



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

February 3, 2018

NHL suspends Sabres Larsson 2 games for cross checking

Associated Press

By JOHN WAWROW

Feb. 2, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The NHL suspended Buffalo Sabres forward Johan Larsson two games for cross checking Florida Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck in the face.

The league's department of player safety issued the ruling after conducting a hearing with Larsson on Friday, a day after Buffalo's 4-2 loss to the Panthers. Larsson was already facing a one-game suspension after being issued a 10-minute match penalty and 5-minute cross checking major for his hit to Trocheck with 35 seconds left in the game.

The hit occurred after Trocheck and Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe got their sticks up during a skirmish at the Panthers blue line. Larsson skated toward Trocheck and cross checked him.

In its ruling, the NHL noted Larsson's stick initially hit Trocheck high on the left shoulder before riding up to connect with the player's cheek. The league, however, noted players are responsible for their sticks.

"When a player attempts to intentionally use his stick to deliver a blow to an opponent, he cannot necessarily be excused of all responsibility when the blow lands in an unintended place," the league ruled.

Following the game, Larsson said he merely "pushed him a little bit and the ref came and grabbed me."

The fifth-year player will lose close to \$15,900 in salary and miss Buffalo's home games against St. Louis on Saturday and Anaheim on Tuesday.

Emotions boiled over between the Sabres and Panthers shortly after Florida's Colton Sceviour closed the scoring with 2:24 remaining. Officials issued a total of 56 minutes in penalties to six players, including Larsson, over the final 2:01.

Sabres shoot, don't score as accuracy remains an issue

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

February 2, 2018

Golfers know when they crush a drive. The feel, sound and trajectory combine to immediately let them know it's a beauty.

It doesn't work that way in hockey. There are too many variables with shots. Unlike a stationary golfer with a ball on a tee, hockey players are moving and the puck is, too. Plus, there are defenders, goaltenders, teammates and choppy ice in the way.

"There's a lot of things that come into consideration," Buffalo Sabres left wing Benoit Pouliot said Friday. "Until I see it go in, I don't really feel it."

Pouliot is the Sabres' resident sharpshooter. If he can't feel it, consider it a team-wide situation.

The topic arose after the Sabres misfired time and again during Thursday's 4-2 loss to Florida. They had open looks from the front, sides and point, but pucks failed to find or even hit the net. Buffalo finished with 32 shots on goal, but another 19 went wide or high and 16 more got blocked.

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The Sabres will look to improve their percentage Saturday when they host the St. Louis Blues in KeyBank Center. They've been trying all season.

Buffalo is tied for last in the NHL with a shooting percentage of 7.4 percent. It's the second-worst total in franchise history, ahead of only the 7 percent in 2013-14.

The problem was especially glaring against the Panthers. With the Sabres trailing by one in the closing minutes, they consistently got open in the slot and shot wide or high. Not only didn't the puck go in, there was no rebound chance.

"We've got to put the puck in the net," right wing Kyle Okposo said. "We probably missed the net on six Grade A's that we'd like to have back."

Players shoot pucks nonstop before, during and after practice. It's easy to go top shelf with no pressure and no one around. Once the variables are added in, the Sabres struggle.

"Maybe trying to get too fine," coach Phil Housley said. "I know we were eyes up and we were able to pick a corner, but in saying that we still have to hit the net because we did have guys going there."

Players' eyes light up when they get open in front of the net. When it's one-on-one with the goalie, the shooter is thinking corners first.

"You want to score so you're trying to pick a corner," right wing Jason Pominville said. "If you're not in a scoring area, you're probably shooting to create a rebound. But when you're in the slot, you're going to go out there and try to put one in and pick a corner."

It just hasn't been working. The Sabres rank 19th with 1,578 shots and are 31st with 117 goals. They've fired 463 pucks wide, 64 over the net, 22 into the post and four off the crossbar.

Pouliot leads the Sabres in shooting percentage at 16.4 percent, up from his already-impressive career total of 13.2 percent. He has nine goals on 55 shots in 47 games.

"I just don't have many shots on net," said Pouliot, who ranks 11th on the team in shots. "If I would put more pucks on net, they're not always going to go in, but it would help my game for sure."

Center Jack Eichel and defenseman Jake McCabe are the only other regulars who have boosted their shooting percentage. Eichel is firing at 11 percent after entering the season at 9.9 percent. McCabe is at 5.7 percent after previously shooting 4.9 percent.

While most players are down only slightly, there have been significant drops for center Johan Larsson (10.2 percent to 5.1 percent) and defenseman Marco Scandella (5.4 percent to 1 percent). Scandella has one goal on 97 shots. It's obviously tougher for defensemen to score from the point. Plus, they're not always trying to beat the goalie, so shooting percentage isn't the best indicator of their success.

"Sometimes you just have a good lane and try to put it in a good spot and hope for the best from the point, hope for a good screen," Scandella said. "You get your head up and try to see where traffic is moving to. Sometimes you shoot away from it. Sometimes you try to make a guy pass in front of the goalie and shoot opposite side. It's just a read."

