



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

December 27, 2017

Sabres owner Terry Pegula: 'Pretty obvious our team in the NHL needs some goal-scoring'

The Buffalo News

By Nick Veronica

December 26, 2017

Buffalo Bills and Sabres owner Terry Pegula made a radio appearance on WGR-550 AM Tuesday to discuss the 2018 World Junior Ice Hockey Championship, which Buffalo is hosting this week.

Asked which players he is excited to see play in the tournament, Pegula said all of the Sabres' prospects, but specifically mentioned the forwards – Alex Nylander (Sweden), Casey Mittelstadt (USA) and Marcus Davidsson (Sweden).

"I want to see how they perform. It's pretty obvious our team in the NHL needs some goal-scoring," Pegula said. "So it'd be nice to see these guys fill the net a little bit."

The Sabres have scored the fewest goals in the NHL so far this season. The team also has goaltending prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen of Finland in the tournament, as well as defenseman Vojtech Budik of the Czech Republic.

Much of the conversation on the "The Instigators" radio show with former Sabres Martin Biron and Craig Rivet also included a discussion of Sunday's Bills game and the controversial reversed Kelvin Benjamin touchdown call, during which Pegula said "we have to fix" replay in the NFL.

Sabres' entire Winter Classic week will be spent in New York City area

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

December 26, 2017

It will be a big week in the Big Apple and environs for the Buffalo Sabres.

It's three games in six days, including a spot in the NHL's premier regular season showcase. Certainly the league and the Sabres were hoping that Buffalo was not going to be in last place in the Eastern Conference heading into this stretch but that's where the Sabres will likely be when they play the New York Rangers outdoors Jan. 1 at Citi Field in Queens.

The Sabres have been looking forward to this game since word leaked in March, so they're going to try to make the best of the opportunity.

"Being named the new head coach in June and knowing this time was coming, you feel very fortunate," said Sabres coach Phil Housley. "I'm really looking forward to it. I'm honored. I think our group is looking forward to it ... When we get to that point, we'd like to be in a better position but we're representing Buffalo and this organization and the fans and the community. We're going to try to do our best to win that game because it's a great opportunity for our organization."

The NHL's collective bargaining agreement mandates that teams are off from both games and practices Dec. 24-26. Teams can travel the morning of Dec. 27 for a game that night and that's what the Sabres will be doing, leaving Buffalo Wednesday morning and heading right for a morning skate at Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

The Sabres play the New York Islanders there Wednesday before heading to practice Thursday in Newark, N.J. They play the New Jersey Devils Friday night in Prudential Center and are scheduled to practice again in the Devils' attached secondary facility on Saturday. Things start to get real on New Year's Eve with a 10 a.m. practice outdoors at Citi Field.

The Winter Classic is set for a 1 p.m. faceoff Monday and the Sabres, remember, are designated as the home team for the game because the Rangers' tax agreement with the city does not allow them to stage home games outside of Madison Square Garden.

"I'm looking forward to Wednesday in Brooklyn right now," center Jack Eichel said after Saturday's 4-2 loss in Carolina. "They're a hot team right now and last time we went in there, we got smoked pretty good (a 5-1 loss on Oct. 7).

"The whole week is going to be really good. I'm looking forward to it. Hopefully that can do some good for us here. We have to find a way to start stringing wins together. It just can't be one, one, one, one."

The Sabres finished their pre-Christmas schedule with a 9-20-7 record, worst in the East and 30th overall in the NHL. They posted just one two-game winning streak, and that came back in October. The trip figures to be a rugged one.

The Rangers and Islanders enter the resumption of play 19-13-4 and tied for the East's two wild-card slots. Meanwhile, the Devils (21-9-5) are the surprise leaders of the Metropolitan Division one year after finishing last in the East.

The World Junior Championship has kicked the Sabres out of KeyBank Center until Jan. 9 but the NHL at least gave them a decent road trip; the team will stay in the same Lower Manhattan hotel for the entire week. When Buffalo hosted the World Juniors seven years ago, the Sabres were furious when they saw an NHL schedule that started with a trip to Calgary and Edmonton, came home for a New Year's Day game the team requested – and then sent them back on the road, all the way to San Jose, Denver and Phoenix.

