



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 8, 2018*

## **Sabres' Housley shows proof that net-front presence works**

Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 7, 2018

More often than not, it's easy to see why the Buffalo Sabres lose. Their efforts are typically subpar and so is their talent level.

But nights like Tuesday leave the team searching deeper. They matched the Anaheim Ducks with 33 shots. They had a decided edge in five-on-five puck possession, spending 11:54 in the Ducks' end compared with eight minutes of offensive-zone time for Anaheim.

The problem is the Sabres don't score during that five-on-five time. Buffalo's goals in the 4-3 overtime loss came short-handed, on the power play and at six-on-five with the goaltender pulled.

It's nothing new. Buffalo ranks last in five-on-five goals with 71. They are eight behind 30th-place Arizona and 53 behind co-No. 1 Toronto and the New York Islanders, who visit KeyBank Center on Thursday.

The lack of even-strength production has been particularly pronounced lately. In the last nine games, Buffalo has scored just six of its 21 goals at five-on-five. They've scored 10 times on the power play, three times short-handed, once during three-on-three overtime and once with the goalie pulled.

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"Obviously, it's an issue," center Ryan O'Reilly said Wednesday. "We have to create more five-on-five and find a way to get these chances."

All year, coach Phil Housley has been preaching shot mentality and net-front presence. He brought up the game against the Ducks as his ideal illustration.

"You look at the Anaheim goals, they had people or players going to the net," Housley said. "That's what we need to do more of. I preach that all the time. First of all, we've got to have a shot mentality, then we've got to have net-front presence and more guys going there to pay a price to score."

He pointed to two of Buffalo's goals as proof. Zemgus Girgensons opened the game by scoring short-handed from below the goal line.

"He shoots a puck from a bad angle, but he goes to the net and he finishes it off," Housley said.

The tying goal from O'Reilly with 14.5 seconds left came with Evander Kane so close to Ducks goalie Ryan Miller that his skate was in the blue paint.

"You have Evander Kane right in front of Miller," Housley said. "You have a layer with Sam Reinhart, and that puck almost goes to the middle of the net. It's just having that mentality of getting there. Our D have to find ways to get the puck there to reward our forwards as well."

As this group of players showed under Dan Bylsma, they know how to tune out a coach. But when Housley has video proof with his words, it should show the Sabres what they need to do.

"A lot of teams are fighting for playoff spots, and you have to fight for every inch out there," center Jacob Josefson said. "You have to play on the inside to make sure you get pucks on the net and have some guys in front of their goal. That's usually how you score goals this time of year."

Added O'Reilly: "It starts with playing harder and getting to the net front. We did a good job getting the puck in the zone and had some good zone time. I think we have to put a little more emphasis on playing heavier in front and looking for those greasy goals. From that, that's when we get those lucky bounces."

On the bright side, the Sabres' special teams are rocking. The penalty killers have scored in three of the last five games, and their seven short-handed goals rank tied for third in the NHL. The power play is a scorching 12 for 34 (35.3 percent) in the last 12 games.

"We're confident," O'Reilly said. "We go out there and we know we're going to score. That's different. I think at the beginning of the year we were a little hesitant. We weren't very comfortable.

"We've kind of found some of that now, and that helps a lot. Every time we go out there, we feel we can impact the game. That's where we want to be."

They just can't get there at five-on-five. It resulted in another frustrating loss, the fourth in a row, all at home.

"It's a little frustrating," defenseman Justin Falk said. "Obviously, we want to have that consistent effort and emotion in our game. We had that for the most part and battled back. We didn't get the results we wanted. A couple bad breaks. There wasn't really a lot of pretty goals.

"One of those games where you've just got to find a way to grind it out, and they seemed to get the bounce there at the end."

## **Sabres Notebook: Housley on Olympics; Bald for Bucks; wine festival**

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 7, 2018

It's time for the Winter Olympics, which means it is time for Phil Housley to let his patriotism show.

"I was part of USA Hockey, and I'm always rooting for USA Hockey," the Buffalo Sabres coach said Wednesday. "I've got deep roots there. USA Hockey really had an impact on my life whether I was playing or being a coach, so I'm all for the red, white and blue."

The Minnesota native represented the United States in the 2002 Olympics, six world championships (1982, '86, '89, 2000, 2001, 2003), one world juniors (1982), the Canada Cup (1984) and the World Cup (1996). He is also a seven-time member of USA Hockey coaching staffs.