Around the net, however, it's about beating the goalie. The Sabres need to do a better job.

"It's frustrating, especially when there's an A-plus chance like that in the slot," Pouliot said. "Everyone bears down and tries to put it in, but it's not going to happen every time. As long as you get your chances, though, that's a positive. At least you're doing something right and in the right spot."

Sabres Notebook: Larsson suspended two games; Nelson impresses

The Buffalo News

By John Vogl

February 2, 2018

Johan Larsson didn't mean to hit Vincent Trocheck in the face with his stick. The NHL Department of Player Safety doesn't care. It just knows that he did.

As a result, the Buffalo Sabres center will serve a two-game suspension.

The league's disciplinary arm announced the penalty Friday after a hearing with Larsson. The center earned a five-minute cross-checking major and a match penalty for intent to injure after hitting Florida's Trocheck late in Thursday's game.

"It is important to note that we understand Larsson's argument that he was not aiming for Trocheck's head, and we acknowledge the stick did ride up Trocheck's shoulder pad before making contact with Trocheck's head," the Department of Player Safety said in a video announcing the suspension.

"However, this is not a case in which a stick rides up unintentionally while a player is attempting to make an otherwise legal play such as establishing body position or while making a play on the puck. This is not a hockey play."

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The league also took into account the physical nature of Thursday's contest, which featured 66 penalty minutes in the final 2:01 of play.

Larsson's cross-check was actually the result of an altercation between Trocheck and Buffalo's Jake McCabe. The Sabres defenseman hit Trocheck along the boards, and the duo pushed, shoved and trash-talked its way to the Panthers' blue line.

"Seeing the confrontation, Larsson skates over to Trocheck, raises his stick and delivers a sharp blow that hits Trocheck in the face," the Department of Player Safety said. "Late in the third period of a physical game, Larsson approaches Trocheck for the sole purpose of continuing Trocheck's altercation with McCabe. He raises his stick and delivers a blow aimed at Trocheck's upper body, which rides up and makes solid contact with Trocheck's face.

"Players are responsible for their stick at all times, and when a player attempts to intentionally use his stick to deliver a blow to an opponent, he cannot necessarily be excused of all responsibility when the blow lands in an unintended place."

Larsson will miss Saturday's home game against the St. Louis Blues and Tuesday's visit by the Anaheim Ducks.

"It's a heat-of-the-battle moment where emotions are running high," Sabres coach Phil Housley said in KeyBank Center. "It's unfortunate."

Casey Nelson will keep getting looks.

The Sabres have eight defensemen on the roster, and Nelson is keeping two NHL regulars on the sidelines. The rookie call-up from Rochester has impressed coach Phil Housley and will play his eighth straight game Saturday.

"I really like the way Casey's playing," Housley said. "He moves the puck really well. He's defending really well. His gaps are really tight. That's why he remains in the lineup."

Nelson, who joined the Sabres out of college for seven games at the end of 2015-16 and played 11 games last year, has seen his confidence blossom. He leads the Amerks with a plus-11 rating and is holding his own with Buffalo.

"Defensively, I feel like I could be out there against some of the top players and be good against them, just shut them down," the 25-year-old said. "I think my plus/minus down in Rochester showed that."

Nelson practiced with Nathan Beaulieu, who could return after missing four games with a possible concussion. Rasmus Ristolainen skipped practice for a maintenance day after tying for the team lead with three hits during Thursday's 4-2 loss to Florida.

"Little bumps and bruises," Housley said. "His normal self is a great competitor and physical. He even went on the forecheck there and laid a heavy hit. When he plays with that attitude, he's really, really good for us."

Sabres left wing Benoit Pouliot filled in as a defenseman during practice, which almost assuredly points to him sitting for the second straight game and fifth time in the last 12.

Pouliot is tied for fifth on the Sabres with nine goals in 47 games, but he has just one goal, one assist and nine shots in his last 16 outings.

"He understands where he's at right now, and he's got to make the most of his opportunity when he gets back in the lineup," Housley said. "He understands the detail of his game slipped a little bit, and that's why he's out of the lineup."

When NHL teams take players' parents and mentors on a road trip, it's usually to Florida, California, Nashville or a similarly exotic locale. St. Louis chose Boston and Buffalo for its fourth annual journey.

The Blues will have their dads and others in attendance Saturday. They were scheduled to have a group dinner Friday night in Buffalo.

"It is an outstanding tradition," Blues coach Mike Yeo told the St. Louis media. "Every time you do it – it doesn't matter if it's a dad's first trip or their sixth trip – every time we do it, it's special. And it's special not just for the dads but for the players too."

Sabres' Nelson earning Housley's trust on blue line

Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 2, 2018

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Sabres center Johan Larsson practiced on the third line despite a pending hearing with NHL Player Safety that could result in a suspension. He cross-checked the Panthers' Vincent Trocheck in the side of the jaw.

"It's a heat-of-the-battle moment where emotions are running high," Housley said. "It's unfortunate, but we'll know more later on today."