"Certainly it's an inconvenience to us being out of our building," admitted Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill. "But I also think it's been great that the NHL put us in New York for a week at a time and we're not bouncing from hotel to hotel. We're based in one spot and that's a little bit better."

Things get more difficult after the Winter Classic. The Sabres return home immediately after that game and head back on the road Jan. 3 for a game the next night in Minnesota. They play Jan. 5 in Winnipeg and Jan. 7 in Philadelphia before finally playing their next home game against the Jets on Jan. 9.

But this entire segment of the season is mostly about the Winter Classic. It's the game the Sabres have been asked about for a month, pretty much as soon as the NBC Sports Network reality show cameras started showing up around the rink.

"There's a lot of buildup for it and your families will start to come," said winger Kyle Okposo. "It's a special game so you've got to cherish the moment and have fun with it. I really like the buildup, the family skate, all the media, seeing the baseball stadium, everything leading up to the game with the anthem and performances. I'm really looking forward to all that."

"My family is coming the 29th and they'll have the whole weekend in New York," added defenseman Jake McCabe. "It will be great to have a couple dinners with them, they'll be in New York for New Year's Eve. You never know how many of these you'll have in your career. This might be the only one. To be able to share it with family and friends will be great and I know the families are really looking forward to it as well."

Mike Harrington: Empty seats, replay review make for ugly opening day

Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

December 26, 2017

It's the day after Christmas, a holiday they call "Boxing Day" on the other side of the Peace Bridge. We've got the greatest under-20 hockey players in the world in our midst for the next 10 days. I should be in a good mood. The World Junior Championship was the bomb when it made its debut here seven years ago.

So why am I thinking this event's boom is going to go bust here this time around?

Tuesday was not an auspicious start.

There might have been 2,000 folks in the KeyBank Center stands to see the Czech Republic's upset of Russia in the opener. Canada got better as its 4-2 victory over Finland went along in a game played in front of maybe 8,000 fans. Team USA battered Denmark in front of a pathetic house of maybe 5,000 -- and officials closed the 300 level and offered fans comp seats down below. Which had to make folks who paid for that level super-duper happy about the extra money they shelled out.

Organizers have to be choking on their hot chocolate after the intimate gatherings that entered the building. The Canada-Russia game played here on Dec. 26, 2010 drew a sellout crowd of 18,690. The US-Finland game that day drew 14,093. So what the heck happened Tuesday?

I hate to be I-told-you-so guy. But I told you so.

It was 11 months ago I wrote that USA Hockey and the Sabres better heed the warnings of all the empty seats last year in Toronto and especially Montreal. But they didn't listen to me, trying to force overpriced ticket packages down the throats of Canadian and Buffalo fans, seemingly as a way to fill seats for Friday's USA-Canada outdoor game in Orchard Park that now looks to be an utter Freezefest.

It looks like they're going to reap what they sow.

Seven years later, the Sabres are a scourge rather than a playoff team, the Bills are fighting for the postseason, the Canadian dollar isn't doing as well, the Leafs are soaring and Canadian junior fans have been hit with high prices in both 2015 and 2017. It's a bad combination for Buffalo and if USA Hockey and Sabres officials didn't see this all coming, shame on them.

The potential for embarrassment here is high. Nobody should buy a ticket from the box office, where you could pay up to \$75, with all the tickets floating around StubHub and offers now showing up, of all places, on Groupon. Parking lots near the arena were shamefully pushing prices to \$20 and \$25 Tuesday when they're often in the \$10-\$15 range for Sabres games.

Organizers don't deserve any luck for their foolishness but they're not getting any either. The weather is brutal, and it's going to render moot the neat idea of Championship Village over at Canalside. Who's walking over there in all this wind and cold? Even the ice skating rink at the Aud site is going to be underutilized.

