



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*February 19, 2018*

## **Kopitar, Amadio score 2 each in Kings' 4-2 win over Sabres**

Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW

Feb. 18, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Anze Kopitar and the Los Angeles Kings took advantage of the Buffalo Sabres' second-period meltdown to snap a three-game skid and keep pace in the tightly contested Western Conference playoff race.

Kopitar and rookie Michael Amadio each had two goals in a 4-2 win, which the Kings broke open by scoring three times on consecutive shots over a span of 5:35 on Saturday afternoon.

"I think our second period was huge, not just getting the three goals but just dictating the game," said Kopitar, who upped his team-leading total to 25 goals. "I thought (today) was a step in the right direction, but we've got to continue going."

Los Angeles improved to 31-22-5 and vaulted into 10th place in the West, a point ahead of the idle Colorado Avalanche.

The win was also the Kings' first in Buffalo since a 4-1 victory on Feb. 21, 2003. Los Angeles had gone 0-6-2 in its previous eight trips to Buffalo, and was 1-12-2 plus a tie in its previous 16 visits dating to the start of the 1993-94 season.

"I don't think we were worried about the 15-year drought in here, but we had a three-game slide that we certainly wanted to stop," Kopitar said.

Frustration boiled over for the Eastern Conference's last-place Sabres.

The press box shook with the loud sound of a door slamming, and Sabres general manager Jason Botterill was spotted leaving the team's booth shortly after Kopitar scored his first goal to put the Kings up 2-0.

Sabres forward Jason Pominville wasn't surprised upon being informed of what happened.

"I would've probably done the same thing," Pominville said of Buffalo's lackadaisical effort through 40 minutes.

"The one thing we control is our effort and the energy we bring," he said. "Some nights, we're just not bringing it. I really don't get it."

The Sabres didn't wake up until the third period, when Marco Scandella scored 30 seconds in with a blast from the blue line that sailed over goalie Jonathan Quick's right shoulder. Then Rasmus Ristolainen scored during a scramble in front with 3:18 left.

Quick stopped 33 shots, while Dustin Brown had two assists.

Buffalo's Robin Lehner was yanked after allowing four goals on 30 shots. Chad Johnson finished with six saves in the final period.

Kopitar's first goal summed up Buffalo's dreadful performance.

Sabres forward Benoit Pouliot lost his balance while trying to play the puck just inside Buffalo's blue line. The puck dribbled to Brown to set up a 2-on-1 break. Brown fed Kopitar, who wound his way across the front of the net and easily deposited a shot into the open right side with 7:58 left in the second period.

The Kings scored twice more in a span of 1:29.

Kopitar made it 3-0 with 3:54 left. He was set up for a one-timer in the left circle by Alex Iafallo, who beat the Sabres' defenders to a loose puck behind the Buffalo net.

Then, Amadio scored his second when Sabres defenseman Justin Falk got turned around. Amadio stepped around Falk, and snapped a shot inside the right post.

The only knock Kings coach John Stevens had was how his team eased up in a third period during which Los Angeles was outshot 18-6.

“I thought we kind of got off page a little bit, and they made a big push in the third period that we weren’t ready for,” Stevens said.

NOTES: The Sabres are 2-6-1 in their past nine home games and 8-17-4 overall at home. Buffalo’s fewest home wins in an 82-game season is 13, set in 2013-14. ... Iafallo was a fan of the Sabres growing up in Eden, New York, just outside Buffalo. Though Iafallo had a large contingent of friends present for his first game at Buffalo, the Kings rookie’s parents weren’t among them. They were instead in Columbus, Ohio, to be with Iafallo’s sister, Juliana, who was being honored as part of Ohio State women’s hockey team’s senior weekend. ... Sabres C Ryan O’Reilly entered the day leading the league with 867 faceoff wins.

UP NEXT

Kings: Continue their seven-game trip at the Chicago Blackhawks on Monday night.

Sabres: Host the Washington Capitals on Monday afternoon.

## **Sabres Notebook: Nice days hard to come by; Winter Classic jersey is back**

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

February 18, 2018

It's another afternoon game for the Buffalo Sabres.

Uh-oh.

Buffalo is 0-5-1 in day games this season. The next matinee comes Monday when Washington visits KeyBank Center for a 3 p.m. matchup.

Someone should probably just tell the Sabres it starts at 1 p.m.

While little went right for the Sabres in any of the day games – they've been outscored, 27-10 – the starts have been particularly troublesome. They've given up the opening goal in five of the six, and it came early in all of them.

Washington will be eager to pounce after getting embarrassed, 7-1, in Chicago on Saturday night.

"We've got to focus on what we can control, and that's getting ready to play Washington," Sabres coach Phil Housley said Sunday. "After their loss against Chicago, they're going to be ready to respond.

"It's an odd time, 3 o'clock, but I think the message to our players is get ready for a team that's going to be pushing back, so to speak, and we have to be prepared for that, but we have to have our own push as well."

Capitals, NHL confront racism after taunts directed at Smith-Pelly

The Sabres had little pushback during their latest afternoon game, a 4-2 loss to Los Angeles on Saturday. The Kings scored 11:26 into the game and rolled to a 4-0 lead after two periods.

It wasn't an afternoon anomaly:

During New Jersey's visit Oct. 9, the Devils scored 6:28 in and held a 6-1 lead after two periods. They won, 6-2.

San Jose scored 9:12 into its visit Oct. 28. Although it was 2-2 after two periods, the Sabres lost, 3-2.

The New York Rangers scored 4:09 into the New Year's Day Winter Classic. They held a 2-1 lead after 40 minutes and won, 3-2, in overtime.

Buffalo actually had a good start Jan. 7 in Philadelphia. It held a 12-5 shot advantage through a scoreless first period and netted the opening goal in the second. But the Flyers quickly rallied for a 2-1 lead en route to a 4-1 victory.

Dallas scored 5:03 into its visit Jan. 20 and jumped to a 6-1 lead after two periods. The Stars embarrassed the Sabres, 7-1.

Now the Sabres are looking to rebound after the latest embarrassing start to the Kings.

"They came out and had a really good push," Housley said after an optional practice in KeyBank Center. "They checked well, and we didn't have a pushback, which was disappointing."

Mike Harrington: Botterill needs to slam the door on this sorry group

The Sabres and Capitals have met once. Buffalo won, 3-1, during Washington's visit Nov. 7. It opened with a 15-4 shot lead during a scoreless first and sealed the game into an empty net.

"Passion and emotion is a great tool," Housley said. "We have to have more emotion. I think we have to play with more passion.

"We had a really good game against Washington last time we played in here. We're going to try to use some of those examples of why we played the way we did, and we have to prepare that way. I just think we have to control what we can control, and that's how we prepare individually, as a group, as a coaching staff to get ready to play."

\* \* \*

The Rochester Americans are missing some of their key offensive catalysts. A primary role player has to sit now.

The American Hockey League has suspended forward Colin Blackwell for two games, a penalty that began with Sunday's visit by the Binghamton Devils. The league didn't announce the exact reason for the suspension (other than "supplementary discipline"), but it is most assuredly for a hit early in Friday's 12-3 victory over Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

As Blackwell and Penguins defenseman Luka Bengtsson chased a loose puck into Wilkes-Barre's zone, Blackwell turned his attention to Bengtsson after the defenseman pushed the puck. Blackwell gave a two-arm shove that sent Bengtsson flying into the boards.

Bengtsson suffered an injury.

Colin Blackwell makes most of first chance with Sabres

Blackwell has five goals and 19 points in 39 games with the Amerks, who are 2-4-4 in their last 10 games. They have been without top scorer C.J. Smith (injury) and fellow offensive-minded players Nick Baptiste, Evan Rodrigues and Casey Nelson, who are playing in Buffalo.

\* \* \*

The Sabres will wear their white Winter Classic uniforms against the Capitals. They are 1-0-1 in the gear. After the Jan. 1 setback to the Rangers, they dropped the New York Islanders, 4-3, at home two weeks ago.

The Sabres will hand out Winter Classic jersey-themed towels before Monday's game.

View image on Twitter

View image on Twitter

Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

1st look at the jersey towel giveaway for Monday's game 📸 <http://bufsabres.co/rY6raQ>

3:45 PM - Feb 16, 2018

179

32 people are talking about this

Twitter Ads info and privacy

\* \* \*

The Sabres had 16 players take part in Sunday's optional practice: Josh Gorges, Marco Scandella, Nelson, Jacob Josefson, Baptiste, Jordan Nolan, Scott Wilson, Johan Larsson, Sam Reinhart, Zengus Girgensons, Jason Pominville, Chad Johnson, Justin Falk, Rodrigues, Nathan Beaulieu and Ryan O'Reilly.

## Sabres again miss wake-up call in latest lackadaisical loss

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

February 17, 2018

The Sabres have the same conversations as the fans. How can they look good sometimes and be so atrociously awful the rest of the time?

OK, they're obviously not as critical of their game as the fans are, but they do ask themselves similar questions when they're unlacing their skates or hanging out in the players' lounge.

"We talk about it in the room," right wing Jason Pominville said after Saturday's 4-2 loss to Los Angeles. "We talk about it all the time. I wish I could give you an answer, but it's extremely frustrating.

"A lot of things are said in the room, but until you go out there and do it, it's not going to change."

Photo Gallery: Los Angeles Kings 4, Buffalo Sabres 2

It's not changing. There are few signs it will. Sure, there's the blip like sweeping western Canada and winning three of four before Saturday's pounding. But for the first 40 minutes against the Kings, the players may as well have taken in brunch or a movie rather than skate listlessly around KeyBank Center and fall into a 4-0 hole.

