



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Niederreiter extends scoring streak in Wild win

Associated Press

By JONAH BRONSTEIN

Nov. 23, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund helped the Minnesota Wild end a two-game skid.

They each scored two goals to lead the Wild to a 5-4 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday night.

“We were sloppy for a long time and had the lead and gave them life again,” Niederreiter said. “It was always back and forth. At the end of the day, it was good that we closed them out but it definitely wasn’t as good as we wanted to play.”

Tyler Ennis also scored while Mikko Koivu and Ryan Suter each had two assists. Devan Dubnyk made 30 saves.

Niederreiter has scored in five straight games, the second-longest streak in franchise history.

“He goes to the net and he’s hungry,” Wild coach Bruce Boudreau said. “He’s not going to get a million beautiful goals but he’s going to get the greasy ones in front of the net and that’s what he does.”

Jordan Nolan scored twice for the Sabres. Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart also had goals. Robin Lehner made 17 saves after replacing Chad Johnson following the first period. Johnson stopped 10 shots.

Buffalo has lost seven in a row and had an extended closed-door meeting after the game.

“We just have to start holding guys accountable, start being honest with ourselves and our teammates,” said Nolan, the former L.A. King. “This team hasn’t been too successful in years and it needs to change. It’s going to be a long, long season and a few seasons to come if that’s the way it is.”

The Wild scored three goals in a 5:29 span in the first period and led the rest of the way.

Foligno fed his former Sabres teammate Ennis for the first goal nine minutes into the game. Granlund scored unassisted to put the Wild ahead with 7:32 remaining in the period.

Niederreiter deflected Mikko Koivu’s shot from the point to make it 3-1 on a power play two minutes later. It was the first power-play goal the Sabres have allowed at home this season.

After Nolan scored his first goal as a Sabre to make it 3-2 two minutes into the second, Niederreiter netted his second of the night to extend Minnesota’s lead midway through the period.

Granlund got his second goal on a power play with 4:04 left in the third to make it 5-2.

Reinhart scored late the second period for his 100th NHL point. Nolan scored his second on a wrist shot from the right circle to bring the Sabres within a goal with 6:05 remaining in the game.

Eichel gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead 6:55 into the game. Officials initially ruled that it was not a goal, but the decision was overturned after video review.

“Everyone’s got to look themselves in the mirror and pull up their sleeves and be better,” Sabres forward Jason Pominville said. “We’ve got to put this behind us and move forward because what’s behind us isn’t even close to being good enough.”

NOTES: Brian Rolston scored a goal in six straight games for the Wild from Jan. 21 to Feb. 5, 2008. ... This was the first meeting between the teams since the Wild traded D Marco Scandella and F Jason Pominville to Buffalo in exchange for F Tyler Ennis and F Marcus Foligno on June 30. ... Wild F Chris Stewart returned to the lineup after he was a healthy scratch for Monday’s 4-3 overtime loss to the New Jersey Devils. ... Dubnyk is 4-0-0 all-time vs. Buffalo.

UP NEXT

Wild: Host Colorado on Friday

Sabres: Host Edmonton on Friday night.

Pride becomes the motivating factor for Matt Moulson

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

November 23, 2017

This has been the most challenging stretch in Matt Moulson's professional hockey career.

The 34-year-old has been a regular in an NHL lineup since the 2009-10 season when he played all 82 games for the New York Islanders.

He played 81 games the past two seasons for the Buffalo Sabres.

But now, the forward has become the routine healthy scratch in the Sabres lineup.

Wednesday's game against Minnesota was his 10th game as a healthy scratch this season and fourth straight out of the lineup. He last played Nov. 14 against Pittsburgh where he had no shots, one penalty, and was a minus-1 in 8:57 of ice time. In his 12 games this season he has no points with eight shots on goal.

If the Buffalo Sabres collectively have first-class tickets on the struggle bus, Moulson is in the front row.

He's heard the chatter. Maybe the Sabres put him on waivers and send him to Rochester. Maybe the Sabres try to buy him out. Maybe they try to trade him. Maybe that five-year, \$25-million contract they gave him 2014 was a really bad idea.

Moulson tries to block out the noise, tries to focus on what's important, on what he can control. It's not an easy task, but it's essential if he wants to keep his head in the game and work his way back into the Sabres lineup.

"Yeah, I think it's hard to sometimes," Moulson said about ignoring the chatter. "But I think once you start worrying about that, then you've got a little more problems than just hockey. I think you're at home thinking about a lot of things. Obviously you want to do well. I think any athlete that's competitive wants to do well in a team environment and personally.

"Once you start listening to everything else, I think that comes back to just knowing yourself and what you do. I think a lot of people say things that don't know what I do on a daily basis as a person. I don't really let that bother me. I think what my family thinks of me is probably the most important."

Moulson's best offensive season came with the Islanders in 2011-12 when he scored 36 goals with 33 assists.

Last year he scored 11 of his 14 goals on the power play and recorded 18 of his 32 points on that unit.

But this season, Moulson hasn't had a chance to get any rhythm on the power play. Or any rhythm at all. In his 12 games he's averaging 1:24 of power play time per game. Overall, he's averaging 10:25 per game and just 14 shifts, ranking ahead of only Jordan Nolan, Nicholas Baptiste and Kyle Crisculo in average ice time.

"It's been tough," Moulson said. "I haven't played too many games in a row so it's tough to get confidence and consistency in your game. Obviously the team's struggling. I think for myself all I can really control is how hard I work. I think people that know me know I'm not a sulker. I'm going to come in and do everything I can to keep working which I think I've done a good job of.

"It's definitely challenging. It's hard at times. I think you have to find things mentally to motivate you. For me it's my pride and how hard I work on the ice and off the ice and what type of person I am as well."

Sabres Notebook: Veterans looking to establish accountability

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

November 23, 2017

The rink is not a fun place for the Buffalo Sabres these days. The atmosphere in KeyBank Center was grim Thursday morning as about half the Sabres took to the ice for a light, optional workout after a team meeting.

Four losses in a row and a seven-game winless streak will do that.

"It's obviously not very much fun to be at the rink right now and that's never a good feeling," Kyle Okposo said Thursday morning. "We just feel like we're letting a lot of people down and we just have to find a way to make some changes. I think as a group we have to come together as a team and just really buy in. Otherwise it's just going to be a miserable year."

After Wednesday night's 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Wild, the Sabres locker room was closed for about 15 minutes. Thursday morning the players had another prolonged meeting as the word "accountability" has become the buzzword.

"We've got to find a way to do our own jobs and push each other to be better basically," Ryan O'Reilly said. "We're not satisfied. This is nothing that we wanted. We have to get back. We have to start making each other look good."

"We have to be able to hold each other accountable and find ways to push each other," O'Reilly said. "What we're doing isn't working so we have to find a way to do better."

The notion of accountability, not only for oneself but in calling out teammates, has become a growing theme in the Sabres dressing room, mostly for the lack of it in the room. Jordan Nolan made the observation after Wednesday's loss.

Okposo picked up the theme Thursday. When asked if the way players hold teammates accountable has changed since he entered the league in 2008, he considered the question then responded. "Yes. I think it has."

"When I first came in the league I just kind of stuck to myself and tried to follow the veteran guys," Okposo said. "If I did something that was wrong or not the right way, you had Bill Guerin or Doug Weight or Brendan Witt saying, 'Hey kid, do this. You can't do that. You can't do that here. You can't do that in this league.' And kinda seems like it's gotten away from that a little bit and maybe that's my fault. You know in the last year before I got hurt I tried to get some accountability in the locker room and we need more of it."

When the Buffalo Sabres play the Edmonton Oilers, the storyline usually turns toward Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel. The two forwards who went No. 1 and No. 2 overall in the 2015 NHL Draft will forever have their hockey careers intertwined, much to their current chagrin.

But when the Sabres and Oilers meet this time, a 7 p.m. Friday night tilt in KeyBank Center, there are some other considerations.

Like which team will be desperate enough to earn the win.

While the Sabres are reeling with four straight losses, a winless skid of 0-5-2, and 30th place in the NHL standings, the Oilers aren't far ahead. In fact, they're just four points ahead, sitting in 29th place with eight wins in 22 games.

Edmonton stopped the bleeding Wednesday night with a 6-2 win against the Red Wings in Detroit. That came after an embarrassing 8-3 loss to the Blues in St. Louis where for all intents and purposes the Oilers just plain quit playing. That loss capped a three-game losing streak in which the Oilers give up 18 goals.

There was redemption in Detroit for the Oilers, but no one was celebrating just yet.

"We needed this game," said Edmonton's Mark Letestu after Wednesday's game in Detroit. "There was a desperation and urgency that we're used to, but we've put ourselves in this position and everybody responded appropriately. We got it done five-on-five. Everybody came here with something to prove, a chip on their shoulder, and it showed up.

"I guess we'll answer the question about whether we can do it for more than one night next game," Letestu said. "There's been a lot of lip service that this is the one that change things, but we have to show up Friday in Buffalo."

For the record, McDavid leads the Oilers in scoring with 28 points (10 goals, 18 assists) in 22 games. He's averaging 1.27 points per game in 21:35 of ice time per game.

Eichel is second on the Sabres in scoring with 18 points (six goals, 12 assists) in 22 games. That's a 0.82 point-per-game pace in 20:41 of ice time.

Sabres' season feels over by Thanksgiving after another loss

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

November 22, 2017

Enjoy your Thanksgiving, Buffalo Sabres fans.

Enjoy your Black Friday shopping.

Enjoy your long weekend if you're not working.

Enjoy whatever you can because there's certainly no enjoying a victory.

You probably won't be enjoying playoff hockey, either, but that's nothing new.

The Sabres' demoralizing start continued Wednesday with a 5-4 loss to Minnesota. Buffalo fell to 5-13-4 this season, including 0-5-2 in the last seven games. The dwindling crowds in KeyBank Center have seen the team put up a 2-7-1 record at home.

"Every one just gets worse and worse and worse," center Ryan O'Reilly said. "It's tough looking at the standings right now. It doesn't feel good. It's discouraging."

It's hard to imagine the season being over before the holiday turkey is carved, but the Sabres are digging that type of hole. They have just 14 points through 22 games. It takes about 95 points to make the playoffs. The Sabres have 60 games left, so they would need a 40-20 record just to get to 94 points.

It's possible, of course, but a seventh straight year without the postseason seems more probable.

"There's no hiding from the standings," defenseman Marco Scandella said. "You have to look at it. It's reality. I do look at it every day, and it's not pretty right now."

The Sabres held a closed-door meeting after the loss, which featured deficits of 3-1 and 5-2. Most (if not all) of the players were still in their stalls when the door opened, and the room was a mix of anger and gloom.

"It's about us in this room," Scandella said. "We've got to figure it out. We're going to need more pride in this locker room."

"The only way to get out of this is if we all work together and find a way to show up to the rink and give 100 percent effort every single night."

That's clearly not happening.

"They've got to make a decision internally of what's playing the right way," coach Phil Housley said. "As a coaching staff, we're going to fight through it. I just think that everybody's got to buy in to the message because obviously when you see that, you can see the result out there."

Mike Harrington: Okposo knows Sabres are desperate for return on their investment

While the Sabres' offense had a successful night – especially after scoring just one goal in seven of the previous 12 games – subpar goaltending, team defense, puck management and penalty killing contributed to a seventh straight setback.

Sabres goaltender Chad Johnson had a rough start. He allowed three goals on 13 shots in the first period, including getting fooled on a no-look backhand by former teammate Tyler Ennis. Robin Lehner replaced Johnson after 20 minutes.

"I can't argue it," Johnson said. "Three goals in the first period. With how things are going, it's obviously not good enough. We're not in a situation where we can let in three goals in a game, let alone a period. Disappointed I got pulled, but not surprised."

"I obviously need to be a lot better."

The Wraparound: Wild 5, Sabres 4

The Sabres' penalty killers were a perfect 26 for 26 at home entering the night, but Minnesota went 2 for 3. On another goal, Johan Larsson turned the puck over. On others, the Sabres simply didn't cover their man or for each other.

The next game is Friday against Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers. They have plenty of problems with an 8-12-2 record, but they earned a 6-2 victory in Detroit on Wednesday.

The Sabres' last win was Nov. 7.