Story topics: Casey Nelson

Inside the Sabres: Deadline history as Botterill readies for trades

Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 2, 2018

The first four months were essentially a waste of time, which makes this the most important month of the season for the Buffalo Sabres. February features the NHL trade deadline, and it's up to General Manager Jason Botterill to ensure the whole season isn't a loss.

His predecessors had mixed results.

The Sabres have been obvious sellers at the deadline eight times in the previous 15 years. Darcy Regier handled the fire sales in 2003, 2008, 2012 and 2013. Tim Murray was in charge from 2014 to 2017.

For all his flaws, Regier had an ability to win trades. The jury is still out on Murray, though it doesn't look promising.

Here's history to guide Botterill as he looks to deal Evander Kane, Benoit Pouliot and anyone else who might be of interest.

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Darcy Regier

2003

The GM made three moves at the deadline. Two failed to help the organization. He hit the jackpot with the other.

Regier sent center Chris Gratton and a 2004 fourth-round pick to Phoenix for center Daniel Briere and a 2004 third-round pick that was used on defenseman Andrej Sekera. It's one of the most lopsided deals in team history.

Regier also traded captain Stu Barnes to Dallas for Mike Ryan and a 2003 second-round pick. Ryan played just 65 games for Buffalo, recording seven goals and 13 points. The pick, Branislav Fabry, never left Europe and is still playing in Slovakia.

Regier gave Rob Ray to Ottawa for "future considerations" that were never returned.

2008

Regier's only move was a win. He held a prime trade chip in Brian Campbell, and Regier sent the defenseman and a seventh-round pick to San Jose for forward Steve Bernier and a first-round pick.

Bernier was traded that summer for two picks, including defenseman Brayden McNabb, but the big prize was San Jose's first-round pick. Buffalo used it to select forward Tyler Ennis, who spent eight years in the organization.

2012

Regier was busy with three trades. Two were positive.

The big move was sending center Paul Gaustad and a 2013 fourth-round pick to Nashville in exchange for a first-round selection. Regier packaged Nashville's pick with a second-rounder to select forward Zemgus Girgensons.

The trade of forward Zach Kassian to Vancouver for center Cody Hodgson looked good for a while, but Buffalo ended up buying out Hodgson.

Regier also got defenseman Alex Sulzer from Vancouver for Marc-Andre Gagnani. Sulzer played parts of three seasons in Buffalo, while Gagnani appeared in only 14 games with Vancouver.

2013

Once again, Regier held a sought-after trade target at a busy deadline. All three trades eventually helped the Sabres, though not as much as the team would have liked.

Regier sent right wing Jason Pominville and a 2014 fourth-round pick to Minnesota for center Johan Larsson, goaltender Matt Hackett, a first-round pick and a 2014 second-round pick. The Sabres used the first-round pick on defenseman Nikita Zadorov, who was sent to Colorado as part of the package for Ryan O'Reilly. The second-round pick became winger Vaclav Karabacek, who is injured in the ECHL. Hackett played 13 games in Buffalo. Larsson is still in town as a bottom-six forward.

Regier traded defenseman Jordan Leopold to St. Louis for a second-round pick (forward Justin Bailey, who has bounced between Buffalo and Rochester) and a fifth-round pick (defenseman Anthony Florentino, a rookie in the ECHL).

The GM also sent defenseman Robyn Regehr to Los Angeles for two second-round picks. More on that in 2014.

Tim Murray

2014

Hired in January, Murray had less than two months to line up one of the most notable moves in franchise history and three others.

Murray traded goaltender Ryan Miller and captain Steve Ott to St. Louis for forwards Chris Stewart and William Carrier, goaltender Jaroslav Halak, a 2015 first-round pick and a 2016 third-round pick. It was a decent haul.

The first-round pick was part of the package sent to Winnipeg for Evander Kane and Zach Bogosian. Murray bundled the third-round pick with defenseman Mark Pysyk and sent them to Florida for a blue-liner Dmitry Kulikov and a second-round pick that was used on Swedish center Rasmus Asplund. Carrier did little and was lost to Vegas in the expansion draft.

Halak never played for Buffalo, traded to Washington with a 2015 third-round pick for goalie Michal Neuvirth and defenseman Rostislav Klesla, who went to Europe instead.

Murray shipped left wing Matt Moulson and center Cody McCormick to Minnesota for forward Torrey Mitchell, a second-round pick and a 2016 second-round pick. The 2016 second-round pick went to Montreal for defenseman Josh Gorges. The 2014 selection was sent to Washington for a pair of picks that became forward Eric Cornel and defenseman Brycen Martin, minor-leaguers who are not close to the NHL.

Murray dealt McNabb, forward Jonathan Parker and the two second-round picks acquired in 2013 back to Los Angeles for forwards Hudson Fasching and Nicholas Deslauriers.

The success or failure of the year depends on how Gorges is evaluated and whether Fasching becomes an NHL regular.

