



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 10, 2018

Sabres forward Kyle Okposo diagnosed with a concussion

Associated Press

John Wawrow

March 10, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres forward Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely after being diagnosed with his second concussion in less than a year.

Okposo was hurt when he and Senators forward Bobby Ryan didn't see each other and collided early in the second period of Buffalo's 4-3 shootout win at Ottawa on Thursday.

Coach Phil Housley on Friday said he was encouraged by how Okposo looked on the team's flight home.

"Just seeing him last night, I thought he was in a good place," Housley said. "Obviously, there's things that can happen down the road. But from my perspective, he was in good spirits, so that was a good sign."

A head injury was an issue for Okposo last year when concussion-related symptoms nearly derailed his career. Okposo lost weight and had difficulty sleeping and spent a week in the hospital after sustaining a concussion during what he called a routine hit in practice.

The 11-year veteran is tied for third among Sabres with 38 points (11 goals and 27 assists) in 65 games this season.

Center Ryan O'Reilly described seeing Okposo lying on the ice as "awful," understanding what his teammate went through last year.

"You're just praying that he's OK," O'Reilly said. "It's tough. He's been through a lot, and hopefully it's a speedy recovery and he's back soon."

The injury is the latest to affect the Eastern Conference's last-place team. Leading scorer Jack Eichel has missed nearly a month with a sprained right ankle.

The Sabres, who host Vegas on Saturday, filled Okposo's roster spot by recalling forward Justin Bailey from their AHL affiliate in Rochester, New York.

What's happening in Vegas is turning the hockey world on its head

The Buffalo News

Amy Moritz

March 9, 2018

No one saw it coming in October. Most were impressed in December but wondered if it would last, if this record-setting run by the NHL expansion franchise in Las Vegas was sustainable.

With 15 games left in the regular season, including their KeyBankCenter debut at 1 p.m. today against the Sabres, the Vegas Golden Knights have become one of the favorites to reach the Stanley Cup Final. In their first year of existence.

Even the hockey gods think that's a bit crazy.

If you've been wallowing in the Sabres season and have missed the Vegas story, here's the recap:

The first-year team got off to a hot start, going 8-3-0 in October. Impressive, but the hockey world wondered if the Golden Knights could keep up all that winning.

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Turns out they could.

They went 11-1-1 in December, had an eight-game winning streak carry over to the new year, and arrive in Buffalo with four players hitting the 60-point mark for the season.

For contrast, the Sabres have only two players in the 50-point club – Jack Eichel with 53 and Ryan O'Reilly with 50.

Leading the Golden Knights is center Jonathan Marchessault with 65 points, while William Karlsson, Reilly Smith, and David Perron all have 60. All were chosen in the expansion draft. All had some NHL experience. All were looking for a place to call home.

"You look at the players they have and the depth that they have," O'Reilly said. "They're bringing on all these guys with a lot of them coming from successful teams. They're all veteran players that have been around and when you bring a group like that together, you see how they've done, how consistent they are and how they found a way to work. I didn't expect them to be at the top but you expect them to be at least competing every night and what they've done is very impressive."

The majority of the Vegas roster is comprised of players from the expansion draft, players left unprotected by their former teams. If you think that means there's a group of players who came together with a chip on their shoulder, Marchessault said you'd be right.

"Yeah, sure. Everybody was part of an organization that they didn't protect you and didn't necessarily want you," Marchessault said Friday after Vegas practiced in KeyBank Center. "It's definitely hard to take, but it's a hard business also. You're never safe. Everybody wants to be part of history, wants to be part of something great. We came in with the same mentality. We wanted to win games."

And win games they have.

Vegas has run away with the Pacific Division and is in second place in the Western Conference at 43-19-5. Should the Golden Knights win today, they will set the record for most road wins by an expansion club with 20, breaking the mark of 19 set by Anaheim in the 1993-94 season.

"I was (surprised) a little bit early on, like if they could maintain that throughout the year," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "They've done a terrific job. You put together their speed and transition and their work level, I think that's one of the biggest things in their identity is that they work. If you put work and speed together, that's a deadly combination."