So when the opening ceremonies commence Friday and the puck drops Wednesday, Housley will be watching.

"I'm always interested in all aspects of the Winter Olympics and trying to root on our country and the people representing it," Housley said in KeyBank Center. "It's going to be interesting this year to see how this plays out. We're putting a team together without NHL players.

### ADVERTISEMENT

"You might want to think that the Russians or the European teams might have a little bit of an edge because they have their groups together before they're heading to the Olympics, so it'll be interesting to see how that plays out."

The gambling website Bovada has the Olympic Athletes from Russia as even-money favorites, followed by Canada, Sweden (9-to-2 each), Finland (8-to-1), Czech Republic (9-to-1) and the USA (10-to-1).

The United States will be captained by former Sabres forward Brian Gionta.

"I played with Brian Gionta in 2000 on the U.S. team," Housley said of the world championships. "I haven't really looked at the roster real hard, but when those games come I go, 'I know that guy. I coached him.'"

The U.S. team also features defenseman Will Borgen, a 21-year-old from St. Cloud State who was drafted by Buffalo in the fourth round in 2015.

"He's really had a solid season," Housley said of Borgen, who has two goals and 12 points in 26 games. "I know the scouts that have watched him have really good praise for him. It'll be interesting to see how he plays."

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The Sabres weren't sure if they'll have Jake McCabe back for Thursday's visit by the New York Islanders. Johan Larsson will be in the lineup.

McCabe left Tuesday's loss to Anaheim after suffering an upper-body injury during the first period. The defenseman's most memorable moment was a net-side scrum with the Ducks' Ryan Getzlaf, but Housley said Wednesday that was not when McCabe got nicked up.

"It was a shot that he took during the first period," the coach said. "Jake is with our doctors as we speak, so we'll know more later."

Larsson was one of 12 players to take the ice for a short optional workout. He has completed his two-game suspension and is eligible to return.

"I'd figure Larsson in the lineup," Housley said.

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The Buffalo Sabres have once again partnered with "Bald for Bucks" and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to raise funds to support critical cancer research and patient-care programs.

As part of the effort, the Sabres and Bald for Bucks have released limited-edition T-shirts. Donors who contribute \$50 or more will receive the T-shirt and have a chance to win autographed merchandise, tickets to future Sabres games and meet-and-greet opportunities.

Donations may be made at [Sabres.com/BaldForBucks](http://Sabres.com/BaldForBucks) or at the arena during home games on Thursday and Feb. 17 and 25.

\* \* \*

The Buffalo Sabres Alumni Association will host its 14th annual Sabres Alumni Wine Festival from 6-9:30 p.m. March 28 in KeyBank Center. The event will feature samples from wineries and restaurants from Buffalo, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., and beyond.

The festival will also include music, auctions and raffles with unique items from the Sabres and Sabres Alumni. Tickets are \$75 each and are available at [Sabres.com/winefest](http://Sabres.com/winefest), the arena box office or by calling Nick Fearby at 855-4452. Businesses interested in sponsorship opportunities can contact Teresa Belbas at 855-4588 or [Teresa.belbas@sabres.com](mailto:Teresa.belbas@sabres.com) for more information.

All proceeds from the event will benefit breast cancer care in Western New York. Attendees are asked to dress in business attire. There will be complimentary parking in the ramp adjacent to KeyBank Center.

## **Sabres still evaluating McCabe as Larsson readies for return**

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 7, 2018

The Sabres aren't yet sure if they'll have Jake McCabe back for their next game. Johan Larsson will be in the lineup.

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"It was a shot that he took during the first period," Housley said after an optional practice in KeyBank Center. "Jake is with our doctors as we speak, so we'll know more later."

Larsson was one of 12 players to take the ice for the short optional workout. He has completed his two-game suspension and is eligible to return Thursday when Buffalo hosts the New York Islanders to complete a five-game home stand.

"I'd figure Larsson in the lineup," Housley said.

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The Sabres have lost the opening four games of the homestand and have dropped five straight in Buffalo overall. They remain stuck on 999 career home victories.

They played a decent game against the Ducks but fell, 4-3, in overtime.