"We weren't ready to play," Buffalo defenseman Marco Scandella said.

No, they weren't. It's not the first time. Or the second. Or the third. Or the 20th.

Do they even care?

"I don't want to say care. I hope everyone cares," Pominville said. "You go out there, you play, you work hard, you compete, you battle. Sometimes we don't, and I don't get it. I don't understand.

"If you want to play in this league and play for a while, that's where it starts. Sometimes we're not doing it, and it's led to us being where we are in the standings."

Inside the NHL: As deadline approaches, Sabres in the thick of the chatter

They are 30th in the 31-team NHL after winning only 17 of the opening 59 games. Last-place Arizona is right on their tail. A few more "efforts" like Saturday and they'll be back at rock bottom.

"It's a decision you make when you go out there whether you're on board or you're not," Pominville said. "For us to have success, we need everyone to be on board."

The Kings pounced on the Sabres with 19 shots in the opening period, scoring once. It was a bad-angle shot that slipped between the pads of under-siege goaltender Robin Lehner.

"I wish I had the answer why I stopped 18 shots and let in a brutal one," Lehner said. "I wish I knew. I'm not doing it on purpose."

The Kings scored on three straight shots during the second period, and fans started grabbing their coats and heading for the exits.

"Third period, it's over from that point," said Sabres coach Phil Housley, who saw his team score twice in the final 20 minutes to make the result seem close. "I don't think our guys were ready to play."

How do you sell Sabres tickets that no one wants? You don't.

Housley repeatedly told them to be ready. He expressed his disappointment about Thursday's 3-2 overtime loss in Ottawa. He explained that Los Angeles had lost three straight on its seven-game road trip and would be eager to turn things around. He told them ...

It clearly didn't matter what he told them.

"We prepare the same way we do every game," Housley said. "It's up to individuals to take the information that's given to them."

It's a lather-rinse-repeat cycle of in one ear, out the other. It resulted in their ears being filled with boos at the end of the second period.

"We deserve that," left wing Zemgus Girgensons said.

More often than not, the Sabres get what they deserve on the scoreboard.

"It's unacceptable," Scandella said. "There's no reason for it. We should be ready every night, especially in our building.

"We definitely weren't engaged enough. They were playing playoff-type hockey, and we're going to have to step up next game and figure out what we need to do in this dressing room."

They need to show they care. They need to play for an entire game. It certainly won't get easier with Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals coming to town Monday afternoon.

At this point, the odds are against a solid effort and good start.

"I really don't get it," Pominville said. "I don't understand it."

## **Mike Harrington: Botterill needs to slam the door on this sorry group**

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

February 18, 2018

Memo to Terry Pegula, Kim Pegula and Russ Brandon: If you dare to increase ticket prices after this clown show of a hockey season, prepare for fan (and media) wrath unlike anything you've ever seen.

The players in your locker room insist they care. It's lip service. Constantly pulling no-shows at the start of games in front of their soon-to-be former season ticket-holders is a funny way of showing it. Even your rookie general manager - who certainly bears heavy responsibility for this disaster - has clearly moved past his breaking point.

KeyBank Center was deathly quiet and the Sabres were slowly plodding down the ice, fumbling the puck all the way, late in the second period Saturday afternoon.

Just then, GM Jason Botterill made a long-overdue statement on behalf of the paying customers. The denizens atop the 300 level and the residents of the press box heard a yell. Then the box shook with the slam of a door. It was the mild-mannered GM, vacating his suite and heading down the hall to blow off some steam.

Oddly enough, the score was only 2-0 at that point but the Sabres were already non-competitive. A couple of a minutes later, at the end of Pee Wee-style barrage of three goals on three shots against Robin Lehner, the Sabres were in a 4-0 hole and another matinee with a house full of kids was down the tubes. Lehner got so little help at times in the 40 minutes he played, he should have taken his stick and gloves and gone home.

The message to Botterill from this view: Blow it up, Jason. All of it.

Coach Phil Housley is less than impressive at times but I'm still firing 10 or 12 players before I think about changing coaches. There are too many guys in this dressing room too happy to have their money.

Don't let the third period fool you. It's easy to play when you're down 4-0. There's no pressure. The Los Angeles Kings were already intrigued by the aroma of the postgame wings that filled their dressing room.

So no stat sheet that shows a 4-2 final score, a 36-35 margin in shots on goal or a 62-61 edge in shots at goal (all for the visitors) should be misconstrued to make anyone think the Sabres gave a quality effort in this game.

Afterward, Jason Pominville was ashen-faced trying to explain things and you felt for the guy. He has to be thinking, "Chris Drury and Daniel Briere never would have put up with this."

It sure looks like this room has Evander Kane Syndrome, the chief symptom being a player skating aimlessly around the ice waiting for his cell phone to buzz with his new destination. But No. 9 - who has three goals since Christmas - is far from the only one suffering from the malady.

Pominville was trying to convince himself that's not the case here.

"I hope not," he said. "We still have games to play, areas we want to improve and build on. Everyone is probably on edge a little bit but this is 2 1/2 hours where you get away from everything and go out there and play and work hard. You can't be sitting here thinking and waiting for something to happen. If you are, you're not in the right business."

Marco Scandella is one of the few guys in that dressing room that truly cares what's going on. You can tell he's astonished at times - because this is the only season he's been here. Nothing new to most of us.



"We should be ready to play every night, especially in our building," Scandella said. "We need to find a way. They were playing playoff-type hockey and we're going to have to step up next game and figure out what we need to do in this dressing room."

And about players just hanging on waiting for the deadline?

"I have nothing to say about that," said Scandella.

Frankly, that says a lot.

Scandella scored the Sabres' first goal 30 seconds into the third period and punctuated it oddly with a Lambeau Leap into the corner glass. He said he was just trying to get some life into his team. Maybe. Of course, he said in his next breath "we're a good team in here" and thus his credibility for the rest of the interview was shot.

It meant nothing but the Sabres did play well in the third period. No one would give up if Housley or Botterill or some player went nuts behind the doors to engender some professional pride. What little anyone in Blue and Gold has anymore.

"If you fight your whole life to get to this level, you'll get to see it," Lehner said matter of factly to reporters about the scene. "But you guys do not."

Whatever. Folks in this town see enough of these guys as it is. Too much, as a matter of fact. At least the media gets paid to watch. The fans, meanwhile, have to endure the Pegulas, Brandon and these players robbing them of their hard-earned dollars for yet another year.

Don't just bang on a door, Jason. Blow this sorry group up.

## **Sabres Notebook: Iafallo has homecoming fun; Lehner struggling in Buffalo**

The Buffalo News

By JOHN VOGL AND MIKE HARRINGTON

February 17, 2018

Alex Iafallo said Feb. 17 was one date he had circled when he looked at the Los Angeles Kings' schedule. It was pretty easy to see why Saturday.

As the Eden native took the ice in KeyBank Center, the Zamboni end of the rink was full of fans in black and silver. "Eden loves Iafallo" read one placard, a heart substituting the word "loves." A comedian in the crew even plastered several big head shots of Iafallo against the glass.

"It's a pretty amazing feeling," Iafallo said after the Kings' 4-2 victory over the Sabres. "Seeing in warmups all the support was pretty special. Especially coming here as a kid with my parents and sister coming to games, it's a special feeling.

"We had a quick practice yesterday, I stepped on the ice and it gave me a lot of goosebumps. In warmup, too. You always dream of playing in your hometown and seeing everybody in the stands."

Two buses full of Iafallo's family and friends came to the game from The Towne House, the Hamburg pub run by his father, Tom, that's been family owned since 1962.

His parents, however, were not in the house. That's because Iafallo's sister, Julianna, was having her senior day in Columbus, Ohio, with the Ohio State women's hockey team. Alex Iafallo said he agreed with that decision because it was Senior Day.

Tom Iafallo even tweeted Saturday that both of his kids got an assist. Julianna notched one in Ohio State's game against Bemidji State, and Alex fed Anze Kopitar for a second-period goal that put the Kings up, 3-0.

Iafallo played 18:29 in his first meeting with Buffalo, a 4-2 victory in October in Los Angeles, registering three shots on goal, but he did not have a point. He played 16:45 Saturday and had two shots on goal.

On the goal, Iafallo got the puck from Dustin Brown to the right of Sabres goalie Robin Lehner and found an open Kopitar in the slot.

"I got the assist there, and one of my buddies is in the corner right by the Zamboni door," Iafallo said. "I looked at him for a second, and it was pretty cool feeling."

Iafallo has six goals, 14 assists and 20 points in 56 games this season.

"He's a hard worker, he skates really well, he's making plays," said Kopitar. "His forechecking ability is obviously very good. It's actually very easy to play with him."

After the game, the Iafallo clan gathered in Sections 113 and 114 to greet him and wish him well as the Kings headed to the airport for Chicago, where they will meet the Blackhawks on Monday night. The crowd rivaled any that observers have seen over the years waiting for South Buffalo native Patrick Kane.

"I didn't expect it was going to be that big," Iafallo said. "I saw new faces every time I looked in this crowd. It was a very special feeling. I can't be thankful enough for all the support I've gotten the whole season and throughout my career. Every time I looked in the stands, I saw an old friend or family member. It was a very cool time here."

-----

Lehner admits things aren't going well in Buffalo.

The goalie allowed four goals on 30 shots through the opening two periods, and he watched from the bench as backup Chad Johnson played the third.

Lehner has been pulled from three of his last eight starts in KeyBank Center. He is 1-5-1 with a .865 save percentage during the forgettable stretch.