"We're chasing games," said Housley, whose team scored late in the second and third periods to make it close. "I really liked the fight that we had till the end, but when you chase games it's a losing recipe.

"I don't feel that everybody is on the same page."

Mike Harrington: Okposo knows Sabres are desperate for return on their investment

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

November 22, 2017

You hate that it comes down to money. Especially when there was a time a few months ago where hockey was downright irrelevant as we thought of Kyle Okposo.

But the veteran winger got through his health scare that landed him in a neuro ICU unit. He was well enough to play summer league hockey back in Minnesota and was good to go when Sabres training camp opened.

Then the season started. An October illness sapped his strength. A prolonged goal drought has chipped away at his confidence.

A quarter of the season is gone. Okposo has two goals. Two.

This is a guy who has seven seasons of 18 or more. Three seasons of 22 or more. He had 19 in 65 games for the Sabres last year, a 24-goal pace for a whole season.

He's the guy the Sabres signed to the biggest free agent contract in their history in the summer of 2016. Okposo got seven years and \$42 million. With five years left on the deal, that \$6 million cap hit sure looks like an albatross these days.

The Sabres have too many bad contracts as it is. This can't be another one. Particularly since it likely means it will be exceedingly difficult to keep Evander Kane, who has simply been by far the best player on the team this season.

Okposo has been better of late, with 14 shots on goal in the five games entering Wednesday's matchup with Minnesota. But the production he's paid for has yet to appear. He's at nine points through 20 games, a pace that leaves him far below his average of 57 points the last four seasons.

"It is what it is. The games are gone and you're not going to get them back," Okposo said before Wednesday's contest. "I obviously would like to be contributing more offensively and have those numbers but I don't. I just have to keep going, keep trying to make things happen offensively and be better defensively. I still think I have another gear, more to give and you can't look at the past. Just move forward."

Okposo has been more active of late. He had four shots on goal in Monday's 3-2 loss to Columbus and just failed to connect on a loose puck in the crease in the final minute with the Sabres pressing for a tying goal after being in a 3-0 hole with 11 minutes left.

"The chances the last two games, those have to go into the net," he said. "I take a lot of pride in scoring goals and putting up numbers. It's definitely a tough pill to swallow but I've been through a lot worse in my career where you go through 5-6 games with no chances whatsoever and that's when you really start to wonder. I'm not looking to reinvent the wheel. I'm looking to just dig a little bit deeper, work a little bit harder."

The biggest question, of course, is Okposo's health. Obviously, he wouldn't be on the ice at all if there were any issues still lingering from the spring, when he had a bad reaction to medication while being treated for a concussion.

But if Okposo needed any official confirmation there's no problems, he got it Nov. 14 in Pittsburgh after taking a thunderous hit from 230-pound enforcer Ryan Reaves.

"It left me thinking a lot the next few days," Okposo admitted. "I'm thinking, 'Am I OK? What's going on? Do I feel this? Oh, I feel this. Is that OK?' It kind of plays in your head a little bit but it all turned out fine. So I have no concerns."

"That was a pretty heavy hit to the head," said coach Phil Housley. "I look back to training camp at how fast he looked and how good he was playing. Then he got sick and it affected him, the production went down and his confidence went down. That hit was a really good telling tale that he's back."

Okposo admits he's a huge self-evaluator. He had no goals in the first 10 games of the season so he was going to be behind for the duration, given that poor start. But he doesn't sit and wallow in his situation. His wife, Danielle, is a chief confidante. So is Darryl Belfry, a Canadian who is one of the game's renowned mental and physical skills coaches and runs summer camps for NHL players in Naples, Fla.

"You just have to keep going and trust your game. If you don't, it will drive you nuts," Okposo said. "I trust myself. When I'm not going well, I have a lot of tools I use to get out of it, a lot of people I talk to, people who have watched me play every single game for many years."

"They know what to look for in my game. I lean on those things heavily. I don't sit here and say, 'It will turn'. I actively try to do things that I know are going to work and that I believe in."

There are times you watch Okposo and he plays a slow, plodding game. Other times he gets his feet moving and can drive the net to create opportunity. That simply hasn't happened enough this year.

"When he works and makes his mind up that he's going to make a difference, it's really evident," Housley said. "I can see that he's getting the chances. He's a guy that really evaluates himself and puts a lot of burden on himself because it's about production."

One problem right now for Okposo is that he was dropped out of the top six in the Sabres' forward group Wednesday, moving to a line with Jordan Nolan and Jacob Josefson, not the way you'd draw up getting your ice-cold \$42 million free agent scoring again.

Okposo had one golden chance Wednesday but was stopped on the doorstep by Devan Dubnyk with 30 seconds left and the Sabres pressing for the tie in their 5-4 defeat. Bent over at the waist in a portrait of frustration, he was the last Sabre off the ice after their seventh straight loss.

Okposo had been a regular with Benoit Pouliot and Ryan O'Reilly but it simply wasn't working so the Sabres continue to make moves with their forwards to try to snap their funk.

"That's the definition of insanity, right? You can't do the same thing," he said. "We're going to keep trying to find different combinations, try to do something new."

Sabres Notebook: Jordan Nolan speaks on the need for accountability

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

November 22, 2017

For only the second time in his seven-year NHL career, Jordan Nolan scored twice in one game.

It was about getting the puck on the net, about playing a simple game, about taking his opportunity and allowing good things to happen.

But good things aren't happening with regularity for the Buffalo Sabres. And the reason, in Nolan's eyes, is a lack of accountability.

"I think we've got to start holding guys accountable. Start being honest with ourselves and our teammates," Nolan said after the Sabres 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Wild in KeyBank Center Wednesday. "When we're turning pucks over and not working hard, it kinda (gets) swept under the rug and we've got to, if someone does turn it over, if they don't chip it in at the red line or blue line, we've got to say something.

"This team hasn't been too successful and it needs to change or it's going to be a long season and a few seasons to come if that's the way it is. But we've got to turn the page here and start holding each other accountable I think."

Nolan said that was the culture in Los Angeles, where he played with the Kings for six seasons winning two Stanley Cups.

"If I made a mistake in my fifth year, a higher guy was telling me, 'you've got to work harder. You've got to chip that puck in.'" Nolan said. "I remember Jeff Carter telling me a few times when I was younger that I need to work harder or my shifts are too long. And that's just little things. That's what I learned coming into the league and I think we're missing a little bit of that in this room. But guys are young and I think they need to be told."

Nolan got his first goal as a Sabre at 2:01 of the second period, taking a pass from Kyle Okposo and firing it on net. He scored again with 6:05 left in the game, taking a pass from Nathan Beaulieu and again just threw it on net.

His only other two-goal game came on Dec. 2, 2016.

"I mean I try to prepare the same way every day," Nolan said. "I try to play hard. I try to be positive around here and keep guys honest. I just try to do that every day and I just happened to get two goals today."

After making it through the summer and training camp injury-free and excited about the prospect of a more active role for defensemen, it seemed as if the stars might have finally aligned for Zach Bogosian in Buffalo.

But then came the injury. In the last period of the last preseason game.

Officially listed as a lower body injury, but believed to be a groin issue, Bogosian was sidelined. Again. The 27-year-old defenseman has had his share of injury trouble. This one landed him on injured reserve to start the season and there he's been ever since. Wednesday marked the 22nd game of the season for the Sabres and it was the 22nd game that Bogosian missed.

The good news came Wednesday morning when Bogosian skated for the first time with his teammates in KeyBank Center. A small group of Buffalo Sabres took an optional morning skate before hosting the Minnesota Wild. That included Bogosian, for the first time in more than a month, along with fellow injured defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who missed his ninth game with an upper body injury.

"Obviously would have liked to come back quicker but you know I re-aggravated it a little bit trying to come back," Bogosian said in his first meeting with the media since training camp. "That's what happened. So just try to be smart about it the second time around. It seems like I've turned the corner and just trying to now get back into practice with the team and then eventually into a game."

Bogosian said the injury occurred in the third period of the Sabres preseason finale on Sept. 29, a 3-1 loss to the New York Rangers in KeyBank Center.

"It was in the last preseason game," Bogosian said. "I just felt a tweak and it was in the third period, which kinda stinks. You know I get through training camp and preseason feeling really good, liking where my game's going and then the last period of the last preseason game it happens."

Not his first trip on the injured reserve meant Bogosian had experience with how to mentally deal with the prolonged injury. He was determined to stay positive. But how does one do that?

"Two things. One, you don't listen to the outside noise and two you just don't get frustrated," Bogosian said. "I think me getting frustrated is not going to help me. It's not going to help my teammates. It's not going to help the team. I'm a pretty positive guy. I try to be as upbeat as possible. There's a lot worse things in life that people are going through. I'm dealing with an injury. That's how I thought about it. So I just tried to stay positive and not listen to the outside noise and go about my business."

There's no timetable for Bogosian's return. He still needs to get into a full practice to see how his body responds to five-on-five drills and contact. He needs to get his timing back with passing and reacquaint himself with an opposition rush heading his way.

But the Sabres are ready to get Bogosian and Ristolainen back in the lineup as soon as possible.

"I think if they're ready, they're ready," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We have no time to wait, obviously. We haven't had our full six, so to speak, since Day 1. The great thing is these guys are getting close. We want to be smart about it, too, because we don't want to have any negative setback."

Ristolainen, who said his upper body injury occurred from a hit and a shot late in the third period of Buffalo's 5-4 win in Arizona on Nov. 2, feels ready to go.

"I told everyone I'm ready. It's up to them when I will be back," Ristolainen said. "It's been real hard. You can't help your teammates and you see we've had some tough games and tough weeks there. So obviously you would like to help and hopefully I can be back soon and help the team."

The Sabres unveiled the jerseys they will wear for the 2018 Winter Classic on Jan. 1 when they play the New York Rangers at Citi Field, the home of the New York Mets.

"It's unreal. It's great," said forward Jason Pominville, who was part of the original Winter Classic with the Sabres 10 years ago. "They did a good job. I like the look. I like the old-school look of it, too. Even the shells on the pants and the gloves look pretty neat. I'm sure that's going to be a pretty popular jersey around here."

The jersey is primarily white with blue and gold accents. The letters "NY" have been added as a nod to the intrastate matchup with the Rangers.

Our #WinterClassic jersey 🍁🍁 pic.twitter.com/eoAw5JQ9Po

— Buffalo Sabres (@BuffaloSabres) November 22, 2017

THE THOROUGHLY MODERN MARRIAGE OF PHIL AND KARIN HOUSLEY

After 35 years, the Minnesota state senator and the Buffalo Sabres head coach still share a goal-driven lifestyle.

By Tim O'Shei
The Buffalo News
November 23, 2017

LAKELAND, Minn. – The words above the fireplace appear to be a Bible verse: VELIS ET REMIS 12:1.

They are not. The words are Latin, the numbers represent a date, and though the message is not drawn from the Bible, it may as well be. In the life of Karin and Phil Housley, velis et remis has been a biblical philosophy. It's what drove them to stay together 35 years ago, when Phil was a teenager drafted by the Buffalo Sabres. That philosophy defines his Hall of Fame hockey career, his resilience as a coach even as his Sabres struggle through a disappointing season, and it defines Karin's life since her husband's playing days ended.

Karin Housley, standing in the living room of their three-story stone home on the banks of the St. Croix River, pointed to the words. "That is Latin for 'full speed ahead,'" she said, adding that translated literally, velis et remis means "sails and oars" – as in letting the wind catch your sail, and churning your oars in the water as you move full speed onward.

Housley motioned to the 12:1. "I feel bad for the next person moving in," she said, with a pitter-patter laugh she uses often. Those digits are actually a date: December 2001. That's when this home, which looks like a scaled-down castle from the street and a beachside resort from the river, was built. Back then, Phil was winding down his playing career as Karin moved back to Minnesota with their four children. He retired in January 2004 and joined them full time.

"We finally felt like we got back here to Minnesota," Karin said, "and it was going to be full speed ahead with the rest of our lives."

ADVERTISEMENT

It was. While Phil settled into an at-home role as dad, making breakfast for their youngest daughter every morning and coaching high school hockey in the afternoon and evening, Karin sped into the career she had long wanted. She built a successful real estate business, became a media personality and, later, a Republican state senator whose name has been floated as a future governor of Minnesota.

