



Buffalo Sabres

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Tempers flare between Sabres' Kane, Falk during practice

Associated Press

Jan. 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres coach Phil Housley is OK with tempers flaring on his struggling team after forward Evander Kane and defenseman Justin Falk had to be separated following a brief shoving match during practice.

Housley says it was “good to see some emotion” when asked about the skirmish on Wednesday.

According to Buffalo’s WGR-Radio , Kane was unhappy with Falk getting his stick up while the two battled in front of the net. Falk responded by telling Kane to “shut up,” and then pushed him once before the two were separated by coaches.

Falk called the altercation “spur of the moment,” and says it might be good for players to show more passion given that Buffalo sits last in the Eastern Conference standings.

Kane said it wasn’t a big deal and ended quickly.

Buffalo is coming off a 7-4 loss to Winnipeg on Tuesday, and is 2-7-3 in its past 12.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian’s status is uncertain after leaving practice with a leg injury.

Buffalo hosts Columbus on Thursday before entering a six-day break.

Emotions spill over at Sabres practice

Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

January 10, 2018

On the surface, it felt as if the practice fell apart at the seams.

But upon closer examination, the emotional altercation during a five-on-five drill may be just what the Buffalo Sabres need. If nothing else, it shows while the team is in last place in the Eastern Conference, there's still a pulse to the roster.

A shoving and shouting match between Evander Kane and Justin Falk was the climax of an intense and interesting 35 minutes on the ice at KeyBank Center Wednesday morning.

"Well, it's good to see some emotion," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It was a battle practice out there focusing on some areas we need to improve on. Tempers flared up but it was more about being in the heat of the battle and guys being frustrated with where we are and sometimes emotions get high."

Tempers flared when Kane and Falk were battling in front of the net. Kane yelled to Falk to keep his stick down. There were some verbal exchanges. And then Falk went off on a rant. He shoved Kane and was directed away by other players, all the time shouting phrases that echoed throughout KeyBank Center, including calling Kane selfish, combined with some choice words.

"I really don't think it's that big of a deal as you guys are maybe making it out to be," Kane said after practice. "It happens more often than maybe you guys see. Like I said, it was a just a battle of one play."

And of that particular battle on that particular play?

"We'll leave what I said on the ice between us and the team," Kane said.

Falk was curt with the media when he came off the ice, clearly still riled up from the incident.

"Just spur of the moment. Emotions running high. This time of year, where we're at," Falk said. "Personally everyone's got a different situation they're in. Just in the heat of the moment it boiled over."

Housley lets Sabres have it after another bad loss

The Sabres situation is pretty grim from a results standpoint – just 10 wins with half the season gone. Their latest setback is an embarrassing 7-4 loss to the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday with the Columbus Blue Jackets on the schedule for 7 p.m. Thursday.

Falk is in his second season with the Sabres and has been a healthy scratch three of the last four games.

He can't speak to Tuesday's loss, since he didn't play, but he can speak to the emotion needed in practice.

"To be honest with you, more stuff like that is probably what we need to get us going here, to get guys a bit more passionate," Falk said. "It's not the first time it's happened by any means with any team I've been on. Quite honestly, I think it's healthy. You're pushing each other. You're honest with each other. You're up front with each other. There's no BS behind anything."

The emotion and the passion is something the Sabres have lacked for the last number of years. And oddly enough, the profanity-laced rant offered by Falk may be a sign not just that players have hit their frustration limit, but are now emotionally invested in figuring out what's gone wrong.

"Yeah there's been some frustration from different guys at different times," said Jason Pominville said. "I think everyone wants to do well but until we go out there and do it, we're (just) saying all the right things, but we've got to do it. It's

everyone. It's not one individual. It's from top to bottom. It's understanding the details that it takes on a daily basis to win games. Yeah, the result of it is games but it starts with practice and habits in practice."

Those habits come from hard work and hard work means pushing your teammates, which often leads to some heated confrontations.

"It's natural. You've seen it before," Pominville said of the incident between Kane and Falk. "Guys are battling. There's anger. There's frustration. Guys are competing and working hard. Usually when people work hard, you'll see that more often. I like seeing that today. It's good. You don't want it to get to a point where guys are fighting and stuff like that but if it has to happen it happens. But it starts with competing and working hard and if guys aren't happy about it, well then, what can you do?"

Sabres Notebook: Jack Eichel named to the NHL All-Star Game

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

January 10, 2018

Jack Eichel will be playing in his first NHL All-Star Game.

The forward earned the honor for the first time in his three-year NHL career and is the lone representative for the Buffalo Sabres at this season's event.

Eichel leads the Sabres in goals (17), assists (22) and points (39). He will be part of the 2018 NHL All-Star Weekend scheduled for Jan. 27-28 at Amalie Arena in Tampa which again will feature a three-game tournament, played in a 3-on-3 format. Teams are competing for a \$1 million winner-take-all prize pool.