"It's a tough environment here right now," Lehner said. "It's been a tough little stretch for me at home trying to regroup and stay confident in this building. I was really confident the first 15-17 games. I was at the top of the league here. The last four, five games I just haven't been able to get that confidence here."

Lehner stopped 18 of 19 shots during the opening period but let a bad-angle attempt slip through his legs. During the second, Anze Kopitar beat Lehner one-on-one after a turnover in the Sabres' zone, and the Kings scored on their next two shots to make it 4-0.

"At the end of the day, it was a 1-0 game going into the second," Lehner said. "No matter what if it's a two-on-one or -nothing or -something, I want to make that save, keep it at 1-0 and spark the team."

"I've got to find a level back to find my confidence here at home because at the end of the day it's momentum in hockey games."

-----

Rookies don't usually get a long leash. Nick Baptiste is learning that.

The right winger scored for Buffalo on Tuesday against Tampa Bay. In Thursday's return to his hometown of Ottawa, Baptiste had no shots and no hits in 8:53 of ice time.

Housley scratched him Saturday.

"Nick took a step back against Ottawa," Housley said. "I didn't see the tenaciousness that he had in his last game using his speed. His wall play, he could have been a little bit hungrier in the battle, but I can see him getting back in the lineup soon."

## **The Wraparound: Kings 4, Sabres 2**

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

February 17, 2018

Even the Sabres teams that were built to lose could beat the Los Angeles Kings in Buffalo. This edition couldn't.

It barely even tried for the first 40 minutes.

Buffalo had won eight straight games against the Kings in KeyBank Center, part of a 14-1-1 run that dates to December 1993. This group tossed that success into the Buffalo River, allowing Los Angeles to dominate in a 4-2 victory Saturday afternoon.

Los Angeles had 30 shots during the opening two periods in building a 4-0 lead. The Kings won in Buffalo for the first time since a 4-1 win Feb. 21, 2003.

The Sabres fell to 8-17-4 at home and 17-31-11 overall.

Kings strike first ...: Los Angeles opened the scoring with 11:26 gone, and goaltender Robin Lehner would like another chance at it. Andy Andreoff pushed a bouncing puck to Michael Amadio in the right circle, and it looked for a moment like Amadio wouldn't get a shot off.

He did from a bad angle, and it went between Lehner's pads to put the Sabres in a 1-0 hole.

... And second: As Benoit Pouliot tried to exit the Sabres' zone, he fell and gave the puck to the Kings. Dustin Brown fed Anze Kopitar, and the center skated a clear path to the net, went around the sprawling Lehner and dumped the puck home with 7:58 left in the second period.

... And third: Fans began grabbing their coats and heading toward the exits with 3:54 left in the second when Los Angeles made it 3-0. Brown passed to Eden native Alex Iafallo behind the net, and the left winger quickly hit Kopitar in front. The center buried his 25th of the season.

... And fourth: Amadio joined Kopitar with a multiple-goal day with 2:25 remaining in the second. Jonny Brodzinski found Amadio in the high slot, and the forward beat Lehner on the stick side to give the Kings a commanding 4-0 lead.

Three in a row: The Kings' three second-period goals came on three consecutive shots.

Booooo: As the second period came to a merciful end, the fans loudly booed the home team as it trudged to the dressing room.

Switch: Backup goalie Chad Johnson headed to the crease for the third period. Lehner finished with 26 saves on 30 shots in 40 minutes.

Finally: The Sabres got the zero off the scoreboard with 30 seconds gone in the final period. The puck came to a rest near the top of the Kings' zone, and defenseman Marco Scandella unleashed a slap shot with the thunder of a freight train.

After the puck barreled into the top corner, Scandella coasted to the corner and leaped into the glass.

Money: The Sabres hold a promotion in which a goal during the opening minute of the third period earns an additional \$5,000 grant for a charity. As Gary Bluestein held the original \$2,000 check for the Western New York Food Bank, Scandella's goal boosted the total to \$7,000.

One more: Rasmus Ristolainen scored with 3:18 to go, cutting the Sabres' deficit to a prettier-looking 4-2. Ryan O'Reilly's shot found traffic in front, and Evander Kane put a no-look backhand pass onto Ristolainen's stick.

Shots, shots, shots: The Kings came in averaging 30.9 shots per game. They took 19 in the first period, including nine of the opening 11. Buffalo had eight shots through 20 minutes.

Los Angeles had a 30-17 advantage through two periods.

Welcome home: When the Kings came out of the dressing room for the pregame skate, about 100 fans were ready near the tunnel. They cheered as Iafallo emerged and prepared to skate as the left winger on Los Angeles' top line.

Friends and family members lined the glass with cutouts of Iafallo's face and held up a sign that professed Eden's love for its hometown player. Another cheer came when the 24-year-old was announced as part of the Kings' starting lineup with Kopitar and Brown.

Moment of silence: The Sabres asked fans for a moment of silence before the game to honor the students and faculty who lost their lives during the school shooting in Parkland, Fla.

Counting the house: The Sabres announced 18,632 tickets sold.

Next: The Sabres will get ready for another matinee Monday. Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals will visit Monday with a 3 p.m. start on Presidents' Day.

## **Inside the NHL: As deadline approaches, Sabres in the thick of the chatter**

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

February 17, 2018

The countdown to Feb. 26 is on. Things have been awfully quiet in the NHL in recent days, save for the big Los Angeles-Ottawa trade that involved Dion Phaneuf and Marian Gaborik packing. That's all about to change as the NHL's trade deadline day approaches.

The Sabres are expected to be a prominent seller, with the likes of Evander Kane, Benoit Pouliot, Robin Lehner and Josh Gorges good bets to be moved. It will be a good test for first-year General Manager Jason Botterill to see if he can not only offload some salary but also start the process of rebuilding his team by adding a piece or two.

The Sabres have made it clear to teams they're in position to retain some salary to facilitate deals and perhaps enhance their return. They're expected to keep part of Kane's \$5.25 million salary in a trade and would likely have to keep part of the \$3.9 million hit on Gorges or the \$4 million for Lehner. Teams are limited to three retained salaries at any one time.

Here's a look at some of the latest scuttlebutt around the Sabres and the league:

**Golden Knights:** David Conte, Vegas' special advisor to hockey operations, has attended multiple Sabres games. He was also in Rochester last week and followed the Sabres to Ottawa on Thursday. While you wouldn't think they'd be all that interested in upsetting their lineup or dressing room by adding Kane, perhaps a veteran spare part like Pouliot would be of some interest. Still, the Knights' continued presence seems to foreshadow something bigger brewing.

And in non-Sabres news, what is Vegas going to do at the deadline? They were built to sell, with big names like James Neal, David Perron and Luca Sbisa all being unrestricted free agents. In October, you figured they would all go for draft picks to build the franchise going forward. They can't go now. The Golden Knights are legitimate Stanley Cup contenders who have essentially been forced to go for it in year one by the play of their team. They have to add, or at least stand pat. Amazing.

**Rick Nash vs. Kane:** The "For Sale" sign is up in New York for players like Nash, Ryan McDonagh, Michael Grabner and Mats Zuccarello. Nash's presence on the market makes him the top rental player available and teams are likely looking to get their hands on him first before cycling back to the Sabres on Kane. Nashville and St. Louis both seem to be places that would be fits for Nash, who has played 77 career playoff games.

It will be very interesting to see who takes a chance on Kane, who has never appeared in the playoffs and will engender questions about locker room fit. Botterill is known to have talked with his old boss, Pittsburgh GM Jim Rutherford, about Kane and Botterill obviously knows the Pens' farm system better than any other team. And going to most playoff teams will allow Kane to be in a complementary role than trying to be a lead player like he is here. Still, Nash is a much safer bet to most teams.

**Pouliot:** He's got 11 goals and can kill penalties. He's cheap at \$1.15 million. He's been playing better of late, much better than the buyout version that got the boot from Edmonton last season. You could do much worse for a third- or fourth-line left winger going forward and can probably get him for a low-round pick.

**McDonagh:** The Rangers captain has one more year left on his deal at \$4.7 million and TSN reported he submitted a list of 10 teams he would not accept a trade to. There's plenty of chatter both Tampa Bay and Boston are interested, although the Rangers want a high price. Reports out of Boston have rookie winger Jake DeBrusk as one of New York's chief targets.

**New York Islanders:** What goaltending problem? Jaroslav Halak and Thomas Greiss combined to stop 95 shots in back-to-back nights and post shutouts Thursday against the Rangers and Friday in Carolina. The scuttle has been for weeks they weren't that interested in Robin Lehner, and maybe not in any goalie at all. For two key Metro Division games, GM Garth Snow's faith was rewarded.

**Flyers:** A big Sabres-Philadelphia deal keeps making the rounds. Kane could be a fit there and the Flyers have all kinds of young prospects on defense like Samuel Morin, Travis Sanheim and 6-foot-5 Philippe Myers, an undrafted 21-year-old having a nice year at Lehigh Valley in the AHL.

While they might be looking at a goalie to replace the injured Brian Elliott, don't discount the possibility the Flyers would be more interested in Sabres backup Chad Johnson than Lehner. Johnson is a UFA after the season while Lehner is a restricted free agent -- and Philly GM Ron Hextall picked Johnson to play for Team Canada at last year's World Championships. Hmmm.

Canadiens: Extend or trade Tomas Plekanec? Trade Max Pacioretty? There's two major fish that could be available to catch for the right price.