But Phil was still feeling that velis et remis too. After coaching high school for nine years at their hometown Stillwater High School, he leapt back into the National Hockey League. Today he is the Sabres' head coach, but there was an in-between step. In 2013, Phil became an assistant coach with the Nashville Predators. He was based in the south, jetting the country, rarely home as he elevated his coaching career.

Karin, meanwhile, was balancing her real-estate business with her budding political career, which started a few months before the Predators hired her husband. (She took office in the Minnesota State Senate in January 2013; Phil was hired that May.)

He was back in the NHL. She was on the political hot track. Velis et remis, indeed.

It almost tore them apart.

...

The Housleys at home on the banks of the St. Croix River in Lakeland, Minn. (Angela Jimenez/Special to The News)

I first met Karin Housley, who is 53, on a sticky July day in Buffalo. Less than a month earlier, Phil, who is also 53, had been hired by the Sabres to replace the fired Dan Bylsma. While Phil ran the Sabres' prospects camp for young players, Karin spent time getting their living situation settled. They were in the midst of buying a condo on the Buffalo waterfront and living out of a hotel room in the Marriott HarborCenter, adjacent to the KeyBank Center.

Karin and I met at Panorama on Seven, the seventh-floor restaurant inside her hotel. She was wearing a brightly patterned dress and a set of long necklaces. The dress fit her personality: Fun, but not obnoxious. Personable, but not obtrusive. Energetic, but not frenetic.

"I think half the world has ADD," she said, including herself in that pronouncement as we hopscotched through a conversation that spanned her work in the Minnesota Senate to her hope to become involved in the Western New York community. She mentioned a lunch with Kim Pegula in which the Sabres co-owner told her "Let's work together."

"She's such a happy person – have you noticed that?" Pegula told me in a separate conversation. "She's such a happy person, win or lose... She has a crazy schedule, and she makes the time, and she's so organized and thoughtful about everything, and she's always happy when she's doing it."

If Housley positions herself as a visible member of the Buffalo community, it won't be an unfamiliar position. She is recognizable already in her Minnesota Senate district and around the state Capitol. In her five years as a legislator, she has satiated her hyperactive attention with an array of projects, from turning a private plot on the St. Croix into a public park to changing a law regarding the ownership of three-wheeled motorcycles for the benefit of a single business owner.

"This is the greatest career for anybody with ADD, because you cannot get bored," said Housley, who, as a member of the Republican majority, chairs the Senate's committee on Aging and Long-Term Care Policy. This legislative area is personal to her; her father, to whom she was very close, died two years ago, and her mother has Alzheimer's disease. A family member financially exploited nearly \$90,000 from her parents when they both were still alive, and was convicted and jailed. Housley won't go into details, but acknowledged that it drives much of her work as a legislator.

Then there's the less-serious stuff: When the singer Prince, a Minnesotan, died in 2016, she introduced a bill to make purple the official state color. It failed – some of her Republican colleagues considered it "frivolous," she later said – but she wore purple to the Senate floor every day for weeks.

And she may not be done with the idea yet. Telling Housley that something isn't possible seems to be the best way to guarantee she'll do it.

One of Karin Housley's Minnesota state senator roles is to lead the Senate Aging and Long-Term Care Policy Committee. Here she meets in her Senate office in St. Paul with people representing consumers and providers. (Angela Jimenez/Special to The News)

In the 1990s, for example, the Housleys' financial adviser angered her by talking down to her. She responded by challenging him. She started learning about investments on her own, then opened an investing club for women. After a few years of doing that, she pitched a book to a New York publisher and landed a contract. In 2001, Crown Business released a 278-page investing guide for women called "Chicks Laying Nest Eggs: How 10 Skirts Beat the Pants Off Wall Street ... and How You Can, Too!"

During our meeting, I pulled out a copy of "Chicks Laying Nest Eggs." I suspected Karin hadn't seen one in a while, and I was right. She laughed that rat-a-tat laugh, joked about how she thought her political opponents might scour it for opposition research, but then turned serious.

"My first stepping into the world of bias was right with that," she said, meaning the book. "People would say things like I got it handed to me on a silver platter, (or) the only reason they published it was because I was Phil Housley's wife ... and then it continued."

She said the same thing happened when she started her business, Karin Housley Real Estate, in the early 2000s, and when she decided to run for office. Housley lost her first race in 2010, but ran again and won in 2012, and has held her seat since.

"You have to fight that much harder, and not in a whiny or combatant way," she said. "You just have to be that much smarter, that much more organized, on your toes, always, and you have to dress that much more professionally. A lot more thought has to go into everything you do."

...

"Karin is almost a female version of Forrest Gump," says Frits Hoffman, an East Aurora-based businessman who has been friends with the Housley since the mid-'80s. Hoffman has several stories of Karin injecting adventure into everyday life.

Among his favorites: A few years ago, the Housleys and the Hoffmans spent a weekend at an IndyCar race hosted by Mario Andretti. Karin made a few phone calls, and soon, the two couples were a part of Andretti's entourage for the weekend.

"It's amazing," Hoffman said, "and it's fun getting caught up in it with her."

At home in Minnesota (and Buffalo) with Karin and Phil Housley

When she started that investment club for women, Housley was also working on her master's degree. (She never finished.) Later, when she called her father to tell him she was writing a book, he responded, "Another one of your thousand ideas."

"One of them is going to hit, Dad," Housley said. "One of them is going to hit."

Years later, when she called her father to say she was running for Senate, he replied, "Well, I guess you can't be a senator if you don't try."

So she tried. And when she lost the first race in 2010 by 606 votes, she tried again two years later – and won by 631 votes.

"Boredom is death to me, and I think to Phil too," Karin said, "because you'll see he has a slight bit of ADD also. On a quieter level."

Both Housleys are intensely motivated – "We both really, really like to work hard," Karin said – but their drive plays out in different ways. Phil has dedicated his life to a single professional pursuit: hockey. Karin keeps setting new goals. "He was fortunate to know what his was very young and to hone it to genius level," she said, "where I just kept seeing shinier objects and going after that."

For a while, that next shiny object seemed to be running for governor of Minnesota in 2018. The current governor, Democrat Mark Dayton, is nearing the end of his two-term limit, and Housley was lining herself up to run. But then Phil was hired by the Sabres "right when things were taking off for me in Minnesota," Karin said.

There's no practical reason she couldn't be governor while he is an NHL coach. In fact, Karin added, Phil told her, "Go ahead and do it."

But she is reluctant. Until the state Senate goes into session in February, she is splitting her time between Buffalo and Minnesota. When the Sabres are in town, she is here with Phil; when the team is on the road, she is in Minnesota.

Karin Housley and her daughter Reide take in the Party in the Plaza on Oct. 5 before the Sabres' 2017 home opener against the Montreal Canadiens in KeyBank Center. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

If she were Gov. Housley, she couldn't do that. Nor could she do it even if she were running for governor. Plus, she said, "I really want to be a big part of this community and the team." She is open to running for the less-demanding role of lieutenant governor. (She did that in 2014, and lost in the primary.) For now, a full-fledged gubernatorial run is on hold – but not ruled out.

"That's what you do when you're married," she said.

If Housley does decide to run for higher office, the Sabres ownership will back her decision.

"That would be great," said Kim Pegula, noting that she wants to be careful not to "promote" Housley in a political sense, but is supportive of her aspirations.

"Anytime we have great success from anyone associated with Buffalo in any way is, I think, just another feather in Buffalo and Western New York's cap," Pegula continued. "For her to kind of move up the political ladder and to have even bigger aspirations than what she's already achieved now would be great. I think it would just be a huge boost for our area, as well as her constituents in Minnesota. But I would be really proud of her and would encourage her decision, and we would support it as ownership, as an organization, and give them the flexibility or support or whatever it is that she would need for her to accomplish that."

•••

The Housleys started dating in seventh grade.

“One date,” said Phil.

“To a dance,” Karin added.

“Did it go well?” I asked. We are in the Housleys’ living room – the velis et remis room – in Minnesota. It’s a cozy space bathed in natural lighting. Karin, in a black-and-white sundress, is sitting on a patterned upholstered chair. Phil, in a golf shirt and shorts, is leaning forward on the couch. His reddish hair still has the color of his youth, and right now, my question seems to have sent him back to those awkward junior high school dance days.

Phil, smiling through pursed lips, shook his head decidedly no.

“No,” Karin said. “No, it didn’t. I thought he ended up kissing somebody else, but he didn’t. But I thought he did, and then –”

“It was seventh grade!” Phil cut in. They burst out laughing. “You know? It was just one of those things.”

Karin and Phil stayed in the same crowd, though, and started dating again during their senior year of high school. “She was good at English,” Phil said. He was softly smirking; she was laughing.

“That’s sooo bad,” Karin said, as Phil began explaining: It’s his senior year of high school, and he is away at the World Championships, playing for Team USA. He had a big paper to write for his advanced composition class on the legalization of marijuana, but set it aside while he was away. When he got back to Stillwater, he asked the teacher for an extension.

“No, you have three days,” she told him.

“So I asked her” – he was looking at Karin now – “and she helped me with my paper and I got an A-minus.” (“Helped” is a euphemism, I later learned. Karin actually wrote the report for him – and got a B for her paper on how computers would one day be in every household.)

“From right then, I guess I just liked the company,” Phil said, with a hint of tenderness.

“I thought he was funny, and he was so cute,” Karin said. “So cute. I could never really pinpoint what it was, but you were funny.”

Phil is looking slightly uncomfortable. “That’s a little too mushy for me right now,” he said. “Not you,” he added, nodding to Karin. He looked at me. “The question.”

But there is mushy sweetness to their story. Phil was drafted out of high school by the Sabres in 1982. He moved to Buffalo, impressed in training camp, and made the team. Phil was only 18, the youngest guy on the team, still a kid. A kid who missed his girlfriend back home. “We kept talking on the phone for hours, and wrote letters, and finally she came out to live with me,” he said. “Which was not ...”

Karin piped in: “Our families were not happy.”

“Especially her mom and dad,” Phil said.

“I didn’t have my degree yet,” Karin said, recalling her parents’ concerns. “And I needed to be married.” She lets out a small, chirpy laugh.

This 1982-83 hockey card shows the Phil Housley many Sabres’ fans remember: a drafted-fresh-out-of-high-school rookie who would help lead the team to the second round of the NHL playoffs in his first season. (Angela Jimenez/Special to The News)

When Karin moved to Buffalo in January of 1983, her parents told her she was on her own. They didn’t give her a ride to the airport. They didn’t come to visit. Karin and Phil had good times in Buffalo in those days.

“We were a little bit of rebels,” Phil said.

“We were just fun,” Karin added.

They started setting up their lives, too. Phil became a steady, reliable and quietly impressive player: rarely flashy, but so good and consistent every year that, by the end of his career, the sum total of his success ranked him among the all-time greats. Karin, meanwhile, enrolled at Erie Community College, and later the University at Buffalo. She paid her way by waitressing and used to babysit for Phil's older teammate Bill Hajt and his wife, Jean. The Hajts had a computer and printer; Karin would come over to write papers and watch the Hajts' four kids. (Their son, Chris, is now Phil's assistant coach on the Sabres.)

"Karin was at our house many times," Bill Hajt recalled. "We were one of the first families to have a computer, and she spent a lot of time on the computer, and then she'd come over and babysit the kids. She was always very respectful."

Phil, too, was respectful and – even as one of the best players on the team – deferential, Hajt added.

"Both knew their place," he said, "yet both were very mature."

The Housleys married in 1985. Even before earning her communications degree from UB, Karin went to work as an entry-level producer for WGRZ and WKBW, juggling a nascent media career with motherhood. (The Housleys' first two children – daughters Taylor, who is now 30, and Reide, 27 – were born in Buffalo.) That ended in 1990, when Phil was traded to the Winnipeg Jets.

Phil and Karin Housley on their wedding day.

"I had big dreams of being big in the media, and then he got traded to Winnipeg," Karin said. "We had to really look at what was I doing with my career and how long was his career going to last. Did I just want to give all of that up and be a stay-at-home mom and raise kids?"