Hard work has been the core identity of the Golden Knights. Because along with that chip on their shoulders, the players in Vegas realize what they achieve collectively is larger than what they are individually.

“We have no, except for our goaltender, any big stars,” said Marchessault, referring to Vegas goalie Marc-Andre Fleury. “I think it makes it fun. Everybody’s humble. Everybody’s ready to be together. We just knew right off the bat if we were going to win games it’s not because we’re talented; it’s because we work harder than the opponent. So we just got to know that and are sticking to it.”

Another piece to the Vegas success story – shedding the “expansion team” label in their own locker room.

“After the first month and a half we were in good shape,” Marchessault said. “We had a great record. But since that time we’ve said let’s keep moving forward, let’s keep playing well. As a team we don’t really talk about expansion team any more. We’re just playing and getting good and we’ve got to work hard every day and get ready for the next game.”

Sabres Notebook: Okposo suffers another concussion

The Buffalo News

Amy Moritz

March 9, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres confirmed what most suspected. Kyle Okposo suffered a concussion in Thursday's game in Ottawa and will be out indefinitely.

Okposo was in a freak collision with Senators forward Bobby Ryan 1:56 into the second period. Neither saw the other coming and they skated directly into each other. Both hit the ice, with Okposo attended to by trainers then skating slowly to the dressing room.

"It's awful," forward Ryan O'Reilly said Friday morning as the team had meetings but did not practice. "I didn't see the hit but you see him on the ice after. You're just praying that it isn't anything big. But it's a tough bounce. He's been through a lot but hopefully he'll be recovering and back with us soon."

It's the second straight concussion at the end of the season for Okposo. Last year he missed the final six games with a concussion and was taken to the neurointensive care unit at Buffalo General Medical Center after having a severe reaction to medication.

Even so, Sabres coach Phil Housley seems hopeful that Okposo could return to the Sabres before the end of the season.

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"I thought he looked really good last night on the flight home so we'll just have to go day-to-day with that and see where he's at," Housley said, referring to the Sabres return from Ottawa after Thursday's 4-3 shootout win. "From my personal knowledge, just seeing him last night, I thought he was in a good place. Obviously there's things that can happen down the road but from my perspective he was in good spirits so that was a good sign."

With the injury to Okposo, the Sabres recalled Justin Bailey from the Rochester Americans late Friday. It's his second recall this season after scoring two goals with an assist in seven games for the Sabres in October. In his third pro season, Bailey has seven points (four goals, three assists) in 47 NHL games.

It started when he was a 16-year-old kid playing hockey for the Peterborough Petes in the Ontario Hockey League. Zach Bogosian would be one of the players making trips to local hospitals. It's a popular community service event among athletes from all sports. But something about it pulled at Bogosian, particularly the families dealing with cancer.

He knew he wanted to get involved in charity work, to use his platform as a National Hockey League player to raise money for organizations doing the heavy lifting when it comes to treating cancer. But he was a hockey player and didn't know anything about setting up and running his own foundation.

Seven years into his NHL playing career and after the death of his grandmother from cancer, Bogosian was ready to jump in. And now Zach, the pro hockey player, and his wife Bianca, the retired pro soccer player, are using their athletic platforms to run the Bogo Bunch Foundation and raise money for various organizations that deal with cancer treatment, research and patient care.

The latest, The Zach Bogosian Kancer Jam, will be held on the floor of KeyBank Center Saturday after the Buffalo Sabres host the Vegas Golden Knights. The Kan Jam tournament will feature 64 fundraising teams (two people per team) with proceeds going to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. Fans can register or donate to the cause on the fundraising platform Crowdrise.

The foundation has become a family affair, with Bianca doing much of the work during hockey season. And while the foundation was started before the birth of their daughter, Mila, she has certainly given the couple a new perspective on health.

"We're blessed to have a healthy daughter," Bogosian said. "We're able to see what we have and know we're very fortunate and in a position to help out other people. We look at it together as a family. The foundation started before Mila was born but as she has come into our lives, it's opened our eyes to what life is really about."

Bogosian suffered an injury in practice in January and the team announced later that month the 27-year-old defenseman would undergo hip surgery with an estimated recovery time of four to six months, rendering him on injured reserve for the rest of the season.

