in your whole life, being able to agree to something like that, and everything your family's done for you, it was a pretty special moment."

Soon it will be Eichel buying dinner for Reinhart, McCabe and the rest of his teammates, a tradition that comes with a lucrative extension. Eichel said he's been a part of those meals before, and he doesn't expect his teammates to be modest.

Then again, Eichel seems ready for all of the expectations that come with being the highest paid player in Sabres history. He said at the outset of camp that he felt he hadn't accomplished anything in the NHL, a modest self-assessment for a player who finished 12th in points per game at age 20 last season.

He came into his third season with the goal of stepping up as a leader both on and off the ice, and neither the money nor the contract will change that.

"I think with or without the contract, that was my goal coming into camp," Eichel said. "Be a leader, be a guy who people can rely on and try to push our teams and organization to the next level. I want to be that person. I want to take on more responsibilities."

"Obviously when something like this happens, it maximizes that. You could be under more of a microscope but there's so many great people in that room and so many great people in this city and this organization, I just try and be myself and be the best player I can be every day."

At the same time, he doesn't expect the title of captain to be handed to him. Botterill said Wednesday that the Sabres will not name a captain for the start of the season, but Eichel has been a part of a leadership group in camp that's included young players like Rasmus Ristolainen and Jake McCabe as well as veterans such as Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo.

"We're very comfortable with our leadership group that we have right now, and Jack's a big part of it," Botterill said. "We don't need Jack to take over the room or take over the organization, and to be honest I don't think that happens very often anymore. I think successful teams have a collaborative model and, just like coaches, you can't have one voice."

And, as Eichel put it, you don't need a letter to be a leader. He'll continue to be a piece to the Sabres' puzzle, albeit a very large one, for this upcoming season and at least eight more after that. It starts Thursday, when Buffalo opens its season against the Montreal Canadiens at KeyBank Center.

With contract questions now behind him, that's really all that matters.

"More than anything," Eichel said, "I'm just excited to lace up my skates and play hockey tomorrow."

Sharpen Up: October 4, 2017

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 4, 2017

We're one day away from the beginning of the 2017-18 season and you've probably heard the big news by now. Jack Eichel has agreed to terms on an eight-year contract extension with an average annual value of \$10 million. That'll keep him in a Sabres uniform for nine more seasons.

Here's what you need to know.

Jack Eichel has a new contract

00:59 • October 3rd, 2017

Eichel led the Sabres with 57 points (24+33) in 61 games during the 2016-17 season, also finishing 11th in the NHL with 0.93 points per game and leading the league with 4.1 shots per game. That's pretty good.

In leading the Sabres in points, Eichel became just the fourth player in franchise history to lead the team in points before turning 21, joining Gilbert Perreault, Rick Martin and Pierre Turgeon (his 21st birthday is on Oct. 28). Pretty, pretty good.

Since entering the NHL in 2015-16, Eichel ranks second among Sabres players with 113 points (48+65) in 142 career games. In his career, the Sabres are 41-21-6 when he records a point and 22-5-1 when he records at least two points in a game. That's actually really good.

Stick with us throughout the day for news on the Eichel extension, his and the front office's reactions, and anything else that may come up. That's what we're here for.

It's OK to talk about other players too

Sabres Now (10/3/17)

01:48 • October 3rd, 2017

Jake McCabe was back at it with the club yesterday, practicing for the first time since sustaining an upper-body injury in Buffalo's preseason game against Toronto on Sept. 22.

Not practicing? Zach Bogosian (day-to-day) and Justin Falk (who was placed on injured reserve later on).

Those changes meant that Buffalo practiced with seven defensemen and led to some new pairings. Nathan Beaulieu skated with Rasmus Ristolainen, McCabe was on the left of Victor Antipin and Marco Scandella practiced both with Matt Tennyson and Josh Gorges.

Phil Housley (10/3/17)

03:48 • October 3rd, 2017

Scandella did not play in any preseason games as he works his way back from off-season hip surgery, but there's reason for optimism when it comes to his availability Thursday night.

"Marco's been doing great," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We said it was going to be a process with him and his progress is going in a great direction. These last two practices were pretty intense, there was a lot of battle but he looked great out there so that's promising."

For more on practice as well as new additions to the second power-play unit, check out the Ice Level Practice Report.

We'll have more from practice later this morning.

The opening night roster is finalized

Yesterday afternoon, the Sabres sent forwards Sean Malone and Alexander Nylander to the Rochester Americans. Both were dealing with injuries that caused them to miss the entirety of training camp.

Evan Rodrigues and Falk will start the season on IR, putting the Sabres at 23 players (13 forwards, eight defensemen and two goaltenders).

Here were the lines and pairings (if you skipped reading the section containing Sabres Now) from practice:

9 Evander Kane - 15 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville
67 Benoit Pouliot - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 23 Sam Reinhart - 25 Seth Griffith
22 Johan Larsson / 26 Matt Moulson - 10 Jacob Josefson - 17 Jordan Nolan

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
19 Jake McCabe - 93 Victor Antipin
6 Marco Scandella - 5 Matt Tennyson / 4 Josh Gorges

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson

Party in the Plaza tomorrow

A Party in the Plaza presented by KeyBank will take place tomorrow night in Alumni Plaza from 5 to 7 p.m. Come celebrate the new season and the Eichel contract with friends.

The Party will be highlighted by a special live performance throughout the event by Rochester natives Joywave, whose single, "It's A Trip!," is currently No. 24 on the Billboard US Alternative Radio chart.

The Party will also feature the KeyBank "puck shoot" and NHL Network inflatable games and giveaways for fans, as well as a fan photo area. Productive Edge will also be onsite to provide fans with an immersive 360-degree virtual reality experience that will put their hockey skills to the test.

Sabres alumni and Sabretooth will be on hand to sign autographs and hand out giveaways during the event, which is free to the public.

Food samplings will be provided by Tim Hortons, Yancey's Fancy and Wegmans Sushi. Additionally, food and beverages will be available for purchase during the Party. All outdoor events are weather permitting.

Following the Party, all fans who attend the home opener will receive a Sabres T-shirt courtesy of KeyBank.

Sign up for Learn To Play today

Learn To Play 2016-17

01:58 • April 3rd, 2017

Learn to Play, which enhances the way youth hockey is offered by providing first-time participants from ages four to nine with free head-to-toe equipment, age-appropriate instruction and certified coaching led by NHL alumni in a fun and safe atmosphere is back for a second season. The program will be held at 10 local rinks this season with lessons taught by Sabres alumni and USA Hockey certified instructors.

Sabres alumnus Patrick Kaleta will continue implementing and managing the program. As a Buffalo native, Kaleta has worked with numerous local charity organizations throughout his career to help benefit families in Western New York.

"Year one for Learn To Play was a tremendous success in which we introduced the game of hockey to more than 500 youth players, and we are very excited for what year two has to offer," Kaleta said. "This year, we are expanding the program as far east as Rochester and as far south as Olean. The support from the NHL, NHLPA and USA Hockey has given us the tools to grow the game of hockey and an opportunity to create lifelong fans."

All Buffalo Sabres Learn to Play participants will be outfitted at Pure Hockey, the official hockey retail partner of the Buffalo Sabres and HarborCenter. Equipment kits will include a helmet, stick, equipment bag, jersey, shoulder pads, elbow pads, gloves, pants, shin pads, socks and skates.

Participants can register for the program and learn more about it by [clicking here](#).

Developed with the help of experts from USA Hockey and Hockey Canada, the NHL/NHLPA Learn to Play initiative aims to be the gold standard for youth hockey programs with the goal of inspiring more families to join the hockey community.