Eichel is part of the Atlantic Division team, coached by Jon Cooper of the Tampa Bay Lightning. Also on the team are forwards Aleksander Barkov (Florida), Nikita Kucherov (Tampa Bay), Brad Marchand (Boston), Auston Matthews (Toronto), and Steven Stamkos (Tampa Bay), defensemen Mike Green (Detroit), Victor Hedman (Tampa Bay) and Erik Karlsson (Ottawa), and goalies Carey Price (Montreal) and Andrei Vasilevskiy (Tampa Bay). The coach is Jon Cooper of Tampa Bay.

The rest of the all-stars are:

Metropolitan Division: Forwards: Josh Bailey (Islanders), Sidney Crosby (Pittsburgh), Claude Giroux (Philadelphia), Taylor Hall (New Jersey), Alex Ovechkin (Washington), John Tavares (Islanders). Defensemen: Noah Hanifin (Carolina), Seth Jones (Columbus), Kris Letang (Pittsburgh). Goalies: Braden Holtby (Washington), Henrik Lundqvist (Rangers). Coach: Barry Trotz (Washington).

Central Division: Forwards: Patrick Kane (Chicago), Nathan MacKinnon (Colorado), Brayden Schenn, (St. Louis), Tyler Seguin (Dallas), Eric Staal (Minnesota), Blake Wheeler (Winnipeg). Defensemen: John Klingberg (Dallas), Alex Pietrangolo (St. Louis), P.K. Subban (Nashville). Goalies: Connor Hellebuyck (Winnipeg), Pekka Rinne (Nashville). Coach: Peter Laviolette (Nashville).

Pacific Division: Forwards: Brock Boeser (Vancouver), Johnny Gaudreau (Calgary), Anze Kopitar (Los Angeles), Connor McDavid (Edmonton), James Neal (Vegas), Rickard Rakell (Anaheim), Brent Burns (San Jose). Defensemen: Drew Doughty (Los Angeles), Oliver Ekman-Larsson (Arizona). Goalies: Marc-Andre Fleury (Vegas), Jonathan Quick (Los Angeles). Coach: Gerard Gallant (Vegas).

While the passion was there and the execution of plays started to get a little better, the latest injury may spell more bad news for the Sabres.

Zach Bogosian was battling with Evander Kane along the boards for the puck during Tuesday's practice in KeyBank Center. The two became tangled. Bogosian went down and stayed down. He was helped off the ice, unable to put pressure on his left leg.

"You know it was weird, we were just kind of battling and got tangled up and we were both falling and obviously he was in some discomfort and just kind of a freak accident," Kane said. "I've played with him my whole career and he's had some tough breaks; hopefully this one is [not] too bad and he'll be back out there soon."

Housley had no update on Bogosian after practice but did say defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Marco Scandella were missing from practice for maintenance days.

Jacob Josefson was also out after blocking a shot with his right foot in Tuesday's game. Housley said he's day to day.

If you love the look of the Sabres Winter Classic jersey, you'll get three chances to see the team wear them in KeyBank Center this year. The team announced it will wear that uniform style on Feb. 8 (vs. the New York Islanders), Feb. 19 (vs. the Washington Capitals), and April 4 (vs. the Ottawa Senators).

The Feb. 19 game will also feature a Winter Classic jersey themed towel giveaway for fans. Meanwhile on April 4, which also is Fan Appreciation Night, select fans will receive the Winter Classic style jerseys worn by the players that night during the team's annual "Jersey Off My Back" promotion.

Going off the ice with Sabres insiders

Buffalo News

By Evan Przybylak

January 10, 2018

Most sports addicts dream of working behind the scenes with their favorite teams. NeXt recently got an exclusive look at what happens off the ice with the Buffalo Sabres when we sat down with Dan Dunleavy, play-by-play broadcaster, and George Babcock, assistant equipment manager.

Dunleavy said he prepares for a game by studying the Sabres' opponent's previous two games. It doesn't always have to be the team's last two games against the Sabres. While watching, he looks for tendencies of the opposing squad, such as specific line combinations. He also said he watches a lot of video and interviews.

On game day, he starts off his day at 10:30 a.m., when he arrives to the arena. He picks up his game notes, then watches the team's morning skate (which is open to the public). Here, too, he specifically watches for line combinations – who is with whom, any play moved up or down on a line, and so on.

After the morning skate, the locker room is open to the media. During this, he looks for players' focal points, for example, who the player may connect to a lot during the game.

After that, head coach Phil Housley speaks at the podium and the media can ask questions. "You can even ask what he had for lunch today," Dunleavy joked.

After the coach speaks, Dunleavy goes home for lunch. He comes back around 4 p.m., works out in the team gym, and then gets ready for the game. One thing he wants to avoid is overpreparing, though he also doesn't want to be caught looking at his notes during a broadcast.