Blue Jackets: Columbus is on the periphery of the East playoffs a year after a 108-point season. The Jackets figured they'd be in easily and now need help. On top of that, defenseman Jack Johnson has asked out as a way to enhance his chances in free agency. Johnson filed for bankruptcy in 2014 after his parents cleaned him out of much of the earnings from his first NHL deal by taking millions of dollars in high-risk loans, and is hoping to get big money this summer to recoup some of the losses.

Other key targets: If you don't get Nash or Kane, Oilers winger Patrick Maroon could be next on your list. Ottawa defenseman Johnny Oduya is expected to land with a Cup contender again as teams hope the 36-year-old finds the form that helped the Blackhawks win it all in 2015. The Senators already made one major move and could be involved in another involving left winger Mike Hoffman, who still has two years left on his deal. The word at the All-Star Game in Tampa was that no player was getting "recruited" more by players on his team than Detroit defenseman Mike Green. Vancouver will deal former Sabres winger Thomas Vanek, who has 16 goals and will get another playoff shot somewhere.

Gostisbehere stunned by shooting at old school

Flyers defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere spent two years attending Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., before heading to a Connecticut prep school to further his hockey career. He was stunned to learn of Wednesday's mass shooting at his former school that killed 14 students and three adults.

"They always say it hits close to home, but when it's actually your home it's pretty tough to see," Gostisbehere told Philadelphia reporters. "I haven't really processed it yet. I still can't believe it. I was just in that school. I was only in that school for two years, but I felt safe at that school every day I was there. Just to see something like that happen and to those kids and those teachers and whatnot, it just sucks."

Gostisbehere knew assistant football coach Aaron Feis, who was killed shielding students from the shooting.

"He was always a great guy, always nice to me when I was there," Gostisbehere said. "Obviously really shows his character and what he did in a time of panic and emergency, putting himself on the line before others, obviously he's the true hero and he's the guy we need to focus on rather than the shooter."

Gionta looking East?

It's been reported for a few weeks that Team USA veterans Brian Gionta and James Wisniewski are ready to make a quick return to the NHL after the Olympics. They would need to be signed by Feb. 26, the day after the gold medal game, to be eligible for the playoffs.

Gionta opted to stay home with his family rather than play in the NHL this year when the Sabres didn't bring him back. You would think he would still prefer to play in the East and that would make Boston and the contenders in the Metropolitan Division as the favorites for his services.

It says here the Sabres goofed not bringing Gionta back for another season, especially if they weren't prepared to name a new captain and with no young players making a big impression in training camp. Gionta had 15 goals last season in what the best of his three seasons with the Sabres. Wouldn't he have been a better choice for a bottom-six forward than the likes of, say, Jacob Josefson or Jordan Nolan?

Also out of the Olympics, one of the biggest talking points is the job former Sabres star and coach Craig Ramsay is doing with Slovakia. The Slovaks beat the Russians in the opener and suffered a 2-1 loss to Team USA in Game Two. Ramsay is 66 and only served 131 games as a head coach with the Sabres, Philadelphia and Atlanta. His '10-11 Thrashers had 80 points, which was pretty good for that moribund franchise before it moved to Winnipeg. Plenty of NHL teams could still use Ramsay's eyes on their bench.

Around the boards

\* Lehner on the Sabres' response to Jack Eichel's injury: "Every team in this league needs to have depth. Injuries happen. The way we've been playing is something we've been talking about all season long. When we play that hard-checking, simple, physical game, we usually have really good games and come out with a win or get to overtime at least against good teams. That's happened all year. When we get away from that, it's been the polar opposite."

Really good games: Boston, Tampa Bay. Polar opposites: Colorado, Ottawa.

\* Regression coming? Vegas' William Karlsson entered play Saturday tied for fourth in the league with 30 goals, and a 24.8 shooting percentage. Tampa Bay rookie Yannick Gourde had 22 goals and was shooting at 22.2 percent. There are currently 48 players with 20-plus goals in the league and they're the only two shooting over 20 percent.

\* Speaking of Gourde, he's up to second among rookies in goals to Vancouver's Brock Boeser (27) and fourth in points behind Mathew Barzal of the Islanders, Boeser and Arizona's Clayton Keller. Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper stumped for his player when the Lightning were in town Tuesday.

"We'll start that Rookie of the Year plug right now," Cooper said. "I don't know if he's going to win it. But it's going to be hard not to sit here and if he continues this, to not be in the top three."

\* How bad was the Blackhawks' 6-1 loss Monday in Arizona? The Coyotes had not won a regulation game at home since Dec. 2 and had only won twice in regulation in their previous 26 games. Chicago is absolutely toast, likely to finish last in the Central. You wonder where that leaves coach Joel Quenneville after the season.

\* A sad personal note: Veteran Boston Herald writer Steve Harris, who covered the Bruins since 1976, died Thursday at age 66 after a brief illness. Accent & all, Harris was everything you'd picture of an old-school Boston reporter. He thoroughly enjoyed his trips to Buffalo, even visiting for Prospect Challenge games in September, and often said how impressed he was with the HarborCenter complex and the burgeoning Canalside area. He was a true pro and he will be missed.



## **Sabres have to play with more passion**

Nathan Beaulieu says the team needs a quicker response than Saturday's game against the Kings

WGR550

BRAYTON WILSON

FEBRUARY 18, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres came out flat for the first 40 minutes of their game with the Los Angeles Kings at KeyBank Center on Saturday afternoon. Buffalo was out-shot 30-17 in the first two periods of play while surrendering four goals against, three of them coming in the second period.

The Sabres responded in the third period with two goals and 18 shots on goal, but the comeback effort was too little, too late in a 4-2 loss.

Buffalo's start to the game was an issue once again against the Kings, with just two shots on goal in the first 10 minutes of play, and a stretch of nearly nine straight minutes without a single shot on goal into the second period. Sabres head coach Phil Housley was not pleased with the results, and knows that his team needs to get off to a better start in games.

"You look at the statistics - it's a 4-2 game and the game was over after the second period," Housley said after practice on Sunday. "We reviewed the things we need to improve on, but certainly being ready at the start of the game is one of them."

Defenseman Nathan Beaulieu struggled throughout most of the afternoon on Saturday. He was on the ice for three of the four goals against in the game, and was bumped down to the third defensive pairing with Justin Falk for the third period.

While his performance lacked overall from the start, the entire group couldn't seem to figure things out until the game was already out of reach. The overall team performance frustrates Beaulieu, knowing that they had played so well against some of the better teams in the NHL prior to Saturday's debacle.

"It's frustrating in the fact that playing teams like Tampa and Boston, [we were] playing so well, and then I don't know what it is," Beaulieu said. "We come back to our home ice and let the game slip away from us in the first 30 minutes of the game. It's extremely frustrating. Even though we had a push in the third, it doesn't matter. This league's too good. You can't win a hockey game in the third period, it takes a full-60. We need to clean it up and be ready tomorrow because we have another good hockey team coming in."

Beaulieu understands that he and his teammates need to get off to a better start, and that they need a quicker response to a goal against than they did against the Kings.

"You have to be engaged in the game," Beaulieu said. "You look at L.A., a team that's looking to make a big push and that's made some moves and are trying to sneak into the playoffs, and you know how well they play in the playoffs. They're a heavy team, and we just didn't come out ready to play. I think it starts in the dressing room mentally, and when we get out there physically too, we have to get engaged earlier."

The 25-year old defenseman is currently in his first season with the Sabres, and has struggled out of the gate with just a goal and six points in 41 games played this season. Last season with the Montreal Canadiens, Beaulieu set career-high stats with four goals, 24 assists and 28 points in 74 games played.

In Montreal, the Canadiens had some considerable success with their fast and aggressive style of play, and stepped up their game when they smelled blood in the water. So far in Buffalo, the same type of play and success has been hard to come by.

"We were a team (in Montreal) that tried to jump on other teams because we were so fast and quick at the Bell Centre, trying to get the crowd behind you," Beaulieu said. "It seems like [here] we can't get our crowd behind us. They're there, they're cheering, but when you go down that early and get booed off the ice, it doesn't sit well."

In the past, Sabres forward Evander Kane has said that the team needs to play with more of a "F-you mentality" and be more willing to play with an edge to their game. Beaulieu echoed that sentiment on Sunday as he feels the team needs to play with more of a pissed off mindset.

"That's the mindset we have to have going into the game," Beaulieu said. "It's not something that you can teach or you can't just get pissed off. We just have to have that mindset and it shouldn't have to take four goals against and your goalie getting pulled to start that feud. It's frustrating, but the only thing you can do is learn from it."

"Passion and emotion are great tools," Housley added to that. "I think we have to have more emotion, I think we have to play with more passion. I thought we had a really good game against Washington the last time we played in here. We're going to try to use some of those examples of why we played the way we did and we have to prepare that way. We have to control what we control, and that's how we prepare individually, as a group and as a coaching staff to get ready to play."

The Washington Capitals come to Buffalo on Monday following a 7-1 loss to the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday night. The Capitals currently sit atop the Metropolitan Division standings, just one point ahead of the Pittsburgh Penguins and five in front of the Philadelphia Flyers and New Jersey Devils.

Washington is a team that has been up and down lately, going 5-3-2 in their last 10 games, and could use a win on Monday to better themselves in the standings with the Penguins hot on their tail. Sabres defenseman Casey Nelson knows that the team will need a better start against Washington if they want to come away with another win over a top team in the league.

"I think we just have to start off on the right track, stick to our game right away," Nelson said. "The first two periods we weren't getting the pucks behind their [defensemen] and setting up a forecheck. That's where you have to put a team early on in the game."