The Housleys made something of a compact: She would go "all in as a full-time hockey wife/mom," but as soon as Phil retired, it would be her turn to have a career. For the next decade, Karin and the couple's eldest three kids – Taylor, Reide, and Wilson, who is 26 – followed Phil around the continent. (Their fourth child, Avery, was born in 1997.) He played in eight NHL markets (Buffalo, Winnipeg, St. Louis, Calgary, New Jersey, Washington, Chicago, Toronto) and Karin and the family lived in most of those places.

"That was his 21 years," Karin said, "and then I got the next 10."

During that decade – approximately 2003 to 2013 – the Housley household had a different look. Every morning, Phil made breakfast for Avery and drove her to school — simple dad tasks that he could never do during his playing days. In the afternoon and evening, he coached the boys hockey team at nearby Stillwater High School. Within the community, that coaching job was a big deal; high school hockey in Minnesota is akin to high school football in Texas. But altogether, he was living a normal, routine, low-key life.

Karin, on the other hand, was in and out at all hours, leaving on short notice for real-estate calls, hosting a radio show, writing a newspaper column, and eventually becoming involved in politics.

"There was a little competition, I guess," Phil said.

"But not like outright competition," Karin added.

"We pushed each other," Phil clarified.

They cheered each other on, too. Phil and the kids joined Karin for parades and door-knocking during her Senate campaign, and she was there for him as he coached at Stillwater (their son Wilson was on the team) and in the USA Hockey program.

In 2013, Phil coached the USA to a gold medal in the World Junior Championship and was an assistant on the bronze-winning U.S. national team. His coaching credits, combined with long NHL career, led to three NHL job offers. He accepted the position in Nashville and, after a decade at home, left.

"You always have goals, whether she wants to build a real estate company or become a senator, or for me it was having a new challenge and coaching in the best league in the world," Phil said. "When you peel away the layers, there are things you want to do."

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The family dynamic, by then, was starkly different than during his playing career. Three of the four Housley kids were grown, and Karin had both her real estate business and her Senate seat. But Avery Housley was 15 at the time, still in high school, and had grown up with her dad around.

“Avery had me here all that time, getting up with her, so that was an adjustment,” Phil said. Avery was excited for him to take the job, he added, “but I don’t think she realized – or we didn’t realize – how time away was going to affect us. That was tough.”

Karin, now, was juggling two cities and two sets of family responsibilities – one in Nashville with her husband, and the rest of her life in Minnesota, with her still-young daughter. With her dad gone all school year, and her mom often in Nashville, Avery had to become a highly independent teenager and often stayed with her sister Taylor, who is 10 years older.

“It wasn’t really hard for me,” Avery said by phone from North Dakota, where she is a sophomore in college. “I knew my parents needed to be together. They need time together. They’re in love.”

But even together in Nashville, Karin and Phil weren’t connecting. He was focused on coaching, and would come home at night, lean back in a reclining chair, gaze at the television or fall asleep. He was tired.

Karin, too, was absorbed in her careers, and the possibilities of what she could do as a senator, or beyond. While Phil chilled in his recliner, she sat on a couch. They may have been separated by feet, but emotionally, the couple was still several states apart.

“What the hell are we doing?” Karin remembered thinking to herself. The Housleys were self-aware enough to realize a couple of truths: First, they were disconnected with each other emotionally. “It was just checking in,” Phil said. “It wasn’t the deep conversations you used to have as a couple.”

Second, they were startlingly OK with that. They weren’t miserable individually. They weren’t unhappy with each other. Karin and Phil were simply co-existing.

“We had long, serious conversations,” Karin recalled, “like, ‘How are we going to do this?’ And, ‘How can we make it work?’ Or, ‘Do we just separate and go our separate ways and (have) independent lives? What do we want for us and our family?’”

They decided to make their marriage work again, but as Karin pointed out, they also realized “that’s going to take work and it’s practicing a new mindset.” One of the key moves came via a bit of shopping on Karin’s part. One day in Nashville, she told Phil, “You can’t be in that recliner.”

He wondered why. She explained: “I know you’re tired. I just need your knees next to my knees. We just need to be touching, you know? You can sleep, and we don’t have to talk, but we just have to be touching.”

Karin had a replacement in mind: She had found a tan-colored electric couch that reclines. “He has his side and I have my side,” Karin said. “He could recline and watch his Fox News or his movies or whatever, and I could just be next to him. We didn’t have to talk. Just being next to each other and having our legs touching, you know, it was just quiet comfort. That was the beginning.”

This may look like Karin and Phil Housley relaxing on the couch, but it’s also a picture of a married couple showing off a piece of furniture that they say strengthened their marriage. (Sharon Cantillon/Buffalo News)

Phil smiled as his wife told the story of their couch. “That was a great move,” he said.

They started talking more regularly and deeply. Instead of just checking in by text, they made sure to connect by phone a couple of times a day. They talk about more than their careers; they discuss issues, the kids, the future. If they have something tough to talk about, they bring it out – often with the preface, “I have something on my mind” – rather than stew on it.

The solution wasn't perfect. More togetherness for Karin and Phil also meant more time separate from Avery, who was finishing high school.

"I went down more the next two years just so we could spend real, quality time," Karin said, speaking with an uncharacteristic softness. "So Avery was the one that kind of suffered."

Phil, whom Avery says "is like my best friend," interjected. His voice was louder than Karin's.

"She had the best of it," he said.

Phil is talking about Avery, their one child who had the benefit of having both parents full-time at home for most of her childhood. He was, and is, very close with his youngest daughter.

He continued: "And then – for those nine years, it was great."

Avery, speaking separately from her parents, said, "I've told them, 'You don't have any reason to feel bad. I was doing just fine. You guys left me with a lot of responsibility, and I did pretty well, I think.'"

Last summer, Avery lived in Kentucky, where she earned about \$12,000 selling educational books door to door. At times she was frustrated and homesick, but when she called her parents, they encouraged her to stick it out. It was difficult, because in their conversations, Phil would talk to Karin about how much he missed Avery – especially when he got word that she might be on the road again next summer.

"She is not going to Kentucky next summer," Karin recalled Phil lamenting. "I miss my Pumpkin Pie!"

To which Karin reminded her husband, "Well, she's her own person, too."

When they are together, the Housleys often pull out a yellow pad and write their plans and goals. The previous evening, they were sitting on their dock that juts into the St. Croix, waving at boats passing by and scrawling plans for the next few months on a yellow pad.

They wanted to find a time to get the entire family to Buffalo. That's a challenge: Taylor and her husband have a toddler, Louis, and an infant, Archer, who was born in October. Reide, their second daughter, splits her time between Florida and Minnesota. Their son Wilson is a senior at Arizona State University, and Avery is at school in North Dakota. All told, Thanksgiving seemed like a natural time to fly everyone to Buffalo – and so it went on the notepad.

Karin and Phil Housley show their grandson Louis Pass, 2, Aiple Park in Stillwater, Minn. The park is a piece of privately owned land on the banks of the St. Croix River that, with Karin's Senate support, became a public park with city, state and county funding. (Angela Jimenez/Special to The News)

Karin and Phil talk, too, about the more distant future. She would still like to run for governor, but given the likelihood that the next one will serve two terms, she will probably wait eight years. Phil would like to coach for at least 10 years, and it's unlikely that they will need this large home anymore. The Housleys spent all summer readying it for sale, but have since considered holding onto it as a place where their family can converge. Or maybe they'll just take everyone on a two-week cruise every summer. They have time to decide on that.

For now, it makes for substantive, real, true husband-wife dialogue.

"I have to say, we have our best conversations now that we've ever had, and it's not even if she's here or we're together," Phil said. "We found that way to communicate."

They credit the couch, which at the time, was still at their condo in Nashville, as being the catalyst.

"We love that couch," Karin said. "That couch is coming with" the Housleys to Buffalo.

A few days later, Karin texted with an update:

"Funny story. We sold the condo in Nashville, and the buyer was wondering if she could buy the couch. The. Couch."

So are they selling?

“Oh no,” she wrote back. “We gave her the TVs instead.”

Minnesota holds off Sabres 5-4

Buffalo drops their seventh consecutive game on Wednesday night at KeyBank Center

WGR550

PAT MALACARO

NOVEMBER 22, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres' losing streak has now hit seven straight games. Buffalo comes out on the wrong end of a 5-4 final against the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday night at KeyBank Center. Jordan Nolan scored his first two goals as a Sabre in the loss, while Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart also found the back of the net.

Check out how the game played out below:

First Period

16:09 - Buffalo again has come out with more energy, just like on Monday. However, they have recorded shots on goals, three to be exact, and seem to be playing with more urgency than two days ago. Johan Larsson had a rebound chance go off his stick, that was probably the best chance for the team to this point.

13:05 - The Sabres think they have the game's opening goal with the puck clearly past Devan Dubnyk, but I believe one of the referee's has indicated that he blew the whistle or intended to blow the whistle before the puck crossed the goal line. It is no goal, and the game stays 0-0.

13:05 - SABRES GOAL. I stand corrected. After a video review during the TV timeout, the referee has indicated that is a "good goal" and the call on the ice was overturned. Jack Eichel will get credit for the tally. 1-0 BUF.

11:01 - WILD GOAL. If you took Tyler Ennis over Marcus Foligno in the "who will score first" pool, it would be Ennis. He uses a spin-o-rama move on Victor Antipin and beats Chad Johnson with the backhand. I need my goalie to make that save. 1-1 tie.

7:23 - WILD GOAL. Sometimes you just have to tip your hat to the shooter and say nice job. Mikael Granlund used Justin Falk as a screen and then unleashed one heck of a wrist shot into the top corner of the net. He totally picked his spot, and now Buffalo trails by a goal. 2-1 MIN.

5:32 - WILD GOAL. It looks like a deflection on the power play has given Minnesota a two-goal lead on Buffalo. Mikko Koivu took the initial shot from the slot. It was a low, whipping wrister that was deflected by Nino Niederreiter at the top of the crease. So much for the good start by the blue and gold. 3-1 MIN.

End of Period

Goal Summary:

BUF: 6:55 - Jack Eichel (6) (Jason Pominville, Evander Kane)

MIN: 8:59 - Tyler Ennis (4) (Marcus Foligno, Charlie Coyle). 12:28 - Mikael Granlund (4) (unassisted). 14:28 - Nino Niederreiter (7) PPG (Mikko Koivu, Ryan Suter)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: 14:00 - Benoit Pouliot (2 min., charging)

MIN: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 14, MIN - 13

Second Period:

20:00 - Robin Lehner has taken over in net for the Sabres, replacing Johnson.

17:59 - SABRES GOAL. A nice play by Jordan Nolan to use a back checking Minnesota defenseman as a screen, and the forward is able to use a wrist shot to beat Devan Dubnyk and bring Buffalo back within a goal. Consider me surprised, pleasantly, by the play. 3-2 MIN.

14:40 - The intensity is noticeable for the blue and gold this period. They have had two fortuitous goals go in early in a period tonight, they need to really capitalize this time and not let Minnesota come back to dominate the rest of the frame.

12:03 - WILD GOAL. Well, it has happened again. This time Nino Niederreiter is able to get in between the two Sabres defensemen, and Josh Gorges cross checks the forward as he is pushing the puck past Robin Lehner's pads. Bad defensive zone coverage by the blue and gold help Minnesota re-establish the two-goal lead. 4-2 MIN.

5:04 - Buffalo did a nice job on their last penalty kill to keep the deficit at two, and now they go back to a man down thanks to a Nathan Beaulieu minor for roughing. As the period has gone on, I have liked the Sabres less and less. Same thing happened in the first.

4:04 - WILD GOAL. The Sabres are not as fortunate this time as two Minnesota players camp out in front of the net, Justin Falk ties up one but Mikael Granlund is able to deflect the puck through the pads of Robin Lehner. Mikko Koivu took the shot that was redirected into the net. 5-2 MIN.

1:34 - SABRES GOAL. Buffalo is able to catch the visitors in a change, and are able to bring themselves within two goals. Sam Reinhart streaked right through the middle of the slot and was able to tip home Jake McCabe's give-and-go pass into the top corner of the net. That is the kind of goal the team needed to spark the offense. 5-3 MIN.

