



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

December 14, 2017

Sabres Notebook: Winter Classic documentaries; ticket donation drive

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

Dec. 13, 2017

The "Road to the Winter Classic" acknowledges the Buffalo Sabres are, at best, a work in progress, so it's not surprising the premiere started by focusing on the New York Rangers. But fans of Jason Pominville, bowling and behind-the-scenes clips likely enjoyed the opening episode Wednesday night.

The four-part television documentary, which tracks the Sabres and Rangers as they head toward a New Year's Day game in Citi Field, began on NBCSN. It will continue for the next three Wednesdays.

The show opened with a look at the difference between the teams and cities, with New York laying claim as the "biggest stage in the world." The cameras followed the Rangers' Jimmy Vesey, Brady Skjei and Kevin Hayes as they rode the subway in full gear on their way to an outdoor practice.

After shifting back to Buffalo, the talk was of the hole in the franchise's résumé – its lack of a Stanley Cup. Coach Phil Housley spoke of wanting to win one and introduced viewers to Jack Eichel.

"He has the skill to become one of the elite players in the game," Housley says of Eichel, who gave the team an end-of-practice pep talk.

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Transit Lanes, Roswell Park and the Sabres' foundation got airtime as the cameras filmed Buffalo's annual Bowl-A-Rama. There was a comical look at Kyle Okposo's lack of bowling ability.

After an extended look at Kevin Shattenkirk living out his dream of playing for his hometown team, the defenseman helped the Rangers beat New Jersey. There was a chance to see and hear Lindy Ruff, who is an assistant coach in New York.

The cameras then headed to the home of Buffalo's Jason Pominville. It was easily the highlight of the 23-minute show for Sabres fans. He and his wife played hockey and did gymnastics with their children. Pominville talked of getting sticks signed for his son.

The series also profiled New York's Rick Nash before taking in the Sabres' visit to St. Louis last weekend. After a quiet interview with Eichel, the show had highlights of Buffalo's 3-2 overtime loss. Viewers went inside the dressing room for pep talks by Josh Gorges and Housley.

Narrated by Emmy- and Tony-nominated actor Bill Camp, the "Road to the Winter Classic" is providing enough Buffalo material to keep Sabres fans watching.

* * *

There will be no shortage of Winter Classic material this month. NHL Network will present "The First NHL Winter Classic, Hockey Goes Outside." It will offer a look back at the 2008 game between the Buffalo Sabres and Pittsburgh Penguins in the Bills' stadium.

The documentary will air on NHL Network at 8 p.m. Wednesday. There will be a special screening in (716) Food and Sport at 6 p.m. Tuesday.

The film will feature interviews with Sabres participants Ryan Miller, Brian Campbell, Pominville and Ruff. Narrated by actor and Pittsburgh native Michael Keaton, there will also be interviews with Penguins captain Sidney Crosby and NBC announcers Mike "Doc" Emrick and Bob Costas.

The game in Orchard Park proved that outdoor games would work and set the precedent for 21 stadium games for the NHL.

* * *

Thousands of tickets to Sabres games have been going to waste. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County and Community Beer Works want to change that.

The nonprofit organization and the Buffalo brewery are asking fans who aren't interested in the games to donate their tickets rather than let them sit on the shelf. The tickets will be given to the Big Brothers Big Sisters program so children and their mentors can attend the games.

The Sabres sold 17,454 tickets to Tuesday's game, but there weren't that many in attendance in their 19,070-seat arena. (John Vogl/Buffalo News)

Fans are asked to bring printed tickets to Community Beer Works at 15 Lafayette Ave. from 3 to 10 p.m. Friday. In exchange for every pair of tickets, fans will receive a receipt for their tax-deductible donation and a free pint of Frank American Pale Ale.

Fans who use virtual tickets through the One Buffalo app can also donate by forwarding them to tickets@communitybeerworks.com or contacting Community Beer Works on Twitter (@communitybeer) or Facebook ([Facebook.com/communitybeerworks/](https://www.facebook.com/communitybeerworks/)).

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The Rochester Americans went to the Big Easy for a big hire.