With the NHL Trade Deadline just eight days away, the Sabres' locker room could go through a shake up as they continue to re-tool for the future. Housley does not want outside distractions affecting how his team plays and prepares for a game night in and night out.

"I feel we have to focus on what we can control, and that's getting ready to play Washington who, after their loss yesterday to Chicago, they're going to be ready to respond," Housley added. "That's the thing we can control is the how we approach tomorrow, and how we prepare today to get ready for Washington."

The Sabres took part in an optional skate on Sunday morning with Robin Lehner, Evander Kane, Kyle Okposo, Rasmus Ristolainen, Victor Antipin and Benoit Pouliot as the only players not participating. Housley was also not on the ice for practice as assistant coaches Tom Ward and Andrew Allen running Sunday's session.

The Sabres and Capitals will face off from KeyBank Center on Monday at 3 p.m. Pre-game coverage on WGR with Pat Malacaro starts at 2 p.m. following the John Murphy Show. Be sure to tune in to hear from Paul Hamilton, as well as Housley, Nelson and Beaulieu from the locker room.

## **The Kings conquer the Sabres 4-2**

The Sabres lose their 2nd in a row

WGR550

FEBRUARY 17, 2018

The Sabres gave up 19 shots in the first period, and goals on 3 straight shots in the 2nd, as they lost their 2nd game in a row. Robin Lehner gave up some goals he will want back, but was given no help in the process. He was pulled in favor of Chad Johnson in the 3rd. It's the 2nd straight loss for the Sabres, and the first to the Kings at home since 2003 when Ryan Miller was a rookie.

Here's how the game played out:

First Period:

15:50 - Kyle Okposo makes a great play, skating hard back to prevent a 2 on 1 for the Kings. He pressured Pearson from behind and forced an easy save for Robin Lehner. Shots are 5 to 1 early in favor of the Kings.

12:49 - Robin Lehner has been sharp so far, 9 saves already. The Sabres have been pinned in their own end for almost the entire game, and Lehner has stood tall. Not only is he making the saves, but he's giving up very few rebounds.

9:56 - Evan Rodrigues was too passive on the powerplay. Two times he had an open shot from a dangerous area, and tried to make a pass. He does look very comfortable playing on the left side of the Sabres umbrella formation, just needs to shoot more.

8:34 - **KINGS GOAL.** A bad goal to let in by Robin Lehner. Kings forward Michael Amadio sneaks a wrist shot, along the ice, through Lehner's legs. What made it look bad was that Lehner didn't go down on the play. He was standing against the post when the puck crossed the line. It was Amadio's 3rd of the year.

1:00 - The Sabres have been dominated in this period. Other than the powerplay chances, they have had no threatening offense. The Kings forecheck forced countless turnovers by the Sabre defense. Lucky to be just a 1 goal game. Kings are on pace for 55 shots.

Goal Summary:

BUF: None

LAK: 8:34 - Michael Amadio (3) (Andy Andreoff)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: 14:38 - Rasmus Ristolainen (2 min., interference)

LAK: 11:57 - Dustin Brown (2min., tripping)

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 8; LAK - 19

2nd Period:

15:30 - The Sabres are playing much better in this period. The Kings do have 3 shots, but much of the offensive pressure has been supplied by the Sabres.

10:34 - Robin Lehner makes a save on Dustin Brown, the rebound sits in front of Lehner for a good 5 seconds. All five Sabres were fishing for the puck, and it looked like only Ristolainen was clearing Kings out.

7:58 - KINGS GOAL. Anze Kopitar scores his 24th of the year. Benoit Pouliot turned it over in his own end, and Kopitar stick handled around Lehner to put the puck into an empty net. Nathan Beaulieu didn't pick up either King in front of the net, and was caught watching the puck. 2-0 LAK.

3:54 - KINGS GOAL. Anze Kopitar again. He was set up by Buffalo native Alex Iafallo in front, and Kopitar put the puck low on Lehner. After a good start to the period by the Sabres, the Kings have re-asserted their dominance. 3-0 LAK.

2:25 - KINGS GOAL. Michael Amadio gets his 2nd of the night. Drew Doughty pads his stats with his 33rd assist of the season. Three goals in just over 5 minutes for the Kings, yet Robin Lehner remained in net. Could see Chad Johnson to start the 3rd. 4-0 LAK.

0:00 - The Sabres were booed off the ice to end the 2nd period. Deservedly so, giving up 3 goals, and being outplayed like this on home ice.

Goal Summary:

BUF: None

LAK: 7:58 - Anze Kopitar (24) (Dustin Brown); 3:54 - Anze Kopitar (25) (Alex Iafallo); 2:25 - Michael Amadio (4)(Jonn Brodzinski, Drew Doughty)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: 14:12 - Johan Larsson (2 min., tripping)

LAK: None

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 9 (17); LAK - 11 (30)

3rd Period:

19:30 - SABRES GOAL. Marco Scandella fires an absolute rocket over teh shoulder of Jonathan Quick. The puck was moving slowly in an open area by the point, and Scandella came from center to step into it with a slap-shot. Chad Johnson was in net to start the 3rd. 4-1 LAK.

13:51 - Dion Phaneuf shows up to slash Benoit Pouliot while going after him. Not sure why he did. Phaneuf gets two for slashing and two for roughing. Pouliot gets two for roughing, so the Sabres go to the powerplay.

9:02 - Casey Nelson's strong play continues. He jumped down into the corner to keep the play alive, and set up Rodrigues for a great scoring chance. On the same shift, Nelson got a shot from the point through a herd of players for another scoring chance.

5:30 - Some good back and forth action between both teams. Not a lot of whistles as both teams try to get this game to the garage.

3:18 - SABRES GOAL. Rasmus Ristolainen scores his 5th of the season. The second goal of the night by a Sabre defenseman. Ryan O'Reilly got the original shot off, and Ristolainen charged to the net to put in the rebound. 4-2 LAK.

2:31 - The Sabres respond from the goal with a wild sequence in front of Jonathan Quick. Evander Kane tipped a shot right on, and O'Reilly was robbed on the rebound. Sabre net is empty.

0:00 - A flurry of shots came from the Sabres with the net empty. O'Reilly, Kane, and Ristolainen had several opportunities with the net empty.

#### Goal Summary:

BUF: 19:30 - Marco Scandella (2)(Unassisted); 3:18 - Rasmus Ristolainen (5)(Unassisted)

LAK: None

#### Penalty Summary:

BUF: 13:51 - Benoit Pouliot (2 min., roughing)

LAK: 13:51 - Dion Phaneuf (4 min., roughing, slashing)

#### Shots on Goal:

BUF - 15 (35); LAK - 9 (36)

#### End of Game

#### Goalies:

BUF: Robin Lehner - 26 saves; Chad Johnson - 6 saves

LAK: Jonathan Quick - 33 saves

#### Power Plays:

BUF: 0 for 2

LAK: 0 for 2

#### 3 Stars:

1. Anze Kopitar
2. Michael Amadio
3. Dustin Brown

#### What's Next

The Sabres have another afternoon home game on Monday at 3pm. They'll play the Washington Capitals, who are 1st in the Metropolitan Division. The Paul William Beltz Pre-game Show will start at 2pm right here on WGR!

## **From the Locker Room: Sabres-Kings**

Marco Scandella, Jason Pominville, Johan Larsson, Robin Lehner and Phil Housley address the media after the 4-2 loss to Los Angeles on Saturday

WGR550

FEBRUARY 17, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres played host to the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday in KeyBank Center. Buffalo was looking to extend their head-to-head home winning streak over Los Angeles to nine with an afternoon victory over their West Coast opponents.

On this day it was all Kings as they jumped out to a 1-0 lead after one, and a 4-0 advantage after 40 minutes of play. Though the Sabres netted a couple of goals in the final regulation period, it was too little, too late as they were dispatched by the sticks of Los Angeles by a final score of 4-2.

Go inside the locker room to hear from Marco Scandella, Jason Pominville, Johan Larsson, Robin Lehner and Phil Housley following the loss.

Marco Scandella:

Not ready once again: "We weren't ready to play. We didn't bring enough energy into our building. It's unacceptable."

Difference in mentalities: "We definitely weren't engaged enough. They were playing playoff-type hockey. We're going to have to step it up next game and figure it out. We have to address things in our locker room. That's the bottom line."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-17-marco-scandella-post-game>

Jason Pominville:

L.A.'s winning formula: "They defend hard, they battle... they keep it simple, and they win games. They've won multiple [Stanley] Cups that way. You saw the way they started the game. That's why they've been so successful."

Deadline rumors keeping teammates' minds elsewhere?: "I hope not. I mean, we still have games to play. We still have areas where we want to improve and build on. There's probably guys who are on edge, but this two, two-and-a-half hours where you get away from everything and just out there and play and work hard. You can't be sitting and thinking and waiting for something to happen. If you are, you're not in the right business."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-17-jason-pominville-post-game>

Johan Larsson:

Another slow start: "I think we're too hesitant going to battle. We're giving them too much time to make plays instead of going to see what happens. Sitting back is not good."

Home woes: "We don't want to lose. We especially want to win at home. Been a real struggle at home this year."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-17-johan-larsson-post-game>

Robin Lehner:

Wish the third period was the template of the whole game: "In the third period we were dumping pucks and following our structure. In the first period, we didn't. When you go and dump pucks and play hard and finish checks, you see what happens."

