



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 17, 2018*

## **Sabres Notebook: Housley picks up the pace, McCabe back from surgery**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

September 14, 2018

Coach Phil Housley promised a much tougher training camp and he delivered Friday as two groups of Buffalo Sabres combined to spend more than three grueling hours on the ice at HarborCenter.

The drills came rapid-fire and the pace was fast, with Housley's voice barking orders that echoed throughout both rinks. Afterward, the second-year coach said he was thrilled to see how his players endured the workouts.

"It was a tough go today, but I'm really pleased the way the guys responded," Housley said. "These guys are ready to go. They've trained hard throughout the whole summer. They know what's at stake, there's competition for places. Everybody's trying to make a good first impression. ... They were very focused today. I was really pleased the way both groups went out and executed."

Housley said his team's preparation was helped by the amount of work players did over the summer and in their informal skates the last three weeks leading to camp. It was necessary, the coach said, because the real thing is a much more structured setup at a much higher tempo.

"As much as you can do in the offseason, how you try to prepare, there's nothing like stepping on the ice Day One of training camp," he said. "Because that tempo and the pace just go up another level."

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Defensemen Jake McCabe (shoulder) and Zach Bogosian (hip) both returned to the team at 100 percent after their seasons ended prematurely due to surgeries. They each set career lows for a full year last season by playing 53 and 18 games, respectively.

McCabe admitted Friday the shoulder had been limiting him for a couple of years and took advantage of the time he was going to miss anyway with another injury to get it repaired.

Said McCabe: "It was kind of a decision at the point where I broke my thumb so it's kind of like, do I rehab my thumb and come back for 10 games but then maybe not be ready for training camp? I was kind of weighing the pros and cons and ultimately we all felt like it was the right decision for me to be 100 percent for training camp."

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Housley said the team is formulating a roster plan for the first four games of the seven-game preseason schedule. It opens Monday in Columbus and the home opener is Tuesday against Pittsburgh in KeyBank Center.

The only player injured and unavailable in the wake of the team's physicals on Thursday is newly-acquired defenseman Matt Hunwick, who is out with an upper-body injury. Housley did not specify the severity other than to say Hunwick would miss the first part of camp.

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The Sabres have announced the entire preseason schedule will be on WGR Radio 550 and four of the games will be televised.

The home opener will be on MSG, with Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray on the call. Dan Dunleavy will join Ray for the other six games on the radio.

The home-and-home series Friday and Saturday with Toronto will be shown on MSG using Sportsnet announcers. The Sept. 25 game against Columbus in Clinton will be shown on NBCSN.

There is no television for Monday's preseason opener at Columbus as well as the Sept. 26 game in Pittsburgh and the Sept. 28 finale against the New York Islanders in Oshawa, Ont.

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The Sabres return to the ice Saturday with practices stretching over both HarborCenter rinks from 9:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. On Sunday, practice opens at 9:45 and a scrimmage will be held from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. All sessions are free and open to the public.

## **New Sabre Conor Sheary's experience winning Stanley Cup: 'Invaluable'**

By Jason Wolf

The Buffalo News

September 14, 2018

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill had a vision as he reshaped the roster this offseason, turning to his former employer for inspiration and a player who has raised the Stanley Cup twice.

Botterill laid out his expectations in a conversation with Conor Sheary, shortly after trading for the former Penguins forward this summer.

"He just kind of informed me that I was going to be a big part of the change around here," Sheary said after reporting for the start of training camp at KeyBank Center. "I think we've got to just focus on moving up. He wants me to be a part of that and me to bring my experience from Pittsburgh over here and try to use that throughout the room and see what we can do.

"He obviously told me a lot of things that I won't mention to you guys, but I'm really excited to be here and he told me that, as well."

Botterill was in the Penguins' front office when Pittsburgh signed Sheary as an undrafted free agent out of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2014. The forward was promoted from the AHL in 2015 and played alongside Sidney Crosby, helping to win back-to-back championships.

Sheary, 26, recorded 18 goals and 30 points in 79 games last season. It represented a significant drop in production from 2016-17, when he had 23 goals and 53 points in 61 games.

Botterill brought Sheary to Buffalo in June, trading a conditional fourth-round pick for him and defenseman Matt Hunwick in what was a cap-clearing move for Pittsburgh. Sheary has one year and \$3 million remaining on his contract.

