



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

December 22, 2017

Sabres owners purchase women's league Buffalo Beauts

AP

John Wawrow

December 21, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres and Bills owners Terry and Kim Pegula are expanding their sports holdings by purchasing the National Women's Hockey League Buffalo Beauts in a first-of-its-kind sale for the 3-year-old professional league.

The Pegulas will become the first private owners to have full control of one of the NWHL's four franchises in a move that further expands the league's ties to the NHL. Two months ago, the New Jersey Devils reached what was called "a strategic alliance" with the Metropolitan Riveters in which they also gained partial ownership of the team.

The NWHL operates its two other franchises in Boston and Connecticut.

The defending champion Beauts already had ties with the Sabres in playing home games at the Pegula-operated HarborCenter hockey and entertainment facility.

Kim Pegula says the purchase represents her and Terry's commitment in contributing to the growth of women's hockey.

NWHL founder and commissioner Dani Rylan described the purchase as a significant step for women's hockey.

The Pegulas' purchase of the Beauts has the potential of providing the young league financial stability a year after the NWHL was forced to cut player salaries.

Reinhart avoids press box, ready for chance with Eichel

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

December 21, 2017

With one assist in his last 12 games and his ice time cut to just over 11 minutes Tuesday against Boston, Sam Reinhart seemed more likely to be headed for the press box than Jack Eichel's wing.

But coach Phil Housley said Thursday he's liked what he's seen from Reinhart of late and that it's time to give him a chance with the Sabres' top creative playmaker. So Reinhart will join Eichel and Zemgus Girgensons on one of the team's two key forward lines for Friday night's visit from the Philadelphia Flyers.

"He's playing well positionally and making some plays down low," Housley said after practice in KeyBank Center. "He just hasn't found the net so he's earned that opportunity to get back up there with Jack."

"That's where I'm most comfortable playing, reading and reacting off each other," Reinhart said. "We're able to talk things out and get familiar."

Reinhart has just five goals and six assists for the season in 34 games and is on a 12-goal pace. He hasn't scored since tallying in back-to-back games against Columbus and Minnesota on Nov. 20 and 22, respectively. The timing of his move up from a stint with Johan Larsson and Jordan Nolan is a tad odd, as Reinhart has just three shots on goal combined over the last four games.

"The last game I felt good," Reinhart insisted off his one-shot performance during Tuesday's 3-0 loss to the Bruins. "I'm just going to keep trying to build off that and hopefully the goals start coming. You can't deal with losing your ice. You can just come the next day and work and I really liked my practice [Wednesday] coming off of it. Just want to keep building off that."

Reinhart had skated Wednesday with Eichel and Evander Kane but Housley rebalanced the lines Thursday, putting Kane with Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo. Girgensons, who has just four points on the season and only one assist to show for his last 24 games, has done some of the best work of his career with Eichel.

The third line has Jacob Josefson centering Benoit Pouliot and Jason Pominville while Scott Wilson, Johan Larsson, Evan Rodrigues and Jordan Nolan all took turns on the fourth line.

All the juggling shenanigans is certainly justified. The Sabres have the worst offense in the league, with just 72 goals overall in 34 games and just 47 at five-on-five. Reinhart said he wasn't concerned about being a healthy scratch but did admit his continued slump does make the game a mental grind.

"Throughout my career I've always been pretty good at getting away from the game of hockey mentally when I'm away from the rink and using that to my advantage," he said. "But I will be honest with you guys that it's been tough to do that this year through a number of stretches.

"I think I've got to get back to that, be able to move on and get that belief in myself back. I know it's there, I know it's been there. As soon as I find that, I'll start banging those chances in. Even last game they were there and you've got to stick with it."

Housley admitted that Reinhart has been invisible for stretches during this slide but hopes to continue to see the 22-year-old battle to find the net again.