Regaining confidence: "It's a tough environment here right now. Been a tough little stretch here for me at home. I was really confident the first 15-17 games; top in the league here. But my last 4-5 games I haven't been able to find that confidence in here."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-17-robin-lehner-post-game>

Phil Housley:

Individual change at this point: "We prepare the same way we do every game. I think it's up to the individual to take the information that's given to them and use it. At the same time, you have to know that the Los Angeles Kings, in the position they're in, are going to come with a push. We weren't prepared for that."

Disheartening: "It's really disappointing. Thought we were making some good strides. It's unfortunate because before [these last two games] we were putting good showings together of how to check and play the right way. Today when we did have opportunities to execute, we didn't execute."

## **Sabres' Josh Gorges wondering about uncertain future**

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Feb. 18, 2018

BUFFALO – Josh Gorges said he wonders if this is it, if he has just about reached the end of his NHL career. Right now, the graying 13-year veteran can't even keep a regular spot on the Sabres' weak defense corps.

Gorges, 33, has become a spare part on the league's second-worst team, sitting out 10 of the last 13 games as a healthy scratch entering Monday's tilt against the Washington Capitals.

Just a week before the NHL trade deadline, the proud Gorges said he knows the Sabres are likely trying to deal him. Even with his best days behind him, he could offer a team some valuable depth or an accountable presence to help in the dressing room.

Of course, trades are difficult to complete. So far, Gorges has played only 25 times in the final year of a contract paying him \$3.9 million this season.

"You look around and teams don't have a lot of room, trades are tough to make nowadays, and for a guy that hasn't been in the lineup, what do other teams see that as?" Gorges told the Times Herald following Sunday's optional practice inside KeyBank Center. "There's a lot of different circumstances that are playing out."

So thoughts about his uncertain future – "Everything kind of goes through your mind," he said – have been running through Gorges' head.

"Do you get traded? What happens there? You think about your family situation. Do I not see my kids for a little while, my wife?" he said. "There's a lot more to it than just the hockey side of things you think about."

Naturally, Gorges said this season "definitely hasn't been easy." It was clear long before the campaign began he would have a reduced role.

The Sabres fired general manager Tim Murray, who acquired Gorges in 2014, and coach Dan Bylsma, who regularly skated him more than 20 minutes, in April.

New coach Phil Housley scratched Gorges opening night and hasn't played him more than six consecutive contests.

Prior to this season, Gorges hadn't been a healthy scratch in about 10 years. Moving in and out of the lineup and watching for stretches has sapped some confidence.

"I believe this game is all mental," Gorges said. "You got to be confident in what you're doing when you get out there, you got to be able to play without hesitation, you got to play instinctually, and then when you get in this type of position, a lot of times you're thinking when you're out there, which isn't a good thing. You know confidence isn't at an all-time high, anything that happens out there, there's a mistake here, a mistake there, that could be it, you're going to be out again."

So would Gorges, who entered the league with the San Jose Sharks in 2005-06 and later became a mainstay on some strong Montreal Canadiens teams, like a fresh start somewhere else? He paused a few seconds before answering.

"It's a difficult question, there's a few other things that play into that that I don't want to get into," he said.

Gorges said he simply wants to "get back to enjoying hockey."

"We all played this game as kids growing up because we love the game, you love the game and you play to win the Cup," he said. "Then after while, not that you still don't have those same feelings, but you realize and understand the business of hockey and the NHL. ..."

"So you try not to think about those types of things as best you can. ... You try to just enjoy every day you can. I told some of the young guys it goes quick, you don't even really think about it, next thing you know it's where did it all go, so enjoy it while you got it."



Gorges said he wants to play as long as everything is still enjoyable. When it starts to “really become a job,” he said, then it’s time to start thinking if he should continue.

“Players always talk about being able to leave and exit the game on their own terms,” he said. “Not too many guys get that luxury.”

When the Sabres started building up the team following the first tank season, Gorges was one of the first significant pieces they added. Whether or not Gorges stays past the deadline, he will complete his Sabres career without a playoff appearance.

Gorges said having not accomplished his goal is “very difficult.” He sorely wanted to be part of the solution in Buffalo.

“You want to be part of the group that turns things around and figures it out and takes that next step, and so it’s felt like a bit of a failure, to be honest with you, because we haven’t achieved what I hoped we would by this point,” he said. “And so as a guy like myself, that eats you up.”

## **Sabres winless in afternoon games**

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Feb. 18, 2018

BUFFALO – The Sabres have performed terribly in afternoon games this season, going 0-5-1. In their last two, including Saturday's ugly 4-2 loss to the Los Angeles Kings, opponents have outscored them 11-3.

The reeling Sabres, who are a point away from falling in dead last in the NHL, have another afternoon tilt Monday against the Washington Capitals, who got annihilated 7-1 on Saturday in Chicago.

Yikes!

"It's an odd time, 3 o'clock," Sabres coach Phil Housley said this morning. "But I think the message to our players today is get to ready for a team that's going to be pushing back, so to speak. We have to be prepared for that, but we have to have our own push as well."

The Sabres beat the Capitals 3-1 on Nov. 7 in their first visit to KeyBank Center, one of only eight home wins Buffalo has earned this season.

Fresh off Saturday afternoon's embarrassing defeat, a game in which the Sabres looked listless throughout the opening 40 minutes, the Sabres held an optional practice this morning.

"Passion and emotion is a great tool," Housley said. "I think we have to have more emotion. I think we need to play with more passion. I thought we had a really good game against Washington last time we played them here."

"We're going to try to use some of those examples, why we played the way we did, and we have to prepare that way. I just think we have to control what we can control."

## **Disinterested Sabres implode early against Kings**

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

Feb. 18, 2018

BUFFALO – The NHL trade deadline hits in eight days, and based on the feeble effort given in Saturday afternoon’s ugly 4-2 loss, some Sabres are waiting for the phone to ring.

Clearly, some players want to get the heck out of town.

Against a Los Angeles Kings team that had lost three straight games, the Sabres showcased nothing early on, falling behind 1-0 while getting outshot 19-8 in the first period.

In the second period, the Kings scored on three straight shots, opening up a 4-0 lead.

“Slow start, for sure,” Sabres winger Jason Pominville said. “Look at this team’s history, their past (two Stanley Cups since 2012), where they are in the standings. They were dialed in early, we weren’t.”

Sabres coach Phil Housley said: “I don’t think our guys were ready to play. We talked about it yesterday and we talked about it this morning.”

Predictably, the Sabres, like so many times throughout this trying season, turned it on late with the pressure off, making a lopsided game look a little more respectable. But don’t let the two-goal margin fool you.

The Sabres have stumbled early in games all season, often losing them before they’re 20 or 30 minutes old. Despite making their starts a point of emphasis, Housley and his staff haven’t seen any improvements.

“It’s really disappointing,” Housley said of the poor starts. “I thought we were making some good strides. I thought we had a little blip in Ottawa (Thursday, a 3-2 overtime loss), but it’s unfortunate because that was a good example of how to check and play the right way. When we did have opportunities to execute, we didn’t execute.”

Housley said the Sabres prepared “the same way we do every game.”

“It’s up to the individual to take the information that’s given to them and use it,” he said. “But at the same time, you have to know that the L.A. Kings and the position they’re in just on this road trip, you have to know they’re going to come with a push.”

Housley, of course, said he doesn’t believe players are waiting to get dealt. But boy, some looked totally checked out, simply going through the motions before the crowd of 18,632 inside KeyBank Center.

“I hope everyone cares,” said Pominville, a proud veteran who, based on his effort, still cares. “I hope no one’s just kind of waiting for that deadline. This is a time where you get away from everything, you go out there and you play, you work hard and battle. Sometimes we don’t and I don’t get it, I don’t understand.

“If you want to play in this league and play for a while and be successful, that’s where it starts. Sometimes we’re not doing it and it’s led to us being where we are in the standings.”

That’s last in the Eastern Conference with only 45 points and 30th in a 31-team league. The Arizona Coyotes, the NHL’s worst team, are only one point behind.

Incredibly, the Kings ended an eight-game losing streak in Buffalo, winning their first game here since Feb. 21, 2003.

The Sabres almost escaped the first period scoreless, but Sabres goalie Robin Lehner allowed a soft goal to Michael Amadio at 11:32.

Anze Kopitar then scored at 12:02 and 16:06 of the second period. Amadio, who had scored twice in his first 18 NHL outings, tallied again 16:06.

At one point during the second period, when the Sabres misfired on a pass, a loud thud was heard from where Sabres general manager Jason Botterill sits during games.

When the second period ended, frustrated fans booed the Sabres off the ice.

The Sabres' late rally – two defensemen, Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen, scored – should offer them little consolation for an awful 40 minutes.

Incredibly, Scandella jumped into the glass after scoring 30 seconds into the third period.

“Just trying to get some life,” Scandella said. “We’re a good team in here and I just wanted to spark a little bit of a fire.”

Lehner, who got pulled after 40 minutes, said the 17-win Sabres dumped pucks and followed their structure in the third period.

“When you dump pucks and you go and you play hard, you finish checks, you see what happens,” he said. “In the first they did and the second they did.”

Why do the Sabres suddenly turn it on late in games?

“We have nothing to lose, I guess, at that point and we just go out there and work,” Pominville said. “It shouldn’t be that way. If you want to win games and be successful in this league, you got to find a way to get a good start and maintain that for 60 minutes. At no point in time on their side they probably felt any heat early on.”

These days, Pominville said, everyone is probably a little on edge.

“But this is two, two and a half hours where you just get away from everything and play,” he said. “You can’t be sitting here waiting for something to happen. If you are, you’re not in the right business.”

