



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres determined to have perfect trip to Canada

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

January 24, 2018

VANCOUVER – Jack Eichel is headed to his first All-Star Game this weekend, and he'll arrive in Tampa Bay as one of the hottest players in the NHL. As exciting as that is, the Buffalo Sabres center isn't looking ahead.

"We have one more," Eichel said.

It's a big one.

It's been almost a year since the Sabres won three games in a row. Now they have a chance to do it on one four-day road trip. After impressive victories in Calgary and Edmonton, Buffalo will visit Vancouver on Thursday with winning on its mind.

"It's a great opportunity for us to come out west on this Canada road trip and go 3 for 3," Eichel said.

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It's an unexpected opportunity. The Sabres were minor-league level Saturday in a 7-1 loss to Dallas. Even the most optimistic die-hard would have been hard-pressed to believe Buffalo could fly across the continent and roll to three straight road victories.

Yet here they are with only the Canucks left in their way.

"To get a three-game streak here would be obviously big for confidence," center Evan Rodrigues said Wednesday after a short, optional practice in Rogers Arena. "It shows we're taking steps in the right direction at this point."

The steps have been huge. From the top to the bottom of the lineup, from forward to defense to goaltender, from puck drop to final horn, the Sabres have been a downright good NHL team. They gutted out a 2-1 overtime victory Monday in Calgary, and they dismantled Edmonton, 5-0, Tuesday.

"Obviously, like we showed the last few nights, it can be done," left wing Scott Wilson said. "We've just got to continue that."

Consistency has long been absent for the Sabres. This is only the second time all season they've won two straight, matching back-to-back wins over Boston and Detroit in October. They topped out at three in a row three times last season, picking up a trio of victories in October-November, January and February.

That's a long wait to do it again.

"We've really been trying to make strides in the right direction, just playing good hockey and not even worrying about the result," Wilson said, "just kind of getting back to doing the little things right and trying to play for a full 60. We've realized that the good teams are able to not just play two periods or one good period of hockey. It's got to be 60 minutes every day."

There haven't been any passengers for the Sabres this week, which is why they're winning. But it helps to have someone in the driver's seat, and that is undoubtedly Eichel.

The center had one goal and three assists against the Oilers, running his season totals to 20 goals, 29 assists and 49 points in 48 games. He joined Gilbert Perreault, Rick Martin and Thomas Vanek as the only Sabres to score 20 goals in each of their first three seasons. With one more assist, Eichel will join Perreault, Martin, Phil Housley and Christian Ruuttu as the only Sabres to record 30 assists and 50 points in each of their first three seasons.

Eichel is riding a seven-game point streak, piling up five goals, nine assists and 14 points. In his last 16 games, Eichel has 12 goals and 25 points – the best numbers in the NHL since Dec. 15.

"Jack's been leading us in the right way," Housley said. "He's playing well at both ends. His defensive responsibilities, he's taken that to heart. When he gets an opportunity to use his speed through the neutral zone and attack the game, he's done a terrific job.

"He's creating offensively. He's tough to play against in the offensive zone. He uses his body really well, and he's finding the net. Also, his linemates are doing a good job of creating space for him."

Eichel, left wing Zemgus Girgensons and right wing Kyle Okposo have been monsters on this trip, combining for three goals, five assists and 16 shots in two games.

"It's just playing for each other, competing – the things we should have been doing all year," Girgensons said. "It makes a big difference when everyone is on the same page and works for each other."

The big difference is winning. The Sabres had just 11 victories in their opening 46 games. They could vault to 14 in one short, three-game trip to western Canada.

"It's fun to win games," Rodrigues said. "It's fun to score goals. When you play responsible and you compete, you get the results."

Story topics: Jack Eichel

Sabres Notebook: Power play dominating; goalies rebound; Housley says thanks

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

January 24, 2018

VANCOUVER – They had to show up at some point, right? The Buffalo Sabres' power play dominated the NHL last year, and the same guys are back. Things had to start clicking sometime.

The time is now.

The Sabres scored three power-play goals during Tuesday's 5-0 demolition of Edmonton, moving the long-suffering unit to 6 for 15 (40 percent) in the last four games.

"Right now we're all on the same page, and I think that was evident," right wing Sam Reinhart said. "We all have fun with each other when we're out there playing like that and reading and reacting off each other. We have a game plan and we know where each other is at, but a lot of it is reacting. That's when we're playing our best out there."

The five-man group of Reinhart, Jack Eichel, Ryan O'Reilly, Kyle Okposo and Rasmus Ristolainen toyed with the Oilers. They scored on their first three chances and caused the fans in Rogers Place to derisively cheer the home team when Edmonton finally stopped the final power play.

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"We're all just doing our jobs," Eichel said. "The more reps you get together, the more times you go out, the more comfortable you start to feel.

"It's good because you're seeing everybody score. You're seeing Risto score. Okie's got a couple on the power play this year. Everyone's kind of contributing."

No one was contributing for the opening three months. Buffalo, which ranked No. 1 last season, fell to the bottom of the league at one point and had been solidly encased in the No. 30 spot. They've climbed to 26th at 15.6 percent.