"When we've gone through this stretch of games where we said we were going in a good direction, I didn't feel he was going in a great direction with his production," Housley said. "Now that we've made some changes to try to find good line combinations ... When you lose a game or two, you try to change things and keep it fresh. The result of him being put up there with Jack and 'Z' today is from what he brought the last two games."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Sam Reinhart

Sabres Notebook: Lehner a snazzy masked man as Winter Classic prep cranks up

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

December 21, 2017

Just before practice started Thursday in KeyBank Center, Robin Lehner looked like something from the "Friday the 13th" series. He had on an old fiberglass mask worn by former NHL goalie Paul Harrison with the Toronto Maple Leafs in the late 70s and for six games during the 1981-82 season with the Sabres. Lehner was apparently pondering it for the Winter Classic and let goalie coach Andrew Allen take some shots on him.

It only took a couple shots for Lehner to get Allen to lob one up high. Experiment over.

"It was an old Buffalo mask. I tried it on and I have a lot of respect for them," Lehner said sheepishly. "I took one off the dome and it felt pretty good. We'll see if we can beef it up."

Lehner said he might consider wearing the mask for warmups when the Sabres and Rangers play Jan. 1 in Citi Field but it seems unlikely it would be his game gear. Lehner spent the rest of practice with a new design by Swedish mask maven Dave Gunnarsson and it featured the new secondary charging Buffalo logo created for the game plus tributes to Dominik Hasek.

"It turned out fine," Lehner said as he displayed it to reporters at his locker. "There's a nice look to it. Couple of Dominik Haseks on it both sides. I tell Dave what I want and he's a pretty creative guy who does what he wants."

ADVERTISEMENT

Robin Lehner's Winter Classic mask features the new Sabres secondary logo for the game and a tribute to Dominik Hasek (Buffalo Sabres photo)

Lehner said he had not seen the new goalie pads unveiled Wednesday on Instagram by Rangers counterpart Henrik Lundqvist and that he may not have any new pads in the works.

"I'm deliberating on a few options," he said. "And we'll see what happens."

All the equipment talk shows how players can bring more personality to the outdoor game and get away from the monotony of just another regular season contest.

"We all look forward to it," Lehner said. "It's going to be a helluva experience, something we're all going to remember for a while."

Lundqvist will be wearing pads that are a tribute to New York City and the Mets for the game. The "NY" logo the Rangers will wear on their jerseys dominates the pads, as it's set atop a bridge to honor what connects all the city's boroughs. The background is the Mets' famous skyline logo with the stitches of a baseball.

"Obviously we're there as guests," Lundqvist told New York reporters. "So it feels good to kind of pay the respect a bit and appreciate that we get this opportunity to play in their home field."

Lundqvist used pinstripe pads to pay homage to the Yankees when the Rangers played a pair of games in Yankee Stadium in 2014.

Coach Phil Housley said the Sabres were happy to provide Alexander Nylander a chance to leave Rochester and play for Sweden in next week's World Junior Championships here.

"All our prospects that are going to be able to go play this tournament, it gives them a chance to represent their country and get back with teammates they've played with before and are familiar with," Housley said. "We want to have him succeed. You can get a good boost of confidence if your country does well and that's what we're looking for from him: To continue to develop his game."

Nylander tied for the scoring lead in last year's tournament in Toronto and Montreal with 12 points in seven games and was named to the tourney's all-star team. Sweden lost to Russia, 2-1, in the bronze medal game. He finished sixth in scoring in the 2016 event in Finland with nine points.

The five players who were ahead of Nylander in 2016 have all become NHL regulars: They were the Finnish trio of Jesse Puljujarvi (Edmonton), Sebastian Aho (Carolina) and Patrik Laine (Winnipeg), and the American duo of Auston Matthews (Toronto) and Matthew Tkachuk (Calgary).

The NBC Sports Network "Road to the Winter Classic" crew was at practice again Thursday, scouring the locker room for thoughts on Lehner from players. Longtime assistant equipment manager and dressing room cut-up George Babcock also spoke about the goalie in rapid-fire fashion as he climbed Lehner's stall to rearrange the masks and gloves on the shelves.

Housley, who has been featured prominently in the first two episodes, said he watched the series premiere last week but had not yet caught the second installment. That one included his quick but sharp words to his team in the dressing room during and after last week's losses to Philadelphia and Carolina, as well as time at home in his Buffalo condo with his wife, Karin, discussing her bid for the vacant U.S. Senate seat in Minnesota.