When asked what has been his most memorable moment over the past five years with the Sabres, he said the comeback game versus San Jose at home, when the Sabres were down by three in the beginning of the third period. That's when the Sabres scored two unanswered goals and went into overtime. Only one shot was counted in OT, and that was Evander Kane's overtime goal.

Dunleavy said he loves the ecstatic home crowd cheering as the team wins the game.

In the locker room, Babcock said game day is the easiest day for him.

First, he makes sure every players' skates are sharp and gloves are dry. When the players leave for lunch, the equipment managers get the skates out and ready.

For away games, Babcock and his team move the locker room out. They makes sure every player has his white helmet in his bag, because without it a player cannot play. Babcock said they triple check for the helmets.

They also check for modified equipment, because every player has special equipment. "Hockey is the most equipment-sensitive sport," he said.

After the interviews, Ian Ott, manager of public relations, gave a tour of the press box, the broadcasting booths and the Pegulas' private suite.

NeXt's backstage look at the Sabres ended after that day's game, with a ride in the elevator next to general manager Jason Botterill and legend Rick Jeanneret. A surreal moment.

Evan Przybylak is a sophomore at Hamburg High School.

Tempers boil over during Sabres practice

Zach Bogosian got hurt after a hit on Evander Kane

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

JANUARY 10, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Phil Housley went after his team hard after Tuesday's 7-4 loss to Winnipeg and he expected some passion in Wednesday's practice.

He got what he asked for as there was plenty of hitting that resulted in Zach Bogosian getting hurt and an almost fight between Evander Kane and Justin Falk.

Bogosian hit Kane against the back wall with a hard body check. Both players went to the ice, but Bogosian stayed down. He was taken to the room not being able to put any weight on his left skate. Phil Housley said, "We'll know more on Zach later today and tomorrow."

Kane felt bad for Bogosian. They've been teammates since Atlanta and he said, "It was weird, we were just battling and got tangled up and we were both falling and obviously he was in some discomfort and just a freak accident and hopefully he'll be OK."

"I've been playing with him my whole career and he's had some tough breaks and hopefully this one isn't too bad."

The emotions in practice didn't end there. Kane was battling in front with Justin Falk. Falk's stick came up and clipped Kane who verbally took exception by repeatedly telling him to keep his stick down. On the next play, Falk caught Jordan Nolan up high and Kane started again from the neutral zone. Falk yelled to him to shut the blank up and then charged him yelling, "Shut the blank up you selfish blank." Falk pushed Kane, but coaches got between them.

Practice ended soon afterwards and Falk was on his way towards Kane. Jason Pominville intercepted him and wouldn't let him get near him.

Falk was still angry as we approached him to talk. He's angry because of where the team is and he's angry because he's not in the lineup. Falk said, "It was the heat of the moment, the emotions are running high this time of year where we're at. Personally, everybody has a different situation that they're in and it boiled over. To be honest, maybe a little more stuff like that is probably what we need."

"I think it's healthy. We're pushing each other, you're honest with each other, you're up front with each other, there's no B.S. behind anything and that's just the way you have to have it."

Kane wasn't upset about it at all. He said, "I really don't think it's that big of a deal as you guys are making it out to be. It happens more often than you guys see. It was just a battle and pretty quickly over after that."

"It's just the heat of the moment, guys just trying to push each other to make each other better and I think that's part of the game."

Jason Pominville has been around the NHL for a long time now and he has zero problem with what happened in practice, "I liked seeing that, I mean yes, you don't want it to get to the point where guys are fighting, but if it has to happen, it happens."

Housley said the players have been cheating the system defensively and they won't win until that changes. Kane said, "Surprised, no. When you've got 10 wins all year, something's going wrong."

"There's times where we're cheating or we're in between and I think you have to make a decision and stick with it, whether you're thinking, you get caught and we're getting caught too much and it's leading to goals in the back of our net."

Pominville has no problem with his coach calling them out. He said, "I totally agree with it and until we understand and take more pride in defending, it's tough to win."

"The teams that are at the top, they understand how to play and how to play the right way and how to defend."

Pominville liked today's practice but he stressed that one practice doesn't fix things. They need to do it more often, "It can't only be one practice, yes today there might be more anger than there usually is, but the way we competed and the way we work has to be that way every day, not just one day."

Jacob Josefson, Rasmus Ristolainen and Marco Scandella all missed practice. Housley said Ristolainen and Scandella were maintenance days while Josefson's lower body injury is day-to-day.

Wednesday's lines:

Pouliot - Ecihel - Okposo

Girgensons - Rodrigues - Reinhart

Wilson - Larsson - Nolan

Kane - O'Reilly - Pominville

Linus Ullmark practiced with the team for a third straight day. Housley said it's just because Lehner is still a little sore and they're just making sure he can get through practice.