"I think it's invaluable," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "Any time we can acquire anybody that's won a Cup and share those experiences with our players is only going to be beneficial to our team."

The Sabres will count on Sheary to play on one of the top lines, centered by Jack Eichel or Casey Mittelstadt.

Off the ice, Sheary said it's important to lead by example.

"I had the opportunity to come into the league right away and play on obviously a really good team, and (with) a lot of really good players," Sheary said, "and you don't really have to listen to them, you just have to watch their work ethic and how they take care of themselves. I think if I can take that kind of advice that I got and bring it into this room and just prove my worth and prove my work ethic every day, I think that can be a big part of this team."

As for being reunited with Botterill, Sheary said it's nice to see a familiar face.

"I think he knows the kind of player I am and he believes in what I do, so I think that's important," Sheary said. "I'm excited to be in this spot."

## **With big expectations swirling, Dahlin starts small at opening of Sabres camp**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

September 15, 2018

Rasmus Dahlin said it with a straight face Friday at HarborCenter after skating on his first day of training camp with the Buffalo Sabres: His goal is to make the team.

Humble, noble thought by the 18-year-old. The rest of the world, of course, is far more presumptuous and has Dahlin mapped out to be the savior of the franchise.

Reminded that all those draft magazines and internet sites that trumpeted his arrival in North America should go out of business if he doesn't make what was the NHL's worst outfit last year, Dahlin laughed and said sheepishly, "I'm not reading those kind of things."

When the story was relayed to him, coach Phil Housley had a good chuckle as well.

"I can only reflect on my career," said Housley, a Hockey Hall of Famer who played in the NHL for 20 years. "Every year I was prepared to make the team. It's a great attitude because you have to strive for excellence. You're striving for perfection and you're not letting yourself off the hook. You're holding yourself accountable. That's a great attitude to have."

Dahlin's first day of camp was pretty routine. He was positioned at left defense, with Jake McCabe his first partner on the No. 2 pair behind Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen. His fluid skating and incredible edges were on full display for the couple hundred weekday fans who came for a glimpse.

He burned Alex Nylander to score in one defense-on-forward rush drill and certainly held his own in other head-to-head matchups featuring normal forward-on-defense matchups.

McCabe, back on the ice in an official capacity for the first time since January shoulder surgery, said he was excited to learn he was getting the first call as Dahlin's partner.

"The guy is an incredible talent as we all know," McCabe said. "He's one of those guys that's going to push me and make me a lot better player. I'm going to try to help him along with the North American game, talk to him as much as I can to help develop his game on both ends of the rink."

McCabe, starting his fourth full season in the NHL, said he feels he can complement Dahlin's style.

"I think we're both very good skaters who can get up and down the ice," McCabe said. "He's very good on both ends. Obviously his talent with the puck on his stick is something that's been highly touted but I think his defensive play is very underrated. He's got a great stick, he plays the body and with his skating ability he can defend really well, too."

Rasmus Dahlin, left, and Jake McCabe watch a drill. (Mark Mulville/Buffalo News)

McCabe has predominantly played the left side in his career while paired with Zach Bogosian, but does have some experience on the right side. He said he's not overly concerned about the switch.

"I think over the summer you work on your skills, not only left side but right side," McCabe said. "Puck retrievals, whether it be our neutral-zone regroupings, offensive blue line work. But I have played it in the past, so it's not unfamiliar territory with me. It's just getting reps at this point and getting comfortable with it."

Dahlin said he quickly felt he built some chemistry with McCabe.

"He was great to play with. He talked a lot out there and he's going to teach me a lot," Dahlin said. "I'm enjoying playing with him. ... I'm super excited to hear what he has to say. He's a really good 'D.' He knows how to play and he's been in the NHL."

In his second season, Housley is intent on pushing speed and tempo with his team. Dahlin obviously is one key addition on that front.

"It's for real now, it's serious," Dahlin said. "The pace is higher. It feels good. I expected that kind of pace. It was fun. It was high tempo. It's hard but that's the fun thing about it."

"It was high tempo, high-paced," McCabe said. "Guys were going up the ice competing and that's all you can ask for, especially on Day One when you're knocking off the rust a little bit. Guys showed a great effort today. That's a good start."

Dahlin probably thought he got his first leg up on making the team. We all know better.

## **Sabres Notebook: Sunday scrimmage will change pace of camp**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
September 15, 2018

Two groups of Buffalo Sabres have combined to endure seven hours of often-grueling practices the last two days, so the team will be getting a change of pace on Day Three.