At times like this, it can be beneficial to be married to another elite athlete. His wife, Bianca D'Agostino, played three seasons of professional soccer, including losing a year to a partially torn ACL, and finished her career as midfielder for the Boston Breakers in the National Women's Soccer League.

"The funny thing is she knows when to leave me alone," Bogosian said. "I think it is a plus that my wife played professional soccer. I think she understands the commitment I made and she respects that. She knows that family is first, but that hockey is very close second."

The college free agent signings have begun as the Rochester Americans signed forward Myles Powell and defenseman Jake Linhart to amateur tryout contracts.

Powell just finished his collegiate career at RIT, notching 105 points (45 goals, 60 points) in 149 career games with the Tigers. He is the 10th player in RIT's Division I history to record 100 or more points.

Linhart completed a four-year career at the University of Wisconsin with 60 points (15 goals, 45 assists) in 142 games. He had career-best 17 assists and 23 points during the 2016-17 season.

Sport and charitable giving are all in the family for the Bogosians

The Buffalo News

Amy Moritz

March 9, 2018

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Inside the Sabres: Robin Lehner shifts gears in drive for success, comfort

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

March 9, 2018

When Darren Pang was in Buffalo recently, the television analyst and former goaltender started walking toward Robin Lehner's locker stall. He gave a curious glance.

It looked like an equipment store was having a going out of business sale. There were three sets of goalie pads leaning on the bench. Six gloves, five blockers and three masks rested on the overhead shelf.

Lehner is neither an octopus nor a Cerberus. He obviously can't use all that gear at once.

He's certainly tried it all out, though.

The Buffalo Sabres goalie is like the Horse of a Different Color from "The Wizard of Oz." He seems to change every time he takes the ice. He's used at least nine combinations of pads, blockers, gloves and masks, and it might be more.

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It's a quest for comfort, success and style.

"There's so much new technology these days, so you're trying things out and seeing what people are using," Lehner said. "There's a lot of development in it, so I'm just trying to see what's good."

NHL players can be notoriously finicky about their equipment. Pat LaFontaine had his skates sharpened several times a game. Lehner wants pads that feel like part of his legs, a glove that is soft and a blocker that's light enough to intercept a 100 mph shot.

"It's a lot of small details that make a big difference," Lehner said. "In this league everything is custom made. There's a lot of things they do for you. It's stiffness, sizes, how they fit. Obviously, colors and stuff like that, but there's a lot of different stiffnesses in different areas of the pads.

"Gloves, there's different angles. I like my gloves very soft. That's why I go through a lot of them. There's a few different things."

The many looks of Sabres goalie Robin Lehner

The many looks of Sabres goalie Robin Lehner

Lehner estimates he uses 15 gloves per season. They break down while facing hundreds, if not thousands of shots per day in practices and games.

This year, though, it hasn't simply been replacing worn-out equipment. He's been mixing and matching brands to find the right fit and feel.

Lehner opened the season with his pads, glove and blocker from Brian's Custom Sports while wearing a silver-blue mask. That lasted two games.

He replaced his Brian's gear with his holdover equipment from Vaughn Hockey. He switched to a white mask. By December, he was back to pads and gloves from Brian's but still had the Vaughn blocker. A Vaughn glove rejoined the rotation before Christmas.

Lehner donned a new mask on New Year's Day to celebrate the Winter Classic. In February, a glove and blocker from Bauer Hockey joined the pads from Brian's.

This month, he got a new, complete shipment from Brian's. The pads, gloves and blocker are all dark blue with gold accents, and he brought back the silver-blue mask.

"It's not really new stuff," Lehner said. "They sent me new colors because I needed to change anyways because my old Brian's are broken down."

All told, it was possible for Lehner to use at least 180 combinations of equipment this season.

"Things are getting lighter and lighter, and I'm just trying to stick with it and see what's out there," Lehner said. "I was going to go with Brian's from the beginning of the year, but they didn't feel like what I'm used to with the Vaughns until they made a bunch of changes and got them right for me. I switched to Brian's eventually, and I didn't like their glove model that I had currently. I used Vaughns and Bauers instead.