You wonder if it will be too cold to even go outdoors Friday at New Era Field. What kind of shape is the stadium in if they're calling out the seat shovelers again? And how about Sunday's USA-Finland game? An interesting attraction on a weekend afternoon at 4 p.m with a key Sabres prospect on each side. But whoops! The Bills-Dolphins game just got flexed to 4:25. There's a friends-and-family crowd for sure now.

The hockey itself was fine. It's easy to see what the fuss is all about around Team USA and Sabres No. 1 pick Casey Mittelstadt. But we couldn't even get through the first six minutes of Canada-Finland before that scourge of sports -- video replay -- intruded on the proceedings.

Canada's Boris Katchouk was awarded a goal on a breakaway even though he clearly crashed into Finland goalie/Sabres prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and knocked the net off its moorings before the puck slid in. It was obvious what happened.

The play was foolishly called a goal on the ice. And before you could say "Kelvin Benjamin", this replay review refused to change the call and awarded the goal. It was equally bizarre as the egregious reversal we saw Sunday and it came on the very day Sabres owner Terry Pegula spoke on his team-produced radio show and brilliantly dressed down NFL replay in the wake of the Fiasco in Foxborough.

You had to wonder if Robert Kraft and Al Riveron were running replay for the International Ice Hockey Federation too.

When I asked Canada coach Dominique Ducharme if he was concerned about the video review, he literally smirked at me and said, "Oh, I thought it was a goal." Canadian reporters around the scrum chuckled uncomfortably. Everyone knew the deal.

TSN



@TSN_Sports

Boris Katchouk's breakaway goal opens up the scoring for Canada to give them an early first period lead. #WorldJuniors

4:29 PM - Dec 26, 2017

22 22 Replies 47 47 Retweets 157 157 likes

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Jordie ●

@BarstoolJordie

Overhead look at that Katchouk goal. Net definitely looks like it's off before the puck crosses the goal line. But I guess the refs have the over. #WJC2018

4:28 PM - Dec 26, 2017

2 2 Replies 1 1 Retweet 28 28 likes

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"He called it goal on the ice so it's hard to overturn that," said Katchouk, a Tampa Bay draftee (as if the Lightning need more speedsters in their system). "The puck was in motion and it's hard to overturn that."

The tournament had a silly controversy around one of its marquee games. We know what Finland coach Jussi Ahokas thought. He didn't stick around to talk to reporters. Who could blame him?

Canada doesn't have the star power it normally does in this tournament but it looks to have a ton of balance. Its three-goal first period wasn't even its best, as Ducharme pointed out. But the Canadians have lots of speed -- Katchouk joked it was "magic speed" that carried him to his goal.

That Canada-USA game should be great fun. Maybe they'll meet again in the medal round. But how many people are going to pay to be there?

What a gross miscalculation by everyone involved. Hockey fans and Sabres season-ticket holders in particular have griped they've been taken for granted in these parts for too long. It would be nice if people started paying attention to them. Unfortunately, the World Juniors might become the collateral damage.

WJC: Mittelstadt shines in U.S. win; Nylander, Sweden take opening round game

Buffalo's prospects perform admirably on the tournament's opening day

WGR550

BRAYTON WILSON

DECEMBER 27, 2017

Opening day of the 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship has come and gone, and it was a busy day for the five Buffalo Sabres prospects in Buffalo. All five prospects were in action for the Sabres on Tuesday, all playing in each of the four games scheduled for the day.

It was a highlight reel night for 2017 first round pick Casey Mittelstadt, who scored twice and earned Player of the Game honors for the United States in a 9-0 throttling of Denmark at KeyBank Center. The 19-year old was all over the ice for Team USA, registering three shots on goal in 18:43 of total ice-time for the Americans.

Mittelstadt's two goals came in an onslaught of five goals from the U.S. in the first period.

The first made the score 3-0 when Mittelstadt drove the puck to the net and cashed in on his own second chance in front of the net. Mittelstadt had room to shoot the puck, but made the charge inside and backhanded the puck into a wide-open net after his first chance never made it on goal.