The team will be holding its lone scrimmage of training camp at 10:30 a.m. Sunday. The activity on KeyBank Rink is free and open to the public.

"I just want to see some competitive fire. I want to see some speed," coach Phil Housley said Saturday. "I want to see our checking come into play. We've been working on that the last couple days, just trying to squeeze off people in the neutral zone. They've done a good job of adjusting to that. It will be interesting."

The coaching staff spent considerable time drawing up teams in advance of camp, and those teams have been split into the practice groups that have been utilized the first two days.

Group A seems to have a bit of an edge, roster-wise. Its top forward line features Jack Eichel between Jeff Skinner and Kyle Okposo, and it has what figures to be the team's top two defense pairs heading into the regular season of Marco Scandella-Rasmus Ristolainen and No. 1 overall pick Rasmus Dahlin with Jake McCabe.

Group B features Casey Mittelstadt between Conor Sheary and Jason Pominville, as well as presumptive starting goaltender Carter Hutton.

Housley revealed at the end of the day he's been trying to stoke the emotion and get Group B fired up.

"When I was talking to the second group I said to them, 'They're talking trash about you guys,'" Housley joked. "I was just trying to set the tone."

Sunday's activities will start with both teams having a practice/warmup from 9:45-10:15 a.m., one team on each rink. The scrimmage is slated to run until approximately 11:15 a.m.

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The full roster for Group A looks like this:

Forwards: Skinner-Eichel-Okposo, Alexander Nylander-Patrik Berglund-Justin Bailey, Victor Olofsson-Johan Larsson-Andrew Oglevie, Scott Wilson-Kyle Crisculo-Eric Cornel, with Matej Pekar-Vasily Glotov as extras.

Defense: Scandella-Ristolainen, Dahlin-McCabe, Lawrence Pilut-Taylor Fedun-Zach Redmond.

Goalies: Linus Ullmark, Scott Wedgewood, Jonas Johansson.

The Group B roster:

Forwards: Sheary-Mittelstadt-Pominville, C.J. Smith-Vladimir Sobotka-Tage Thompson, Evan Rodrigues-Rasmus Asplund-Nick Baptiste, Zemgus Girgensons-Kevin Porter-Dan O'Regan, with Sean Malone-Tyler Randell as extras.

Defense: Nathan Beaulieu-Zach Bogosian, Brendan Guhle-Casey Nelson, Brandon Hickey-Matt Tennyson, Devante Stephens-Will Borgen.

Goalies: Carter Hutton, Adam Wilcox, Ukko-Pekka Lukkonen.

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The Sabres worked on speed during Friday's opening day of camp and ratcheted things up Saturday with some heavy battle drills in the offensive zone in the second half of each session, once the groups moved from KeyBank Rink to New Wave Energy Rink.

"I like the physicality that we've brought," Housley said. "The guys are really competing. Each and every rep they're doing is really meaningful. ... Everybody pushing each other to get better. It got physical. It's great to see some emotion out there but it's all pointed in the right direction."

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Housley said he will watch Sunday's scrimmage from the team's HarborCenter suite along with assistant coaches Davis Payne and Steve Smith.

Smith, the three-time Stanley Cup champion from Edmonton, played with Housley in Calgary and was hired away from Carolina over the summer. Housley said Smith will be on the bench this season running the defense and penalty-killing units. Chris Hajt, who was in charge of them last year, will continue to work with them but will be in the press box during games.

## **Mike Harrington: If it's the last ride, Pominville is determined to enjoy it**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
September 15, 2018

At 35, Jason Pominville is the graybeard of the Buffalo Sabres. Imagine that.

Presented with the notion Saturday in HarborCenter – even though he still looks just about as boyish as he did when he burst on the scene here more than a decade ago – Pominville had a good laugh at the thought.

"I feel like it's almost been that way for a few years now," Pominville said after his workouts on the second day of training camp. "It hasn't changed for me. I still prepare myself the same way I always have."

Study the birthday lists and you're floored.

Of the 51 players the Sabres have in camp, 23 of them are age 23 or younger. Only nine are over 30. Pominville outpaces the next-oldest, defenseman Matt Hunwick, by nearly 2 1/2 years.