"Now they've figured that out and made a really nice set of blocker and glove for me, so now everything comes together."

Lehner tests the gear in practice and works it in until it feels right. Once it does, the equipment is ready for a game.

A big question lingers: What happens when he struggles? Does he think, "Oh, that other glove would have caught the puck"? Or, "Those last pads would have made it across the crease quicker"?

Basically, does having so many options make him second-guess himself on the ice?

"No, no, no, no," Lehner said. "I don't go into a game if I'm not comfortable with it. If I'm not comfortable with anything, I don't go in, so if I go into a game I'm confident in them."

Sabres need DiMaggio

Last week, we suggested this group of Sabres take a tip from Ryan Miller on respecting coaches. This week, we'll go with Joe DiMaggio and respecting fans.

There's a legendary quote from the legendary New York Yankee, given to the Sporting News in 1951.

"There is always some kid who may be seeing me for the first or last time," DiMaggio said. "I owe him my best."

Every time the Sabres take the ice, it's possible that it is someone's first game. That was definitely the case Wednesday with Bills receiver Zay Jones in the arena. The Sabres certainly didn't give their best. It was among their worst.

Ryan O'Reilly and Zengus Girgensons said they hope Jones comes back because they'll be better. How about being like DiMaggio and insisting on making a positive first impression the first time?

Story topics: Robin Lehner

Sabres' Josefson is Housley's shootout weapon

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

March 9, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Jacob Josefson is one of the best shootout players in the NHL, but it took 68 games for him to get just his second opportunity with the Sabres.

Josefson beat Craig Anderson on Thursday for his 5th career game deciding shootout goal. The Sabres first shootout came on opening night and Josefson missed which sent the twitter experts over the edge. Many who were clueless to his success wanted Phil Housley fired on the spot.

Josefson leads the Sabres with a .522 shootout percentage. Overall with Buffalo and New Jersey he is 12-of-23. Josefson said, "I'd rather win the games before the shootout, but it was a good feeling to be able to contribute.

"I've got some confidence in that area, so I guess that's the secret."

Against Anderson he went high, glove side. He said there are a few different things that he likes to do "I have a couple of different things, so there are a few options I can use."

Both Zach Bogosian and Rasmus Ristolainen are 1-for-1 in shootouts. Sam Reinhart also scored on Anderson and is 4-for-10. Jason Pominville is slightly better than Reinhart going 28-of-69 which is .402.

Ryan O'Reilly was great at shootouts in Colorado, but it hasn't transferred to Buffalo. Both he and Kyle Okposo are career .333 shooters.

Zemgus Girgensons is .286, Benoit Pouliot is .231 and Jack Eichel is .111 going 1-for-9.

Housley has only had to pick shootout players twice all season. He said there are a few things that go into his selections, "There's percentages, there's stats, there's players that have faced the goalies before, so we look at all of those things and their success, so Joey's percentages speak for themselves.

"I have an idea who we're going to go with before the game. I talk to Andrew Allen our goaltending coach and he is well aware of the goalie that we're facing and who has had success against that goalie."

Saturday is the end of four games in six days for the Sabres.

Housley said Jack Eichel is still doing well, but we don't know when he'll be back. The head coach said, "It's still in an indefinite mode. He's looked really good, he's felt really good, but we've got to be very careful with those types of injuries."

Seth Griffith didn't make the Ottawa trip with an upper-body injury. Housley said, "Yes, he's getting better, it's just going to be day-to-day with him."

Evan Rodrigues had missed four games. Housley said, "Evan's been skating, he looks really good, but he hasn't had any practices with the team, so the chances of him playing tomorrow are unlikely."

Vegas makes its first ever appearance in Buffalo on Saturday. Join Brian Koziol for the pregame at noon when he'll be joined by Phil Housley, Ryan O'Reilly and Jacob Josefson.

Okposo has suffered another concussion

WGR550

Brayton Wilson

March 9, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres' injury report continues to grow as the 2017-18 season heads into its final few weeks.

On Friday, the Sabres added Kyle Okposo to the list of injuries as he has been diagnosed with a concussion. Okposo will be out of the lineup indefinitely.