"It's a little frustrating," defenseman Justin Falk said. "Obviously, we want to have that consistent effort and emotion in our game. We had that for the most part and battled back. We didn't get the results we wanted. A couple bad breaks. There wasn't really a lot of pretty goals. One of those games where you've just got to find a way to grind it out, and they seemed to get the bounce there at the end."

## **Why do the Sabres have such little puck luck?**

WGR 550

Paul Hamilton

February 7, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Do you ever wonder why the team the Buffalo Sabres are playing seems to get all the bounces? In the 4-3 loss to Anaheim, the Ducks got two goals where they didn't even shoot the puck and the overtime winner was off the stick of Rasmus Ristolainen. The Sabres shorthanded goal by Zemgus Girgensons was a rebound from the side of the net that he banked in off of Ryan Miller.

It just seems like losing teams rarely get a break.

You've all heard the cliché that you make your own breaks. Josh Gorges said, "I think when you really look at it, it's the percentages, it's a percentage game. If you spend more time in the offensive zone, get more traffic at the goalie, more shots, more second chance opportunities, you're going to create those bounces. Yes, some of it is luck, but you create that luck by putting the other team in tough positions."

Ryan O'Reilly gave some serious thought to the question of puck luck. He said, "It's tough to describe. I find personally, when I'm not thinking as much and just moving my feet or doing the little things right, I seem to find the puck or the puck seems to find me."

It's only human nature that when it keeps happening, the players say to themselves, why? "I try not to think about it. It's one of those things that's out of my control and I have to find a way to raise my own game to make an impact and those bounces they happen," O'Reilly said. "Yes, they sting, they kill momentum, but you have to find a way to respond."

Phil Housley doesn't feel sorry for himself or the team. He firmly believes there are ways to create your own luck, "If you look at the Anaheim goals, they had people going to the net and that's what we need to do more of. First of all, we have to have a shot mentality and then we have to have net-front presence and more guys going there to pay a price to score."

Gorges is very good at blocking shots. Occasionally, one will go off him and in, but it doesn't happen that often. Gorges said there really isn't any technique he uses to make sure he doesn't get a bad bounce, "I think you're aware of your positioning to where the shot's coming from to where the net is, but your mentality is get in front of this puck and don't let it get to the net."

There is one thing that's a big no-no when it comes to blocking shots and avoiding bad deflections. The defenseman said, "I feel like those bad breaks or bounces happen when you put your stick out there and it goes off your shaft and drops down. I think when you get your body in front of it, there's less chance of it going through you."

Jake McCabe was with the doctor having his upper body injury examined and Housley said he hasn't heard the result yet. Wednesday's practice was optional and was attended on the ice by 12 players.

## **How Sam Reinhart compares with his draft class**

WGR 550

Joe DiBiase

February 7, 2018

Time certainly moves quickly. We're coming up on 4 years since Sam Reinhart was selected 2nd overall by the Sabres in the 2014 NHL Draft. It took Reinhart a year to become a regular in the NHL, and he's put up some decent numbers as a young player. This year he has regressed. To the point where there have been several reports saying that teams have inquired about his availability for trade. Meanwhile many in his draft class have had great success on other teams. Like we did with Jack Eichel a few weeks ago, it's time to look at how Reinhart compares to his fellow 2014 draftees.

### **GAMES PLAYED:**

1.) Aaron Ekblad - Defenseman - Florida Panthers (1st overall)

Games Played: 278

2.) Leon Draisaitl - Center - Buffalo Sabres (3rd overall)

Games Played: 238

3.) David Pastrnak - Left Wing - Boston Bruins (25th overall)

Games Played: 223

4.) Sam Reinhart - Center/Wing - Buffalo Sabres (2nd overall)

Games Played: 220

T5.) Dylan Larkin - Center - Red Wings (15th overall)

Games Played: 212

T5.) Sam Bennett - Center - Flames (4th overall)

Games Played: 212

### **POINTS:**

1.) Leon Draisaitl - Center - Edmonton Oilers (3rd overall)

Points: 182

2.) David Pastrnak - Left Wing - Boston Bruins (25th overall)

Points: 173

3.) Nikolaj Ehlers - Left Wing - Winnipeg Jets (9th overall)

Points: 141

4.) Dylan Larkin - Center - Detroit Red Wings (12th overall)