Eichel is a first-time All-Star

Four players from the Lightning made the Atlantic Division team

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

JANUARY 10, 2018

(WGR 550) - Jack Eichel will be playing in his first NHL All-Star Game. Eichel is one of six forwards taken for the Atlantic Division team for the 3-on-3 tournament.

Joining Eichel up front are Brad Marchand (Boston Bruins), Aleksander Barkov (Florida Panthers), Auston Matthews (Toronto Maple Leafs), Stephen Stamkos (Tampa Bay Lightning) and Nikita Kucherov (Tampa Bay Lightning).

On defense, it'll be Victor Hedman (Tampa Bay Lightning), Erik Karlsson (Ottawa Senators) and Mike Green (Detroit Red Wings).

In goal, it's Andrei Vasilevskiy (Tampa Bay Lightning) and Carey Price (Montreal Canadiens). John Cooper of the Lightning will serve as the head coach.

In 43 games this season, Eichel has 17 goals and 22 assists for 39 points.

The game is January 28 in Tampa Bay, with the skills competition set to take place on January 27.

Last season, it was Kyle Okposo making the team. Zemgus Girgensons, Jason Pominville and Ryan O'Reilly have also represented the Sabres.

Sabres' Justin Falk yells at, shoves Evander Kane during practice

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Jan. 11, 2018

BUFFALO – Defenseman Justin Falk's booming voice suddenly cut through the din of Wednesday's intense Sabres practice.

"Shut the (expletive) up, you selfish (expletive)," Falk yelled as he skated at winger Evander Kane on the KeyBank Center ice.

A livid Falk then shoved Kane before some coaches intervened. The Sabres, who host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday, finished the memorable practice shortly after Falk's outburst.

Clearly, the Sabres' wretched 10-win season has ignited emotions. Right now, they're arguably the NHL's worst team. Fresh off Tuesday's 7-4 loss to Winnipeg, their fifth straight setback, players are angry and searching for answers.

About 30 minutes after the incident, Falk, who perhaps got this stick a little too high battling Kane and heard about it, was still riled up.

"It's just spur of the moment, emotions are running high," an agitated Falk said in the dressing room. "This time of year, where we're at, everyone's got a situation they're in, just heat of the moment, boiled over.

"To be honest, maybe a little bit more stuff like that is probably what we need, get things going here, get guys playing with a bit more passion, urgency."

Unlike Falk, Kane seemed unfazed by the scene. He also downplayed it, saying it occurred in "the heat of the moment."

"It's guys kind of trying to push each other, make each other better," he said. "I think that's part of the game and you see it from time to time."

Still, it rarely happens during a practice session, although Kane and defenseman Josh Gorges slashed each other and exchanged words last season.

"This is not the first time it's happened by any means with any team I've been on," Falk said. "To be quite honest, I think it's healthy, you're pushing each other, you're honest with each other, you're up front with each other. There's no BS behind anything."

So did Falk and Kane talk to each other and set the record straight? Falk replied he hadn't even taken his equipment off.

"I have an appointment at the library to read to a couple kids here in a half hour, so I kind of have to get going," he said.

Kane, who has an expiring contract and could be traded soon, said: "I really don't think it's that big of a deal as you guys are making it out to be. It happens more often than maybe you guys see."

The Sabres are a mess. This disastrous season is quickly becoming the most disappointing in the franchise's 47-year history.

Sabres coach Phil Housley uncharacteristically ripped his players following Tuesday's ugly loss, saying some believe points are more important than playing defense.

Perhaps Housley's strong words – he also challenged the Sabres to play better for their fans – and Falk's anger can spark the hapless club.

"It's good to see some emotion," Housley said of Wednesday's incident. "It was a pretty battle-(heavy) practice out there focusing on some areas that we need to improve on, some tempers flared up. But it was just more about being in the heat of the battle and guys being frustrated where we are."

Sabres winger Jason Pominville said: "I liked seeing that today. It was good."

The Sabres are in last place and rank 30th in the 31-team NHL for a myriad of reasons. They'll likely never showcase much improvement until they fix their porous defense.

Like Housley, Pominville said the Sabres must "take more pride in defending." They've allowed 3.5 goals a game, the league's second-worst total.

"There really isn't a big difference between some of the best teams and lower teams and the teams at the top," Pominville said. "(Top teams) understand how to work and how to play the right way and to defend. And yes, they'll get the puck more often, they'll make their plays. But it starts with keeping the puck out of their own net."

Housley, of course, has been preaching what he said Tuesday all season. Teams with a new coaching staff and a slew of fresh players like the Sabres aren't expected to mesh overnight.

But the Sabres have played 43 games. Why hasn't the message sunk in?