No. 1 overall pick Rasmus Dahlin and fellow 2018 draftee Matej Pekar are here as 18-year-olds, the first Sabres to attend training camp born in the 2000s. Casey Mittelstadt, the center on Pominville's line, is more than two months away from turning 20.

Pominville will turn 36 – and thus double Dahlin – when the Sabres are in Florida on Nov. 30.

"I'm sure these guys will look up and have questions as we go along," Pominville said. "I'm with two good young talents in Mittelstadt and [Conor] Sheary and I can help them. I played with Casey a little last year, and hopefully I can teach him along the way."

"It is difficult. Let's face it, there's a lot of young legs," said coach Phil Housley. "But Pommer has done a great job of bringing his speed and experience. He's a really good leader out there pushing the young guys."

Pominville's totals with the Sabres entering the season are 660 games, 201 goals, 289 assists and 490 points. When he plays 22 more games, he will move past Ric Seiling and Rick Martin for eighth overall in franchise annals. He's one of just nine Sabres with 200-plus goals, and almost certainly will become just the eighth member of the team to hit 500 points while wearing the crossed swords.

Quite a tale. From being on waivers as a 22-year-old in 2005 to two stints as one of the more popular players in franchise history.

Strangely enough, assuming Pominville is in the lineup for the first 12 games of this season, No. 1,000 would come Nov. 1 at the site of his greatest moment – Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa.

It was Pominville, of course, who scored the "scary good" goal against late Ottawa goalie Ray Emery that eliminated the Senators and sent the Sabres to the 2006 Eastern Conference final. It remains the only short-handed overtime goal to clinch a series in NHL history.

Those were heady days. Thirsting for hockey after the cancellation of the previous season, Buffalo fans were gifted a team that feasted on new NHL rules and became the talk of the town before that fateful Game 7 in Carolina ended their Stanley Cup hopes.

The next season led to a Presidents' Trophy and another run to the conference final, albeit another disappointment as Ottawa got its revenge. But remember what the edited sign on the Kensington Expressway said during the '07 playoffs? Yep. "Welcome to Pominville."

The Sabres don't figure to get near those kind of heights this year, but Pominville is heartened by the way General Manager and former teammate Jason Botterill has reshaped the roster.

"We knew there were going to be changes but it's one thing to say it and another to go out and do it," Pominville said. "It's left us pretty excited. Everyone was pretty impressed with the haul we got back with the guys from St. Louis (in the Ryan O'Reilly trade), and then you go get Sheary and [Jeff] Skinner too."

Pominville's career ledger shows 987 games, 277 goals and 696 points between the Sabres and Minnesota. He said he's particularly proud at the chance to play 1,000 games, a mark fewer than 5 percent of players in NHL history have reached.

"It goes by fast. It's crazy," he said. "I still remember my first year and the runs here. I remember seeing guys early in my career who were hitting 1,000 and I'm thinking, 'Man, that's a lot of games. That guy has been around a while.' And now here I am. It's overwhelming and exciting."

Pominville is on the second line in camp, although he probably fits into more of a third-line role at this stage of his career. That's his likely slot when Sam Reinhart returns.

A three-time 30-goal scorer, Pominville hasn't cracked 20 in the last four seasons. He had 16 goals and 18 assists for the Sabres last season, but the losing certainly wore him down, as he had six goals in October – but then endured goal-less stretches of 14, 13 and 20 games.

One thing that's remarkable about Pominville's career is his durability. Last year was the eighth time he has played the full 82 games in a season, and he has missed just a combined 12 games over the last seven seasons.

This year promises more distractions and perhaps more reflection. Pominville is on the last year of his deal with a \$5.6 million cap hit. It's a young man's game now and this might be it, either by his own choice or by that of teams who may not feel he can fill the net anymore.

"I'm here to help. I want to be part of the solution," he said. "I'm not worried about the other stuff. Those things will take care of themselves. I just want to be here to help and bring the team in the direction we've worked hard to get it back into. We've made strides even the first couple of days here and I want to keep focused on that."

Pominville's children are 8 and 7 now, so he's happy they'll get to enjoy one last year with the Sabres.

"What I'm excited about is that my kids now realize what it is and will see me play," he said. "If they were too young they might say, 'What did you do, Dad? You played hockey?' Now they'll know a little bit so that's a cool thing."

"I've always loved it here, been a fan of living here, the city, the team, everything. I always followed the team even when I was away for four years in Minnesota. It makes it even more special here to be here again."