The Sabres started to show a little life around New Year's, and they've got tons of pep in their step now. They have at least one power-play goal in five of the last seven games.

"We're moving around pretty well," said Eichel, who had one goal and two assists on the power play against Edmonton. "There's a confidence right now when we go out there that we're going to succeed and get the job done. Earlier in the year, it was a bit frustrating part of our game, but right now it's something we're able to build off."

The unit is succeeding in numerous ways. On the opening goal Tuesday, Ristolainen got his shot through from the point and Reinhart tipped it in front. Eichel got open for a blistering one-timer on the second power-play goal. The third was a quick-strike masterpiece. The Oilers were bewildered as tic-tac-toe passing by Eichel and Reinhart to O'Reilly made it 5-0.

While the skill players filled the score sheet, the credit was shared team-wide. All four lines applied consistent pressure on the Oilers, forcing them to take two hooking penalties, a cross-checking call and a roughing minor.

"That's how you win games," left wing Zemgus Girgensons said. "It's maybe not always about who gets those goals. It's a full-out team effort. Everyone chipped in. Other lines have worn them down, and it just happens that they score.

"They're the guys that pull the team, but it's just a full team effort these last two games."

Coach Phil Housley concurred.

"A lot of that power-play success has to do with the work five-on-five," Housley said. "When your five-on-five game is really, really solid, it reflects on the power play."

"They're benefiting from guys doing the dirty work and drawing a penalty. Then when they have an opportunity on the power play, they're cashing in. It was really clicking. They're gaining a lot of confidence now, which is important as move forward."

Going back to Dec. 23, the Sabres' net was a go-to zone for the opponent. It was an 11-game onslaught that had Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson grasping at air and debating whether to change their equipment, styles and routines.

So as much as anyone in the dressing room, the goaltenders are relishing the fun of the last two games.

Johnson stopped 32 of 33 shots during Monday's 2-1 overtime victory in Calgary, his hometown. Lehner was a perfect 33 for 33 against the Oilers.

"I want to be successful here as everyone else," Lehner said. "It's not about one guy or two guys or three guys. When we all show up, all 20 of us, we're a good hockey team. It makes the job easier for everyone. That's what happened the last two games, and these are the results you get."

The combined .985 save percentage the past two games is a welcome relief from the dismal numbers that preceded the run. Since losing to Carolina on Dec. 23, Johnson had allowed 14 goals on 109 shots for a .871 save percentage, and Lehner had allowed 28 goals on 228 shots for a .877 save percentage.

The combined .875 save percentage wasn't all their fault, but they certainly felt the brunt of it. They're appreciative of the help.

"Everybody contributed," Johnson said. "It wasn't really one guy. I made saves. Guys blocked shots. Everybody contributed, and that's what you need."

Victor Antipin filled the stat sheet in his return to the lineup. Although the Sabres defenseman didn't have a point against Edmonton, he blocked five shots, took two, had one hit, one takeaway and a plus-1 rating in 19:31 of ice time.

It was Antipin's first game since Dec. 19 after missing 13 as a healthy scratch and flu fighter.

The defenseman was one of only a handful of players to take part in a short, optional practice Wednesday in Rogers Arena. Also on the ice was defenseman Josh Gorges, who missed the last two games due to illness.

Housley is a guy who appreciates nice gestures. He really appreciated the ones shown by the Flames and Oilers.

Both organizations honored late USA Hockey executive Jim Johannson with pregame ceremonies. After saluting Johannson's accomplishments, the Flames and Oilers asked their fans for a moment of silent remembrance.

Housley was a close friend of Johannson, who died unexpectedly Sunday at age 53, and he relished the moments.

"I want to say thank you to the Calgary Flames and Edmonton Oilers," Housley said. "The remembrance for Jim Johannson was classy of the organizations to do. I just wanted to say I appreciate that."

How Eichel stacks up against his draft class

WGR550

Joe DiBiase

January 24, 2018

Midway through his 3rd season in the NHL, there's no doubt that Jack Eichel is the real deal. Both Eichel and Connor McDavid were labeled "generational" prospects by pretty much everyone that knew what they were talking about going into the 2015 draft. Despite Eichel's great play, the Sabres have not come close to the playoffs since his arrival.

Many questions have been and could be asked about Eichel. Is he even close to as good as McDavid? Was the Sabres tank worth it to get him? What if the Sabres hadn't finished last in 2015-16? Is Eichel even the second best player from that draft? Many questions could be answered just by looking at his numbers stacks up against the rest of the 2015 draft class.