"We're saying all the right things, but we got to do it," Pominville said. "It's everyone. ... It's understanding the details that it takes on a daily basis to win games. ... It starts with habits in practice."

Falk said: "We're all just getting impatient trying to figure out how to get things changed here."

Sabres notes: Jack Eichel earns first NHL All-Star Game appearance

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Jan. 11, 2018

BUFFALO – With a team-high 17 goals and 39 points through 43 games, center Jack Eichel is on pace for the Sabres' first 30-goal, 70-point season since winger Jason Pominville in 2011-12.

Eichel, 21, has often dazzled throughout his three-year career, showcasing slick talents few players possess. In the last few weeks, Eichel has shaken off a so-so start and played perhaps his best NHL hockey.

Since recording his first hat trick Dec. 15, Eichel has scored nine times in 11 games, tying him with Boston's Patrice Bergeron for the most goals in that span. Eichel's 15 points are tied for fourth.

On Wednesday, Eichel was rewarded for his strong season, earning his first spot in the NHL All-Star Game. Eichel, one of six forwards on the Atlantic Division's team, will be the Sabres' lone representative at the festivities Jan. 27 and 28 in Tampa.

Barely halfway through the season, Eichel has surpassed some of his career-best totals. He scored two even-strength goals in Tuesday's 7-4 loss to Winnipeg, giving him 16, one more than he had in 61 games last season. His 24 primary points – that's goals and primary assists during five-on-five play – have already tied the mark he set as a rookie in 38 fewer games.

Eichel, the second overall pick in 2015, has 65 goals and 152 points in 182 career NHL appearances.

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Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian left Wednesday's practice with an apparent left leg injury after getting tangled with winger Evander Kane along the boards inside KeyBank Center. Bogosian couldn't put any pressure on his left foot as he was helped off the ice.

Coach Phil Housley, whose Sabres host the Columbus Blue Jackets tonight, said he would know more about Bogosian later Wednesday or today.

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The Sabres announced Wednesday they plan to wear the popular throwback-style jersey they sported in the Winter Classic three more times – Feb. 8 and 19 and April 4 – this season.

Notes: Goalie Linus Ullmark is still with the Sabres as insurance for starter Robin Lehner, who was hit in the neck Sunday. "Just precautionary for Robin in case he gets one off the shoulder in practice, we need to make sure we have a couple goaltenders out there," Housley said. ... Housley said center Jacob Josefson, who left Tuesday's game after blocking a shot, is day-to-day with lower-body injury. Housley said defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Marco Scandella had maintenance days Wednesday.

Tempers flare at Sabres practice after altercation between Kane and Falk

WKBW

Matt Bove

Jan 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Things aren't going well for the Buffalo Sabres and on Wednesday tempers flared as Evander Kane and Justin Falk got into an altercation towards the end of practice.

"Shut the *expletive* up, you selfish *expletive*," Falk screamed at Kane.

It started as the two battled in front of the net as it appeared Falk's stick came up on Kane. The exchange was broken up by coaches a few seconds later. From where most media were watching, it was hard to make out what Kane said during the incident.

Justin Falk just yelled at Evander Kane, called him selfish and shoved him. Wow. #Sabres

— Bill Hoppe (@BillHoppeNHL) January 10, 2018

"I really don't think it's that big of a deal as you guys are maybe making it out to be," Kane told reporters after practice. "It happens more often than maybe you guys see, like I said, it was just a battle on one play and it was pretty quickly over after that as you guys saw."

Falk echoed Kane's comments a few minutes later and said that these types of incidents are normal, especially when a team is struggling.

"This is not the first time that this has happened by any means with any team I've been on," Falk said about 30 minutes after the incident. "To be quite honest, I think it's healthy. You're pushing each other, you're honest with each other, you're upfront with each other, you know, there is no BS behind anything, that's how you have to have it."

Housley agreed and said it was good to see some emotion out of his players.

"It's just the heat of the moment," Kane said. "It's guys just trying to push each other and make each other better and I think that's part of the game and you see it from time to time."

Evander Kane and Justin Falk react to their heated exchange during today's #Sabres practice @WKBW
pic.twitter.com/IjomRVj9xw

— Matthew Bové (@Matt_Bove) January 10, 2018

"It was just a stir of the moment, emotions are running high this time of year with where we're at," Falk added. "Everyone has a different situation they are in. It was the heat of the moment, it boiled over. To be honest, maybe more stuff like that is what we need, to get things going here. I think if guys play with a bit more passion and urgency to help right the ship here."

Kane has been all over 41 telling him to watch his stick. 41 went right towards him telling him to shut up. aft 1 push, coaches pulled 41 away.

— Paul Hamilton (@pham1717) January 10, 2018

Eichel lone Sabres' representative at NHL All-Star game

WKBW

Matt Bove

Jan 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - For the first time in his three-year career, Jack Eichel is an All-Star. On Wednesday the rosters for the upcoming NHL All-Star game were announced and Eichel was the only member of the Buffalo Sabres to make the team.