## **Sabres notebook: Phil Housley stays mum on when Dahlin will debut**

By Rachel Lenzi  
The Buffalo News  
September 16, 2018

Phil Housley won't say when Rasmus Dahlin will make his debut for the Buffalo Sabres.

It could be Monday night when the Sabres open the preseason at Columbus. Housley and his staff could also wait until Tuesday to unveil the Swedish defenseman to the home crowd, when the Sabres host Pittsburgh at KeyBank Center.

As of Sunday morning, Housley remained cagey as to whether Dahlin will immediately be in the lineup.

"We're going to evaluate that shortly," Housley, the second-year Sabres coach said after Sunday's practice and scrimmage at HarborCenter. "We'll have a roster coming out, but as you know (Zach Bogosian) and (Conor) Sheary were out for maintenance days so we've got to see where they're at.

"But we'll make a decision this afternoon."

The Sabres face the Blue Jackets in the first of seven preseason exhibition games at 7 p.m. Monday at Nationwide Arena.

While Housley wouldn't give a definite on whether Dahlin will play Monday at Columbus or Tuesday against Pittsburgh, the rookie certainly helped his cause by scoring two goals and an assist in the Sabres' first intrasquad scrimmage.

Dahlin gave the Blue team a 2-0 lead about seven minutes into the Sabres' 45-minute scrimmage, as he took a pass from Scott Wilson and beat Yellow goalie Carter Hutton on a shot from the left circle.

"His timing is really impeccable," Housley said. "He jumps into the play at the right time and when he beats a guy, he moves the puck, right away and gets it up ice. Overall, I just liked the way he's developed so far in this camp."

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The Blue team dominated the Gold team in a 7-1 win, in the Sabres' first intrasquad scrimmage.

The Blue team featured the top forward line of Jeff Skinner, Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo, and the top two defensive pairings of Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen and Dahlin and Jake McCabe.

Skinner and Eric Cornel, a forward who played last season with Rochester of the AHL, scored goals to help the Blue team to a 4-0 lead. The Gold team put only two shots on Blue goalie Linus Ullmark in the first 25 minutes.

Kyle Crisculo, Ristolainen and Scott Wilson also scored for the Blue team, while Brandon Hickey scored for the Gold team.

"I just liked the competition," Housley said. "Obviously, it's the third day of camp, so it's kind of like that hump day. They've got two really tough practices, and I think you can see they're a little tired at time, but, mainly, getting them to get to game condition. You can prepare yourself, but once you get into the bump-and-grind, it's just a different situation."

One of Housley's conditioning tactics: playing a 45-minute scrimmage with a running clock, as there had been concerns about the Sabres' stamina coming into camp.

"You think of a period in a game, it's 35-45 minutes, depending on stoppages," Housley said. "We wanted to give them a game-like condition, and to evaluate them in their changes, and all the little details that go into playing a game."

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The Sabres announced Sunday that goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen has been assigned to Sudbury of the Ontario Hockey League and that goalie Michael Houser has been added to the training camp roster. Houser played in 45 games with Fort Wayne of the ECHL in 2017-18, where he was 28-11-0 with a .909 saves percentage and a goals-against average of 2.73. Houser made one save in one game with the Tucson Roadrunners of the American Hockey League.

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The Sabres will hold their morning skate at 10:30 a.m. Monday at KeyBank Center, then fly to Columbus for a 7 p.m. preseason game against the Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena.

Players who won't play in the preseason game Monday at Columbus will practice at 9:15 a.m. Monday at HarborCenter and will scrimmage at 9:50 a.m.

The Sabres will skate at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday at KeyBank Center, prior to a preseason home opener at 7 p.m. against Pittsburgh. Players who won't be in the lineup Tuesday night will practice at 11:15 a.m. Tuesday at HarborCenter, then scrimmage at 11:50 a.m.

## **Confidence key for Tage Thompson to stay in Sabres lineup**

By Rachel Lenzi  
The Buffalo News  
September 16, 2018

Tage Thompson is used to being on the move.

Thompson's father, Brent, played in the NHL, American Hockey League and International Hockey League from 1991 to 2005, and has coached professional hockey since 2003, when he was a player/assistant with the Canadian Hockey League's Colorado Eagles.

The younger Thompson grew acclimated to frequently packing his belongings, going to new schools and meeting new teammates as his father pursued a coaching career. He learned how to adjust on the fly, not just in hockey, but in everyday situations.