The Amerks have announced Rob Minter will serve as the team's vice president of business operations. He will oversee the day-to-day business activities of the Sabres' minor-league club.

Minter arrives in Rochester after three years as the director of premium seating for the NFL's New Orleans Saints and the NBA's New Orleans Pelicans. He organized and managed a staff that focused on the sale and retention of premium products for both franchises.

"I'm tremendously excited to join such a longstanding and historic organization like the Rochester Americans," Minter said. "I look forward to getting to know our loyal season-ticket holders, corporate partners and the great hockey fans we have in the city of Rochester."

The Virginia native has also worked in the American Hockey League for the Lake Erie Monsters, overseeing their ticket operations.

The Amerks' position opened in October after the organization let go of Rob Kopacz. He had been the vice president of business operations since July 2011.

Sabres' Pouliot holding up his end of the bargain

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

Dec. 13, 2017

Benoit Pouliot had a lot to prove. He's actually proving to be quite the bargain.

The Buffalo Sabres took a flier on Pouliot following his buyout by Edmonton. They signed him to a one-year contract worth \$1.15 million July 1.

There were nine other forwards who signed for more money on the opening day of free agency. Pouliot has more goals than all of them with eight.

It's taken him just 31 games to match the goal total he recorded in 67 games with Edmonton last year.

"I feel pretty good," Pouliot said in KeyBank Center. "It's positive, and for the whole team it's good."

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It could be even better for the team come trade-deadline time. Of the pending unrestricted free agents – also known as deadline rentals – Pouliot is tied for ninth in goals. Teammate Evander Kane is fifth with 14 goals, so the Sabres could have a few bargaining chips.

The players, of course, are focused on building up Buffalo, not picturing their next home. The Sabres head into Thursday's game in Philadelphia on a 2-0-2 run that has lifted their spirits more than their overall record (8-17-6).

"We've got to build on it and keep the momentum," Pouliot said.

After falling out of favor in Edmonton, Pouliot turned to Buffalo because he figured he'd get a chance. He is. He has consistently lined up as the second left winger behind Kane, which means he skates with playmaking centers Ryan O'Reilly and Jack Eichel.

Pouliot has responded by tying for second on the team in goals. On a team that lacks finish, Pouliot is providing it. He is scoring on 17.4 percent of his shots, which is higher than his already-impressive career average of 13.4 percent.

"I just show up at the rink and try to play hard, try to play good and help the team as much as I can," he said. "The guys that I play with help a lot, too, and being in different situations in games helps."

Pouliot is an equal-opportunity scorer, connecting six times at even strength to go with one power-play goal and one short-handed tally. The Sabres are 6-0-1 when he scores and 7-0-1 when he registers a point.

NHL

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@NHL

Excuse me, pardon me, comin' through. #OTTvsBUF

8:33 PM - Dec 12, 2017

19 19 Replies 141 141 Retweets 629 629 likes

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The 31-year-old added another entry to the Sabres' highlight reel during Tuesday's 3-2 victory over Ottawa. He kick-started a three-goal second period by picking up the puck at his blue line, sneaking between two Senators at their blue line and slipping a shot between the pads of goaltender Mike Condon.

The goal energized the fans and made the Senators look silly, particularly Condon and Dion Phaneuf. The big defenseman shoved Pouliot, but the winger barely slowed while going past.

"I kind of picked my head up there at the last second and saw him stepping up, so he kind of surprised me a little bit," Pouliot said. "I thought he was going to put a check on me, and I just snuck by him luckily, and things went well after that."

Things are going well for the Sabres in terms of the contract. Pouliot has two more goals than fellow July 1 signees Nick Bonino (four years, \$16.4 million with Nashville), Justin Williams (two years, \$9 million with Carolina), Brian Boyle (two years, \$5.1 million with New Jersey) and Brett Connolly (two years, \$3 million with Washington).

Pouliot has 11 points, which is topped only by Williams' 20.

The one area Pouliot would like to improve is his consistency. He had one assist in the opening eight games, then went on a run of six goals and seven points in 10 games. He followed that with nine straight games without a point.