Eichel, 21, has been one of the lone bright spots for the struggling Sabres, tallying 39 [17G, 22A] points in 43 games. In his short career, Eichel has 152 points in 185 games.

Here are the full rosters:

Here are your NHL All-Star teams pic.twitter.com/nfMpiRz1kH

— Greg Wyshynski (@wyshynski) January 10, 2018

Bove's take:

This shouldn't necessarily come as a surprise, especially when you consider the NHL selects at least one representative from each time. Eichel is by far the Sabres most impactful player and is as much of a household name as anyone who has donned the blue and gold in recent memory.

What is surprising is that Eichel has never been named an All-Star up until this point. Last year, Okposo represented the Sabres while Eichel was just returning from an ankle injury that caused him to miss the first 21 games of the season. In Eichel's rookie year Ryan O'Reilly was the Sabres' lone representative.

This may be Eichel's first All-Star game but you can bet it won't be his last.

Sabres to wear Winter Classic jerseys for three home games

WKBW

Jan 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - The Buffalo Sabres are bringing back the jerseys they wore for the 2018 Winter Classic.

The Sabres announced Wednesday the team will wear the uniforms for three home games this season.

Those games include:

Thursday, February 8 against the New York Islanders

Monday, February 19 against the Washington Capitals

Wednesday, April 4 against the Ottawa Senators (Fan Appreciation Night)

The February 19 game will also feature a Winter Classic-themed jersey towel giveaway.

The team's annual "Jersey Off My Back" promotion returns on Fan Appreciation Night. Select fans at the final home game of the season will receive the Winter Classic-style jerseys worn by the players that night.

The uniform combines design concepts from the franchise's early years with modifications to the team's current logo and elements from the team's 40th anniversary jersey.

Sabres get testy ahead of game against Blue Jackets

Fox Sports

Jan 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Maybe a heated, confrontational practice is what it will take to snap the Buffalo Sabres out of their funk.

Coming off a 7-4 loss to the Winnipeg Jets on Tuesday night, the Sabres held a physical practice that could have an effect in different ways moving forward.

Evander Kane and Justin Falk had a loud shouting match at one point, and defenseman Zach Bogosian was injured after a collision with Kane along the boards.

Buffalo (10-24-9) will look to snap its latest five-game losing streak on Thursday in a home game against Columbus.

“It’s good to see some emotion,” Sabres coach Phil Housley said, according to the team’s website. “It was a battle practice out there, focusing on some areas that we need to improve on and tempers flared up. It was more about just being in the heat of the battle and guys being frustrated at where we are. Sometimes emotions get high.”

Emotions aside, the Sabres must improve on defense if they wish to get back on the winning side. The defense was nowhere to be found in the blowout loss to Winnipeg on Tuesday, when Buffalo fell behind 5-1 less than five minutes into the second period. Goalie Robin Lehner was pulled early in the period.

“Until we understand and take more pride in defending, it’s tough to win,” Sabres forward Jason Pominville said, according to the team’s website. “There really isn’t a big difference between some of the best teams and the lower teams. The teams that are at the top, they understand how to play and how to play the right way and how to defend.

“It starts with keeping the puck out of their net. We haven’t done a good enough job at all with our five-on-five play.”

The lone positive for the Sabres on Wednesday came when Jack Eichel was named to the NHL All-Star game. Eichel leads Buffalo in scoring with 39 points (17 goals, 22 assists). It will be his first All-Star game.

The Blue Jackets (25-16-3) sit in second place in the Metropolitan Division. Columbus has won three of its past four games after a 3-2 shootout win over Florida on Sunday and a 3-2 shootout win over Toronto on Monday.

Columbus won each of the two previous meetings with the Sabres, prevailing 5-1 on Oct. 25 and 3-2 on Nov. 20.

Columbus defenseman Seth Jones was named to the All-Star game on Tuesday.

“These are big games coming up here, so we need all the points we can get,” Jones said, according to the team’s website. “Buffalo’s coming off a pretty bad loss, so we know they’re going to come out hot and try to prove a point.

“When you lose like they did, you know they’re going to come out with a vengeance and try to make something happen early. We have a back-to-back, but we’re going to lay it on the table in these next games before the break.”

Bogosian leaves physical, emotional practice with injury

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 10th, 2018

Following a loss to the Winnipeg Jets that prompted Phil Housley to call for his team to show a greater sense of defensive urgency, the Buffalo Sabres held a physical, competitive practice at KeyBank Center on Wednesday morning.

With that physicality came emotion, and potentially a loss on defense. Zach Bogosian had to be helped off the ice while battling Evander Kane for a loose puck in the corner on one drill. On another, emotions boiled over and prompted an exchange between Kane and Justin Falk.