Games Played

1. Noah Hanifin, D, CAR, 5th overall: 208 games
2. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 190 games
3. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 175 games
4. Mikko Rantanen, RW, COL, 10th overall: 131 games
5. Ivan Provorov, D, PHI, 7th overall: 130 games

Points

1. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 201 points
2. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 162 points
3. Mitch Marner, C, TOR, 5th overall: 93 points
4. Sebastian Aho, RW, CAR, 35th overall: 86 points
5. Mikko Rantanen, RW, COL, 10th overall: 85 points

Points Per Game

1. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 1.15 p/g
2. Brock Boeser, RW, VAN, 23rd overall: 0.88 p/g
3. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 0.85 p/g
4. Mitch Marner, C, TOR, 5th overall: 0.74 p/g
5. Sebastian Aho, RW, CAR, 35th overall: 0.69 p/g

Goals

1. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 68 goals
2. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 61 goals
3. Sebastian Aho, RW, CAR, 35th overall: 40 goals
4. Mikko Rantanen, RW, COL, 10th overall: 37 goals
5. Brock Boeser, RW, VAN, 23rd overall: 28 goals

Assists

1. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 140 assists
2. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 94 assists
3. Mitch Marner, C, TOR, 4th overall: 68 assists
4. Noah Hanifin, D, CAR, 5th overall: 57 assists
5. Mikko Rantanen, RW, COL, 10th overall: 48 assists

Team Wins (since player became regular NHLer)

1. Connor McDavid, C, EDM, 1st overall: 99 wins (3 seasons)
2. Noah Hanifin, D, CAR, 5th overall: 92 wins (3 seasons)
3. Jack Eichel, C, BUF, 2nd overall: 81 wins (3 seasons)
4. Mitch Marner, C, TOR, 4th overall: 66 wins (2 seasons)
5. Ivan Provorov/Travis Konecny, PHI: 63 wins (2 seasons)

One name that doesn't come close to popping up in any of these lists is 3rd overall pick Dylan Strome of the Arizona Coyotes. Strome has just 2 career NHL points in 18 games played. The Coyotes finished 2nd last in the 2014-15 season.

Eichel is the best goal scorer of the 2015 draft class, but McDavid has clearly been better so far in his career. McDavid has a significantly higher total in points, and not to mention he led the Oilers to the 2nd round of the playoffs last year, losing to the Anaheim Ducks in 7 games. There is however a huge drop off after McEichel. Noah Hanifin has been a solid defenseman, but is not thought of as one of the leagues best. Brock Boeser has a higher points per game than Eichel, but has played 136 less games.

So far, the draft class has pretty much played out how it was predicted to. Two generational players, with one being better than the other, and a giant gap after that. What Jack Eichel hasn't found yet is team success. His stardom around the league will be limited as long as the Sabres are at the bottom of the NHL.

Mittelstadt and Guhle lead the way as young Sabres

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

January 24, 2018

(WGR 550) - With the team wrapping up its road trip in Vancouver and the All-Star break coming up, I thought it would be a good time to look at the future.

Before I head down to Rochester, let's see how last June's 1st round pick is doing. Casey Mittelstadt was the class of the World Junior Tournament for Team USA. He had 11 points in 7 games. The 19-year-old has seven goals and 13 assists for 20 points playing his freshman season at Minnesota.

Let's continue with the Rochester Americans. Their leading scorer signed last March as a free agent from UMass-Lowell. C.J. Smith has 14 goals and 23 assists for 37 points in 43 games. He played two games in Buffalo last season and had one assist. Smith just turned 23 and will play in the AHL All-Star Game.

Brendan Guhle was with Buffalo. He's been up for two games and had one assist. Guhle was taken in the 2nd round of the 2015 draft after Jack Eichel was selected second overall. The 20-year-old is in his first pro season and has seven goals and 14 assists for 21 points. Guhle said he's really learning a lot about playing defense in professional hockey.

Hudson Fasching is 22-years-old and was acquired from Los Angeles in March of 2014. He's played five games in Buffalo this season and was pointless. In Rochester, he has seven goals and nine assists for 16 points in 36 games.

Eric Cornel was a 2nd round pick in 2014 and has not really shown much during his two years in Roch. The 21-year-old has four goals and three assists for seven points in 33 games.

Sean Malone is a rookie. The Western New York native had a great senior season at Harvard, but the 22-year-old has four goals and three assists in 40 games with the Amerks. Malone was taken by the Sabres in the 6th round of the 2013 draft.

Buffalo 1st round pick in 2016, Alex Nylander is again struggling mightily in the AHL. The 19-year-old is playing in a man's league and has only been able to produce two goals and four assists for six points in 21 games. He played for Team Sweden in this year's World Junior Tournament picking up a goal and six assists in seven games.

Another Western New York native, Justin Bailey has been hurt most of this season. He's only played 11 games in Rochester netting two goals and one assist for three points. In Buffalo the 2013, 2nd round pick had two goals and one assist in seven games. Bailey is 22.

Linus Ullmark is 24-years-old was taken by Buffalo in the 6th round of the 2012 draft. Ullmark has made the AHL All-Star Game both years he's played in Rochester. This season he's 17-6-3 with a 2.35 goals against and .926 save percentage. He's played one game in Buffalo and beat Columbus 3-1 stopping 44 pucks.

Devante Stephens is a 21-year-old defenseman who has played four games in Rochester and 28 games in Cincinnati. The Sabres 5th round pick in 2015 had no points with the Amerks and eight assists with the Cyclones.

Vaclav Karabacek was a 2nd round pick in 2014. In one game in Rochester he was scoreless and in seven games with Cincinnati, he has one assist. Karabacek is 21.