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Sabres/Amerks injury report for Friday, March 9.

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Okposo suffered the concussion on Thursday night in a collision with Ottawa Senators forward Bobby Ryan early in the second period. Neither players saw one another before the collision, which resulted in Okposo needing some help off the ice. Ryan was able to remain in the hockey game, but was slow to get up after the impact. Phil Housley was encouraged with what he saw from Okposo after the game, "They just ran into each other and I thought it was more of an upper-body, but he was diagnosed with a concussion.

"I thought he looked really good last night on the flight home, so we'll just have to go day-to-day with that and see where he is at."

The news of Okposo's concussion is concerning with the 29-year old suffering his second concussion in nearly a calendar year. Last year, Okposo ended up having to be admitted to Buffalo General Hospital's Intensive Care Unit as a result of a concussion. Okposo experienced mood changes and sleeping troubles, and eventually stopped eating and started to lose weight. The experience nearly ended Okposo's career in his first season with the Sabres.

With that incident in mind, our Paul Hamilton wondered if Housley is more concerned than he would normally be. Housley said, "I don't think so, from my personal knowledge of just seeing him last night, I thought he was in a good place. Obviously there are things that can happen down the road, but from my perspective, I thought he was in good spirits, so that was a good sign."

Ryan O'Reilly knows what his teammate went through last season. He of course is concerned, "It's awful, seeing him on the ice after I was just praying that he was OK.

"He's been through a lot, but hopefully it's a speedy recovery and he's back with us soon."

This season, Okposo has appeared in 65 games, scoring eleven goals and registering 38 points. The 10th year veteran of the NHL struggled to start the 2017-18 season, but eventually started to pick up his game around Christmas.

In 130 games with the Sabres, Okposo has 30 goals and 83 points, and has five years remaining in his seven-year deal that he signed on July 1, 2016.

Keep it locked to WGR and WGR550.com with the latest on this developing story.

Sabres recall Justin Bailey from Rochester

WGR550

March 9, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres have announced they've recalled forward Justin Bailey from Rochester. This comes after the team announced that Kyle Okposo has a concussion, and is out indefinitely.

Bailey has struggled at times this year in the AHL. He's dealt with injuries that have kept him out of all but 34 games between the NHL and AHL. In 27 games with the Amerks, Bailey has just 6 goals and 4 assists. He has played well as of late, scoring 4 goals in his last 5 games.

This is Bailey's 2nd recall of the season. Earlier in the year he played 7 games, and chipped in 2 goals with an assist.

The former 2nd round pick is still trying to find his way as an NHL regular. Last season he managed to play 32 games for the Sabres, but produced just 4 points. He'll have to show some production soon if he wants to stay up here.

Golden Knights face Sabres as one of NHL's powers

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

March 9, 2018

BUFFALO – Before the Vegas Golden Knights began their inaugural season six months ago, coach Gerard Gallant underestimated just how motivated and jilted his players felt.

Everyone on the Golden Knights, the greatest expansion team in NHL history, seems to have a chip on his shoulder.

“I didn’t think it was going to be a big deal at all, but the way the guys played against their old team, it definitely was a big deal early on,” Gallant said Friday after the Golden Knights prepared for this afternoon’s tilt against the Sabres. “We didn’t talk about that very much. Maybe the players do individually.”

A lot of things have buoyed the NHL’s 31st team to unprecedented success.

The NHL changed the expansion draft rules so the Golden Knights could pick assets from other teams, not journeymen. The newcomers quickly seized the bigger opportunities a club starting from scratch presented them.

But the players’ strong desire to stick it to their old teams should be at the top of the list.

“We all came from different places, we all want to do well,” said goalie Marc-Andre Fleury, perhaps the Golden Knights’ only true star. “Every night somebody plays against his old team and we all help him have a good game, help him have a win.”

The Florida Panthers exposed Jonathan Marchessault, the Golden Knights’ leading scorer with 65 points, to Vegas after the center’s breakout 30-goal season.

“They didn’t protect you and didn’t necessarily want you,” Marchessault said. “It’s definitely hard to take, but it’s a hard business also. You’re never safe. We came in and everybody wants to be a part of history, want to be part of something great.”