Points: 116

T5.) Aaron Ekblad - Defenseman - Florida Panthers (1st overall)

Points: 115

T5.) Willie Nylander - Left Wing - Toronto Maple Leafs (8th overall)

Points: 115

7.) Sam Reinhart - Center/Wing - Buffalo Sabres (2nd overall)

Points: 113

### **GOALS:**

1.) David Pastrnak - Right Wing - Boston Bruins (25th overall)



Goals: 80

2.) Leon Draisaitl - Center - Edmonton Oilers (3rd overall)

Goals: 63

3.) Nikolaj Ehlers - Left Wing - Winnipeg Jets (9th overall)

Goals: 60

3.) Viktor Arvidsson - Right Wing - Nashville Predators (112th overall)

Goals: 56

4.) Sam Reinhart - Center/Wing - Buffalo Sabres (2nd overall)

Goals: 50 goals

5.) Dylan Larkin - Center - Detroit Red Wings (12th overall)

Goals: 48

#### ASSISTS:

1.) Leon Draisaitl - Center - Edmonton Oilers (3rd overall)

Assists: 119

2.) David Pastrnak - Right Wing - Boston Bruins (25th overall)

Assists: 93

3.) Nikolaj Ehlers - Left Wing - Winnipeg Jets (9th overall)

Assists: 81

4.) Willie Nylander - Left Wing - Toronto Maple Leafs (8th overall)

Assists: 75

T5.) Aaron Ekblad - Defenseman - Florida Panthers (1st overall)

Assists: 68

T5.) Dylan Larkin - Center - Detroit Red Wings (12th overall)

Assists: 68

7.) Sam Reinhart - Center - Buffalo Sabres (2nd overall)

Assists: 63

Tim Murray picked Reinhart 2nd overall right in front of Leon Draisaitl, who arguably is the best player from that draft with Aaron Ekblad. Reinhart could end up being the first player from the top 5 in 2014 to be traded. Both his name and Sam Bennett's have been attached to trade rumors at times. Reinhart really hasn't played the position he was drafted to play either. There have been a couple stretches where he did play center, but for the most part Reinhart has played wing.

Reinhart is not going to be as good as other 2nd overall picks like Jack Eichel, Tyler Seguin, Victor Hedman, Drew Doughty, etc. However, could he end up being as good of a player as the Gabriel Landeskog's and Jordan Staal's of the world? Reinhart has had that kind of production at times, but the consistency hasn't been there. Especially this year when he's had seven 5-game stretches not scoring. Just 23 points in 53 games is definitely not the kind of production you should be getting from a 2nd overall pick.

## **Sabres goalie Robin Lehner could be attractive option for contender**

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 7, 2018

BUFFALO – Forget about struggling winger Evander Kane, the asset that could fetch the Sabres the greatest return before the upcoming trade deadline is goalie Robin Lehner.

Kane has been struggling for months, producing just four goals over a 32-game span, including zero in the past 13 contests. His value has dropped dramatically.

Lehner, meanwhile, has been tending some strong goal for the hapless Sabres, who have lost four straight home games. In his last five games, the Swede is 2-2-1 with a 1.42 goals against-average, a .955 save percentage and two shutouts.

“It’s tough to feel good when we’re not winning,” Lehner told the Times Herald on Wednesday. “But, yeah, last four or five games, I’ve started seeing the puck a little bit again, the puck’s getting bigger. Sometimes you go through some stretches where the puck seems really quick and small, and it looks a little bigger right now.”

Some teams fighting for playoff spots, most notably the New York Islanders, tonight’s opponent at KeyBank Center, need a goaltending upgrade.

Given Lehner’s recent play and body of work – he has a terrific .919 save percentage in 119 outings since the start of last season – perhaps he could bring the Sabres a high draft pick or a strong prospect.

Of course, Lehner, 26, knows his name has been mentioned in trade rumors.

“You think about it sometimes,” he said. “I’ve got two kids and a wife, so sometimes you look around and see what might be happening, but it’s nothing I think about constantly.”

Do the rumors bother him?

“Not really,” Lehner said. “I know what I can do, I know I can save the puck. So obviously I like the city a lot, I like it here, I want this team to be successful, I want this organization to be successful. At the end of the day, you just take it day by day and see what happens.”