"They do such a terrific job in editing and putting that together," Housley said of the show's traveling crew. "You have to thank the NHL and NBC for doing a great job and making me look good."

The Sabres enter Friday's game against Philadelphia with a 4-10-2 home record, second-worst in the league to Arizona's 3-11-1 mark. No one else in the Eastern Conference has more than seven regulation home losses. The Sabres' 2-5-3 record over the last 10 games is second-worst in the league to the Coyotes' 1-7-2.

Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek entered Thursday's play leading the NHL in assists (34) and was tied for third in points (42) with John Tavares and Josh Bailey of the New York Islanders. The Flyers are 7-1 in their last eight games after snapping a 10-game losing streak that saw them go 0-5-5.

Story topics: Alex Nylander/ Buffalo Sabres/ Henrik Lundqvist/ New York Rangers/ Robin Lehner/ Winter Classic/ World Juniors

Sabres players re-live their World Junior memories

WGR

Brayton Wilson

December 21, 2017

The 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship is set to begin on Tuesday when the first game of the tournament between the Czech Republic and Russia gets underway at KeyBank Center. It will be the second time in the tournament's history that Buffalo will play host to the eleven-day tournament, the first time since 2011.

The annual tournament showcases some of the best players from around the world under the age of 20. This year, the Buffalo Sabres will likely have five players representing the organization from four different countries.

Many of the current Sabres have played in this tournament in the past. All together, 15 players on the current roster have played in at least one tournament in their careers. Five players on the current roster have gotten the chance to represent their country in multiple World Junior tournaments.

Every player's experience has been a different one, whether it ends with a medal or not, but the message is pretty similar all around.

"Any time you get a chance to represent your country is a special thing," said Sabres forward Kyle Okposo after practice on Thursday. "To put the USA jersey on and hear the anthem after a win is really special. Wish I would've been able to play in one stateside, but it's a great experience. You have the eyes of the hockey world watching you for a week and a half, and it's a really fun tournament."

"It was the biggest moment of my life at that point," said Sabres defenseman Marco Scandella of his World Juniors experience. "It's just huge playing for Team Canada when the tournament was held in Canada. It felt like a surreal experience. The World Juniors in Canada is bigger than the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Everyone is watching that during the holidays, and just trying to find out who the future stars are going to be. Once I got to that level and got to play, it was just magical."

Sabres head coach Phil Housley never played in a World Junior tournament in his playing career, but was fortunate enough to coach the 2013 United States national team to a gold medal in Russia. Housley gets what it means for the players to get an opportunity to wear the nation's colors and play for the right to be called the world's best hockey team.

"Any time you get to represent your country it's an honor. There's a lot of pride that goes into it when you put on that sweater," Housley said with Howard Simon on WGR on Wednesday. "I think [Team USA] has come such a long way with consistency in our hockey program. It's a great experience. The last time the World Juniors were here in 2011, the fans got behind us and gave us tremendous support. Being able to win a medal, even though we lost that big game against Canada, it was a great experience. It just showcases a lot of the future stars of the game. There's going to be a lot of really good players in this tournament. It's going to be an exciting time, and hopefully the USA can get the back-to-back gold."

Many current NHL players took part in the 2011 World Juniors and have gone on to have considerable success in the league. Two current Sabres players took part in that tournament in goalie Robin Lehner and forward Johan Larsson. Both played for Sweden, who failed to medal after losing in the bronze medal game against the United States.

For Larsson, coming to Buffalo in 2011 was a whole new experience for him at 18 years of age.

"It meant a lot," Larsson said. "For us (Sweden), the World Juniors is kind of big. Coming over here is kind of the first time coming over to the U.S. or Canada. It's on the TV, you're on the big scene for a couple of weeks, so you learn the whole tournament was kind of crazy. It was fun playing in every game, the media was good, and it was a great experience."