The Golden Knights, who rank first in the Pacific Division, have already made plenty of history. Thanks to a stunning 43-19-5 record, they have a whopping 91 points entering their first visit to KeyBank Center.

The Sabres, meanwhile, are 22-35-11 and rank 30th in the NHL.

The Golden Knights won eight of their first nine games, including a 5-4 overtime triumph against Buffalo on Oct. 17. They recently set expansion records when they earned their 34th win and 84th point. Thursday’s 4-0 win in Detroit, their 19th road victory, tied the all-time expansion record the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim set in 1993-94.

At this point, are the Golden Knights really still an expansion team?

“We don’t really talk about (being an) expansion team anymore,” Gallant said.

While Gallant never expected so much success so soon, he knew he had a strong team.

“After the expansion draft was over, I looked at the lineup, I said, ‘This is going to be a pretty good hockey team,’” Gallant said. “I didn’t know it was going to be a first-place hockey team, but I knew it was going to be a pretty good hockey team. We had a lot of top-six forwards, we had a lot of solid defensemen who never got a chance to play in top roles.”

He added: “Everybody took advantage of their opportunities. We knew we had some good hockey players, but we didn’t think the guys would take advantage like the Karlssons.”

Karlsson is center William Karlsson, who has scored 35 goals and 60 points through 67 games, gaudy numbers no one expected. In the previous two seasons with Columbus, the Swede compiled 15 goals and 45 points in 162 games.

The Golden Knights already have four 60-point players. The Sabres have had one 60-point player – center Ryan O’Reilly in 2015-16 – in the last five seasons.

None of the Golden Knights’ leading scorers – Marchessault, Karlsson, Reilly Smith and David Perron – are household names.

“A lot of teams got a lot of good hockey players, but there’s not many (Evgeni) Malkins and (Sidney) Crosbys in the NHL,” Gallant said of the Pittsburgh superstars.

Marchessault said “everybody’s humble, happy to get together.”

“We knew right off the bat that if we were going to win games, (it’s) not because we were talented, it’s because we worked harder than the opponent,” he said.

To Gallant, his team’s “work ethic is second to none.”

“We’ve been a team since Day One,” he said.

In the beginning, Marchessault said, the success surprised the Golden Knights.

“We were always wondering if we were going to keep the pace up,” he said. “After Christmas, when we kept winning and winning, we kind of knew we had a good team and teams were coming to Vegas or waiting for us away and they were ready for us. They were big challenges.”

Sabres' Kyle Okposo out indefinitely with concussion

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

March 9, 2018

BUFFALO – Concerns over Kyle Okposo's second concussion in less than a year are heightened since the Sabres winger was hospitalized in intensive care after suffering one last March.

The Sabres announced this morning a concussion Okposo suffered when he collided with Senators winger Bobby Ryan will sideline him indefinitely.

"From my personal knowledge, just seeing him last night, I thought he was in a good place," Sabres coach Phil Housley said inside KeyBank Center. "Obviously, there's things that can happen down the road. But from my perspective, I thought he was in good spirits, so that's a good sign."

The play early the second period of Thursday's 4-3 shootout win in Ottawa, Housley said, was "unfortunate."

"They just ran into each other," he said. "I thought it was more of an upper-body (injury). Definitely was diagnosed with a concussion."

Housley said the Sabres haven't thought about shutting Okposo down for the season.

With Okposo out, the Sabres might have to recall a player from the Rochester Americans. Housley said that will be discussed later today.

Update: The Sabres have recalled winger Justin Bailey.

The Sabres have five forwards on their injury list, including winger Seth Griffith and center Evan Rodrigues, who are both day-to-day with upper-body injuries.

Housley said Griffith and Rodrigues are improving. Rodrigues, who hasn't practiced with the team, is unlikely for Saturday afternoon's home tilt against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Okposo out indefinitely with concussion

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

March 9, 2018

Kyle Okposo will be out indefinitely after sustaining a concussion in the second period of the Buffalo Sabres' game in Ottawa on Thursday night. Okposo was skating through the neutral zone when he collided with Senators forward Bobby Ryan, with neither player seeing the other coming.