"Being able to adapt to new environments and new situations, it helps, especially with being traded," said Thompson, a wing in the Buffalo Sabres' training camp. "Being able to pick up and move, whenever you're called to do that."

Thompson enters his second full season of pro hockey and he wants to stay in one place this season: the Sabres lineup.

Thompson split the 2017-2018 season between the Blues and San Antonio, its AHL affiliate. Thompson scored nine points (three goals, six assists) in 41 games with the Blues, and scored 18 points (eight goals, 10 assists) in 30 games with the Rampage.

The 20-year-old joined Buffalo as part of a trade in July that sent Ryan O'Reilly to St. Louis for a first-round draft pick in 2019, a second-round pick in 2021 and forwards Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka.

Thompson has a precise shot and deceptive speed. When it looks like he's gliding across the ice, he's actually covering plenty of ground; he's the Sabres' tallest skater at 6-foot-5. Goalies Jonas Johansson and Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (who was reassigned Sunday to Sudbury of the Ontario Hockey League) also are listed at 6-foot-5.

He can also create plays with a burst of speed from the neutral zone, and has a physical presence on the ice.

"I can help contribute a lot of offense, and I think I've got a pretty good shot and a knack for making plays," Thompson said. "I like to score goals. We've got a lot of players, especially up the middle, that can make really good plays and really solid puck-movers, so I think that'd be a great pairing."

Having a few familiar faces has helped Thompson in his second professional camp. He participated in training camp with Sobotka, Berglund and goalie Carter Hutton last September with the Blues, and skated on a line with Sobotka in the Sabres' intrasquad scrimmage Sunday at HarborCenter.

"He's got speed and he's a good shooter, so I'm just trying to make a play to him and let him do his thing," Sobotka said.

Sobotka immediately noticed Thompson's confidence on the ice as a rookie with the Blues in 2017. Some rookies are hesitant to stand out in a crowded training camp.

Not Thompson.

"I recognized him on the ice because he wasn't scared to make a play as a young guy who just got in the league," said Sobotka, a center from the Czech Republic and a 12-year NHL and KHL veteran.

"You can't be scared to do something on the ice. It doesn't have to be too much, but it has to be as much that's going to make you good, or make a good play, or even chip the puck in. You need to know which time is good to make a play or a good time to put the puck deep and make a change."

Confidence is vital for Thompson as a younger player looking to make an impression on the coaching staff and on his potential teammates.

"I know that if you go in a little timid, that's when you make mistakes," Thompson said. "It's better to make mistakes out of confidence, because then you learn what works for you and what doesn't. When you're too scared to make plays, you'll never know what works for you."

That mentality should help Thompson stick with the Sabres, who have stockpiled their lineup with young talent, and aim to turn the organization into a playoff contender.

Sobotka believes Thompson has a shot to make the Sabres lineup.

"I think he is (more comfortable) here," Sobotka said. "He's playing with confidence, and he's not scared to make a play or beat somebody one-on-one."

## **Buffalo's new goaltending tandem ready to get to work**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

September 14, 2018

As part of the overhaul of the roster following the disastrous 2017-18 season, the Buffalo Sabres decided to part ways with both goaltenders Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson. In their place comes 32-year-old veteran goalie Carter Hutton, and 25-year-old Linus Ullmark up from the Rochester Americans.

Hutton comes to Buffalo via free agency, where the Sabres signed the six-year veteran to a three-year contract worth \$8.25 million. He spent the past two seasons with the St. Louis Blues, serving mainly as a backup to Jake Allen. In 62 games played in St. Louis, Hutton was 30-15-5 with a 2.23 goals-against average and a .923 save percentage. Last season, Hutton had a career-year with the Blues, starting in 26 games with an impressive 2.09 goals-against average and a .931 save percentage.

Coming to Buffalo for his first season with the Sabres, Hutton realizes the expectations are much different here than when he was in St. Louis.

"We had a team that was expected to win all the time," Hutton said with his meeting with the media on Thursday at KeyBank Center. "I think here we've established that we're growing and we're trying to get better all the time. But at the same time, I don't want to sit and and say - we're not setting the bar low by any means. We want to be in the playoffs or be a contender. We also understand that having younger guys in the lineup, you're going to take your bumps and bruises. I think from Day 1 here, we're going build to win games and be a better team. As a veteran guy, my job is to come in here and create that culture and help us win hockey games."