Brycen Martin is a defenseman taken in the 3rd round of the 2014 draft. He was scoreless in his one game with Rochester and has a goal and six assists for seven points with the Cyclones. Martin is 21-years-old.

Goaltender Jonas Johansson is 22 years-old and was taken in the 3rd round of the 2014 draft. With Cincinnati he's 7-6-0 with a 3.16 goals against and .904 save percentage.

Jason Kasdorf was acquired in 2015 as part of the Evander Kane trade. The 25-year-old is 5-5-0 with the Cyclones with a 2.93 goals against and .891 save percentage.

Will Borgen has made Team USA for the upcoming Olympics. The 2015, 4th round pick plays a ton for St. Cloud State on defense. The 21-year-old has one goal and nine assists for 10 points in 22 games, but he's projected to be a guy that can play in the NHL.

Let's go back to the 2012 draft and move up. Judd Peterson is a senior at St. Cloud State. He was taken in the 7th round. The 24-year-old winger has three goals and nine assists for 12 points in 22 games.

One of Buffalo's 2nd round picks in 2013 was Connor Hurley. The center played three years at Notre Dame and then transferred to Minnesota. He's sitting out this season and will have one more year of eligibility next year. In his junior season with the Fighting Irish, the 22-year-old had 4 goals and 12 assists for 16 points in 21 games.

Max Willman is a senior at Brown. He was taken in the 5th round of the 2014 draft. The 22-year-old has one goal and four assists for five points in nine games.

Chris Brown is a junior at Boston College. The 2014, 6th rounder has six goals and seven assists for 13 points in 24 games. Brown is 21-years-old.

Victor Olofsson is playing for Frolunda HC in Sweden. The 22-year-old winger was Buffalo's 7th round pick in 2014 and has 21 goals and 12 assists for 33 points in 36 games.

Ivan Chukarov is playing his senior year at UMass-Amherst. He was Buffalo's 7th round pick in 2015 and has five assists in 16 games. He's 22.

Buffalo's 2nd round pick in 2016 was Rasmus Asplund. The 20-year-old has six goals and 19 assists for 25 points in 37 games with Farjestads BK Karlstad in Sweden.

Cliff Pu had a nice training camp this year before going back to junior. The 3rd round pick has 20 goals and 33 assists for 53 points with both London and Kingston of the OHL. Pu is only 19-years-old.

Casey Fitzgerald is playing defense in his junior year for Boston College. The 20-year-old was taken in the 3rd round of the 2016 draft. He has four goals and nine assists for 13 points in 23 games.

Brett Murray is a junior at Penn State. The winger was taken in the 4th round and has one goal and four assists for five points in 17 games.

The Sabres had two 5th round picks and took Philip Nyberg and Vojtech Budik. Nyberg is a junior at UConn and has two goals and an assist for three points in 15 games.

Budik is also a defenseman playing in the WHL with Prince Albert. He has 40 games in and has seven goals and 13 assists for 20 points.

Brandon Hagel went in the 6th round and is also in the WHL with Red Deer. He has seven goals and 18 assists for 25 points in 32 games.

Western New York's Austin Osmanski went in the 7th round. The defenseman has played 43 games with Peterborough and Mississauga scoring one goal and 12 assists for 13 points.

Vasili Glotov also went in the 7th round and has 23 goals and 32 points in 41 games for Shawinigan of the Quebec league.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen played for Finland in the World Junior Tournament. In five games he had 3 goals against and .879 save percentage. This season he's playing with Leki in Finland. The 2nd round pick from last June has 2.70 goals against and .915 save percentage.

Marcus Davidsson joined Nylander in Team Sweden and had three points in seven games. The center is also playing for Djurgardens IF in Sweden. He has five goals and eight assists for 13 points in 27 games.

Oskari Laaksonen is a defenseman for Ilves-Tampere in Finland. He has one assist in seven games.

Jacob Bryson was taken in the 4th round and is a sophomore at Providence. The defenseman has one goal and 18 assists for 19 points in 26 games.

Linus Weissback is a freshman at Wisconsin. He has seven goals and 10 assists for 17 points in 24 games. Buffalo took him in the 7th round.

I think we all know that Guhle is going to be a good NHL defenseman. We'll need to see if Smith's skills can transfer to the NHL. I have been hearing good things about Borgen for over a year and Fitzgerald is spoken well of too.

Kris Baker has liked Asplund since they drafted him and Pu is a great skater who they liked in camp.

I wouldn't be shocked if Ullmark winds up being Buffalo's goalie and of course Mittelstadt has a lot of skill. The question is should he play one more season at Minnesota?

Eichel shining with little help around him

Lowell Sun

Barry Scanlon

January 24, 2018

He is on the National Hockey League's lowest-scoring team.

But Jack Eichel is doing what he can to lift the Buffalo Sabres out of the basement and enjoying a strong offensive season during his third pro campaign.

It's easy to forget about Eichel in the abyss that is Buffalo despite the fact that he was recently named an NHL All-Star at the tender age of 21.

Consider that the former Boston University star and Hobey Baker Award winner impressively leads one interesting category.

According to Sportsnet Stats, Eichel entering Monday's action as the player involved in the highest percentage of his team's goals during the 2017-18 season.