Although Sweden failed to medal in 2011, they bounced back the next year with a gold medal win over the Russians in Alberta, Canada. That year, Larsson led the Swedes as team captain while racking up six assists in six games played.

"We knew we had a good team, we had a solid team," Larsson said. "The whole year we were playing good with that team, and we knew it was the time. We just knew this team was going to do it. We had a lot of good character guys. Definitely going all the way in Canada, I can't explain how exciting and fun it was."

Another former Sabre who knows what it's like to win gold at the World Junior Championship is forward Sam Reinhart. After failing to medal in the 2014 tournament, Reinhart and the Canadians returned to home soil and dominated the field en route to a gold medal win over the Russians.

"The enthusiasm that comes with junior hockey in Canada from those little towns like the one I played in in Cranbrook (British Columbia) is so underestimated. That's the time of year where it really shows," Reinhart said. "The passion that wipes across the country is great to be a part of. Whether you're at home, overseas or this close to the border, you feel that support especially being a Canadian.

"To do it the way we did in Toronto, you couldn't have set up a better scenario for us."

One of the biggest rivalries in hockey will take shape once again this year at the tournament, but with a unique twist to the tradition. For the first time in World Junior history, the United States and Canada will play one another in an outdoor game at New Era Field on December 29th.

In the tournament's 42-year history, the U.S. and Canada have played some all-time classic games. The two teams have met up several times in the medal rounds, including last year's tournament where the U.S. captured the gold medal in a shootout in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

While many of the players in the NHL have a close relationship with one another, regardless of where they come from, the rivalry between the U.S. and Canada will likely continue for many more years.

"Everyone has their own opinions. You've got Canada-Russia or Canada-U.S. from our perspectives, those are the two huge ones," Reinhart said. "For me, Canada-U.S. was always the biggest. Especially at that age when you're more familiar with the U.S. guys being from Canada, whether you play with them or against them numerous time growing up. That's the one that was a big one, that made it easy to get up for. I can't imagine a better place for that to be set this year in Buffalo.

"It's just huge," Scandella echoes. "You don't want to lose to the U.S. if you're Canadian and vice-versa. You just know you're playing for your country, for pride. It's a big moment in hockey. Everyone watches the World Juniors. You don't want to lose and have that hanging over your head for the rest of your career."

On Wednesday, the Sabres officially loaned prospect Alexander Nylander to the Swedish national hockey team for the World Juniors, making him the fifth prospect to likely compete in the tournament. Nylander joins fellow Swede Marcus Davidsson, Vojtech Budik (Czech Republic), Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (Finland), and Casey Mittelstadt (United States) as the Sabres' representatives in Buffalo.

Housley is hoping that this tournament can give Nylander, and every Sabres prospect an added boost of energy heading into the second half of the hockey season.

"It gives all of our prospects that are going to be able to go play in this tournament a chance to represent their country," Housley said following practice on Thursday. "[Nylander] can get back with some of the teammates he's played with before and that he's familiar with. Obviously we want to have him succeed. I think you can get a good boost of confidence if your country does well and that's what we're looking from him, just to continue to develop his game."

On the ice Thursday, Housley did some more shuffling of the lines as he continues to look for ways to get some more positive outcomes on a nightly basis.

Here's how the lines looked:

Kane - O'Reilly - Okposo

Girgensons - Eichel - Reinhart

Pouliot - Josefson - Pominville

Nolan - Larsson - Wilson

Scandella - Ristolainen

McCabe - Bogosian

Gorges - Beaulieu

Antipin - Falk

Evan Rodrigues was the extra skater for the Sabres. Here's also a look at how the powerplays lined up:

PP1:

Kane - O'Reilly - Okposo

Eichel - Ristolainen

PP2:

Pouliot - Reinhart - Pominville

Scandella – Beaulieu

Sabres have become tight-knit group

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

December 21, 2017

BUFFALO – During Wednesday’s practice, Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian experienced what he called a “Bogo moment.”

“I fell on the ice and everyone started laughing,” Bogosian said Thursday. “We always give each other a hard time.”

Actually, it was a little funnier than a simple spill.