If Tim Murray had remained general manager, then perhaps Lehner’s future in Buffalo would be secure. Murray traded a first-round pick to Ottawa in 2015 for Lehner, a steep cost for someone who had never started regularly in the NHL.

But Murray believed Lehner, someone he watched up close with the Senators, could be a top No. 1 netminder.

Then the Sabres fired Murray following a last-place finish in 2016-17. Instead of a long-term deal, new GM Jason Botterill gave Lehner, who posted a .920 save percentage last season, a one-year, \$4 million contract as a restricted free agent.

With Linus Ullmark, one of hockey’s best goalie prospects with the AHL Rochester Americans, almost ready for the NHL, a short contract for Lehner made sense.

Botterill has no attachment or investment in Lehner. Why would he give a multi-year deal with Ullmark, 24, so close?

The Sabres likely want Ullmark to play regularly in the NHL next season, not sit as Lehner’s backup. Lehner has played 40 of the Sabres’ 53 contests, a 62-game pace. He played a career-high 59 times last year.

Basically, there’s not enough room in net for both goalies in 2018-19.

While Lehner has often been the Sabres’ lone bright spot, Ullmark is younger, cheaper and arguably possesses a greater upside. Lehner will be an RFA again following the season, so he is still under team control.

Off the ice, Lehner has established himself for his outspoken talk. He has often been blunt, unafraid to call out his team’s play (he never mentions names always includes himself) during the many rough stretches over the past three seasons.

“I know there’s a lot of questions thrown at him,” Sabres coach Phil Housley said. “I think he does a pretty good job.”

Lehner said he believes “in calling it as it is.”

“The guys here do a good job of maybe slowing me down a little bit,” he said. “There’s time in life for things, but sometimes I say what’s on my mind, sometimes it’s right, sometimes it’s wrong.”

Where does Lehner get that from?

“I don’t know, really,” he said. “I just feel like going around the issue sometimes is not the way forward.”

## **Sabres' Phil Housley interested in Olympic hockey**

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 7, 2018

**BUFFALO** – Phil Housley's ties to USA Hockey run deep.

The Sabres coach, a Hall of Fame defenseman, represented his country at tournaments 11 times during his playing career, including one Olympics, the 2002 Salt Lake City Games. Housley has also coached Team USA at six tournaments, winning a gold medal at the 2013 World Junior Championship.

So Housley will be watching the Pyeongchang Games, the first Olympics without NHL players since 1994, this month. Team USA plays its first game next Wednesday against Slovenia.

"It's going to be quite interesting to see a different facet in the hockey part of it," Housley said this afternoon. "I'm always interested in the hockey part of it."

Without NHL talent, Team USA features former NHL players, current AHLers and European pros and collegiate players.

"We're putting a team together without NHL players," Housley said. "You might want to think the Russians or the European teams might have a little bit of an edge because they have their groups together before they're heading into the Olympics."

Former Sabres captain Brian Gionta, 39, is on Team USA. So is Sabres prospect Will Borgen, 21, a junior defenseman at St. Cloud State.

"He's had solid season," Housley said of Borgen. "The scouts that have watched him have really good praise for him."

Housley, 53, said he played with Gionta at the 2000 World Championship.

In other news, the Sabres, fresh off Tuesday's 4-3 overtime loss to Anaheim, held an optional practice this morning inside KeyBank Center.

Housley said defenseman Jake McCabe, who left Tuesday's game with an upper-body injury after blocking a shot, was being evaluated early this afternoon, so he didn't have an update.

## **Sabres fans giving up on season tickets**

WKBW

Dave Thompson

February 7, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - After 12 season, lifelong Buffalo Sabres fan Tom O'Connor is giving up his season tickets.

He says there are several reason why, but the incentive of holding onto them to have first crack at tickets for the playoffs is no longer there, and he says without the hope of a playoff run the price is no longer worth it.

"Going to the playoff games was always what you kind of hold on to them for, and then I realized if I can just buy a single playoff game for a couple hundred bucks, I'm still saving money."

Ticket prices have increased substantially since Terry Pegula took ownership of the team in February of 2011. In his first full season of ownership, a 300 level 1 season ticket cost fans \$41 per seat.

This season, the same seat would set fans back \$53 per game; a nearly 30 percent increase.

Some tickets in the 100 level have gone up almost 40 percent in the same time.