2015

Murray made four moves. One helped the Sabres, and the other three were for picks who are nowhere near the NHL yet.

The GM sent Neuvirth to New York Islanders for goalie Chad Johnson and a 2016 third-round pick. Johnson won 22 games in 2015-16. The third-rounder was used on defenseman Casey Fitzgerald, a junior at Boston College.

Murray sent Stewart to Minnesota for a 2017 second-round pick that became highly regarded Finnish goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen.

Forward Brian Flynn went to Montreal for a 2016 fifth-round pick used on Vojtech Budik, a defenseman in the Western Hockey League.

Murray sent Mitchell to Montreal for forward Jack Nevins (four points in 72 games with Rochester) and a 2016 seventh-round pick used on Vasily Glotov, a forward in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

2016

Murray's deadline featured two deals. While he eventually made one exciting, it didn't pay off.

The GM sent forward Jamie McGinn to Anaheim for a 2016 third-round pick. That selection went to Nashville for the rights to forward Jimmy Vesey. The Hobey Baker Award winner elected not to sign with Buffalo and joined the New York Rangers as a free agent instead.

Murray traded defenseman Mike Weber to Washington for a 2017 third-round pick used on Oskari Laaksonen, an unknown defenseman playing in Finland.

2017

Last year was a complete failure. Murray didn't make any moves. He couldn't find takers for unrestricted free agents Kulikov, defenseman Cody Franson and goalie Anders Nilsson. Murray also granted the desire of captain and pending UFA Brian Gionta to remain in Buffalo, which was a noble gesture but didn't help the team.

If 2018 doesn't feature a trade, it will be more embarrassing than last month's 7-1 shellacking at the hands of Dallas.

Recent history suggests trades for picks yield better results. Regier and Murray were able to get Ennis, Kane and Zadorov with the draft-choice assets.

The Sabres, however, have aging cornerstones in O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo. Surrounding them with NHL-ready players is a must. If Botterill brings in prospects, he needs to do better than Carrier, Bernier, Ryan and Mitchell. The next Briere could finally turn around the franchise.

Sabres' Pominville knows he's still contributing despite a long goals slump.

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

February 2, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Jason Pominville started the season with six goals in his first 12 games. Since then, he has three goals in 39 games to give him nine on the season. Pominville is 35-years-old and on the down side of his career, so you can't expect 30 goal seasons anymore. Pominville said scoring goals isn't what he focuses on, "I don't think about it, scoring goals is the last thing that's on my mind, I just go out there and try to defend and not give up much and if you can chip in offensively, you chip in, if you can't, you can't."

In 78 games with the Wild last season Pominville scored 13 goals. The year before that, he had 11 goals in 75 games. As far as why the production hasn't been there, Pominville said, "I don't know, it's a tough question to answer, it is what it is, you just go out there and work and hopefully get the results."

"I don't really see much difference, it's just they're not going in and it's part of the game."

Rasmus Ristolainen missed practice with Justin Falk slipping into his spot with Marco Scandella. Phil Housley said Ristolainen will play on Saturday against St. Louis, "Just a maintenance day, just little bumps and bruises."

Housley said he's thinking about inserting Nate Beaulieu into the lineup. He was in Josh Gorges' spot next to Casey Nelson. Nelson has played seven games since being recalled from Rochester. Things did not go well for him at all in his first two games, but things have improved according to Phil Housley, "I really like the way Casey's playing, I think he moves the puck really well, he's defending really well, his gaps are really tight and that's why he remains in the lineup."

Housley's defensemen have had trouble getting shots through. Nelson had a real good chance against Florida breaking down the slot. Housley said, "You look at his shots from the point, he finds ways to get pucks through to the net, he's uncanny in that way."

Benoit Pouliot has been a healthy scratch for four of the last 11 games. Pouliot has said all along that he knows he must be better. Phil Housley said, "He understands where he's at right now and he's got to make the most of his opportunity when he gets back in the lineup, but understands that the detail of his game slipped a little bit and that's why he's out of the lineup."

The Blues played in Boston on Thursday and practiced here on Friday.

The NHL Network will have an all-female production of NHL Now on Feb. 28 featuring Jamie Hersch and Jackie Redmond from the NHL Network, Kathryn Tappen of NBC, Amalie Benjamin from NHL.com, as well as reporters Caley Chelios (Tampa Bay Lightning), Lauren Gardner (Colorado Avalanche) and Shannon Hogan (New York Islanders). Special guests will include Manon Rheaume, the first female goaltender in NHL history, and members of the U.S. Women's National Team following their trip to the 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

* * *

The Sabres and Untys will host a community blood drive on Monday, Feb. 5 in the Lexus Club in KeyBank Center. Donors will get two tickets to a Buffalo Sabres home game and have the opportunity to meet Sabretooth and Sabres alumni.

The drive runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Donors can make an appointment online at www.untys.org/teamunyt and walk-ins will be welcomed. Those unable to make the event on Monday can donate at their nearest Unyts Neighborhood Donation Center between Feb. 5-10 and also receive tickets for an upcoming Sabres game.