End of Period

Goal Summary:

BUF: 2:01 - Jordan Nolan (1) (Kyle Okposo, Jacob Josefson). 18:25 - Sam Reinhart (5) (Jake McCabe, Johan Larsson)
MIN: 7:57 - Nino Niederreiter (8) (Eric Staal, Jason Zucker). 15:56 - Mikael Granlund (5) PPG (Mikko Koivu, Ryan Suter)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: 12:18 - Josh Gorges (2 min., tripping). 14:56 - Nathan Beaulieu (2 min., roughing)
MIN: 2:23 - Mike Reilly (2 min., holding). 8:25 - Mike Reilly (2 min., hooking). 19:41 - Jonas Brodin (2 min., interference)

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 11 (25), MIN - 14 (27)

Third Period:

18:14 - Buffalo could not capitalize on Jonas Brodin's minor at the end of the last period. They fail to get a shot on goal over the 1:41 of carryover power play time. It would have been nice to see the team get back within a goal with almost an entire period to get the equalizer.

10:25 - I am struggling to come up with anything interesting to say about this period. Shots are 3-3, and none of them would be from what I would call the high quality area. I am sure the Wild are content with seeing the time just ooze off of the clock with a two-goal lead.

6:05 - SABRES GOAL. Jordan Nolan comes through again for the blue and gold. He takes a shot from the half wall and Devan Dubnyk should have stopped it under his arm. Instead, it is the second of the year for Nolan and brings Buffalo within a goal. 5-4 MIN.

2:56 - Buffalo has been buzzing, nearly tying the game several times since Nolan's second goal of the night. Can they get their fifth? We will see.

1:34 - Lenher is pulled for the extra attacker.

End of Game

Minnesota 5, Buffalo 4

Goal Summary:

BUF: 13:55 - Jordan Nolan (2) (Nathan Beaulieu)

MIN: NONE

Penalty Summary:

BUF: NONE

MIN: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 9 (34), MIN - 5 (32)

Goalies:

BUF: Johnson - 10 saves; Lehner - 17 saves

MIN: Dubnyk - 30 saves

Powerplays:

BUF: 0 for 3 (0%)

MIN: 2 for 3 (66.6%)

Three Stars:

Nino Niederreiter - MIN

Mikael Granlund - MIN

Mikko Koivu - MIN

What's Next:

The Sabres will close out their four-game homestand on Friday night against the Edmonton Oilers at KeyBank Center. Faceoff is slated for 7 p.m. with pre-game coverage starting at 6 p.m. with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog live from (716) Food and Sport!

From the Locker Room: Sabres-Wild

Hear from Jason Pominville, Jordan Nolan, Ryan O'Reilly, Chad Johnson and Phil Housley following the 5-4 loss to Minnesota on Wednesday

WGR550

NOVEMBER 22, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres took on the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday night at KeyBank Center as part of their third game of a four game homestand. Buffalo was looking to kick the bucket on a six-game losing streak, and also hoped to spoil the homecoming of former Sabre draftees Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno. The game was a back-and-forth affair, but come the final horn of regulation, the song remained the same: The Sabres lost yet again by a final score of 5-4, pushing the losing streak to seven.

Go inside the locker room to hear from Jason Pominville, Jordan Nolan, Ryan O'Reilly, Chad Johnson and Phil Housley following the loss:

Jason Pominville:

On giving up "free" opportunities: "[Minnesota] is a good rush team, they capitalize on their powerplay chances, and we gave up rush chances. You can't win that way. You can't win against a good team that way; it's an area we have to get better at. It's been addressed, and we have to put this behind us and move forward."

On the team's stronger start to the game: "We got a pretty good start but, again, we get the first goal and hand them a few opportunities. [Minnesota] capitalized on them... again we handed them some opportunities. We had a push at the end but you're not going to win games when you're always pushing and trying to come back in games. We have to find a way to be more consistent."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/11-22-jason-pominville-post-game>

Jordan Nolan:

On why the team cannot get over "the hump": "I think we have to start holding guys accountable. Start being honest with ourselves and our teammates. We're turning pucks over and not working hard. It kind of slips itself under the rug. If someone does turn [the puck] over; they don't chip it in at the red line or blue line, we have to say something. This team hasn't been too successful over the years and it needs to change or it's going to be a long, long season and a few seasons to come if that's the way it is."

On his time with the L.A. Kings, and how that tenure differs from his time as a Sabre: "If I made a mistake [in L.A.], like in my fifth year, I would have guys telling me 'you need to work harder, you need to chip that puck in'. I remember Jeff Carter telling me a few times when I was younger that I need to work harder, or that my shifts were too long. That's just little things. That's what I learned coming into the league. I think we're missing that in this room. Guys are young. They need to be told."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/11-22-jordan-noilan-post-game>

Ryan O'Reilly:

On the same old song and dance: "Couple mistakes early, I myself made a mistake early. Gave up a goal. It's unacceptable. I'm very disappointed in myself. I don't think I was there tonight. We have to stick together. Couple goals happen, we just fall apart. It's my job to do a lot better, and keep guys together."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/11-22-ryan-oreilly-post-game>

Chad Johnson:

On his night not going as planned: "It was disappointing. I thought we had a good start. We scored first, were doing the right things that we needed to, and then their first goal was a bad goal. Unfortunately it was sort of a turning point there for that whole [first] period. It's one I definitely know I can save, and want back."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/11-22-chad-johnson-post-game>

Phil Housley:

On Nolan's comments in reference to comparing L.A.'s team mentality to Buffalo's: "What they talk about in the locker room is their own personal [business]. They can talk about it, but for me I don't think we followed the gameplan for 60 minutes."

On how to change the team mentality, approach on game nights: "I think they have to make a decision internally to play the right way, because right now we're chasing games. I really liked the fight that we had to the end.. we had another look. When you chase games though, that's a losing recipe."

On the "improv" approach enforced by the forwards: "It's a game of mistakes. It's decisions and choices at the wrong time of the game. We get the first goal, and all we have to do is continue to stay the course. It's one mistake here, one mistake there that guys are making which leads to us not playing the right way."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/11-22-phil-housley-post-game>

Housley: We have to ‘take advantage of our practices’

The Sabres head coach joined Howard and Jeremy hours before Wednesday’s game against the Wild
WGR550

HOWARD & JEREMY | WEEKDAYS 6A-10A

NOVEMBER 22, 2017

There hasn’t been too much excitement on the ice at KeyBank Center this season, much to the dismay of passionate hockey fans.

The Buffalo Sabres are in the midst of a six-game losing streak. Their last win came on November 7 against the Washington Capitals. Through 21 games, Buffalo is 5–12–4 on the season and remains in last-place in the Eastern Conference.

Coming off of a 3–2 loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday night, the Sabres will look to rebound on Wednesday when they host the Minnesota Wild. It has not been an easy season for the Wild however, as they have lost two games in a row and are last-place in the Central Division.

Head coach Phil Housley reminded us that injuries have been consistently hurting the team for a majority of the season.

“The number one thing is we gotta try to stay healthy,” Housley said with Howard Simon and Jeremy White Wednesday morning on WGR. “Obviously we haven’t had our top-six guys in the lineup, and with guys playing a little bit higher and getting opportunities, it’s taken its toll on our team. We really haven’t had our true lineup for an extended period of time.”

Housley has been through losing more often as a player rather than a coach, having contributed to the success of the Nashville Predators over the past few years as an assistant coach.

It’s very clear that Sabres fans have not been pleased with the level of performance on the ice this season, and Housley is well aware of this frustration.

“I know fans sometimes get frustrated,” Housley said. “We all get frustrated because we’re in the business of winning, but that hasn’t been the case.

“We’ve got to develop the kind of culture where guys are pushing themselves and pushing each other to get better, and we’ve made steps in that area. This is a good group of players. It’s a very tight team and we’re just going to have to work through it together, and this will make us mentally stronger down the line.”

If the Sabres are hoping to turn their season around, they will need to find a solution as soon as possible. Housley says that the team can do great things if they play consistent hockey.

“Overall, I think the consistency has to get better,” Housley said. “We have to play as best as we can at a high level. Right now we can only try to get better each and every day, and hopefully we’ll have a win tonight.”

You can listen to Housley’s entire interview with Howard and Jeremy here:

Sabres unveil jerseys for 2018 Winter Classic

The Sabres will host the New York Rangers from Citi Field in Queens on January 1st

WGR550

BRAYTON WILSON

NOVEMBER 22, 2017

With the 2018 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic closing in, the Buffalo Sabres have unveiled their jersey for the game on January 1, 2018 from Citi Field in Queens, NY.

Here's a closer look at the jersey:

Photo: Buffalo Sabres

The Sabres are taking part in their first Winter Classic since the inaugural game back in 2008.

Here's more on the jersey from the Sabres' press release:

The uniform combines design concepts from the franchise's early years with modifications of the team's current logo and elements from the team's 40th anniversary jersey to create a unique look that recalls the Sabres' 48 years of history.

"The NHL Winter Classic is a celebration of hockey's rich history and we wanted our jersey to signify that with a tribute to the early days of Sabres hockey," Sabres President Russ Brandon said. "This uniform combines our franchise's great historical look with some new elements to celebrate the uniqueness of the event."

Buffalo will wear a primarily white jersey with blue and gold accents and a slightly modified version of the team's traditional crest, which features a charging buffalo between two crossed swords. In addition to minor illustration adjustments to the logo's buffalo and swords, the initials "NY" have been added as a marker of the interstate matchup. The crest itself is executed in felt and faux leather materials as a nod to historical "hockey sweater" material construction.

The shoulders and collar are contrasted in blue, which is in line with many of the team's past white uniforms, and the collar is executed in a modern adaptation of sweater knit rib material. The blue throughout the uniform has shifted from the Sabres' current navy blue to a royal blue reflective of the team's original color scheme from the 1970s. The jersey striping was inspired by the team's 40th anniversary uniform. However, when applied to the white body, each pair of blue stripes has a contrasting gold stripe between them instead of the white ground color.

The pants are also blue, matching those of classic Sabres uniforms, and feature a vertical gold stripe along the sides. The white accent pant stripe from previous uniforms has been removed to better align the color patterning to the jersey and sock color patterning.

In addition to the crest, the uniform features three secondary marks. The first is a newly designed shoulder patch that has abstracted the Buffalo from the crest and filled it with the team's name, and is executed in a throwback chenille material. The second is a pair of crossed swords, also abstracted from the crest. This mark, which appears on the pants, has featured on Buffalo's helmet in recent years. Lastly, the Buffalo script wordmark featured on the team's 40th anniversary jersey is located on the helmet.

The jersey's number design is derivative of the one worn on the team's 40th anniversary uniform. The numbers on the official game jerseys are executed in felt with unique tonal stitching detail, in homage to how numbers were applied in the early days of hockey. Nameplate letterforms were inspired by the ones the team wore on their uniforms in the mid-1970s.

The jersey will be available for purchase on ShopOneBuffalo.com and at the Sabres Store starting at 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

Our #WinterClassic jersey 🔥🔥

10:03 AM - Nov 22, 2017

232 232 Replies 1,778 1,778 Retweets 4,949 4,949 likes

Losing streak leaves Sabres searching for answers

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Nov. 23, 2017

BUFFALO – Kyle Okposo looked glum, like a man searching for answers. The Sabres' struggles have clearly worn on the winger, who hasn't showcased his normal scoring prowess all season.

"It's not very much fun to be at the rink right now, and that's never a good feeling," Okposo said Thursday. "We just feel like we're letting a lot of people down and just have to make some changes. As a group, we have to come together as a team and just really buy in, otherwise it's going to be a miserable year."

Some would say the year became miserable weeks ago. The Sabres are a mess, owners of a seven-game losing streak (0-5-2) entering Friday's tilt against superstar Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers at KeyBank Center.

With only 14 points (5-13-4), the Sabres rank last in the Eastern Conference and 30th overall, just one point ahead of the hapless Arizona Coyotes. Not surprisingly, the Sabres have the NHL's second-worst offense, defense and power play.

Following Wednesday's 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Wild, coach Phil Housley seemed dismayed the Sabres couldn't follow the game plan again.

Why can't the Sabres buy in and get on the same page?

"I don't have an answer for you," said Okposo, who has two goals and nine points in 20 games. "Things don't go well in a game, I think that we just kind of push the game plan aside and then try to go on our own page right now, and it's not working."