Eichel had either a goal or assist in 42.7 percent of Buffalo's goals entering Monday's game at Calgary, meaning he'd had a direct hand in nearly half of the Sabres' goals this season.

Here were the top five by percentage:

Eichel, Sabres 42.7

Johnny Gaudreau, Flames 41.9

Connor McDavid, Oilers 41.6

Claude Giroux, Flyers 40.9

Jakub Voracek, Flyers 40.2

Eichel increased his scoring percentage Monday when he netted a goal 90 seconds into overtime to lift the Sabres over the Flames, 2-1.

He added a goal and two assists midway Buffalo's game against Edmonton on Tuesday night.

Pending the outcome of the game, Eichel had 20 goals and 48 points in 48 games this season and has been red-hot as of late with five goals and eight assists in his last seven games.

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If the Sabres ever surround him with some top-end talent, the kid who learned to skate on area ponds may really begin to put up big numbers.

UML recruit hot

Speaking of hockey, UMass Lowell incoming recruit Lucas Condotta has been on a major roll.

Skating for the Markham Royals of the Ontario Junior Hockey League, Condotta has tallied five goals and 10 points over his last four games, including a two-goal, three-assist performance.

Condotta, a native of Georgetown, Ont., has scored at least one goal in four straight games. In 43 games, Condotta has netted 30 goals and 69 points, tying him for third-most goals in the league and placing him fourth in the league's scoring race.

The 6-foot-2, 203-pound has good size for a forward as well.

Here and there

If the rumors are true, both Matt Patricia and Josh McDaniels are heading to NFL teams they can win with.

Patricia will have a strong (if overrated) quarterback in Matthew Stafford with the Detroit Lions, while McDaniels will have a superstar (if he can get healthy and then remain healthy) quarterback in Andrew Luck with the Indianapolis Colts. ... What's the rush for the Red Sox in trying to obtain a slugger? If they truly want J.D. Martinez and they're the only bidder, why not wait it out? They should at least make Scott Boras sweat it out. The last time I looked opening day was months away. ... The Anthony Davis-to-Boston rumors likely will never amount to anything but hot air. But if the Celtics ever seriously pursue the talented big man, here's hoping their offer does not include Jayson Tatum. Jaylen Brown, yes. Tatum, no. Too much upside. Too much potential. The 19-year-old Tatum is a young jewel.

Follow Barry Scanlon on Twitter@BarryScanlonSun

What the Connor McDavid-Jack Eichel rivalry will look like in 10 years

ESPN

January 24, 2018

Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, the top two picks of the 2015 NHL draft and faces of beleaguered franchises, squared off on Tuesday night -- with Eichel's Buffalo Sabres getting the better of McDavid's Edmonton Oilers 5-0. But their matchup has lost some luster, given their respective teams' lost seasons. So we asked our writers:

It's 10 years from now. Peer into your crystal ball and tell us: What has happened during the past decade to Eichel and McDavid?

Greg Wyshynski, senior writer: Hello from 2028. It's a bit hotter. The iPhone XXX is selling well. Ryan Seacrest pretty much looks the same, which is odd, given how stressful it is to govern California. Especially for a second term.

It's the 10-year anniversary of the most important day of Jack Eichel's life until that point: When the Buffalo Sabres won the NHL draft lottery and then selected defenseman Rasmus Dahlin with the No. 1 overall pick. (The Houston Aeros, then the Arizona Coyotes, had the best odds in that lottery.)

The partnership between Dahlin and coach Phil Housley helped him become a mutant hybrid of Nicklas Lidstrom and Erik Karlsson, with a dash of Bobby Orr. He helped solidify the back end; the emergence of Casey Mittelstadt and Alexander Nylander gave Eichel offensive support. The Sabres began their rise from the basement in 2020 and never looked back. Eichel saw his point totals steadily increase but remained behind Auston Matthews, Connor McDavid and Jack Hughes in the scoring races.

Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, the top two picks of the 2015 NHL draft, are the faces of their respective franchises and will both earn eight-figure salaries starting next season. But they're learning they can't win all by themselves. Perry Nelson-USA TODAY Sports

But while he didn't dominate individually, Eichel's team thrived. It's hard to imagine, but from 2021 through 2024, Buffalo won four consecutive conference championships. Unfortunately they lost in the championship round all four times, the last two to Dallas.

Connor McDavid -- well, that's a different story. The Oilers would bob up and down the standings like a buoy for years, propped up by the five scoring titles McDavid won with Leon Draisaitl on his wing. (Alas, that second-line center thing never worked out.) But what franchise is going to find success with six coaches and three general managers in an eight-year span? Luckily McDavid was never saddled with the label of "coach killer," as he is, in fact, not Russian.

In 2025, it was obvious that the 29-year-old McDavid wasn't going to re-sign with the Oilers, so Edmonton traded him to their agreed-upon destination: the Los Angeles Kings, who sent an ultimately underwhelming package of players, picks and cash to Daryl Katz.

McDavid, of course, won back-to-back Stanley Cups with the Kings, and is currently working on his three-peat with a 37-year-old Taylor Hall on his wing.