Sabres' Larsson suspended for two games.

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

February 2, 2018

(WGR 550) - Johan Larsson has been suspended two games by the NHL for his cross check to the face of Florida's Vincent Trocheck.

The suspension could've been longer, but Larsson had never been fined or suspended in the past.

Larsson received a match penalty for the hit. The Department of Player Safety said that in his hearing, Larsson argued that he was not aiming for Trocheck's head. The NHL acknowledged that the stick did ride up Trocheck's shoulder pad, but it rode up and made solid contact with Trocheck's head.

The Department of Player Safety said players are responsible for their stick at all times.

Here is the video released by the NHL:

<https://www.nhl.com/video/johan-larsson-suspended-2-games/t-277440360/c-...>

Sabres' Benoit Pouliot trying to regain early-season form

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 2, 2018

BUFFALO – Late last month, Benoit Pouliot tried something new. After 12 NHL seasons and nearly 600 games played, the struggling Sabres winger removed the visor from his helmet.

“A spur-of-the-moment type of (thing),” Pouliot explained Friday. “I wanted to change some things, so I just took the visor off.”

Will shedding some plastic really help Pouliot? Probably not. But right now, the veteran is trying to break out of a funk.

The Sabres' biggest early-season surprise has morphed into a healthy scratch, sitting out four of the last 12 games. Pouliot practiced as a spare defenseman Friday, meaning he will likely be scratched for tonight's tilt against the St. Louis Blues at KeyBank Center.

What has gotten away from Pouliot in recent weeks?

“Playing well,” he said bluntly. “I think I haven't really played that good doing my job, which is using my speed, get in on the forecheck, get in front of the net and create turnovers. But I haven't been doing that lately. Yeah, it (stinks).”

After signing a one-year, \$1.15 million contract July 1, Pouliot quickly became one of the Sabres' most productive and versatile forwards, scoring six goals in the first 18 games while moving up and down the lineup.

But Pouliot, who has never scored more than 19 goals in a season, tailed off by mid-November. Through 47 appearances, he has scored nine goals.

Pouliot has remained positive through his rough stretch. Still, the frustration is evident in his voice.

“My game hasn't been there,” he said. “I'm not going to show up at the rink and be miserable around the guys or pout. I'll show up here, have a good time with the guys, take a positive attitude and just go along with it, and if I'm in the lineup, whatever game it is, I'll be ready.”

He added: “I want to play every night and be with the boys and battle out there. I guess I haven't been good enough to do that.”

Sabres coach Phil Housley said Pouliot “understands where he's at right now.”

“He's got to make the most of his opportunity when he gets back in the lineup, and he understands the detail of his game slipped a little bit and that's why he's out of the lineup,” Housley said.

The 6-foot-3, 200-pound Pouliot could be out of Buffalo soon. With an expiring contract, he might be an attractive option for a team before the Feb. 26 trade deadline. The former fourth overall pick could be available for a low draft choice.

Having played for seven NHL teams, Pouliot is used to moving around and not worried about getting traded.

“I don't think about it. It is what it is,” he said. “If it happens, it happens, then I just roll with it. I've been playing for quite a while now and know how the business of the game is a little bit. I try not to worry. If I start worrying about stuff like that, then it's going to throw me off even worse than I am right now.”

Age and experience have helped Pouliot relax.

“Younger, I think (you have a) different mentality, you're not sure what to expect, you really don't know what's going on,” he said. “When I was younger, I was worried about the little stuff, for sure. Now I'm 31 years old and I've been through a couple things in my career.”

Actually, more than a couple. Pouliot has also played for the Minnesota Wild, Montreal Canadiens, Boston Bruins, Tampa Bay Lightning, New York Rangers and Edmonton Oilers. Following a rough 2016-17 campaign, the Oilers exercised a buyout on the final two seasons of his five-year, \$20 million contract.

Pouliot has tried to embrace his travels.

“I got to see a lot of new cities, make a lot of new friends, get to know organizations well,” he said. “There’s different types of people out there in organizations, and I was fortunate to be on really good ones, and so ... getting a lot of experience, a lot of playoff games, it’s been a fun ride.

“Changing teams, when you do it a lot, it kind of takes a toll, you want to be settled somewhere. I think Edmonton, my three years there was very good. Just right now, I don’t worry about it too much.”

Sabres' Johan Larsson suspended two games for cross-checking incident

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 2, 2018

BUFFALO – The NHL has suspended Sabres center Johan Larsson two games for cross-checking center Vincent Trocheck in the face late in Thursday's 4-2 loss to the Florida Panthers.

Larsson will miss two home contests: Saturday's against the St. Louis Blues and Tuesday's against the Anaheim Ducks.

NHL Player Safety conducted a hearing with Larsson today and announced the decision late this afternoon.

In a video explaining the suspension, George Parros, the NHL's senior vice president of player safety, said Larsson argued he wasn't aiming for Trocheck's face. Videos of the incident show Larsson's stick rode up Trocheck's shoulder.