The Sabres might follow the game plan for a bit. In Thursday's game, they opened the scoring before imploding and falling behind 3-1 before the first period ended.

They seem to panic whenever adversity hits them.

"Bad bounces happen in a game, we kind of deviate," Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly said. "I don't know if we're not mentally strong enough, but we deviate and it kills us. It's a focus, we all have to stick to our job within a system and push other guys to stick to it to."

Yes, pushing other guys. After scoring two goals Wednesday, winger Jordan Nolan said the Sabres lack accountability. In Los Angeles, where Nolan won two Stanley Cups, players drove each other to be better and called out bad habits and mistakes. In Buffalo, however, that doesn't happen.

When Okposo broke into the NHL almost 10 years ago, New York Islanders veterans got on youngsters.

"When I first came in the league, I just kind of stuck to myself and tried to follow the veteran guys, and if I did something that was wrong or not the right way, (I) had Bill Guerin or Doug Weight or Brendan Witt saying, 'Hey kid, do this, you can't do that here, you can't do that in this league,'" Okposo said. "It seems like it's just gotten away from that a little bit. Maybe that's my fault."

Okposo said he tried to "get some accountability" in the dressing room before he suffered a season-ending concussion last March. The Sabres lost four of their last five games without Okposo, whose leadership was missed.

"We need more of it," Okposo said of accountability.

The Sabres also need more positive feelings. Like Okposo, Sabres winger Sam Reinhart said coming to the rink has been tough.

"After that many losses in a row, it's tough to try to keep that positive attitude, that positive energy in the room," Reinhart said. "We got to find ways to highlight our little successes throughout games that leads to more and more positivity."

Still, that inconsistency is a bad sign.

“We feel like we have a good enough team here to win hockey games,” Okposo said. “We do it some of the time, but you know what that is in this league? That’s a bad team. That’s a team that’s not going to win.

“If you do it some of the time, you’re not going to win, no matter what. We have to do it all the time, otherwise we’re going to lose.”

Notes: O’Reilly on the Sabres’ post-game meeting Wednesday: “It was a good reflection meeting. I feel, to a man, everyone knows a little bit more what we need to do and how to change.” ... The Sabres had an optional practice Thursday. ... The Oilers, a chic Stanley Cup pick after reaching the second round of the playoffs last season, are probably the NHL’s biggest disappointment this season. With only 18 points (8-12-2), they rank seventh in the Pacific Division. ... The Sabres close a four-game home stand Friday.

Reeling Sabres lacking accountability among players

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Nov. 23, 2017

BUFFALO – Jordan Nolan grew up in a winning culture. The Sabres winger won two Stanley Cups in his first three seasons with the Los Angeles Kings.

To Nolan, the Kings' accountability helped buoy their success. If you made a mistake or needed a push, someone would tell you.

"If I made a mistake in my fifth year, a higher guy was telling me, 'You need to work harder, you need to get that puck in,'" Nolan said after scoring two goals in Wednesday's 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Wild. "Or Jeff Carter told me a few times when I was younger that I need to work harder or my shifts are too long."

Nolan, a waiver claim during the preseason, sees none of that on the reeling Sabres, who have lost seven straight games (0-5-2).

"We just have to start holding guys accountable, start being honest with ourselves and our teammates," Nolan said.

Twenty-two games into the season, the Sabres have completely fallen apart. A season expected to be filled with excitement and progress has turned into another dud. Right now, they might be the NHL's worst team.

Sabres coach Phil Housley usually showcases a calm, measured demeanor following games. But Wednesday's mistake-riddled loss was still gnawing at him following a closed-door meeting.

Housley, who often accentuates any positives, spoke critically of his team. His answers became more terse as the news conference went on.

After center Jack Eichel opened the scoring 6:55 into the contest, the Wild roared back with three unanswered goals before the crowd of 17,428 inside KeyBank Center.

"It's a game of mistakes, and it's decisions and choices at the wrong time of the game," Housley said. "We get the first goal, all we have to do is continue to stay the course."

What did Housley want to see Wednesday?

"Follow the game plan," he said. "In the offensive zone, we turn the puck over when we have a D going down the wall, we have a D getting involved in the play down low trying to keep a puck alive in the offensive zone and we don't cover for the D. It's these mistakes in the game that are costing us."

"I don't feel everybody's on the same page. I think guys are taking things into their own hands and this is the result we're getting."

The Sabres, as they often do, battled back, getting to within one goal twice. In the waning seconds, winger Kyle Okposo nearly tied it in close.

Still, that offered only a little consolation for Housley.

"They got to make a decision internally about playing the right way, because right now we're chasing games," he said. "I really like the fight that we had until the end."

Housley wouldn't comment on what Nolan said about accountability, only saying, "What they talk about in the locker room is their own personal things."

But Housley, a Hall of Fame defenseman, probably knows accountability's lacking among his players.

Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly said he usually focuses on his own game when he's struggling.

“We’re in this together, we’re one group, we’re one team,” he said. “We have to all find a way to help each other out. Even if I’m not at my best, I still have to push someone to be their best and he’ll push me to be my best.”

Chad Johnson wasn’t at his best – the Sabres goalie allowed three early goals, including a weak one to former teammate Tyler Ennis – so Housley yanked him after the first period.

“I didn’t think he had a good game, I didn’t think he had a good first period,” Housley said bluntly.

Johnson said: “We’re not in a situation where we can let in three goals in a game, let alone a period.”

Why did Housley start Johnson, the backup, over Robin Lehner?

“We’re losing games,” Housley said. “We have to make some decisions.”

Nolan’s goals were his first with his new team. Winger Sam Reinhart scored the Sabres’ other goal.

Sabres unveil Winter Classic uniform

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Nov. 22, 2017

What do you think of the the special uniform the Buffalo Sabres will wear during the Winter Classic on New Year's Day at Citi Field in New York?

The uniform “combines design concepts from the franchise’s early years with modifications of the team’s current logo and elements from the team’s 40th anniversary jersey to create a unique look that recalls the Sabres’ 48 years of history,” according to the Sabres, who released the first images today.

When the Sabres played in the first Winter Classic in 2008, a 2-1 shootout loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins at Ralph Wilson Stadium, they wore the regular throwback jersey from 1980s and 90s.

Winger Jason Pominville, the only current Sabre who played in Winter Classic almost 10 years ago, is pictured sporting the special uniform.

Sabres drop 7th straight game, fall to Wild 5-4

WIVB

By Nick Filipowski

November 22, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Jordan Nolan, Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart each found the back of the net but it wasn't enough as the Sabres dropped their seventh straight game, a 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Wild on Wednesday.

Buffalo opened the scoring, with Jason Pominville originally credited with the first goal of the game. The tally, was ultimately changed to Eichel, who gets credit for his sixth goal of the season.

The Sabres' lead, like it typically has as year, was short lived. Two minutes later, Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno teamed up for the equalizer.

Nino Neiderreiter, who has scored a goal in five straight games, found the back of the net twice for the Wild.

The Sabres return to action Friday when they host the struggling Edmonton Oilers, who have lost three straight games.

NOTES:

LOSING

The Sabres lost their seventh straight game falling to 5-13-4 overall. It's the longest losing streak by the franchise since dropping 14-straight games during the 2014-2015 season.

With 5 wins and just 14 points through 22 games, Buffalo is on pace for 54 points, which would match their total from that same season.

CLEARING THE NET

Clearing the net continues to be an ongoing issue for the Sabres and Wednesday it was an issue again. With Minnesota on the power play, Justin Falk was left by himself to fend off two Wild players.

Mikael Granlund had a free pass in front of the net and an easy opportunity to redirect a shot from Mikko Koivu as the Wild opened up a 5-2 lead.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Twice in the game the Sabres missed opportunities to find the back of the net off rebounds.

In the first period, Viktor Antipin rifled in a shot from the blueline and the rebound bounced off Devan Dubnyk's pads and right to the stick of Johan Larsson, who failed to connect on what should have been an easy goal with a wide open net.

In the second period, Sam Reinhart had a similar opportunity.

If Buffalo is going to snap out of their 7-game funk, they need to start burying their chances.

SCORING WOES

Reinhart did find the back of the net against the Wild, recording the 100th point of his NFL career.

He has five goals on the season while Eichel has six.

For perspective: Minnesota's Nino Neiderreiter has six goals in his last five games.

Bottom line: The Sabres need more production from their stars.

5 Observations: Wild take down Sabres 5-4

WKBW

Matt Bove

Nov 22, 2017

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KEVIN HOFFMANSHOW CAPTION

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Seven games, seven straight losses for the Buffalo Sabres, this time falling to the Minnesota Wild 5-4. With the loss, the already basement-dwelling Sabres fall to 5-13-4 to start the season.

Five observations from Wednesday's loss:

Dark Fantasy

Oh, it's no fantasy, the Sabres struggles are very real and things seem to be going from bad to worse. November has been a horrendous month for the Sabres who have now lost seven straight games, but by now you know all about the losing streak. As a matter of fact, horrendous might be putting it lightly.

After an abysmal October, this was the last thing the Sabres needed. If they don't act soon, this season will completely runaway.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

The same guy in section 316 who has been yelling "I want a refund" is at it again. He's getting louder and louder #Sabres
8:41 PM - Nov 22, 2017

10 10 Replies 10 10 Retweets 60 60 likes

Twitter Ads info and privacy

So Appalled

His nickname is Angry Larry but on Friday Johan Larsson has to be appalled at how his night transpired. It was a rough first period for Larsson, who missed a gorgeous chance that would've given the Sabres an early (earlier) lead.

A few moments later Larsson tried to keep a Sabres' cycle flowing, only to turn the puck over to Wild forward Mikael Granlund, who scored Minnesota's second of the night. For Larsson, it has been a forgettable season that on Thanksgiving Eve became even more frustrating.

Lost In the World

Kyle Okposo just can't buy a goal. The Sabres big free-agent addition last summer has seen a major drop-off this season, with only two goals and seven assists in 20 games played.

On Friday he was relegated to the third line, playing alongside Jacob Josefson and Jordan Nolan for most of the evening. Compared to some of his previous games, Okposo actually looked pretty good and assisted on Nolan's first goal with the Sabres.

But looking at the bigger picture is concerning. Perhaps Okposo will figure things out but if he doesn't it's not promising to think about the future with the 29-year-old under contract for five more years making \$6 million per season.

Blame Game

Where do we even begin? There are plenty of people to blame for the Sabres struggles but on Wednesday Chad Johnson and Robin Lehner could've been better. They don't deserve all the blame but both would be the first to tell you they'd like some of Minnesota's goals back.

Of the goals allowed, Johnson would almost certainly like another crack at Minnesota's first goal, scored by former teammate Tyler Ennis. The former Sabre made a nifty move near the wall and sent a backhand along the ice towards Johnson, who was beaten five-hole. Saucy.

[View image on Twitter](#)

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Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

7:25 PM - Nov 22, 2017

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Johnson was replaced by Robin Lehner to start the second period after allowing three goals on 13 shots. While in the game Lehner allowed two goals on 19 shots faced.

Power

Well, the power play to be specific. That was one of the biggest differences on Wednesday as the Wild capitalized on two of their three man advantages, while the Sabres failed to convert on any of their three opportunities.

That said, this shouldn't come as a surprise -- entering Wednesday the Sabres had the second worst power play percentage in the league. If that wasn't bad enough, their former power play coach from last year's league-best unit, Bob Woods, was on the opposing bench as an assistant with Minnesota. Salt in the wound, indeed.

Sabres reveal Winter Classic jersey

WKBW

Matt Bove

Nov 22, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - After months of speculation, concept designs and rumors the NHL and Adidas have finally unveiled what the Buffalo Sabres will be wearing at the 2018 Winter Classic.

[View image on Twitter](#)

[View image on Twitter](#)

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Here's a better look at the newly announced #Sabres Winter Classic jersey. Well done, @adidashockey.

10:15 AM - Nov 22, 2017

13 13 Replies 65 65 Retweets 226 226 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

On Wednesday the Sabres officially made the announcement after teasing that news would come "soon" for several weeks. In September the NHL posted a series of pictures on social media, hinting at the logos that would be featured on both the Sabres and Rangers sweaters.