His second goal made the score 5-0, and made this game a blowout before the first 20 minutes of play had ended. Mittelstadt received a nice back-pass from Nashville Predators prospect Patrick Harper from behind the net, and was able to roof a wrist shot from in-tight and over the shoulder of Danish goalie, Kasper Krog. Upon further review, the puck was in mid-air when Mittelstadt gets his stick on it, then he quickly put it up high with the flick of his wrist for an impressive goal.

Pete Blackburn

✓

@PeteBlackburn

Behold the soft touch of Casey Mittelstadt

8:46 PM - Dec 26, 2017

10 10 Replies 217 217 Retweets 904 904 likes

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Six other players for the Americans finished the night with two-point games, including New York Islanders prospect Kieffer Bellows who scored twice in the win. Harper and Andrew Peeke (Columbus Blue Jackets) each finished the evening with a goal and an assist, while Josh Norris (San Jose Sharks) and Quinn Hughes (2018 draft eligible) finished the contest with a pair of helpers.

It was an easy night in goal for Toronto Maple Leafs prospect Joseph Woll, who stopped all 17 shots that he faced.

The United States will take to the ice at New Era Field on Wednesday for practice before taking on Slovakia on Thursday night at 8 p.m. at KeyBank Center.

Another one of Buffalo's top prospects put up a decent showing on Tuesday afternoon as Alexander Nylander helped Sweden to a 6-1 win over Belarus at HarborCenter. Nylander registered two assists in the win, while skating the most ice-time among Swedish forwards at 20:14.

The 19-year old Nylander got off to a bit of a slow start, even though he put up a team-high three shots on goal in the first period. Nylander made a mistake early on when his lob pass at the point was knocked down by Belarus' Yegor Sharangovich, who then scored on a shorthanded breakaway to tie the game, 1-1. However, Nylander looked more comfortable in the final 40 minutes of play, and started to play with more confidence as Sweden began to pull away.

Nylander got his first assist when he found Vegas Golden Knights defenseman Erik Brannstrom coming off the bench and streaking into the offensive zone. Brannstrom made a move around a Belarusian defenseman, then rifled a shot past the glove hand of Andrei Grishenko. Nylander's second helper came on the powerplay in the third period when he found New York Rangers' 2017 first round pick Lias Andersson with a beautiful pass to the left of Grishenko.

Andersson added another goal in the third period to make the score 6-1, and officially put things away for the Swedes.

Nylander's linemate, and Vancouver Canucks' first round pick in 2017, Elias Pettersson also had a good night with a goal and an assist for the Swedes in the win.

On the blue line, Swedish defenseman Rasmus Dahlin was noticeable in the win with two assists. The projected first overall pick in the 2018 NHL Draft was skating well for the Swedes on Tuesday, and created a good amount of offensive chances while playing a smart, solid defensive game.

Buffalo's other Swedish prospect in the tournament Marcus Davidsson went pointless on the afternoon, but played well in his fourth line role. Davidsson saw 10:25 of total ice-time on Tuesday, but made a couple of nice back-checks defensively, registered a shot on goal, and won 83.3-percent of his faceoffs.

Sweden will have Wednesday off from game action before taking on the Czech Republic at 4 p.m. on Thursday at KeyBank Center.

An early tournament favorite claimed their first win of the tournament on Tuesday as Canada downed Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and Finland, 4-2 at KeyBank Center.

Luukkonen looked decent in net for the Finns, stopping 28 of 32 shots faced in the game, but his effort was not enough to come out and get a win.

Canada got lucky on a controversial call early on in the game when Tampa Bay Lightning prospect Boris Katchouk appeared to have scored on a breakaway just 5:34 into the action. The official signaled for a goal, but the video replay never showed the puck clearly crossing goal line, and showed that the net was slightly ajar from the surface of the ice when the puck may have crossed the goal line. However, after a lengthy review, the goal stood as called.

Finland's defense, who has five NHL first round picks on the roster, left Luukkonen out to dry for most of the game as goals two and three for Canada came with defensive breakdowns in the Finnish end.