“Bogo went headfirst into the boards,” Sabres winger Kyle Okposo said. “I was cracking up.”

The affable Bogosian, who always seems to be smiling, said he enjoyed the post-tumble “banter.”

“Typical practice thing where someone goes down and everyone starts making fun of him,” he said.

Bogosian’s teammates likely reminded him about Wednesday’s incident until he left the rink.

“If you do something that’s funny or careless or whatever, you can expect to hear about it the rest of the day,” Okposo said. “Guys are going to laugh at your expense.”

The Sabres have endured a miserable season, winning only eight games, the NHL’s second-lowest total. They’ve lost three straight games (0-2-1) and 16 of the last 19 contests (3-11-5) entering Friday’s tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers, their last game at KeyBank Center until Jan. 9.

Still, the Sabres have mostly stayed positive throughout another losing campaign. Hours after Tuesday’s 3-0 home loss to Boston, they were loose and laughing.

In less than four months, the Sabres, a team that has used 13 new players this season, have quickly become a close-knit group.

“It’s just a bunch of guys that get along together on and off the ice,” said winger Jason Pominville, who rejoined the Sabres in June after five years in Minnesota. “Some guys have played together a little while, some guys have come in from different teams. Overall, we’re a young team. It seems like all the young guys get along together.”

Bogosian understands outsiders probably think the Sabres are hanging their heads.

“We’d like our record to be a lot better,” he said. “But we’re a tight group in here, we try to be as positive as possible. You got to have fun with it, right? You hang your head and you’re (ticked) off every day, that’s not going to make you better all of a sudden overnight.”

The Sabres’ core group – guys like Bogosian, defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, forwards Jack Eichel, Evander Kane, Ryan O’Reilly and Sam Reinhart and goalie Robin Lehner – have been together three or four seasons.

“When that’s in place, it’s pretty easy for someone new to come in,” Bogosian said. “We welcome people with open arms and try to be good teammates and good people. That’s the cool thing about this team, there’s a lot of really good people on it. Take hockey out of that, I think there’s a lot of people who have a lot of character, humility.”

Those kind of people, Bogosian said, pull a group “close together.”

“We all want each other to do well,” he said. “When you have that, you’re pulling for the guy to your left, to your right, nothing bad’s going to come out of that.”

Lehner said: “It’s a lot of good guys in here, open-minded guys. They take care of each other. Everyone’s involved with everyone.”

Of course, like any close group, the Sabres have their squabbles.

“Being tight and being able to push each other and sometimes snap on each other, it’s a good thing,” Pominville said. “So that’s always a good thing where guys know how far they can push it.

He added: “There’s those funny moments, there’s the angry moments, a lot of stuff that goes on that no one really sees. But there’s been both.”

For first-year Sabres coach Phil Housley, his group has made a disappointing season easier to handle.

“I really like the group, they’re pushing for each other, and it’s difficult when you go through a long period like this where you haven’t had a lot of success,” he said. “We’re in games and not finishing games. That could really go in a different direction because it’s hard mentally coming to the rink, getting ready for the next game when you’ve been through it.

“But ... they’ve really stayed tight, they’re close, even in tough times. We’re going to have to really lean on each other now.”

Sabres goalie Robin Lehner debuts different masks

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

December 21, 2017

BUFFALO – For a few moments this morning, Robin Lehner looked, well, a little scary. Instead of sporting his usual head protection at the beginning of practice, the Sabres goalie warmed up wearing a 1970s-style “Jason” mask and a winter hat.

Lehner took a few lights shots from goalie coach Andrew Allen, including one off the primitive mask.

“Old Buffalo mask, tried it on, I have a lot of respect for them,” Lehner said inside KeyBank Center. “I took one off the dome, felt pretty good. We’ll see if we can beef it up.”

Beef it up for the upcoming Winter Classic on New Year’s Day at Citi Field. Lehner would like to warm up for the outdoor game wearing the old mask, which belonged to former goalie Paul Harrison, who played six games for the Sabres in 1981-82.

“They’ll aim for my head,” Lehner joked.