Okposo was tended to on the ice by the Sabres medical staff but skated to the dressing room on his own.

"It was an unfortunate play, they just ran into each other," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "... I thought he looked really good last night on the flight home, so we'll just have to go day-to-day with that, see where he's at."

The collision was particularly unsettling given Okposo's history with head injuries. He missed the final six games of last season with a concussion, when a negative reaction to sleep medication sent him to intensive care.

"It's awful," alternate captain Ryan O'Reilly said. "I didn't see the hit, but you see him on the ice after and just praying he's OK. It's a tough bounce. He's been through a lot, but hopefully it's a speedy recovery and he's back with us soon."

Housley said that the concussion Okposo dealt with last season hasn't given the team any extra cause for concern at this point.

"I don't think so," he said. "From my personal knowledge, just seeing him last night, I thought he was in a good place. Obviously, there's things that can happen down the road. But from my perspective, I thought he was in good spirits, so that's a good sign."

Okposo's injury is the latest in a long line of ailments that have struck the Sabres as of late, particularly at forward. Evan Rodrigues (upper body) is day-to-day and has been skating but is unlikely to play on Saturday. Kyle Criscuolo is out four to six weeks after sustaining an upper-body injury in his first game after being recalled from Rochester, while fellow recall Seth Griffith (upper body) is day-to-day.

Jack Eichel has been out since Feb. 11 with a high-ankle sprain and there is still no timetable for his return, although he has been skating. Defensemen Zach Bogosian (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) have both had season-ending surgery.

If there's a silver lining, Housley said, it's that other players are getting opportunities to contribute down the stretch. Nicholas Baptiste, Casey Nelson and Brendan Guhle were all in the lineup on Thursday and each player has surpassed their career-high for games played in a season.

"On the other side of it, guys are getting opportunities to play," Housley said. "I think we played some pretty good hockey lately, and that's good for them to experience the winning part. ... It's good to see our guys rally around this, all that's gone on recently, and coming out with some wins."

Josefson gets his shot

The Sabres went 2-6 in shootouts last season, and thus much was made of Jacob Josefson's high career marks in the skills competition when he signed with the team on July 1. He was 11-for-21 on shootout attempts entering this season but was unsuccessful on his attempt against Montreal on opening night.

It took a long time for him to get a second chance, but he made the most of it. The Sabres went to their second shootout of the season on Thursday, and it was Josefson who scored the winner.

"If you go way back in our first game against Montreal, our last shootout, we played the percentages," Housley said. "He's been terrific in shootouts, that's why we went back to him last night. You could see why he's had success. He had a great shot there."

Josefson said he has multiple moves to choose from, as opposed to one go-to shot. On Thursday, he beat Senators goalie Craig Anderson with a well-placed wrist shot to the top-right corner.

Josefson's shootout winner

00:31 • March 8th, 2018

"I'd rather win games before the shootout," Josefson said. "But it was a good feeling to be able to contribute a little bit yesterday."

Vegas up next

The Vegas Golden Knights will make their first-ever visit to Buffalo on Saturday afternoon, kicking off a six-game homestand for the Sabres at KeyBank Center. The two teams last met on Oct. 17, when the Sabres erased a three-goal deficit in the final 10 minutes only to lose 5-4 in overtime.

Back then, the expansion Golden Knights were a team that had started hot but still faced questions about their sustainability. Those questions have since been answered, as the Golden Knights sit atop the Pacific Division with 91 points and just 15 games to go.

While their success as come as a shock to some, O'Reilly said he hasn't been all that surprised.

"Not really," he said. "You look at the players they have, the depth they have. They're bringing on all these guys, a lot of them are coming from successful teams. They're all veteran players I think have been around. When you bring a group like that together, you kind of see ... how consistent they are and how they've found a way to work.

"I didn't maybe expect them to be at the top, but you expect them to at least be competing every night. What they've done is very impressive."

Puck drop on Saturday is scheduled for 1 p.m. Kids Days ticket packages are available and can be found [here](#).

Sharpen Up: March 9, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

March 9, 2018

If you like shootouts, you probably really liked last night's game. If you like wins, you liked it even more.