"Players are responsible for their stick at all times, and when a player attempts to intentionally use his stick to deliver a blow to an opponent, he cannot necessarily be excused of all responsibility when the blow lands in an unintended place," Parros said.

Larsson, who skated over as Trocheck and Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe jabbed at each other, received a five-minute cross-checking penalty and a 10-minute match penalty at 19:25 of the third period.

An automatic one-game suspension accompanies a match penalty, although the league could've rescinded it. The league also noted Larsson had no previous suspensions.

Larsson declined comment through a team spokesman today. Following the game, the Swede said he wasn't worried about a suspension.

"It's a heat-of-the-moment battle where emotions are running high," Sabres coach Phil Housley said this afternoon inside KeyBank Center. "It's unfortunate."

Larsson will forfeit \$15,860.22, money the league will donate to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

Cats On The Prowl

@CatsOntheprowl

Johan Larsson cross-checks Trocheck in the face:

9:39 PM - Feb 1, 2018

34 34 Replies 34 34 Retweets 38 38 likes

Sabres' Larsson suspended two games for cross-check

WIVB

Nick Filipowski

February 2, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Sabres forward Johan Larsson will sit the next two games after being suspended by the league for cross-checking Vincent Trocheck in the face in the final seconds of Buffalo's 4-2 loss Thursday night.

Although he has no prior history, the NHL Department of Player Safety ruled, that while Larsson did not intend to hit Trocheck in the face, his stick rides up his shoulder and to the face which is not a hockey play.

“When a player attempts to intentionally use his stick to deliver a blow to an opponent he cannot necessarily be excused of responsibility when it lands in an unintended place,” the league said.

Larsson will miss the Sabres' game on Saturday against the Blues and Tuesday's showdown with the Ducks.

Larsson suspended two games for actions in Sabres game against Panthers

NHL.com

February 2, 2018

NEW YORK - Buffalo Sabres forward Johan Larsson has been suspended for two games, without pay, for cross-checking Florida Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck during NHL Game No. 777 in Buffalo on Thursday, Feb. 1, the National Hockey League's Department of Player Safety announced today.

The incident occurred at 19:25 of the third period. Larsson was assessed a major and match penalty for cross-checking.

Under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and, based on his average annual salary, Larsson will forfeit \$15,860.22. The money goes to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

With each passing game, Nelson continues to build confidence

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

February 2, 2018

In their loss to Florida at home on Thursday, the Buffalo Sabres were robbed of a potential comeback mostly by their inability to hit the net. The Sabres tallied 67 shot attempts to the Panthers' 50, but 16 missed the net and 19 were blocked.

One of the few players to buck the trend was defenseman Casey Nelson, who recorded a career-high five shots on goal.

"I really like the way Casey's playing," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "I think he moves the puck really well, he's defending really well, his gaps are really tight. That's why he remains in the lineup. It's always nice to have a right-hand shot as well.

"You look at his shots from the point, he finds ways to get pucks through to the net. He's uncanny in that way."

Phil Housley (2.2.18)

04:45 • February 2nd, 2018

Against the Panthers, Nelson's shots came from all over the offensive zone. He showed an ability to create a shot lane and deliver the puck from the blue line, like on this play that created a scoring chance for Kyle Okposo at the net-front:

At the same time, he also picks his spots to pinch down low in the offensive zone to sustain possession or create scoring chances. On this play, he cut to the net for a point-blank shot and drew a cross-check in the process:

Nelson made his season debut against the New York Rangers on Jan. 18, and while others have moved in and out of the lineup on defense, he's been a mainstay ever since. He began this season with 19 games of NHL experience under his belt - seven upon the conclusion of his NCAA career late in 2015-16 and 12 more last season - but said he feels like a new player this time around.

He feels his biggest improvement has come in his own end, a jump he made in 37 games with Rochester this season. He led the Amerks with a plus-11 rating.

"I feel defensively, like I've been saying, I can be out there against some of the top players and be good against them," Nelson said. "Just shut them down. I think my plus/minus down in Roch has showed that."

His greatest sources of confidence are the situations when he's found himself on the ice for matchups with opposing teams' best players and held his own, opportunities he relishes. Nelson has been used primarily on a third-pair role, averaging 14:43 per game.

"We play against a few different lines, usually not their top line but sometimes we're out there against them," he said. "You've just got to be confident in what you can do and just shut them down, I guess."

If he keeps playing the way he has been, there will be more opportunities to come.

Larsson to have hearing for cross-check

Johan Larsson will have a hearing with the NHL's Department of Player Safety on Friday for his cross-check to the head of Panthers forward Vincent Trocheck. Larsson was assessed a five-minute major and a match penalty for the play.

"It's a heat-of-the moment battle where emotions are running high," Housley said. "It's unfortunate, but we'll know more today."

UPDATE (4:51 p.m.) - Larsson has been suspended two games by the NHL. It is the first suspension of his career.