Lehner said someone brought the vintage mask in and he’s “borrowing” it. Goalies stopped wearing masks with eye holes in the early 1980s.

After Lehner took the mask off, he donned the modern one he will wear for the Winter Classic. The new blue and yellow mask by David Gunnarsson, his regular artist, features legendary Sabres goalie Dominik Hasek and the Winter Classic logo.

“We all look forward to it, it’s going to be a hell of an experience,” Lehner said of the Winter Classic. “It’s something we’re all going to remember for a while.”

Lehner said he doesn’t know if he will wear any other special equipment for the outdoor game.

Sabres goalie Chad Johnson wore his new Winter Classic mask earlier this week.

In other news, Sabres coach Phil Housley hopes sending forward prospect Alexander Nylander to Team Sweden for the upcoming World Junior Championship helps jumpstart the youngster’s season.

The Sabres assigned Nylander to Sweden late Wednesday.

“All our prospects that are going to be able to play in this tournament, it really gives them a chance to represent their country and get back with some teammates that he’s played with before and familiar with,” Housley said. “Obviously, we want to see him succeed. I think you can get a big boost of confidence if your country does well.”

Nylander, 19, has two goals, six points and a minus-9 rating in 15 AHL games with the Rochester Americans this season.

[View image on Twitter](#)

[View image on Twitter](#)

Buffalo Sabres

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@BuffaloSabres

Testing out for #WinterClassic?

Robin Lehner taking a few shots wearing this mask, used by Gerry Desjardins in the 70s, before practice. #Sabres

10:52 AM - Dec 21, 2017

62 62 Replies 505 505 Retweets 1,820 1,820 likes

Sabres' Lehner pays tribute to Hasek with Winter Classic mask

Sportsnet

Josh Beneteau

December 21, 2017

@jbenny15

December 21, 2017, 2:30 PM

11

Buffalo Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner is paying tribute to an all-time great with the new mask he'll be wearing during the upcoming Winter Classic.

[View image on Twitter](#)[View image on Twitter](#)[View image on Twitter](#)

Buffalo Sabres

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@BuffaloSabres

It's here: @RobinLehner's 2018 #WinterClassic Mask by @artofdave.

Includes a tribute to #39 on both sides. #Sabres

1:50 PM - Dec 21, 2017

28 28 Replies 233 233 Retweets 1,020 1,020 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

The new mask features Dominik Hasek's No. 39 and a photo of him making one of his signature flop saves.

Hasek tended the net for the Sabres for nine seasons, winning six Vezina and two Hart Trophies, while leading Buffalo to its only appearance in the Stanley Cup Final.

The mask is much more modern than the one Lehner was skating around with before practice on Thursday.

[View image on Twitter](#)

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@BuffaloSabres

Testing out for #WinterClassic?

Robin Lehner taking a few shots wearing this mask, used by Gerry Desjardins in the 70s, before practice. #Sabres

10:52 AM - Dec 21, 2017

62 62 Replies 505 505 Retweets 1,820 1,820 likes

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Testing out for #WinterClassic?

Robin Lehner taking a few shots wearing this mask, used by Gerry Desjardins in the 70s, before practice. #Sabres
pic.twitter.com/ftCf6WWEQ0

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@BuffaloSabres

Correction: According to Rip Simonick, this is a mask from Paul Harrison who played for the #Sabres in 1981-82.

11:05 AM - Dec 21, 2017

2 2 Replies 17 17 Retweets 125 125 likes

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21h

Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

Replying to @BuffaloSabres

Correction: According to Rip Simonick, this is a mask from Paul Harrison who played for the #Sabres in 1981-82.

Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

Robin Lehner says he hopes to wear the Harrison mask. "At least for warmups." He says he's borrowing it for a bit. #Sabres

11:43 AM - Dec 21, 2017

7 7 Replies 8 8 Retweets 112 112 likes

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The first one looks a little bit safer.

The latest edition of the Winter Classic takes place Jan. 1 at Citi Field in New York featuring the Sabres and Rangers.