So it's been a wild past 10 years for Jack Eichel and Connor McDavid, which has really taken our minds off the fact that our new robot overlords have harvested our bodies as human batteries.

EDITOR'S PICKS

Which current NHL stars are future Hall of Famers?

Sidney Crosby, the greatest player of his generation, is a lock for the Hall of Fame. So's Jaromir Jagr. What about Alex Ovechkin -- or rising star Connor McDavid? We put 43 active players to the test to find out who truly has the stuff of legends.

American Stoppers: Can USA goalies go from anonymity to Olympic glory?

David Leggio, Ryan Zepolski and Brandon Maxwell are hoping to backstop the U.S. to its first Olympic gold medal since the "Miracle on Ice" in 1980. Get to know the trio as they tell the stories of their selection and look ahead to Pyeongchang.

Seattle is already a hockey city. Next up: Lure the NHL

The NHL has flirted with Seattle, which has a rich hockey history, including the first U.S. team to win the Stanley Cup, for decades. But as momentum builds around the city's expansion bid, hope among fans and city officials finally feels tangible.

Emily Kaplan, national NHL reporter: Well, if we're going full-on fan fiction here, let me predict this: By 2028, both the Buffalo Bills and the Sabres will have won multiple championships. Their owners, Terry and Kim Pegula, are pretty much royalty in Western New York (you can find their statues in Buffalo and Rochester -- and, heck, even at Niagara Falls). The Bills, by the way, have won the Super Bowl with Tyrod Taylor as their quarterback. Taylor was never disrespected again. He's as beloved in Buffalo as Jim Kelly. Eichel has as much hardware as Sidney Crosby -- which catapults him to household-name status. His endorsements include everything from Rolex to Nike to bitcoin (remember, it's 2028).

Meanwhile, in Edmonton, the doom-and-gloom regression that was the 2017-18 season proved to foreshadow even darker days ahead. After missing out on the No. 1 lottery pick in the 2018 NHL draft, and seeing Rasmus Dahlin go to Buffalo -- helping explain how the Sabres got so good so fast -- the Oilers continued to spiral. Wayne Gretzky took a more involved role with the team, but even that didn't help. Leon Draisaitl was traded to clear cap space. McDavid maintained his status as the flashiest, fastest and most skilled player in the game. But his talents were never properly showcased on a team that became, quite frankly, irrelevant.

In truth, I don't think either of these extremes is likely. Each player will develop and flourish into an individual superstar, but he will also help the tide rise around him. Both the Sabres and Oilers will build, perhaps slowly, through the draft. I'd like to believe both franchises will have won a Cup by 2028, but I'm definitely confident in stating this: Whoever gets Dahlin will have a far better chance.

ESPN On Ice

Greg Wyshynski and Emily Kaplan discuss the passing of Jim Johannson and some surprise teams that could make a Stanley Cup run. Plus, some expansion talk now that Emily has returned from Seattle, as well as interviews with Lightning HC Jon Cooper and Islanders rookie Mathew Barzal. And finally, some Oscar snubs and another edition of the ESPN On Ice rant line. Listen »

Chris Peters, NHL Insider: I'm not sure my imagination is as vivid as my colleagues' here, but I think these next 10 years will feature an awful lot of action. For one, I think the Connor vs. Jack storyline that has followed them since their draft year is going to dissipate, especially after one of them wins his first Stanley Cup -- and that will happen within the next 10 years, as hard as it might be to envision now.

Sabers GM Jason Botterill is going to get things turned around in Buffalo, slowly but surely. He's a smart exec with a lot of experience maximizing the salary cap, and he has an owner who is willing to spend. The Sabres should end up with another high draft pick this year who will help them take a few small steps forward. Buffalo fans have no reason to be patient anymore, but I think they'll get some relief sooner rather than later, putting this team back on track to becoming a contender.

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The Oilers, meanwhile, should always have a chance with McDavid. This year has been a sobering reminder that one player can't do it all himself, but where would they be without him? There's a lot more work to do on the rest of Edmonton's roster to get this team to the next level -- and I'm not sure GM Peter Chiarelli will get the chance to do it. As long as you have No. 97 as your foundation, however, you've got something no one else in the league has.

Over these next 10 years, McDavid will continue to collect some of the big individual hardware, earning more Hart Trophies than anyone else over that span. Eichel will continue to play second fiddle but will challenge for the Art Ross a few times during the next five years. McDavid, meanwhile, will win the race to the first Stanley Cup between the two, but Eichel will help the Sabres become a legitimate contender within the next five years. By 2028, we'll view each of them as among the best to come out of this current wave of young talent, while McDavid puts himself in position to be considered one of the all-time greats.

Eichel emerges as first-time all-star with Sabres

NHL.com

Tim Campbell

January 24, 2018

EDMONTON -- Buffalo Sabres forward Jack Eichel is set to play in his first NHL All-Star Game, at Amalie Arena in Tampa on Sunday (3:30 p.m. ET; NBC, CBC, SN, TVA Sports), and it's not hard to see why.