Buffalo battled back to tie their game against Ottawa early in the third period and then hung on to pick up the two points. Sam Reinhart and Jacob Josefson tallied in the shootout, with Josefson notching the walkoff shot, giving the Sabres a 4-3 victory in Canada's capital.

The Sabres will host the Vegas Golden Knight tomorrow afternoon in a special Kids Day Game. Tomorrow's broadcast on MSG will also feature the Academy of Hockey, with teaching and training tips from the Academy staff sprinkled in throughout the day.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Recap: BUF 4, OTT 3 - F/SO

04:50 • March 8th, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

Ryan O'Reilly smiled and pointed toward Robin Lehner as he and the rest of the Buffalo Sabres gathered to embrace their goaltender, the celebration of a shootout redemption that had been a long time coming.

Lehner struggled in shootouts last season, going 0-4 without a save. He lost a shootout on opening night of this season too, and the Sabres hadn't found themselves in the skills competition since until the final seconds of overtime dwindled off the clock in their game against the Ottawa Senators on Thursday.

Reinhart with Rayzor (3/8/18)

02:02 • March 8th, 2018

The first shot, a wrister from Matt Duchene, beat Lehner between the pads. He stopped the next shot though, a pad save on Bobby Ryan, and then poked the puck away from former teammate Mike Hoffman as he swept across the net.

Sam Reinhart and Jacob Josefson, the latter of whom came of Buffalo with a reputation for his shootout prowess (he was 11-for-22 in his career), both scored goals against Ottawa goalie Craig Anderson, earning a 4-3 win for the Sabres and giving Lehner the shootout victory he'd been waiting for.

Robin Lehner Postgame (3/8/18)

02:18 • March 9th, 2018

"That's sometimes how it is," Lehner said. "Just like a goal scorer who hasn't scored in a while. You get your first one, you get your confidence back. It's nice. Hopefully I can build off that one in the future."

The Sabres twice erased one-goal deficits in the game. Sam Reinhart buried a rebound to tie the game at two goals apiece after some sloppy second-period play turned into a pair of goals for Senators forward Ryan Dzingel. Thomas Chabot scored to regain the lead for Ottawa with 2:30 remaining in the period.

Phil Housley Postgame (3/8/18)

02:20 • March 9th, 2018

Scott Wilson scored the tying goal just 27 seconds into the third, the product of a strong forecheck from O'Reilly and Reinhart. O'Reilly won a battle for the puck in one corner, then ended up with it again in the other before making a tape-to-tape pass to an oncoming Wilson.

"I think going into the third we were one shot away," Wilson said. "We made that clear to everyone that we need one, and we put ourselves in a good situation."

Scott Wilson Postgame (3/8/18)
01:51 • March 9th, 2018

Lehner made 37 in his first start since allowing four saves in a loss to Florida last Friday. Both he and the rest of the Sabres will look for this response to carry over to KeyBank Center, where they'll begin a six-game homestand on Saturday.

"We needed this one today," Lehner said. "It was a pretty fun game."

Injury update

Kyle Okposo sustained an upper-body injury during an open-ice collision with Senators forward Bobby Ryan early in the second and did not return. Housley said the forward will be evaluated in Buffalo on Friday.

Seth Griffith did not make the trip after sustaining an upper-body injury in Wednesday's loss to Calgary. Buffalo is also currently without Evan Rodrigues, Kyle Criscuolo and Jack Eichel in their forward ranks.

Green Team Equipment Drive starts next week

The Buffalo Sabres Green Team today announced the team will hold a hockey equipment drive at KeyBank Center starting Monday, March 19 when the Sabres take on the Nashville Predators. The drive will run until Friday, March 23, and all equipment donated will benefit Hasek's Heroes.

The Sabres will collect used hockey equipment in conjunction with the NHL's Green Month, an initiative designed to help reduce the League's environmental impact. A Green Team collection net will be located outside the KeyBank Center Account Services Office throughout the duration of the drive.

Coming up today

We'll hear from Phil Housley later this morning and we'll see if there's an update on Okposo's status.

The Sabres will turn their attention to the Golden Knights, who sit atop the Pacific Division, for a game tomorrow afternoon.