While Finland kept things close with a couple of goals, Canada kept the pressure up and put things away with their fourth goal of the game in the second period. This time, it was Lightning prospect Taylor Raddysh lighting the lamp with a spin-around shot that knuckled its way past Luukkonen.

Other than the fourth goal against him, Luukkonen played positionally well for the Finns, and allowed them to stay within striking distance throughout the game. The only problem was that the Finnish offense could not get organized with their chances, and never really threatened the Canadians in the third period.

Up next for Luukkonen and Finland is a matchup with Denmark on Thursday afternoon at 12 p.m. at KeyBank Center.

Last, but not least, the first big upset of the tournament came in the very first game of the day between Russia and the Czech Republic. It was the Czechs who managed to stun the defending bronze medalists and beat them by a 5-4 score at KeyBank Center.

Sabres defensive prospect Vojtech Budik started the day skating on the Czech's top defensive pairing with Lightning prospect, Libor Hajek. It was a relatively quiet day for Budik as he was held pointless in 18:52 of total ice-time, but he was solid defensively for the Czechs, not giving up many quality chances against his team throughout the game.

The Czechs got scoring from some of their top offensive weapons in the win, including Filip Chytil (Rangers), Martin Necas (Carolina Hurricanes), and Filip Zadina (2018 draft eligible). If the Czechs want to have any chance of making a run in this year's tournament, they need to find scoring from some of their best players. They got that result on Tuesday.

In goal, Josef Korenar was brilliant for the Czech Republic, stopping 34 of 38 shots faced in the win.

For Russia, it was a struggle for most of the game to get any continuity flowing on offense. The team could not handle the puck well while missing some key passes, and not capitalizing on their best scoring chances.

Russia will look to rebound from their loss on Thursday when they face Switzerland at HarborCenter at 2 p.m.

On Wednesday, just two games will take place at KeyBank Center with the Swiss opening up their tournament against Belarus at 3 p.m., followed by Slovakia playing their tournament opener against Canada at 7 p.m.

Mittelstadt shines in KeyBank Center debut as USA rolls to 9-0 win over Denmark

WKBW

Matt Bove

Dec 26, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - In his first game at KeyBank Center, Casey Mittelstadt put on a show. The Buffalo Sabres first-round pick in the 2017 draft scored twice as Team USA took down Denmark 9-0 in each team's first game of the 2018 World Junior Championship.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Mittelstadt named Team USA's player of the game, which is neat #Sabres

10:29 PM - Dec 26, 2017

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Mittelstadt's first goal came just 8:26 into the game as he crashed the net, tapping his own rebound into an open net. Almost exactly ten minutes later, Mittelstadt buried his second of the night, putting a quick shot under the crossbar from just outside the Denmark crease. If this wasn't the prettiest goal from an American on Tuesday it was certainly close.

Pete Blackburn

✓

@PeteBlackburn

Behold the soft touch of Casey Mittelstadt

8:46 PM - Dec 26, 2017

10 10 Replies 218 218 Retweets 906 906 likes

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"Any time you're coming out and playing in this big of a stage, especially for us there is going to be a few nerves," Mittelstadt said after Tuesday's game. "But at the same time, we're a pretty close team so we're able to stick together through things like that."

Along with his two goals, Mittelstadt logged plenty of ice time, finishing with 18:43, the second most of any forward. Despite spending most of his time on the wing in pre-tournament games and practices, Mittelstadt spent the majority of his night centering a line with Patrick Harper [1G, 1A] and Riley Tufté [1A]. Along with his even-strength duties, the University of Minnesota freshman also played the point on USA's first power play unit.

"Honestly, the first game of the tournament it's pretty hard to know what to expect," Mittelstadt added. "Obviously we wanted to come and score some goals and get our team going right away and I think us being able to come out and play our game, that helps a lot."

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Mittelstadt said playing in Buffalo is just an added bonus but he expects himself to step up and play well every time he's on the ice #Sabres#WJcInBUF @GopherHockey

10:58 PM - Dec 26, 2017