As Winter Classic approaches, Lehner has fun with equipment at practice

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

December 21, 2017

As the new year continues to draw closer, more and more signs of the Buffalo Sabres' involvement in the upcoming Winter Classic continue to pop up in their dressing room at KeyBank Center. First royal blue gloves appeared in the stalls, followed by pants of the same color.

After Chad Johnson debuted a Winter Classic inspired goalie mask earlier in the week, Robin Lehner joined in on the fun on Thursday. The goalie took warm-up shots prior to practice sporting an old-fashioned mask reminiscent of the 1970s, topped with a toque.

Sadly, it was a short-lived experiment. After testing what it felt like to take a shot off the face, Lehner switched into a more traditional mask he had customized for the upcoming event. At the very least, he plans to wear the old-school mask for warm ups.

"I have a lot of respect for them," Lehner said. "I took one off the dome, felt pretty good. We'll see if we can beef it up."

Sabres Now (12/21/17)

01:17 • December 21st, 2017

The other mask Lehner wore Thursday, which you can view in the Tweet below, includes the image of Sabres legend Dominik Hasek painted along the sides.

[View image on Twitter](#)[View image on Twitter](#)[View image on Twitter](#)

Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

It's here: @RobinLehner's 2018 #WinterClassic Mask by @artofdave.

Includes a tribute to #39 on both sides. #Sabres

1:50 PM - Dec 21, 2017

28 28 Replies 233 233 Retweets 1,022 1,022 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

While the Sabres have four games remaining between now and the Winter Classic, coach Phil Housley said the team as a whole is looking forward to participating in the event.

"You just go back to your childhood and that's what it's all about, being outdoors," Housley said. "Playing on a pond, playing on a rink that had just been frozen the night before. When you look at it from that perspective and just playing outdoors in general, it's exciting for our group."

The Sabres have two games left before the holiday break, a back-to-back set that begins at home against Philadelphia on Friday and concludes in Carolina on Saturday. After the break, they'll head to New York City for road games against the Islanders and New Jersey Devils prior to meeting the Rangers on New Year's Day.

Coverage of Friday's game begins at 6:30 p.m. with GMC Gamenight on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.

Nylander assigned to World Juniors

Jason Botterill has said in the past that he's a strong advocate for the World Junior Championship, including in the case of Alexander Nylander. The Sabres officially assigned Nylander to Team Sweden for the tournament following Rochester's 3-1 win over Belleville on Wednesday night.

Nylander, selected by Buffalo with the No. 8 pick in 2016, has played in two World Junior Championships for Sweden. He was named to the tournament's All-Star team last year after scoring 12 points (5+7) in seven games.

"All our prospects that are going to be able to play in this tournament, it really gives them a chance to represent their country and get back with some teammates that he's played with before," Housley said. "We want to see him succeed. I think you can get a big boost of confidence if your country does well and that's what we're looking for from him."

Other Sabres prospects expected to compete in the tournament include forwards Casey Mittelstadt (USA) and Marcus Davidsson (Sweden), goalie Ukko Pekka-Luukkonen (Finland) and defenseman Vojtech Budik (Czech Republic).

The 2018 World Junior Championship kicks off in Buffalo on Dec. 26.

Lines at practice

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 15 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
67 Benoit Pouliot - 10 Jacob Josefson - 29 Jason Pominville
17 Jordan Nolan - 22 Johan Larsson - 20 Scott Wilson
71 Evan Rodrigues

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
19 Jake McCabe - 47 Zach Bogosian
93 Victor Antipin - 41 Justin Falk
4 Josh Gorges - 82 Nathan Beaulieu

Sharpen Up: December 21, 2017

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

December 21, 2017

The 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship is quickly approaching and Team Sweden received good news last night. Alexander Nylander, Buffalo's first-round pick in 2016, who is in the midst of his second season with the Rochester Americans, has been assigned to Sweden's roster.

The tournament begins Tuesday here in Buffalo. Tickets and other tournament information are available at BuffaloWorldJuniors.com.

Here's what you need to know.

It'll be Nylander's third tournament appearance. He has led Team Sweden in points at each of the last two IIHF World Junior Championships and tied for the tournament lead in 2017 with 12 points (5+7) in seven games.