Bove's take:

It has been a rough few weeks in Buffalo sports. The Bills are crumbling and the Sabres once again sit at the bottom of the Eastern Conference.

So here we are, getting excited about a piece of clothing because there's not much else to be excited about.

And that's completely okay, especially if you love a nice jersey like me. Over the years, I've stood on my soapbox proclaiming the Sabres need to lighten up, returning to their original shade of royal blue and gold on a full-time basis.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

The #Sabres already have a really solid jersey but a few changes & they could be one of the best sweaters in the NHL [http://www.wkbw.com/sports/sabres/bove-its-time-for-the-sabres-to-lighten-up ...](http://www.wkbw.com/sports/sabres/bove-its-time-for-the-sabres-to-lighten-up...)

2:09 PM - May 25, 2017

Bove: It's time for the Sabres to lighten up

When the Buffalo Sabres take the ice to start the 2017-2018 season, it appears they'll have a new look. According to SportsLogos.net, the Sabres are one of at least 12 teams that will undergo an...

[wkbw.com](http://www.wkbw.com)

21 21 Replies 36 36 Retweets 101 101 likes

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While that hasn't happened, at least yet, the Winter Classic jersey is a sweater fans can be excited about. I love the simplicity of the jersey and think Adidas and the Sabres hit a home run. It's a clean look but it still stands out and makes a statement.

For as bad as things have been on the ice, this jersey will give fans something to get excited about. I know that sounds ridiculous but hey, the better you look, the better you play, right?

Wild: Jason Pominville, Marco Scandella enjoying new roles in Buffalo

By CHAD GRAFF

Pioneer Press

November 22, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jason Pominville knew nothing of St. Paul or the Minnesota Wild when he arrived in a 2013 trade, yet he found himself sentimental when discussing both this week.

“I really didn’t know what I was getting into (in Minnesota), but from top to bottom, it was awesome,” he said. “It’s a great bunch of guys, the organization treats you really well, and the city was great. I really enjoyed it and have nothing bad to say about it. When you win, and have the group that we had, it was pretty cool.”

Approaching his 35th birthday next week, Pominville isn’t the same player the Wild acquired four years ago and scored 30 goals in his first full season with the team. But he’s relishing his new gig as a mentor to a rebuilding team, back in the city where his career began.

“I’ve always loved it here, and it was always a place I’ve enjoyed living,” Pominville said. “My kids grew up here, my son was born here. If there was a spot I would’ve liked to have gone to, this was the spot.”

Pominville and teammate Marco Scandella were dealt to Buffalo after last season in a salary dump that allowed the Wild to extend the contracts of young free agents Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund. They landed Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno from the Sabres in a move that saved a little more than \$2 million per year in cap space.

With a fresh start and ample opportunity in Buffalo, Pominville has 13 points in 21 games entering Wednesday’s game against the Wild. Scandella has five assists and has arguably become the Sabres’ top defenseman.

“Pominville got off to a really good start,” said new Sabres head coach Phil Housley of South St. Paul. “He’s been terrific and working really hard. ...

“Marco has done a terrific job, as well. He’s logged a lot of minutes. He plays in every situation and has brought a great energy to our locker room. He says things at the right time and is a true competitor. It’s a pleasure to have him on our team.”

RELATED ARTICLES

[Nino Niederreiter on his way to becoming Wild’s fifth 30-goal scorer](#)

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[South St. Paul’s Phil Housley embracing early challenges with Buffalo Sabres](#)

[Wild send rookies Joel Eriksson Ek, Luke Kunin to minors](#)

[Scandella was drafted by the Wild in 2008 and played in 373 games for the team. He became an everyday player in 2013-14 and set career highs the following season in goals \(11\) and points \(23\).](#)

There was little surprise for Scandella, though, when he was dealt this summer as the Wild sought salary relief and were willing to part with one of their top five defensemen.

“I definitely knew it was a possibility,” he said. “I was just really excited to be in Buffalo. It’s a chance for me to improve my game and I’m really excited about the opportunity here. I had a great time in Minnesota. I loved it there and cherish my memories from there and had seven great years there. I learned a lot as a person and a player. I took that all with me here and started a new chapter.”

A move to Buffalo meant a larger role for Scandella, 27.

Here, he’s relied on as a first-pairing defenseman, enjoying the increased ice time and important role as a veteran on a rebuilding team.

“But it’ll be a little weird playing against my old team,” he said. “I’m definitely excited about it. It’s been marked on my calendar.”

From the Rink: Pominville, Scandella (re)adjusting to life in Buffalo

Former Wild teammates now trying to help return Sabres to postseason

by Dan Myers

Wild.com

November 22nd

BUFFALO -- Returning to western New York and the Buffalo Sabres was an easy transition for former Wild forward Jason Pominville, who along with Marco Scandella was traded to the Sabres in June in a deal that netted Minnesota forwards Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno.

Tonight, Pominville and Scandella will play against their former team when the Wild and Sabres tangle on the banks of Lake Erie at Key Bank Center in Buffalo.

During an optional skate on Wednesday morning, both Pominville and Scandella visited with former teammates and support staff on the Minnesota side.

Pominville, who spent parts of five seasons with the Wild after a midseason trade that sent him from the Sabres to Minnesota in 2013, said it was good to find a few friends, catch up and share some old stories.

"It's is nice to see the guys," Pominville said. "Good memories, good group of guys. We went through a lot together."

Pominville said the return to Buffalo has been great for both him and his family. His wife and two children, who were also with him here during his first stint, were able to find a house in the same neighborhood they lived in before. They've been able to re-connect with several different friends who they stayed in touch with during the Minnesota years.

Around the rink, not much has changed either, other than the faces in the dressing room.

"It's been really easy," Pominville said. "Everything off the ice has been so easy; our family, our kids and the wife, everything has been real easy. Obviously on the ice, we'd like to have more success and win more games, but that'll come."

For Scandella, the trade marked the first time he had changed teams in his professional career. Selected by the Wild in the second round of the 2008 NHL Draft, Scandella said it was nice having a veteran teammate like Pominville to help with the transition to a new team.

Pominville knowing the area and the franchise so well was certainly an added bonus.

"Pommer is a great pro, I've always looked up to him, even when we got him in Minny," Scandella said. "A great pro, great guy to look up to, from Montreal, played here in Buffalo ... So he helped me out with the off-ice stuff, the living situation and giving me a little information about the organization. It was great coming with a guy like him."

In coming to Buffalo, Scandella joins other former Wild draft picks Justin Falk (his defensive partner), Johan Larsson and Benoit Pouliot.

Playing with Falk has been a treat; the two have a history going all the way back to when they were teammates with the Houston Aeros.

Scandella has also been able to adopt to a top-pairing role with the Sabres, one where he's been able to see regular time on the power play. Now 27 years old, it was an opportunity for Scandella to take the next step in his career.

"Super exciting, that's what I was hoping for in the offseason," Scandella said. "Coming into camp, I was trying to earn a spot and get some more minutes which has been really nice to do."

Here are the projected lineups:

WILD

Jason Zucker - Eric Staal - Nino Niederreiter

Daniel Winnik - Mikko Koivu - Mikael Granlund

Marcus Foligno - Charlie Coyle - Tyler Ennis

Chris Stewart - Matt Cullen - Zack Mitchell

Ryan Suter - Jared Spurgeon

Jonas Brodin - Matt Dumba

Gustav Olofsson - Mike Reilly

Devan Dubnyk

Alex Stalock

SABRES

Evander Kane - Jack Eichel - Jason Pominville

Benoit Pouliot - Ryan O'Reilly - Sam Reinhart

Zemgus Girgensons - Johan Larsson - Kyle Criscuolo

Jordan Nolan - Jacob Josefson - Kyle Okposo

Marco Scandella - Justin Falk

Jake McCabe - Nathan Beaulieu

Josh Gorges - Viktor Antipin

Robin Lehner

Chad Johnson

Wild hand Sabres seventh straight loss

Sports Xchange

Mark Ludwiczak

Nov. 22, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- With a critical stretch of the schedule looming, the Minnesota Wild took care of business Wednesday night.

Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund scored two goals apiece to lead the Wild to a 5-4 victory over the Buffalo Sabres. It was a sloppy game with defensive breakdowns by both teams.

"It was an ugly game on both sides but I think we persevered," Wild coach Bruce Boudreau said. "I thought this was an important game for us to win considering how many games we've got against the Central Division coming up and how many teams are playing and going to gain points tonight. We don't want to get too far behind the loop."

Tyler Ennis also scored for the Wild (10-8-3). Devan Dubnyk made 30 saves.

Minnesota has a critical weekend coming up with three games in four days against divisional opponents -- Colorado, St. Louis and Winnipeg -- following Thanksgiving.

"We all know we can play better," Granlund said. "At the same time, we got the win and that's all we need right now. These kinds of games happen and we just got to move on and get ready for the next one."

Jordan Nolan had two goals for the Sabres (5-13-4), who have lost seven games in a row (0-5-2). Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart also scored.

"I think we just have to start holding guys accountable, start being honest with ourselves and our teammates," Nolan said.

"This team hasn't been too successful the years and it needs to change. It's going to be a long, long season and a few seasons to come if that's the way it is."

Buffalo goaltender Chad Johnson allowed three goals on 13 shots and was replaced by Robin Lehner to open the second period. Lehner made 17 saves.

"Three goals in the first period with how things are going, it's obviously not good enough," Johnson said. "We're not in a situation where we can let in three goals in a game, let alone a period. I want them all back, to be honest."

Eichel opened the scoring 6:55 into the game, swiping the puck into the net from a hard angle for his sixth goal of the season.

The Wild quickly took control from there, scoring three goals in the second, though the Sabres would mount multiple comebacks.

Ennis, a former Sabre, evened the score at 8:59 of the first on a terrific goal. Ennis spun inside the left circle and placed a backhand shot along the ice through Johnson's legs for his fourth goal of the season.

"It's funny how it all works out," Ennis said. "I've had so many chances, breakaways, posts the last little while here and just a shot from a tough angle goes in."

Granlund made it 2-1 on a two-on-one opportunity with 7:32 left in the first. Granlund kept the puck and buried a high shot to the blocker side for his fourth goal of the season.

Niederreiter made it 3-1 with 5:32 left in the first. Niederreiter redirected Mikko Koivu's shot from the point for his seventh goal of the year.

Nolan cut Minnesota's lead to 3-2 at 2:01 of the second on his first goal as a Sabre.

Niederreiter picked up his second of the night 7:57 into the second on a tap-in on a pass from Eric Staal behind the Buffalo net.

Granlund scored his second of the game with 4:04 left in the second on a deflection from close range.

Reinhart made it 5-3 on a redirection with 1:35 left in the second. Nolan cut Minnesota's lead to one with 6:05 remaining, whipping the puck into the net from outside the right circle.

Buffalo's best chance to even the score came on a shot by Kyle Okposo with 33 seconds remaining, which was stopped by Dubnyk.

NOTES: D Casey Nelson, C Seth Griffith and LW Matt Moulson were scratched for the Sabres. D Zach Bogosian (lower body, 22 games) and D Rasmus Ristolainen (upper body, nine games) remain on injured reserve for Buffalo. ... D Kyle Quincey was scratched for the Wild. ... Sabres D Marco Scandella was a second-round draft pick of the Wild in 2008 and played in 373 games for Minnesota from 2010-17. ... This was the first of two meetings this season. The second takes place Jan. 4 in Minnesota

LOOK: Buffalo Sabres unveil Winter Classic jerseys and they're fantastic

The Sabres will face the Rangers at Citi Field on New Year's Day in these sharp threads

Pete Blackburn

CBS Sports

Nov 22, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres will be heading outdoors to play the New York Rangers at Citi Field on New Year's Day for the 2018 Bridgestone Winter Classic, and now we know what they'll be wearing. The Sabres unveiled their Classic uniforms on Wednesday morning.

Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

Our #WinterClassic jersey 🔥🔥

10:03 AM - Nov 22, 2017

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Available at the @SabresStore starting at 5pm today.