Housley said that the team will know more regarding Bogosian's status once he's finished being evaluated later in the day. As for the confrontation between Kane and Falk, all sides agreed that the emotions shown may have been healthy for a struggling team.

"It was just spur of the moment," Falk said. "Emotions are running high this time of year, where we're at ... To be honest, maybe a little bit more stuff like that is probably what we need to get things going here, to get guys playing with a little more passion and urgency."

Justin Falk (1/10/18)

01:28 • January 10th, 2018

"It's good to see some emotion," Housley added. "It was a battle practice out there, focusing on some areas that we need to improve on, and tempers flared up. It was more about just being in the heat of the battle and guys being frustrated at where we are. Sometimes emotions get high."

Phil Housley (1/10/18)

06:12 • January 10th, 2018

Buffalo's 7-4 loss to Winnipeg on Tuesday was its fifth in a row, and Housley attributed the ongoing struggles afterward to a "lack of respect and urgency" on the defensive side of the puck. Jason Pominville, who's been on playoff teams in nine of his 12 full NHL seasons, agreed.

"I totally agree with it," he said. "Until we understand and take more pride in defending, it's tough to win. There really isn't a big difference between some of the best teams and the lower teams. The teams that are at the top, they understand how to play and how to play the right way and how to defend.

"Yes, they'll get the puck more often, they'll make their plays. But it starts with keeping the puck out of their net. We haven't done a good enough job at all with our 5-on-5 play."

The problems defending, Housley said, begin with awareness. Be it when a loose puck could result in a change of possession or a puck going from low to high could result in a shot from the point, Housley is looking for players to react and pick up their man defensively. Practice on Tuesday was designed to focus on those situations.

The practice also included 3-on-3 and 5-on-5 drills that bred competition. Bogosian's injury occurred when he and Kane fell awkwardly during a puck battle.

"It was weird," Kane said. "We were just kind of battling, got tangled up and we were both falling. Obviously he was in some discomfort and it was kind of a freak accident. Hopefully he's OK."

Evander Kane (1/10/18)

02:39 • January 10th, 2018

Kane chalked up his confrontation with Falk as being a heat of the moment exchange, and Pominville echoed Falk in saying that he actually liked seeing the emotion.

In fact, he said the Sabres need to show even more of it going forward.

"That was the one that everyone's probably going to pinpoint, but there were other plays where guys were working hard, finishing their checks and competing and battling," Pominville said. "That's what it's all about. That's what you need if you want to win. It can't only be one practice.

"Yeah, today there might be a little more anger than what there usually is, but the way we competed and the way we worked has to be that way every day."

Medical report

Bogosian's injury left the Sabres with six defensemen at practice. Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen both took maintenance days, while Victor Antipin skated with the team for the second straight day as he works his way back from an illness.

Jacob Josefson was also absent after leaving Tuesday's game with a lower-body injury in the first period. Housley said that Josefson is currently being treated as day-to-day but will be reevaluated.

Linus Ullmark continued to practice with the team as a third goaltender, which Housley said was simply insurance for Robin Lehner in the event that a high shot forced him to leave practice. Lehner was shaken up by a shot off his neck in Philadelphia on Sunday.

Guhle's debut

One of the bright spots of Tuesday's loss was the season debut for defenseman Brendan Guhle. He showed flashes of his ability to make an impact on the rush and in the offensive zone throughout the night, but the shift that stands out most was the one that led to Jack Eichel's goal in the first period.

Guhle seemingly covered every square inch of the offensive zone on that shift, keeping the possession alive early by pinching along the boards on the forecheck:

The Sabres kept possession until a delayed penalty was eventually called. No longer having to worry about a potential turnover, Guhle began to move even more freely through the zone. As Eichel took his shot, Guhle was cutting toward the net through the slot for a potential pass or rebound.

"I just think he's trying to find areas to get a puck, and he's using his speed really well," Housley said. "I talked about him last night, about the way he can use his mobility to escape in our D zone and I really like that he's making some good decisions up ice, being a part of the rush or coming from behind in the rush.

"At that point there was a delayed penalty, he was just trying to create some space, trying to get a puck. It was really great to see. His game was pretty solid last night."

Lines at practice

67 Benoit Pouliot - 15 Jack Eichel - 21 Kyle Okposo

9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 29 Jason Pominville

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 23 Sam Reinhart
20 Scott Wilson - 22 Johan Larsson - 17 Jordan Nolan

82 Nathan Beaulieu / 93 Victor Antipin - 47 Zach Bogosian
45 Brendan Guhle - 19 Jake McCabe
4 Josh Gorges - 41 Justin Falk

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson
35 Linus Ullmark

Eichel earns first All-Star selection

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 10th, 2018

In the midst of his most productive stretch of the season, Jack Eichel has been selected to represent the Buffalo Sabres at the 2018 NHL All-Star Game in Tampa, Florida on Jan. 28. It is the first All-Star selection of Eichel's career.