Including his four-point game in a 5-0 win against the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday, Eichel has 25 points (12 goals, 13 assists) in 16 games since Dec. 15, tied with Colorado Avalanche forward Nathan MacKinnon (11 goals, 14 assists) for most points in the League during that span.

"For me, it's my first one and it's a huge honor and I'm excited for it," said Eichel, the No. 2 pick in the 2015 NHL Draft, after he had a goal and three assists against the Oilers. "I'll have my family down there and it'll be cool. It's awesome to be playing well as a group right now, having confidence and enjoying ourselves."

Eichel, 21, missed the first 21 games of last season because of an ankle injury sustained in the Sabres' final practice before the start of the regular season.

This season he's played in all 48 games and has 49 points (20 goals, 29 assists), including 14 (five goals, nine assists) during a seven-game point streak he'll take into Buffalo's game at the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday (10 p.m. ET; MSG-B, SNP, NHL.TV), their final game before the All-Star break.

"Last year being hurt at the start of the year made a difference," Sabres forward Ryan O'Reilly said. "And now being healthy this year and seeing how he impacts the game, I mean, look at [Tuesday], getting four points. He's elite and he's better than so many of us. He works at it. He prepares. He works on his game constantly. He is an all-star, absolutely."

"There are a lot of things out there that I can't even dream of doing. He's just above and beyond and it's nice to see him get rewarded. It's definitely well-deserved."

Eichel's overtime winner

01:02 • January 22nd, 2018

Sabres coach Phil Housley said Eichel's attention to defense is paying off on the offensive end.

"Not even looking at the All-Star Game, just overall I think it's going to boost his confidence knowing that he can play a good, solid defensive game and let the game give what it gives him," Housley said. "He's not going out and trying to create things that aren't there and he's had to learn that playing good defense, that will lead to you having the puck on your stick and then you get the opportunity to play on offense."

"He's been terrific, creating scoring chances and creating for his linemates. He's been really tough to get off the puck down low. He can handle it and he creates his own space that way."

Housley said that for offensively gifted players, learning that patience and having that in-game discipline can be difficult. But Eichel's progress in these areas is evident.

"A lot of times you're just going to have to defend well," Housley said. "And when you have to defend and that's your job, well, then that's your job on that shift. You wait for the next shift or the next shift (for offense). If you start cheating the game, that's when things come back at you in the wrong way and you waste energy in the wrong way, and he's done a really good job of moving forward."

With his strong night against the Oilers, Eichel is on pace for 84 points, which would be a personal NHL-best; his previous high was 57 points in 61 games last season.

Oilers coach Todd McLellan, who also coached Eichel on Team North America at the World Cup of Hockey 2016, said before the game Tuesday that Eichel's elite package of abilities is something that opponents can't help but notice.

Eichel rips home a wrister
00:56 • January 9th, 2018

"He's a skilled player that can hurt you a lot of different ways," McLellan said. "For me, Jack, having had him for a month at the World Cup, he's a great kid and a tremendous player. He's got deceptive speed because he's got those long, loping strides. His legs might not be moving quite as fast but his body is really going so that speed is real deceptive.

"(He's got) a dangerous release, the one-timer and the ability to change the angle of a shot."

Eichel said that while he is looking forward to his first All-Star Weekend, there was one important item before that, which is trying to help the Sabres to their first three-game winning streak of the season in Vancouver on Thursday.

"The last two games were great and we just want to keep it going into this big test in Vancouver on Thursday," Eichel said.

Following 'embarrassing' loss, Sabres are learning what it takes to win

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

January 24, 2018

VANCOUVER - Sometimes, it takes a step back to force a team to move forward. For the time being, it seems like the pivotal moment for the Buffalo Sabres may have come at home on Saturday, when a 7-1 loss to the Dallas Stars raised concerns from within about the team's effort and consistency.

Since then, the Sabres have won the first two games of their road trip in Western Canada, defeating one of the hottest teams in the NHL in the Calgary Flames in overtime followed by a 5-0 trouncing of the Edmonton Oilers one night later.

In the eyes of Jordan Nolan and Scott Wilson, the two players on Buffalo's roster with Stanley Cup victories on their resume, those wins represent an understanding of what it will take to keep winning games in the second half of the season.

Sabres Now (1/24/18)

02:45 • January 24th, 2018

"I think it's good that we got embarrassed like that against Dallas," Nolan said following an optional practice on Wednesday. "It's good to have those kind of games, have those kinds of losses to put things in perspective. It's really just about hard work and competing and playing the right way. You don't need the most skill. Some teams have all the skill in the world but if they don't do that, they're not going to win so it doesn't really matter."

What's changed in these last two games? According to Nolan, it's not just how the Sabres have played - it's the consistency with which they've played for three periods. In both Calgary and Edmonton, they displayed a commitment to backchecking hard, winning battles and supporting one another in all three zones. Most importantly, they've done it for 60 minutes.

"I think we've really been trying to make strides in the right direction, just playing good hockey, not even worry about the results," Wilson said. "Just getting back to doing the little things right and trying to play for a full 60. I think we realize that the good teams are able to not just play two periods or one good period of hockey a night. It's got to be 60 minutes every day."