O'Connor says that with the teams recent struggles, he's having a hard time finding someone to use his ticket for games he can't attend.

"I've almost had to switch to offering people money to take my tickets just to fill the seat. I can no longer expect anyone to pay me even a dollar for a ticket at this point."

But even with the team failing to make the playoffs since 2011, official team attendance figures remain steady.

According to ESPN, with the help of the Winter Classic game at Citi Field, which was considered a home game for Buffalo, the Sabres are currently eighth in overall NHL attendance.

Sabres officials also tell us they there is still a waiting list for people who would like to become season ticket holders, so despite the decision of some fans to cancel their tickets, the team is still confident they'll see similar numbers next season.

## **Sabres sunk by lack of puck luck**

Spectrum

Ted Goldberg

February 7, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. - The Sabres have suffered through plenty of bad breaks and bad luck through a 14-29-10 season, and Tuesday's loss was a prime example of both. The Sabres gave up three goals in regulation -- one of which was an own-goal from Ryan O'Reilly whose clearing attempt ricocheted in off Robin Lehner's stick, and one that was a rebound off of Lehner's leg.

"You get caught thinking a bit more, it seems like the bad bounces happen," says O'Reilly. "I don't know why it is. You tighten up. I think that explains us at home right now."

The Sabres have just six home wins, and a 6-15-4 record at home (including a "home" game for the Winter Classic).

"I think if we're working hard and playing the right way, and doing the right things, you'll eventually get your bounces," says Jordan Nolan, who saw plenty of good luck while winning two Stanley Cups with the Kings. "Sometimes, it seems like, for a few games, you won't get your bounces. Usually the hockey gods work out a little bit. But if you're not playing the right way, it's not going to work out for you."

Head Coach Phil Housley had a simple explanation for the Sabres misfortune; the Ducks created their own luck by playing aggressively and keeping the puck in the Buffalo zone.

"You look at the Anaheim goals, they had players going to the net," he says. "That's what we need to do more of. I preach that all the time. First off, we need to have a shot mentality. We gotta have net-front presence."

The Ducks loss was another reminder of the Sabres awful play in overtime. The Blue and Gold have lost 10 of 13 games that were tied after regulation. Nolan says there's less margin of error because of the 3-on-3 aspect of overtime.

"If you miss your chance, chances are the other team's coming back with a 2-on-1," he says. "That's the way it is. When a team has full possession, you have full possession, and someone gives you half a foot to work with, there's a lot of skilled players in this league and they're going to take advantage of that."

The Sabres need a win against the Islanders Thursday to avoid going 0-5 during their five-game homestand.

## To reverse fortunes, Sabres aim to get to the net

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

February 7, 2018

It's an adage heard in dressing rooms across the NHL: In hockey, you create your own bounces.

In their overtime loss to Anaheim on Tuesday, good bounces were few and far between for the Buffalo Sabres. Of the three goals they allowed in regulation, two went in off their own players. One shot hit the post and was pushed in by Robin Lehner; another was roofed into the net by Ryan O'Reilly.

Bad puck luck? Maybe, but Phil Housley saw another trend that factored into Anaheim's scoring.

"They had people and players going to the net," Housley said. "I think that's what we need to do more. I preach that all the time. First of all, we need to have a shot mentality, and then we need to have a net-front presence, have more guys going there and pay a price to score."

Phil Housley (2/7/18)

04:23 • February 7th, 2018

When the Sabres did score goals on Tuesday, they came as a result of that mentality. Zemgus Girgensons scored shorthanded off a bad-angle shot because he chased his own rebound. On the 6-on-5 goal scored by O'Reilly to tie the game late in the third period, both Evander Kane and Sam Reinhart were stationed in front of the Anaheim net.

Housley has reiterated his belief that it will take that mentality - the combination of taking shots and clogging the net - to produce more scoring at even-strength. The Sabres rank last in the NHL with 71 goals at 5-on-5 and have not scored an even-strength goal in four games during their current homestand.

"I think we talked about it a bit here, about getting to the net more," O'Reilly said. "Obviously, it's an issue. We have to create more 5-on-5. We have to find a way to get these chances and it starts with playing harder and getting to the net-front.

"We did a good job of getting the puck in the zone and had some good zone time, but I think we have to put a little more emphasis on getting there, playing heavier in front and looking for those greasy goals. I think from that, that's when you get those bounces."