Eichel leads the Sabres with 17 goals and 22 assists for 39 points this season, just 16 points shy of the career-high he set in an injury-shortened campaign last season. He's already matched his career-high for even-strength goals (16), set in 81 games as a rookie in 2015-16.

Eichel is also just one point shy of his career-high for primary points at 5-on-5 (24), also set during the 2015-16 season. His 23 primary points rank fourth in the NHL behind Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov, Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon and Chicago's Patrick Kane.

Eichel's spectacular hatty

00:57 • December 15th, 2017

Since scoring his first career hat trick on Dec. 15, Eichel's scoring has been particularly prolific. His nine goals in 11 games during that stretch leads the NHL, and his 15 points rank fifth. He's produced five multi-point efforts during that span, four of which saw him score multiple goals.

It's all coincided with an improvement in his play away from the puck, evident in plays when he utilizes his speed on the backcheck such as this breakup of a 2-on-1 attempt against Philadelphia on Dec. 22:

"I think his play away from the puck is getting better," Sabres coach Phil Housley said at the time. "You look at that goal he saved on the power play, where he just put his head down and you could see how his speed is so valuable to our team.

"And when he does get the puck and he's attacking through the neutral zone, he's a very deadly player."

Eichel will be joined on the Atlantic Division roster by Tampa Bay's Kucherov, Steven Stamkos (team captain), Victor Hedman and Andrei Vasilevskiy; Boston forward Brad Marchand; Detroit defenseman Mike Green; Florida forward Aleksander Barkov; Montreal goaltender Carey Price; Ottawa defenseman Erik Karlsson and Toronto forward Auston Matthews.

The NHL's All-Star Weekend runs from Jan. 26-28 at Amalie Arena in Tampa.

Sharpen Up: January 10, 2018

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 10th, 2018

The Sabres fell to Winnipeg 7-4 last night. They'll return to practice this morning as they get set to take on the Columbus Blue Jackets tomorrow night at KeyBank Center.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Sabres fall to the Jets, 7-4

04:21 • January 9th, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

Following seven straight games away from KeyBank Center, the Buffalo Sabres returned to their home ice on Tuesday night and lost 7-4 to the Winnipeg Jets. Phil Housley was quite blunt when speaking afterwards in saying that the fans who came out to watch them deserved more.

Sure, Housley admitted that the Sabres could have used a save early, and Robin Lehner accepted responsibility for allowing three goals on 17 shots in 21:07 of ice time. But the greater problem, according to the Sabres coach, was the reoccurring lack of urgency the team has shown defensively.

Phil Housley Postgame (1/9/18)

03:29 • January 9th, 2018

"I think there's a lot of cheat in our game," Housley said. "I think they think that points are more important than playing solid defense and you can see the results that are coming. And the one thing that really irritates me is that we've got really good fans coming to the game.

"If there's something for our guys to play for, let's play for them. They're coming here and spending their hard-earned money and we have to be better at home. I believe we might have [22] games left on home ice, we've got to take advantage, we've got to give our fans something to cheer about.

"And if requires to win a 1-0 game," Housley continued, "well then so be it. We'll have to win a 1-0 game. But we'll have to have more urgency in our defensive game."

Jack Eichel Postgame (1/9/18)

03:18 • January 9th, 2018

Brendan Guhle Postgame (1/9/18)

01:32 • January 9th, 2018

All-Star announcement coming today

The captains for the All-Star Game in Tampa later this month have already been named: Steven Stamkos (Atlantic), Alex Ovechkin (Metropolitan), P.K. Subban (Central) and Connor McDavid.

Later today, the remaining players who will comprise the four All-Star rosters as determined by the National Hockey League Hockey Operations Department will be announced.

Who will represent the Sabres? We'll have the news for you shortly.

Mega Raffle on Friday

The Buffalo Sabres Mega Raffle will take place on Friday in the Lexus Club at KeyBank Center.

Fans are encouraged to purchase their individual tickets or reserve tables in advance of the event here, as space is limited.

The Buffalo Sabres Mega Raffle will feature prizes including Sabres autographed items, team experiences, tickets and much more. The doors will open at 6 p.m. with the first spin at 7 p.m. In addition to the raffles, Sabres Alumni and broadcast personalities will be on hand during the event.

In traditional meat raffle style, there will be 12 raffle rounds with three to four spins per round. Ticket prices per round will range from \$2-5 depending on the level of prizes available.

Admission will be \$20 and includes pizza, macaroni and cheese, beer and other non-alcoholic beverages. Tables of 10 can be reserved and all proceeds will benefit the Buffalo Sabres Foundation. No outside food and beverage will be allowed at the event.