As impressive a response as their win in Calgary on Monday may have been, the Sabres seemed to believe to a man that it would be for naught had they not followed it up with another strong game in Edmonton. The Sabres had managed just one set of back-to-back wins prior to this road trip, and they came all the way back in October.

"I think that's kind of been the issue here," defenseman Justin Falk said. "We think we take one step forward and then I don't know if we get a little complacent or think it's going to just carry over, but we end up taking a couple steps back. That was a big effort to be able to understand how we have to play every night and understand what it's going to take."

"You can see it with the way guys are reloading and being desperate to help each other," he continued. "Obviously, mistakes are going to happen, but you can tell how quickly we are there to help each other. You can just tell we look tighter as a group. You can see the results."

The Sabres now have a chance to take another step forward by entering the All-Star break with a sweep of their road trip in Vancouver on Thursday, which would represent their first three-game winning streak of the season.

"I think for the confidence for the guys it would be a big improvement obviously," Wilson said. "Sometimes breaks come in bad spots for teams when they're playing well but I think if we can get three on this trip it's going to be a good break and guys will be excited to get back after."

Coverage of Thursday's game begins at 9:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night Pregame Show on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 10.

Sharpen Up: January 24, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

January 24, 2018

Buffalo came up big last night in Edmonton. The 5-0 win marked the Sabres' largest winning margin since the team's 6-0 win on Feb. 8, 2012 vs. Boston.

Jack Eichel (1+3), Sam Reinhart (1+2), Ryan O'Reilly (2+0), Kyle Okposo (0+2) and Rasmus Ristolainen (0+2) all recorded multi-point efforts.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Recap: BUF 5, EDM 0
04:32 • January 23rd, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

While an overtime win over Calgary on Monday night came as a sigh of relief for the Buffalo Sabres, it also came with one caveat. That victory would amount to little, Phil Housley said, if the Sabres were unable to build on it against the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday.

Phil Housley Postgame (1/23/18)
03:36 • January 24th, 2018

"I think we learned a lot of what we need to do as a team in our checking and our play without the puck," Housley said. "I think the guys are really enjoying that. They're getting opportunities because of it. And we're getting the puck on our stick because of that, we're drawing penalties. We've got to continue to play that way."

Jack Eichel scored a goal and three assists to match his career-high with four points. Sam Reinhart also matched his career-high three points (1+2), Ryan O'Reilly scored a pair of goals and Kyle Okposo tallied a pair of assists. Zemgus Girgensons also found the back of the net.

23 Jan

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Ryan O'Reilly has added another goal, logging his first two-goal game since Oct. 17 at Vegas. He now has eight points (4G, 4A) in his last seven games. <https://twitter.com/SabresPR/status/955999755607445504> ...

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With their assists on Ryan O'Reilly's second goal of the night, Sam Reinhart (1G, 2A) and Jack Eichel (1G, 3A) have both tied their single-game career highs in points.

10:42 PM - Jan 23, 2018

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23 Jan

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The Sabres have now defeated the Oilers in four straight meetings for the first time since Buffalo won each of the six matchups between the teams from Jan. 16, 2006 to Jan. 3, 2012.

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Buffalo has improved to 11-4-1 with a plus-24 goal differential (56-32) in their last 16 games against Edmonton.

Robin Lehner, taking the net for the first time since being pulled in the second period of that loss to Dallas, made 33 saves for his second shutout of the season. A nice personal response, perhaps, but Lehner said the result was truly a testament to the Sabres' potential when they support one another up the ice.

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Robin Lehner made 33 saves tonight to earn his second shutout of the season and the seventh of his career. Five of those have come as a member of the Sabres; Lehner now ties for eighth on Buffalo's all-time shutout list.

11:36 PM - Jan 23, 2018

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"We're just playing together," Lehner said. "Our game is not spread out, we're not doing things by ourselves. We're playing in units. When one guy makes a mistake, another guy is there to help out. It's simple as it might sound. It's us sticking to what coach draws on the board and working hard and wanting it a little bit more. This is what happens."

Sam Reinhart Postgame (1/23/18)

02:08 • January 24th, 2018

"Right now we're all on the same page, and I think that was evident tonight," Reinhart said. "We all have fun with each other out there when we're playing like that, reading and reacting off each other. When there is a game plan we know where each other [are], but a lot of it's reading off each other and that's when we're at our best."

Jack Eichel Postgame (1/23/18)

02:54 • January 24th, 2018

"I think it's important for us to realize what got us to this position, winning this game, and why we had success tonight," Eichel said. "Obviously, we took care of the puck, but I thought we did a real good job at getting the puck back when we didn't have it. I thought we took their time and space away, we were good in the neutral zone and I thought our D did a good job breaking the puck out.

"It's a recipe for success in a game like this."

Coming up

Buffalo is in Vancouver today for practice. Stay tuned for full coverage here on Sabres.com.

The team will play the Canucks tomorrow night at 10 p.m. Catch that game (and the GMC Game Night pregame show starting at 9:30) on MSG and WGR 550.

And the Amerks are back in action on Friday on the road. Catch up with yesterday's Amerks Update for all the happenings with Rochester.