He has two goals and three points in the last four games, so Buffalo is hopeful it's the start of another hot streak.

The game in Philadelphia features streaking teams that sit at the bottom of the standings. While the Sabres have points in four straight, the Flyers have won four in a row. They've improved to 12-11-7, which is good for seventh in the eight-team Metropolitan Division but puts them just four points out of a wild-card spot.

Philly beat Toronto, 4-2, Tuesday to kick off a five-game homestand. The Flyers had lost six straight at home.

They'll be meeting a Buffalo team that is finally feeling good about its ability to make plays and get points.

"We're starting to make a few plays, starting to execute a little bit," right wing Kyle Okposo said. "We did a really good job with our middle guy on the ice. We hit him a couple times, especially in the second period, and we were able to get some speed. We were able to generate some chances that way, and we just did a better job of executing."

Story topics: Benoit Pouliot

Sabres rookie Victor Antipin learning NHL game

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

December 14, 2017

BUFFALO – Five years ago during the NHL lockout, Sabres center Ryan O’Reilly spent 12 games overseas with Magnitogorsk Metallurg, a Russian team in the Kontinental Hockey League.

Thanks to the work stoppage, the team featured a slew of notable NHL talents. In addition to O’Reilly, Metallurg also boasted Evgeni Malkin, Sergei Gonchar and Mats Zuccarello.

They also had a 20-year-old rookie defenseman who caught O’Reilly’s eye.

His name? Victor Antipin.

Back then, the 5-foot-11 Antipin wasn’t considered an NHL prospect. Still, the youngster’s speed and puck-handling skills impressed O’Reilly.

O’Reilly said he “absolutely” thought Antipin could play in the NHL someday.

“He was young, just kind of breaking into the league there, showed good maturity and (was a) significant player there,” O’Reilly said late last month. “You always look to that league and how ... guys can make it, if they could. I definitely thought for sure he could.”

Fast forward to today, and O’Reilly and Antipin are NHL teammates. The Sabres are on a season-best 2-0-2 run entering tonight’s road tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers.

Given the how impressive the Sabres looked for most of Tuesday’s 3-2 win against Ottawa, Antipin will likely be scratched for the third straight game tonight.

Antipin, who signed a one-year contract following a KHL All-Star campaign, has moved in and out of the lineup all season, playing 22 games and sitting out nine times.

The learning curve for European rookies can be difficult, especially an older one like Antipin who spent his entire career playing on a larger ice surface.

Like any newcomer, Antipin has often looked looked raw. He has only played twice since his turnover Dec. 1 led to a Pittsburgh goal. In his last outing, Friday’s 3-2 overtime loss in Chicago, Sabres coach Phil Housley played him a season-low seven minutes, 44 seconds. Other nights, however, Housley has utilized him 18 or more minutes.

“I understand the NHL game, I understand how to play now, it’s a different league,” Antipin said.

Despite getting scratched, Antipin has adapted and improved in just four months, earning some trust from Housley and his respect for studying his craft.

“Just the overall way he approaches the game, he wants to get better, he wants to learn,” Housley said. “I think he’s taken advantage of the time that we do have looking at video.”

Antipin said: “I watch video of my shifts, the coaches help me, I watch the games on TV.”

The Russian has acclimated in other ways. He quickly learned English and speaks the language well enough to comfortably conduct interviews. Instead of keeping to himself, he interacts with his teammates.

“When you come over, I couldn’t imagine going to another country where you didn’t speak the language and everyone else on the team spoke and there’s new surroundings and you don’t know anybody,” Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said earlier this season. “That’s got to be hard.”

Sitting out can also be hard. With Buffalo's defense almost healthy, Antipin could be a healthy scratch for a bit.

"It's a tough transition playing KHL, the different size ice, just different battles, different situations," O'Reilly said.

"Obviously, as he gets more and more comfortable, his game comes out. His talent, you can just tell, he's got a great hockey sense, he makes great plays out there.