More on the decision can be found in the video below:

Friday's practice

Sabres Now (2/2/18)
02:03 • February 2nd, 2018

Rasmus Ristolainen was absent for a maintenance day after skating a team-high 27:24 on Thursday. The rest of the lineup remained the same as in the loss to Florida, with the exception of Nathan Beaulieu replacing Josh Gorges on a defensive pair with Nelson.

Beaulieu has missed the past four games with an upper-body injury, but Housley left the door open for a potential return when the Sabres host the St. Louis Blues on Saturday.

"[I'm] thinking about it," Housley said. "Just trying to change the lineup. We've lost two games in a row here now. It's a possibility."

Here's how the rest of the lineup looked at practice, with Justin Falk filling in for Ristolainen and Benoit Pouliot - a healthy scratch on Thursday - taking reps on defense:

9 Evander Kane - 15 Jack Eichel - 21 Kyle Okposo
20 Scott Wilson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 23 Sam Reinhart
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 29 Jason Pominville
17 Jordan Nolan - 10 Jacob Josefson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste
71 Evan Rodrigues

6 Marco Scandella - 41 Justin Falk
19 Jake McCabe - 19 Victor Antipin
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 8 Casey Nelson
67 Benoit Pouliot - 4 Josh Gorges

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson

#DUFFALO: All-Star Efforts

Sabres.com

Brian Duff

February 2, 2018

On Ice

I was fortunate to be in Tampa with our Sabres.com crew for the NHL's All-Star Weekend. And while every player's story is unique and meaningful, there wasn't a better one than the unlikely and unexpected appearance of Brian Boyle.

A first round pick of the LA Kings in 2003, Boyle joined his 5th team this past off-season as a now 33 year-old mentor for the young and improving NJ Devils.

But before he could really dive into that role he was hit with a startling diagnosis: leukemia.

Thankfully it was detected early and Boyle returned triumphantly with an early scoring surge that included an unforgettable moment on the Devils' Hockey Fights Cancer night.

And when teammate Taylor Hall was felled by a thumb injury last week, the call went to Boyle - who played for the Lightning from 2014-2017 - to replace him in Tampa.

While many will remember him almost winning the accuracy shooting competition on Saturday night, for anyone in attendance the moment was when he was captured on Amalie Arena's massive video board for the first time during the Skills Competition warm-ups.

Boyle, of course, had no idea at first why the crowd went crazy. But soon after, he could no longer deny his larger-than-life image being projected in all directions above center ice.

His smile. His appreciation. The outright love that was on display from the fans. Man, it was something.

And it lasted.

And they chanted his name.

Bri - an Boy - al

Bri - an Boy - al

Chills.

Jack Eichel's first All-Star appearance was a good one. A minor glitch of over-eagerness in the starting blocks may have cost him the fastest skater crown, but it was fun to watch his 3-on-3 exploits with the likes of Matthews, Barkov, Karlsson and Kucherov.

The maturation of his game both on the ice and off will likely be the most important aspect of the Sabres final 30-plus games this season.

Former Sabres Captain Brian Gionta will create some memories of his own this month, starting Friday night in Rochester.

Gionta will appear for his hometown team in a one-game tryout with the Amerks as they host the Marlies and continue their quest for a North Division title.

After that, it's off to Pyeongchang, South Korea, where he will captain Team USA at the age of 39.

Gionta has been a presence off the ice and in practice all season with the Amerks, and as he departs, it's almost symbolic that job be finished by those he has mentored.

Currently second in the North, five points behind Toronto, Chris Taylor's Americans have found the wins harder to come by of late.

Having briefly snared the division lead week ago, Rochester has gone 6-4-4 in its last 14 with only 2 wins in the past 7 (2-2-3).

The Marlies meanwhile have gone 10-0-1 since losing at home to Rochester on Dec. 29.

Amerks general manager Randy Sexton on what has kept them from top spot:

"Toronto has continued to be hot while we've run into some injuries. That said, it's provided a great opportunity for guys to play enhanced roles which we believe will serve us well later in the season."

And he added, "We've been working hard to spread the offense across all four lines. We're confident that secondary scoring will come from the entire lineup."

Off Ice

Wednesday marked an important day annually for social media, driven by our friends north of the border. And the hockey community certainly played a large role.

#BellLetsTalk again garnered an absolutely incredible number of interactions and most importantly raised a lot of money (close to \$7 million!) and critical awareness for those battling mental illness.

Longtime colleague Darren Dreger and his brilliant co-workers at TSN are to be lauded for this powerful piece on a one-time promising young defenseman in Paul Ranger, who we are thankful to say, is still with us today.

[View image on Twitter](#)

[View image on Twitter](#)

TSN



@TSN_Sports

In 2009, Lightning defenseman Paul Ranger vanished from the NHL. The reason for his departure was a mystery.