More on our #WinterClassic jersey: <http://bufsabres.co/q1Mssi>

10:10 AM - Nov 22, 2017

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The special uniform "combines design concepts from the franchise's early years with modifications of the team's current logo and elements from the team's 40th anniversary jersey" in order to create a brand-new look that pulls from the team's near half-century of history.

cut-7.jpg

Buffalo's Winter Classic jerseys pull various design elements from the team's 48-year history. Courtesy Buffalo Sabres
Personally, I think they knocked these out of the park. They're better than either of the primary uniforms that the Sabres wear currently. For starters, that logo is tremendous, plus the striping and numbers/font are classically great. But the most important aspect of this look is how well they play the vibrant blue, yellow and white colors off each other from top to bottom.

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The Sabres primaries use navy over the more classic blue, and that's a mistake. These Winter Classic jerseys pop way more than the regular jerseys ever could, so maybe this is a first step toward the team reverting back to the brighter blue full-time. I certainly wouldn't hate seeing these (as well as a home version) on a frequent basis.

There's nothing wrong with Jack Eichel

Doug MacLean joins Sportsnet's Starting Lineup to say that he does not like what he's seeing from Jack Eichel at the moment.

Jonathan Willis

November 23, 2017

After summer changes behind the bench and in the front office, this season was supposed to mark the dawn of a new era for the Buffalo Sabres. It still may, but after a miserable start to the year it's clear that change won't come easily.

It's common in hockey to boil the hardships of a team down to problems with its most skilled player(s). This is especially true when the player in question is slumping himself, as is the case with Jack Eichel.

Eichel has failed to build on a breakthrough performance in 2016-17. His goal totals are on the low side overall, and he has only scored once in the last month. The league's antiquated and somewhat ridiculous plus/minus system may have fallen out of favour among serious analysts, but his dash-8 is easy fodder for anyone looking to make a claim that he's irresponsible defensively. Combine that with the weight of expectation, and it's easy to be disappointed.

Easy, but wrong.

Eichel scored his sixth goal of the season on Wednesday and just his second in 13 games. He's fired 45 shots over that span, which is actually a per-game increase on last season; they just aren't beating the goaltender.

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That's not unusual. As anyone with even a passing acquaintance with the game of hockey knows, goal-scorers are streaky. Just last season, Eichel had a 14-game run in which he scored just one goal on 52 shots for a miserable 1.9 shooting percentage. He followed it with seven goals on 38 shots over his next nine games (18.4 shooting percentage).

These things balance out, though it can be hard to maintain that perspective if the team is struggling early in the year. The time to start worrying is if the shooter isn't getting looks. For the most part, Eichel is.

This brief slump explains the vast majority of the gap between Eichel's numbers this season and the numbers Sabres fans were hoping he'd post. But when we really dig into his scoring, we find a player whose offensive game still has the potential for even further improvement.

Secondary assists are such an area. It's important to understand that while primary assists are quite predictive — players who get a lot of them one year tend to get a lot of them the next year — the same isn't true for secondary assists. They aren't quite empty calories, but there's a lot of randomness involved in who gets them.

Eichel has just one this year, and none at 5-on-5. In 5-on-5 play, he's in a 12-way tie for 10th in the league with 14 points. If we look solely at primary points (excluding second assists, as some analytics companies and NHL teams have done in the past) he rises to third, one point ahead of Connor McDavid.

Then there's the power play. The Sabres led the league last season with a 24.5 per cent conversion rate, and scored 8.7 goals per hour. This year, they're 30th at 14.3 percent and scoring 4.3 goals per hour. At last year's pace Eichel would have eight points; instead he has zero.

The question then is whether he's dragging the power play down or if he's merely a victim of its early weakness. The answer is probably a little of both.

Last season Eichel scored 10 goals on 54 power-play shots. Half of them were one-timers from somewhere in the left faceoff circle — it's not a particularly original play, but it is effective. Lots of righties with finishing skill have made a good living from there. The Sabres also ran a play off faceoffs to set Eichel up for a quick shot in the high slot; he scored two goals from there. Two others were clearing up garbage in the crease, one was just a good shot off the rush.

Eichel has 22 power-play shots this season, which is a lot. One-third of them were the kind of one-timer which worked so well for him last year; this season they just haven't gone in and that should change. Another third are standard wrist shots from one circle or the other, which didn't lead to a lot of goals last year, while the final third are assorted (including three from the neutral zone). He's had one chance in the net area, so there's probably room for him to improve there.

Offensively, there's been very little wrong with Eichel, certainly nothing that warrants more than passing criticism. So let's dig into that minus-8.

It's a garbage stat. Offensive players on bad teams always have terrible plus/minus totals, because the system is rigged against them. They come on the ice when their team is down by a goal and the net is empty; it's hard to keep goals against down without a goalie. Eichel is minus-4 in such situations. They play the power play; their goals there don't count as pluses but short-handed goals against count as minuses. They play in overtime, where the three-on-three game is a different animal entirely.

At 5-on-5, Eichel has the third-best on-ice goal differential among Sabres forwards; his line scores a ton and only allows as many goals as the team average. The team has regular forwards getting outscored three, four, even five-to-one when they're on the ice at 5-on-5, and insanely some of them have better official plus/minus numbers than Eichel because the statistic is structured in a misleading way.

Although it's superficially easy to build a case that Eichel has been a disappointment this season, anything more than a cursory examination reveals that for the rubbish it is. He's an awfully good player, and by and large he's doing good things in a difficult situation. Buffalo's problem isn't that Eichel isn't doing enough; it's that they don't have enough players like him.

Sabres hope that honesty, accountability will help them turn the page

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

Nov. 23, 2017

Postgame comments following a 5-4 loss to Minnesota for the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday night included a call from some veteran players for increased accountability in the dressing room. It's that same brutal honesty, players said Thursday, that the team hopes will lead them out of their current 0-5-2 rut.

Such was the message during the team's postgame meeting on Wednesday, when the door to the dressing room remained closed well after the final horn had sounded.

"I think we have a better idea of what we need to do," alternate captain Ryan O'Reilly said. "We can think about it as much as we want, but it comes down to that game and the next game doing it. It's something that we're all focused on.

"It was a good reflection meeting. I feel, to a man, everyone knows a little bit more what we need to do and how to change."

Video: Sabres Now (11/23/17)

Count Kyle Okposo among the veterans who feel that more honesty and accountability between teammates is a necessary factor for the Sabres to turn their season around. Jordan Nolan, a two-time Stanley Cup champion in Los Angeles, said mistakes this season have been looked over rather than addressed from player to player.

Growing up in the Kings organization, Nolan said, veterans like Jeff Carter would address him if his shifts were long or mistakes were made. Okposo, too, said that when he came into the league with the New York Islanders he had veterans like Bill Guerin and Doug Weight point out his mistakes.

Okposo was that person for the Sabres late last season, until a concussion ended his campaign in March.

"It seems like it's just gotten away from that a little bit," Okposo said. "Maybe that's my fault. Last year before I got hurt I tried to get some accountability in the locker room and we need more of it."

The problem for the Sabres, according to players and coach Phil Housley alike, has been their tendency to deviate from their game plan when things don't go their way in a game. Whether it's a bad habit or a sign that the team needs the more mental toughness, the players still believe it can be corrected.

"At the end of the day you can sit here and talk about it but you've got to go out there and you've got to show up and you've got to be ready for that," forward Sam Reinhart said. "I think there's one part of that being physically ready to play, which at times can be easier than being mentally ready.

"I think we've got to have that mindset that whatever's thrown at you throughout the game to stick with the game plan."

When the Sabres have stuck to their plan this season, they've found ways to win games. Their last victory, over Washington on Nov. 7, was a prime example of the team limiting chances for a talented opponent and finding a way to win at the end.

Lately, though, the Sabres have fallen behind and had to rely on third-period comebacks to even make games close.

"We feel like we have a good enough team to win hockey games," Okposo said. "We do it some of the times, but you know what that is in this league? That's a bad team. That's a team that's not going to win. If you do it some of the time, you're not going to win, no matter what."

The Sabres have their first chance to rebound at home against Edmonton on Friday, the first game in a back-to-back set that concludes Saturday in Montreal.

"We're all here to win," O'Reilly said. "We have to hold each other accountable and find ways to push each other. What we're doing isn't working, so we've got to change."

Thursday's practice

The Sabres held a team meeting and an optional skate at KeyBank Center on Thursday morning. Injured defensemen Zach Bogosian, Rasmus Ristolainen and Matt Tennyson skated for the second day in a row along with a group that included Evander Kane, Matt Moulson and Kyle Criscuolo, among others.

Housley said Wednesday that Ristolainen was nearing a return to the lineup, but Bogosian, who has been out since training camp, said he expects to need a few full practices before seeing game action.

Sharpen Up: November 23, 2017

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 23rd, 2017

While today is a day to give thanks, the Sabres will take the day to analyze what it's going to take to turn things around and get back on the right track. Buffalo has lost its last seven games, going 0-5-2 over that stretch, and last night's 5-4 defeat at the hands of Minnesota prompted some of the strongest postgame comments of the season from the players.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Sabres fall to Wild, 5-4

04:36 • November 22nd, 2017

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

The Sabres certainly got the start they wanted, at one point outshooting the Wild 9-3 in the first period and taking a 1-0 lead when Jack Eichel jammed a puck past Dubnyk 6:55 into the contest.

At that point, Housley said, all they had to do was stay the course. Instead, Tyler Ennis tied the game with the type of bad-angle goal he became known for during his time in Buffalo and a string of subsequent mistakes led to a pair of goals each for Nino Niederreiter and Mikael Granlund.

Phil Housley Postgame (11/22/17)

02:35 • November 22nd, 2017

"In the offensive zone, we turn the puck over when we have a D going down the wall," coach Phil Housley said. "We have a D getting involved in the play down low, trying to keep a play alive in the offensive zone, and we don't cover for the D. It's these mistakes in the game that are costing us.

"I don't feel like everybody's on the same page. I think guys are taking things in their own hands and this is the result they're getting."

Jordan Nolan, who scored twice, knows what it takes to win, having won two Stanley Cup championships with the Los Angeles Kings.

Jordan Nolan Postgame (11/22/17)

01:48 • November 22nd, 2017

"If I made a mistake in my fifth year, a higher guy was telling me, you need you need to work harder, you need to get that puck in," Nolan said. "Or, you know, Jeff Carter told me a few times when I was younger that I need to work harder or my shifts are too long.

"It's the little things. That's what I learned coming into the league. And I think we are missing that a little bit in this room. But guys are young and I think they need to be told."

Jason Pominville is a veteran of 927 NHL games.

Pominville Postgame (11/22/17)

02:36 • November 22nd, 2017

"We've had talks. We've had video sessions. Again, that's not on coaching, it's on us," he said. "They can't change it. It's got to be us. It's got to come from us. We've got to be better and I believe that we have the capability to do it but, again, everyone's got to look themselves in the mirror and pull up their sleeves and be better.

"Right now it's not happening and we got to put this behind us and move forward because what's behind us isn't even close to being good enough."

Ryan O'Reilly Postgame (11/22/17)

02:23 • November 22nd, 2017

Winter Classic jerseys unveiled

Winter Classic Jersey Revealed

00:43 • November 22nd, 2017

If you're holiday shopping for a Sabres fan you know (or just want one for yourself), they're on sale now at the Sabres Store.

Looking to help those in need this holiday season?

The Sabres will once again partner with Catholic Charities of Buffalo for the Sabres Holiday Angels program. Sabres Holiday Angels is an adopt-a-family program that allows Sabres fans to participate by supporting our neighbors in need this holiday season.

There are four different ways that fans can get involved with the program. The first is the adopt-a-family option. After registering to adopt, fans will receive information via email with details regarding the family they have been chosen to support. Information will include first name, age, gender, clothing size and interests/likes for each person to assist with shopping efforts (Note: In some cases limited information is available).

The second option is the donation of individual gifts to the program. The gift can be an item of the donor's choosing and Catholic Charities will match the gift with a person or family in need. The third option is to bring wrapping paper and wrapping accessories to one of the drop-off locations listed below. The final option is the donation of a gift card. Gift cards may be mailed directly to Catholic Charities Parish Outreach & Advocacy (741 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, N.Y. 14209).

[Click here for more details.](#)

Coming up today

The Sabres are set to hold an optional skate this morning. We'll have full written and video coverage for you here at Sabres.com. Buffalo hosts Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers tomorrow night.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!