"It's tough to be able to play this game and not communicate well, it's so hard to have to talk and help each other out. As he gets more comfortable, I think he's going to be producing more and more. Definitely it's been fun to watch. He keeps getting better."

Sharpen Up: December 13, 2017

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

December 13, 2017

With a win over Ottawa last night, the Sabres have earned points in four straight games, collecting six of a possible eight points over that stretch.

Robin Lehner made 24 saves in net in the 3-2 win while Benoit Pouliot, Kyle Okposo and Evander Kane scored for Buffalo.

The Sabres will fly out this afternoon in anticipation of tomorrow night's game against the Flyers in Philadelphia.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Recap: OTT 2, BUF 3

04:18 • December 12th, 2017

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

Phil Housley Postgame (12/12/17)

04:20 • December 12th, 2017

"We needed this win here tonight, not only for our fans but the guys inside that room," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It was really important we got this one tonight. It's a divisional game, been a heated rivalry, some good physical play on our part. It was good to see we could get a win for our fans."

Housley was pleased with the way the Sabres started the game, although it hadn't translated into much offense at the end of one period. The two teams combined for just 11 shots in the first, with the Sabres holding a 6-5 advantage.

Buffalo's focus entering the second period was to play the same for the most part, but with more of a shot mentality. That mindset translated into a pair of goals, from Pouliot and Okposo, which came just 1:12 apart early in the period.

(The Sabres are now 6-0-1 this season when Pouliot scores and 7-0-1 when he records a point. Pouliot leads all Sabres in lasting-lead goals this season, scoring four go-ahead goals that have given the Sabres leads that they never relinquished. - @SabresPR)

The Sabres were aided by a 3-for-3 night on the penalty kill, including 59 seconds at 5-on-3 in the second period. That kill protected their two-goal lead and kept momentum in their favor, opening the door for Kane to score on the power play less than two minutes later.

Benoit Pouliot Postgame 12/12/17

02:27 • December 12th, 2017

"That was huge," Pouliot, who took the first of two penalties leading to the 5-on-3, said. "I think that's what gave us the big boost, too. It's not always the power play that's going to get you the momentum. I think when you get a good kill, a big kill like that, especially 5-on-3, the boys get up, the boys rally and the boys feel good. That was huge for us."

With a four-game point streak finally showing some signs of progress, Okposo said the important thing now is to not take any win for granted. If the team continues to put work in, sticks with their preparation and focuses on execution, they'll give fans more reasons to cheer going forward.

Kyle Okposo Postgame (12/12/17)
02:34 • December 12th, 2017

"We had some big hits, we had some big goals, big penalty kills," Okposo said. "The fans, obviously, they're starving for a winner here. We want to make sure that we're giving them 100-percent effort every night and if we do that, we're going to have some success on home ice."

Lehner is now 5-0-2 in nine career appearances against his former club with a .955 save percentage and a 1.39 goals-against average.

Lehner with Duffer and Marty
02:48 • December 12th, 2017

With two assists on the night, Rasmus Ristolainen now has eight assists in his last seven games against the Senators.

Rasmus Ristolainen Postgame 12/12
01:30 • December 12th, 2017

If you somehow missed this...

Here's Nia Holloway, who plays Nala in The Lion King national tour, singing the U.S. national anthem before last night's game:

Nia Holloway sings U.S. anthem
01:38 • December 12th, 2017

Nia Holloway
@niaholloway

Thank you so much ! My first hockey game Anthem and jersey ! Never forgetting this ❤️👍
<https://twitter.com/buffalosabres/status/940735384765509633> ...

7:16 PM - Dec 12, 2017 · Buffalo, NY
41 41 Replies 31 31 Retweets 423 423 likes
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And we had other special guests at the game, too:

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Buffalo Sabres

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@BuffaloSabres

Shout out to the crew of USS Little Rock who joined us tonight & met with Ryan O'Reilly postgame.

Thank you for your service! us #Sabres

10:15 PM - Dec 12, 2017
6 6 Replies 18 18 Retweets 169 169 likes
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Coming up today

The Amerks are home against Utica so stay tuned to Amerks.com for all of the updates from Rochester.