## 5 Observations: Kings take down Sabres 4-2

WKBW

Matt Bove

Feb 17, 2018

For the first time in 15 years, the Los Angeles Kings won a game in Buffalo, knocking off the Sabres 4-2. With the loss, the Sabres remain at the bottom of the Eastern Conference with a 17-31-11 record.

Five observations from Saturday's loss:

A little help would be nice

Robin Lehner would certainly tell you he would want back the goal he allowed in the first period to Michael Amadio. But what is the guy supposed to do when his team is outshot 19-8 in the first 20 minutes? If it wasn't for Lehner the game could've been out of reach after the first period.

For comparison, In Thursday's loss to the Ottawa Senators, the Sabres finished the game with 25 shots. Only six more than the Kings had in the first period. And the Sabres game went into overtime. Yikes.

Two and through

After a relatively solid first period, the wheels came off for Lehner as he allowed three goals in the middle frame. Lehner gets a pass on the Kings' second goal as his teammate Benoit Pouliot fell over in the Sabres' zone, gift wrapping a 2-on-1 in the opposite direction.

The same can't be said for the Kings' third and fourth goals. Both beat Lehner five-hole and put the Sabres into a deficit they wouldn't be able to climb out of. Chad Johnson led the team onto the ice as the third period began, stopping the six shots he faced. Lehner wasn't the only reason the Sabres lost this game but a few more saves and this game could've possibly had a different outcome.

Uninspired from start to finish

When you're playing against Jonathan Quick you need to get pucks to the net and hope for some weird bounces. On Saturday the Sabres did the exact opposite, failing to generate almost any dangerous scoring chances in the first 40 minutes of the game.

Eventually the blue and gold spoiled Quick's shutout bid thanks to an absolute rocket from Marco Scandella 30 seconds into the third period. But it was too little too late for the Sabres, who once again let two bad periods spoil their chance at two points. From a strictly offensive standpoint, this was one of the Sabres poorest outings in some time, which is saying something.

Homecoming for Iafallo

Perhaps the biggest ovation of the afternoon came as the Kings' third goal was announced. The nearly (at the time) full KeyBank Center crowd cheered as Eden native Alex Iafallo's name was announced after he picked up the primary assist on Anze Kopitar's second goal of the day.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt\_Bove

Eden native Alex Iafallo is putting together a pretty nice season. He has 20 points in 56 games as a rookie @WKBW

4:10 PM - Feb 17, 2018

30

16 people are talking about this

Twitter Ads info and privacy

For Iafallo this was the first time he's played in his hometown as a pro after spending the last four years at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. In 56 games, Iafallo has a very respectable six goals and 14 assists [20 points].

Now at quarterback, Evan Rodrigues

When Jack Eichel suffered his high-ankle sprain last Saturday the Sabres needed to find someone to replace him on the first power-play unit. Nobody on the roster can do what Eichel does but his former Boston University teammate Evan Rodrigues is doing a commendable job. Rodrigues has looked composed while manning the point and made some really nice plays while doing so.

## **Kings defeat Sabres in Buffalo for first time in 15 years**

Kopitar scores twice for Los Angeles, which ends three-game losing streak

by Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

February 17th, 2018

BUFFALO -- Anze Kopitar and rookie Michael Amadio each scored twice for the Los Angeles Kings in a 4-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Saturday, their first win in Buffalo since Feb. 21, 2003.

Jonathan Quick made 33 saves for the Kings (31-22-5), who ended a three-game losing streak and trail the Anaheim Ducks by two points for third place in the Pacific Division.

"I don't think we were worried about the 15-year drought in here, but we had a three-game slide that we certainly wanted to stop," Kopitar said. "I thought today we came out ready to play, and I think in the end we definitely made it a little too interesting for our liking, but it is what it is. The guys battled hard, getting the first goal is huge, and then we followed it up with a few more. I thought it was a pretty good game on our part."

[WATCH: All Kings vs. Sabres highlights]

Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen scored in the third period for the Sabres (17-31-11), who are 1-2-1 in their past four games but had won eight in a row against the Kings at home.

Scandella's long-range blast

00:41 • February 17th, 2018

"If you want to win games and be successful in this league, you've got to find a way to get a good start and maintain that for 60 minutes," Buffalo forward Jason Pominville said. "At no point in time on their side they probably felt any heat early on, maybe a little bit toward the end."

Amadio gave the Kings a 1-0 lead at 11:26 of the first period when he took a shot that went off the skate of goaltender Robin Lehner.

"I thought the start of the game was different and was a big reason we won the game," Kings coach John Stevens said. "I thought we did a lot of good things. It wasn't just the first line, I thought we had a really good rotation through our lineup where guys were really playing fast, we got pucks up to speed, and we were getting pucks in behind, and we create a lot off our forecheck early in the game, which was good to see."

The Kings scored on three consecutive shots in a 5:33 span of the second period.

Kopitar made it 2-0 at 12:02. Dustin Brown picked up the puck after a turnover by Sabres forward Benoit Pouliot and fed Kopitar, who deked and scored on a backhand. Kopitar scored at 16:06 when he took a pass from Alex Iafallo and beat Lehner through the five-hole for his 25th goal and a 3-0 lead.

Kopitar cashes in on turnover

00:54 • February 17th, 2018

Amadio's second goal came at 17:35 and made it 4-0. He took a wrist shot from the slot for his fourth of the season.

Lehner made 26 saves through two periods; Chad Johnson played the third period and made six saves.

Scandella made it 4-1 with a slap shot 30 seconds into the third period. Ristolainen put a loose puck in at 16:42 to make it 4-2.

"We started playing our game," Scandella said of the third period, when the Sabres outshot the Kings 18-6. "We started getting pucks behind them, playing physical. Once we play our game, when we establish our game, we have a great team here. We move the puck well, we're fast, but when we don't do that we look slow, wasting energy, always backchecking and playing defense."

#### Goal of the game

Amadio's goal at 11:26 of the first period.

#### Amadio opens the scoring

00:52 • February 17th, 2018

#### Save of the game

Quick's save on Scandella at 18:42 of the third period.

#### Quick's save on Scandella

00:08 • February 17th, 2018

#### Highlight of the game

Kopitar's goal at 16:06 of the second period.

#### Kopitar's second goal

00:54 • February 17th, 2018

#### They said it

"We told the team, and we hadn't realized, we haven't won here in what, 14 years? Was it 15? But this group had never played in here together, so for us it was time to win. So I think that was an added bonus for the organization. But the group that played tonight had never played here before." -- Kings coach John Stevens

"The one thing we control is our effort and the energy we bring and the compete we bring. If you want to have any type of success, you have to bring that. Some nights we're just not bringing it, and I really don't get it. I don't understand it. You're playing one of the better teams in, what, the last decade. They've won a couple of Cups, they play the right way. They're heavy, they play physical. I mean, they really took it to us in the first period for sure." -- Sabres forward Jason Pominville

#### Need to know

The Kings are the first road team to win in this series since the Sabres won at Los Angeles on Oct. 23, 2003. ... Ristolainen has 18 points (five goals, 13 assists) in his past 22 games.

#### What's next

Kings: At the Chicago Blackhawks on Monday (8:30 p.m. ET; NHLN, TVAS, WGN, FS-W, NHL.TV)

Sabres: Host the Washington Capitals on Monday (3 p.m. ET; SN1, MSG-B, NBCSWA, NHL.TV)



## **Sabres say more emotion is necessary to begin games**

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

Feb. 18, 2018

For 20 minutes on Saturday afternoon, the Buffalo Sabres looked like a team to be reckoned with. They outshot the Los Angeles Kings 18-6 and outscored them 2-0. It was the type of performance that could have won them a game, had it begun 40 minutes sooner.

What changed in the third period of that loss to the Kings, a game they trailed 4-0 by the second intermission? According to Nathan Beaulieu, it had a lot to do with emotion.

"We played pissed off," Beaulieu said. "We need to start games like that. Guys are angry, guys are mad. That's kind of the mindset you need to go into the game. It's not something you can just teach, you can't just get pissed off. But we need to have that mindset.

"It shouldn't have to take four goals against and your goalie getting pulled to start that. It's frustrating but the only thing you can do is learn from it."

With another playoff-caliber opponent coming to town for another afternoon game on Monday, the Sabres returned to KeyBank Center on Sunday morning in preparation for their game against the Washington Capitals.

Like he did prior to their game against the Kings, who came into Buffalo on a three-game losing streak, Sabres coach Phil Housley said to expect a strong push from their opponent on Monday. That Capitals, clinging to a one-point lead in the Metropolitan Division, are coming off a 7-1 loss in Chicago.

The Sabres played well in their first matchup with the Capitals this season, a 3-1 win in Buffalo on Nov. 7.

"Passion and emotion is a great tool," Housley said. "I think we have to have more emotion. I think we need to play with more passion. I thought we had a really good game against Washington last time we played them here. We're going to try to use some of those examples, why we played the way we did, and we have to prepare that way. I just think we have to control what we can control."

Starts to games have been an issue for the Sabres throughout their season. Their 29 first-period goals rank last in the NHL, and they're just 2-18-2 when trailing at the first intermission.

"In Montreal, that was one of our keys to success," Beaulieu said. "We were a team that tried to jump on other teams because we were so fast and quick. Playing at the Bell Centre, you tried to get the crowd behind you.

"It seems like we can't get our crowd behind us. They're there, they're cheering, but when you go down that early and get booed off the ice, it doesn't sit well."

The Sabres will have another chance to change that on Monday. The Capitals might come to town angry on the heels of a disappointing loss. Then again, so should they.

"I think the message to our players today is get to ready for a team that's going to be pushing back, so to speak," Housley said. "We have to be prepared for that, but we have to have our own push as well."