The Sabres' first-round pick (8th overall) at the 2016 NHL Draft, Nylander has totaled 34 points (12+22) in 79 games during his first two professional seasons with the Rochester Americans (AHL).

"This is a tremendous chance for Alex to play for his country at the upcoming tournament," Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill said. "The World Junior Championship is a prestigious and challenging tournament that we are so excited to be hosting here in Buffalo. This opportunity will provide another important step in Alex's development."

Sabres prospects Casey Mittelstadt (USA), Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (FIN), Marcus Davidsson (SWE) and Vojtech Budik are also set to participate in the tournament.

Yesterday's Sabres practice

Sabres Now (12/20/17)

01:34 • December 20th, 2017

From the Ice Level Practice Report...

Well after practice ended at KeyBank Center on Wednesday morning, Sam Reinhart and Ryan O'Reilly were the last two members of the Buffalo Sabres to leave the ice and enter the dressing room. That much is no surprise; the two have been participating in post-practice drills together dating back to Reinhart's rookie season.

But while Reinhart has continued to work as hard as anyone, it hasn't translated into production as of late. The third-year forward has tallied just one point, an assist, in his last 12 games. He admitted Wednesday that it's been the most difficult stretch of his young career.

"It's not easy," Reinhart said. "I'm showing up and working as hard as I can every day, and that's all I can do right now."

If Wednesday's practice is any indication, Reinhart will have a chance to make an impact on the scoresheet when the Sabres host the Philadelphia Flyers on Friday night. After skating just 11:05 against Boston on Tuesday night, he practiced on the top line with Evander Kane and Jack Eichel.

Other changes to the lines on Wednesday included Scott Wilson, a healthy scratch on Tuesday, skating with Evan Rodrigues at center and Johan Larsson on the wing. Jason Pominville skated on a line with Benoit Pouliot and Jacob Josefson, while Jordan Nolan served as the extra forward.

Phil Housley (12/20/17)

04:51 • December 20th, 2017

"When you're not winning, like I said, we're going to mix things up, change our lines, try to find a winning formula," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "Just with Sam, there's a different expectation for him. He's proven that he can provide points and production offensively. He's getting an opportunity."

Attending tomorrow night's home game?

The Sabres will once again provide fans a chance to do some holiday shopping while supporting the Buffalo Sabres Foundation with the return of the annual autographed light-up ornament surprise this Friday, Dec. 22, before and during the team's game against the Philadelphia Flyers at 7 p.m.

With a \$20 donation to the Sabres Foundation, fans will receive a light-up holiday ornament autographed by a Buffalo Sabres player. This year's ornament features the charging buffalo logo that appears as a shoulder patch on the team's jersey for the 2018 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic.

Starting at 5 p.m., the Sabres' wives and girlfriends will begin selling the ornaments at tables at the top of the escalators of the KeyBank Center 100 Level pavilion and by the 200 level bridge. The ornaments will be sold gift-wrapped, keeping the player who autographed each one a surprise. The tables will remain open while supplies last. All proceeds will benefit the Buffalo Sabres Foundation.

The Buffalo Sabres Foundation is a New York State not-for-profit corporation, qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and qualified as a public charity. The Buffalo Sabres Foundation was established in 1995 and reinvigorated in 2011 following the acquisition of the Buffalo Sabres by Terry and Kim Pegula.

Coming up today

Sabretooth is just doing everything he can to remain atop the mascot power ranking.

One Buffalo

@One_Buffalo

.@Sabretooth_NHL surprised @thurmanthomas with his own custom @BuffaloSabres Winter Classic jersey on the @JohnMurphyShow this afternoon! #OneBuffalo

3:54 PM - Dec 20, 2017

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Stay tuned for some holiday cheer later today.

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Sabretooth

✓

@Sabretooth_NHL

.@BarDown just wait and see what I have up my sleeve this week! 🤖

1:42 PM - Dec 20, 2017

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We'll also have full practice coverage for you here when the Sabres take the ice at KeyBank Center.