@DarrenDreger sits down with Paul in this revealing and deeply personal TSN Original - The Mystery of Paul Ranger: <http://fw.to/aZEHadH> #BellLetsTalk

11:41 AM - Jan 31, 2018

12 12 Replies 750 750 Retweets 358 358 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

Also really happy for one of the best guys we've ever had the pleasure of dealing with here in Buffalo. Congratulations to Mike Weber, whose career ended recently due to injury while playing over in Sweden, on his new appointment as an assistant coach with the Windsor Spitfires of the OHL.

Quotable

"Let's talk. Because if you don't, no one will ever hear you."

Scott Moore



@MooreScottmoore

Proud to share the personal and important words of my colleague @darenmillard that opened tonight's NHL broadcast. <https://bcove.video/2FAHCqN> #BellLetsTalk

8:16 PM - Jan 31, 2018

20 20 Replies 1,321 1,321 Retweets 714 714 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

Very proud of another old colleague Daren Millard for sharing his personal story, and furthering the conversation of #BellLetsTalk,

The Road Ahead (formerly Life On The Road)

Seemingly nothing but home games in the near future with the Sabres locked in a stretch of nine of eleven at KeyBank Center.

That turns into 10 of 12 if you were to include the Amerks hosting Syracuse here on Feb. 21.

The run of games takes us within five days of the NHL's trade deadline (Monday, Feb. 26 at 3 p.m. ET) so this will be a critical evaluation time for GM Jason Botterill and his hockey department.

Not surprisingly as we bounced around Tampa last weekend, everyone we talked to had only one question - "How busy will Botterill be at the deadline?"

My best guess?

Very.

In The Community

Mother Nature nixed the Buffalo Sabres Mega Raffle on January 12. Fortunately, we have an open date to try it again on Feb. 16.

And thank you all for the incredible response to the RJ talking bobblehead!

It sold out within 24 hours and that means a tremendous financial boost to Kevin Guest House and the Buffalo Sabres Foundation.

[View image on Twitter](#)

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Buffalo Sabres

✓

@BuffaloSabres

RJ bobbleheads update ☞ Because of your overwhelming support, the signed and un-signed bobbleheads are sold out.

There is a limited number of the Meet & Greet Packages (that include a bobblehead) still available: <http://bufsabres.co/RJ>

5:41 PM - Jan 31, 2018

13 13 Replies 18 18 Retweets 92 92 likes

Sharpen Up: February 2, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

February 2, 2018

The Sabres continue their homestand tomorrow night against the St. Louis Blues. Last night, the team fell to the Florida Panthers 4-2 at KeyBank Center. Buffalo was up 1-0, but then got into some penalty trouble. They were able to make it 3-2 early in the second period thanks to a shorthanded goal from Zemgus Girgensons, but couldn't even the score.

Buffalo will be back on the ice this morning for practice.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Video: BUF Recap: Penalty troubles hand Sabres 4-2 loss

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

Coming into KeyBank Center on Thursday night, the Florida Panthers had averaged 11:33 of penalty time per game this season. That number ranked second in the NHL, and it figured to bode well for a Buffalo Sabres team that entered the night with one of the league's hottest power plays.

Video: Phil Housley Postgame (2/1/18)

Initially, that held up. Florida took a penalty early in the first period and Ryan O'Reilly opened the scoring for Buffalo with the extra man. It was the Sabres, however, who found themselves trapped in the penalty box from that point on, and it ended up costing them in a 4-2 loss.

Video: Kyle Okposo Postgame (2/1/18)

The Sabres took four penalties in the first period, including two that came just six seconds apart to give the Panthers an extended 5-on-3 power play on which Keith Yandle would score their first goal. Mike Matheson added a second power-play goal less than four minutes later.

Video: Zemgus Girgensons Postgame (2/1/18)

Johan Larsson earned the first penalty for holding, after which Marco Scandella cleared a puck over the end boards to receive a minor for delay of game. The third Buffalo penalty, which led to Matheson's goal, was for too many men on the ice.

Video: Evander Kane Postgame (2/1/18)

"We can't start the game taking four penalties," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "Everything was going in the right direction, we take a penalty. I understand we're going to have to kill penalties, but we shoot a puck over the glass five-on-three and we lose a draw, now we're chasing the game again."

Video: Ryan O'Reilly Postgame (2/1/18)

Emotions continued to pour over in the game's final minute. Jake McCabe got into an exchange with Vincent Trocheck, and Larsson received a match penalty for cross-checking Trocheck to his head. McCabe then fought Alexander Petrovic, resulting in fighting majors for both players (Petrovic also received a game misconduct).

Was the tension a result of emotion or physicality? Likely a bit of both, Housley said, although the Sabres were honest about their frustration regarding their home struggles. They have now lost two games to open their five-game homestand after winning three on the road last week.

"It's so frustrating when you don't win at home," alternate captain Kyle Okposo said. "We've got to pick our game up."

Tomorrow night is both a Family Pack Game (Each Family Pack game ticket - minimum of 4 game tickets per transaction - comes with coupons for a hot dog, soda and popcorn) and for our women hockey fans, a Sabres Style night out.

Stay tuned for full practice coverage today as well.

Our other All-Stars

Video: Young Sabres fans have All-Star experience