Back in white

The Sabres will wear their Winter Classic jerseys for the second of three games at KeyBank Center against the Capitals on Monday. Get to the game early to receive a commemorative Winter Classic jersey towel, and [click here](#) to learn more about Monday's Kids Day offer.

## Sabres lament slow start following loss to Kings

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 17th, 2018

With his team prepping to face the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday morning, Phil Housley stressed the idea that the Buffalo Sabres would need to brace themselves for an early push. The Kings came to Buffalo with an eye on keeping their playoff hopes intact after three-straight road losses.

The push came, but the Sabres were unprepared. The Kings scored one goal on 19 shots in the first period and added three more goals in the second on their way to a 4-2 win at KeyBank Center. Housley said afterward that he felt his players had been unready to play.

"We prepare the same way we do every game," he said. "I think it's up to the individual to take the information that's given to them and use it. But at the same time, you have to know that the LA Kings - and the position they're in just on this road trip - you have to know they're going to come with a push.

"We weren't prepared for that, so we have to just get better tomorrow, learn from it, show them and continue to try to work at it."

Sabres fall to Kings, 4-2

03:16 • February 17th, 2018

Michael Amadio and Anze Kopitar scored two goals apiece for the Kings, while Dustin Brown tallied two assists. Amadio opened the scoring with 8:34 remaining in the first period on a shot that beat Robin Lehner between the pads, the product of a neutral-zone turnover by the Sabres.

Still, Lehner turned away 18 shots in the period and the Sabres entered the second intermission down by only a goal. In the second period, things snowballed. Benoit Pouliot tripped to the ice while attempting a breakout pass at the Buffalo blue line, leading to a 2-on-1 goal for Kopitar.

The Kings would score on their next two shots, tallying three goals in the span of 5:33. Lehner did not return for the third period after allowing four goals on 30 shots. Chad Johnson made six saves in relief.

"I wish we all had the answer," Lehner said. "I wish I had the answer to why I stopped 18 shots and let in a brutal one. I wish I knew. We're not doing it on purpose. ... At the end of the day, it was a 1-0 game going into the second. No matter what, if it's a 2-on-1, I want to make that save."

The Sabres came out looking like a new team in the third period, outshooting the Kings 18-6 and tallying goals from Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen. It was another example of how they can play when they stick to their game plan, as they did in recent wins over Boston and Tampa Bay.

Scandella's long-range blast

00:41 • February 17th, 2018

"It's happened in the past," alternate captain Jason Pominville said. "We had nothing to lose, we competed better than they did, we kept it a lot simpler than we did early, we got pucks deep.

"We played the exact same way in the third as they played in the first, where they had us on our heels. We had looks because we simplified, we got pucks deep, were physical."

Added Scandella: "When we establish our game, we have a great team here. We move the puck well, we're fast. When we don't do that we look slow, wasting energy, always backchecking and playing defense."

How can they establish their game on a more consistent basis? That's the question the Sabres are still trying to answer.

"There's no reason for it," Scandella said. "We should be ready every night, especially in our building."

Up next

The Sabres will wear their Winter Classic jerseys for their afternoon matchup against the Washington Capitals on Monday. Get to the game early to receive a commemorative Winter Classic jersey towel, and [click here](#) to learn about Monday's Kids Day offer at KeyBank Center.

Can't make it downtown? Coverage on MSG-B begins at 2:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night Pregame Show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 3.

## **Nolan, Falk return to lineup against Kings**

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 17th, 2018

Jordan Nolan will get another chance to play his former team when the Buffalo Sabres host the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday afternoon. Nolan, a healthy scratch the past two games, will enter the lineup in place of Nicholas Baptiste.

Justin Falk will be in for Josh Gorges on defense.

Baptiste scored a goal against Tampa Bay on Tuesday night, his first game since being recalled on Sunday. He was held without a shot in his next game, in Ottawa on Thursday.

"I thought Nick took a little bit of a step back against Ottawa," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "I didn't see the tenaciousness that he had in his last game, using his speed, his wall play. I think he could have been a little bit hungrier in the battle, but I can see him getting back in the lineup soon."

Preview: LAK vs. BUF (2/17/18)

01:59 • February 17th, 2018

Robin Lehner will be back in net for the Sabres following a 33-save performance in Ottawa. Housley credited the goaltender with keeping the Sabres in that game, a 3-2 overtime loss, long enough to salvage a point.

"I think the last two outings have been really good for him," Housley said. "It's good to see him bounce back. In that game if it wasn't for Robin, we wouldn't have been in the game. He made some key saves, especially on the penalty kill and even down the stretch. It's good to see him find his game back."

The Kings have lost their last three games and fallen to three points out of the second wild card berth in the Western Conference. They're playing the fifth game of a seven-game road trip.

"They're going to be a desperate team. Obviously, they're trying to get back in the playoff picture and this road trip is going to tell the tale for them really. They'll be looking at this game to turn things around. We know that."

Coverage on MSG-B begins at 12:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night Pregame Show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 1 p.m.

### Projected lineup

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

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
6 Marco Scandella - 8 Casey Nelson  
41 Justin Falk - 93 Victor Antipin

40 Robin Lehner  
31 Chad Johnson

## Sharpen Up: February 17, 2018

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 17th, 2018

The Sabres take on the Kings today at KeyBank Center. It's not too late to get your tickets (A special Kids Day offer is available here).

Faceoff is scheduled for 1 p.m. and if you'll be watching from home, you can catch the GMC Game Night pregame show at 12:30 on MSG. Dan and Rayzor will have the call on MSG and WGR 550.

Here's what you need to know.

Friday's practice

Sabres Now (2/16/18)

01:38 • February 16th, 2018

Here's how the line combos and D pairings looked yesterday. It could be what Phil Housley decides to roll with today:

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

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
6 Marco Scandella - 8 Casey Nelson  
41 Justin Falk - 93 Victor Antipin  
4 Josh Gorges

40 Robin Lehner  
31 Chad Johnson

Yesterday, we focused on the contributions the Sabres have been receiving from up and down the lineup. Can that continue today? Here's a portion of the Ice Level Practice Report, which you can read in full here.

Jack Eichel was on an offensive tear before he sustained a high-ankle sprain during the first period of Buffalo's game against the Bruins on Feb. 9. With the team's leading scorer out of the lineup indefinitely, it was easy to wonder where the goals and assists would come from. As it turns out, the production has come from just about everywhere.

Including that game against Boston, Buffalo has scored 15 goals in four games without Eichel, and it's not just the big names who have been contributing. Ten of 13 forwards have recorded a point, as well as five of seven defensemen who have dressed.

Phil Housley (2/16/18)

06:20 • February 16th, 2018

"I think the guys have done a terrific job rallying around it," coach Phil Housley said after Friday's practice at KeyBank Center. "Obviously when you miss your best player, it's tough to fill that void. But our guys have done a really good job. It's been leadership by committee. It's been production by committee. And we need more of it. But it does give you a good chance to evaluate your players."

It's the depth of the Sabres forward group that has really helped them to a 2-1-1 record since losing their leading scorer. Seven forwards have recorded at least two points over that stretch.

Stay tuned for lineup and news, the game preview and more.

This afternoon's matchup  
From the Game Notes...

This is the second of two meetings between the Sabres and Kings this season.  
Last meeting: Los Angeles defeated Buffalo 4-2 in Los Angeles on Oct. 14, 2017  
The Sabres are 5-5-0 in their last 10 games vs. the Kings; 9-1-0 at home

The Sabres have scored at least four goals in three consecutive home games for the first time since January 2017. With four goals today, the team would stretch that streak to four straight home games for the first time since the first four home games of the 2007-08 season.

Buffalo and Los Angeles have split the season series in each of the last four seasons and would do so again with a Sabres win today.

The Sabres are 61-23-17 (.688) all-time in home games against the Pacific Division

Kyle Okposo has five assists in his last three games against the Kings.

Jason Pominville is on a four-game point streak against Los Angeles, totaling six points (1+5) in those games.

Ryan O'Reilly has nine points (5+4) in his last nine games against the Kings.

The Sabres are 14-1-1 (one tie) in their last 16 home games against the Kings, dating back to a 2-0 Sabres win on Dec. 17, 1993. During this stretch, the Sabres have outscored the Kings 67-25 on home ice.

The Kings have not won a game in Buffalo since their 4-1 win at HSBC Arena on Feb. 21, 2003.

The Sabres are 8-0-0 at home against Los Angeles since the last Kings win in Buffalo, outscoring the visitors by a combined 39-12 margin in those contests. With a win tonight, the Sabres would extend the longest home-winning streak against the Kings in franchise history.

Ryan O'Reilly has recorded 18 points (9+9) in his last 17 games.

Sam Reinhart has totaled 16 points (6+10) in his last 14 games.

Rasmus Ristolainen has 17 points (4+13) in his last 21 games dating back to Dec. 29. Ristolainen's 17 points during that span tied for fourth among NHL defensemen entering play Friday.

Kyle Okposo has recorded 16 points (3+13) in his last 16 games, including four multi-point games.

Casey Nelson, who scored his first NHL goal on Sunday vs. Colorado, has points in five of his last six games (1+4).

Evan Rodrigues has tallied five points (2+3) in his last five games.

Scott Wilson has four points (3+1) in his last four games.

Meanwhile, in Rochester...

Big night for the Amerks on the same evening they inducted Martin Biron into the team's Hall of Fame:

They'll be in Buffalo on Wednesday to play a game at KeyBank Center against the Syracuse Crunch. We suggest you check it out.