Sabres Now (2/7/18)

02:18 • February 7th, 2018

The Sabres are 0-3-1 with one game left to play on their homestand, against the New York Islanders on Thursday night. Josh Gorges suggested that Buffalo's struggles at home are cyclical; they might lose a game in front of their home crowd, have to talk about it as a result and then have it in their head the next night.

"This game is so mental," he said. "When you're thinking about things, good or bad, it's going to affect the way you prepare and the way you play the game. The easiest thing to say is turn your brain off and just come to play."

O'Reilly added: "We're trying so hard to make this a tough building to play in and win some games here that sometimes you tighten up and try to muscle through it and do different things, and the bounces don't seem to go our way.

"I don't know how to explain it, how to get out of it. It's just a tough thing that happens and we have to continue to keep trying because last game was a bit better, but there's still more you can do."

Power play thriving off confidence

While even-strength goals have been hard to come by, the Buffalo power play stayed hot with a goal from Jack Eichel on Tuesday. The Sabres are 12-for-37 (32.4 percent) on the power play since Jan. 7, which leads the NHL.

"I think we're confident," O'Reilly said. "We go out there and we know we're going to score. It's different. I think at the beginning of the year we were a little hesitant. We weren't very comfortable. And I think we found some of that."

#### Evaluations ongoing for McCabe

Jake McCabe left Tuesday's game in the first period with an upper-body injury and did not return, which Housley said was the result of a blocked shot. McCabe was still being evaluated when the coach met with the media on Wednesday.

McCabe is one of two Buffalo defensemen - along with Marco Scandella - to appear in all 53 games this season. His average ice time of 19:30 ranks fifth on the team, third amongst defensemen.



## Sharpen Up: February 7, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

February 7, 2018

The Sabres battled back last night to force OT against the Ducks, but Anaheim came out on top thanks to a goal from Adam Henrique.

Buffalo is back at it today for practice. The five-game homestand ends tomorrow night against the Islanders. Buffalo will wear its Winter Classic uniforms in the first of three games at KeyBank Center this year. It's a Family Pack Game so we'll see you at the arena!

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Sabres fall to Ducks in OT, 4-3

04:38 • February 6th, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report:

For a moment, the tale of the game between the Buffalo Sabres and the Anaheim Ducks at KeyBank Center on Tuesday night was one of redemption. Ryan O'Reilly scored on his own net to give Anaheim a third-period lead, only to then tie the game in dramatic fashion with 14.5 seconds remaining.

Jack Eichel Postgame (2/6/18)

04:29 • February 6th, 2018

Instead, the game ended like all too many others have for Buffalo this season: with a point left on the table. Adam Henrique took a shot that deflected off the stick of Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen and beat Robin Lehner up high, giving the Ducks a 4-3 win in overtime.

Phil Housley Postgame (2/6/18)

02:56 • February 6th, 2018

Buffalo's overtime record fell to 3-10 with the loss.

"It's tough," alternate captain Jack Eichel said. "You get one point. You battle back, you play a good hockey team and you feel like maybe you deserve the second one, but you don't get it."

Zemgus Girgensons Postgame

01:33 • February 6th, 2018

Eichel led the way with a goal and an assist for the Sabres, while Sam Reinhart tallied a pair of helpers. O'Reilly and Zemgus Girgensons each scored a goal, while Lehner made 29 saves on 33 shots.

Rickard Rakell, Ondrej Kase and Corey Perry scored goals for Anaheim. Ryan Miller made 30 saves.

"I thought we did good things, but you battle back against a desperate hockey team and obviously you want the two points," Eichel said. "I think there's the opportunity to make a few plays and we're just failing to make them. I think that's been the tale of our season."

Ryan O'Reilly Postgame (2/6/18)

03:03 • February 6th, 2018

"The two points were there and it's frustrating not to get them," O'Reilly said. "But I thought a lot of guys played well tonight. There's some guys who really worked hard, finished a lot of checks tonight. It's more of a complete effort that we need to be more consistent with."

Hockey Is For Everyone

The Sabres celebrated Hockey Is For Everyone Night. Take a look at how Jordan Nolan, Cody McCormick and USA Hockey's Adam Page are helping to make a difference in the community:

Seneca Nation Hockey Visit

01:55 • February 6th, 2018