Hutton will likely have his first chance at earning a starting job in the National Hockey League with the Sabres this season as Buffalo will take their time developing Ullmark at the NHL level. The native of Thunder Bay, Ontario has been a part of some playoff teams in the past, and knows how important it is to have depth goaltending in order to have a chance at team success.

"The goalies back in the day when you were playing 70 games, you look at Martin Brodier, those days have come and gone," Hutton said. "You mostly have a 50-30 split for a majority of successful teams, and I think you look at the two Cup teams last year, Vegas and Washington, at times their depth goaltending carried a lot of weight. For me, I want to take on a lot of pressure, but at the same time I understand that we need two good goalies to be successful. Coming in here with Linus, Scott [Wedgewood] and the depth goalies we have, we're all going to push each other, but at the same time I want to use my experience and skill set to play more minutes and help this team win."

As for Ullmark, he is getting set for his first full-time season in the NHL after spending a majority of the last three years with the Amerks.

In his three years in Rochester, Ullmark was able to grow his game and get used to life playing the North American game. Each season, Ullmark's numbers have progressively increased as he became more of a pivotal piece to the organization's future. Last year, he started 44 games in Rochester, registering a 2.44 goals-against average and a .922 save percentage. Ullmark was named to his second All-Star Game in consecutive years, and helped the Amerks return to the Calder Cup playoffs after missing out on the playoffs for three seasons.

However, the end of the season could not have been more rough for Ullmark, who posted a 5.50 goals-against and an .800 save percentage in the three-game series loss at the hands of the Syracuse Crunch.

While Ullmark took the series loss pretty tough at the end of the season, he has not let it affect him at all heading into the 2018-19 campaign in Buffalo.

"You can't look in the past. You have to look forward all the time, and I think people are just enjoying the moment here," Ullmark said after practice on Friday. "We've got a great group of guys. Got some younger, really talented players. Also, the veterans are very inspired by what's to come, and that's it."

It may have only been the first day of practice on Friday at HarborCenter, but Ullmark has already embraced that day-to-day mindset.

"[I'm working on] different things every now and then that you have to think about, but you have to get it all into one place and to sort all the pieces out," Ullmark said. "For me, it's a little hard to say right now. I'm just going to go out there and try my very best and hope that works."

This offseason was an eventful one for him, mainly filled with dirty diapers and spending it as a first-time father to a baby boy.

However, it's back to work for the young netminder, but he's not trying to set his goals too high for this upcoming season.

"I always want to go out there and win every game. That's always been my goal," Ullmark said. "I know it's not going to be possible, it's very different from playing in juniors compared to [the NHL]. I'm just going to go out there and enjoy."

Both Hutton and Ullmark have been in town for some time now, and have been able to skate and work with one another before the opening of training camp on Thursday. The two have been able to get to know one another, but not too many experiences have been exchanged between one another at the time being. However, once the season gets going, Hutton is hoping to be a good companion for the Swedish netminder and help him learn the ropes of becoming a full-time goalie in the NHL.

"He has a good attitude. He's fun to be around, which is good" Hutton said. "It's a long season, and he's got a tremendous skill set. I've skated with him a few times now. He's a really big goalie, which is something you can't teach, but he moves well and he handles the puck pretty well. It's something going into camp - I think as we get to play more in game situations, I hope that we can use each other to pick each other brains. He can lean on me, and I can use my experience of playing in different arenas and in different situations to help him get through the lump of playing a full season. It's a lot different than [the American Hockey League]. He's been called up, he's spent time [here], but the wear and tear with the travel, the stuff we deal with and just the mental grind. Hopefully I can help him in that sense."

The Sabres will return to the ice on Saturday for practice at 9:45 a.m. at HarborCenter. All practice sessions are free and open to the public.

## **Beaulieu determined to bounce back from 2017-18 season**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

September 15, 2018

Nathan Beaulieu's first season in a Buffalo Sabres uniform could not have gone any worse.

The 25-year-old defenseman, who was acquired in a trade from the Montreal Canadiens last year, ended up tying his career-worst numbers statistically with one goal and nine points in 59 games played. However, it was more than just the stats that made him feel that he had the worst season of his NHL career.

"A season like that when you finish 31st in the league and, from a personal standpoint, not playing as many games as I want to being injured and not being healthy, the whole year was kind of a disaster for me. It was unfortunate," Beaulieu said following practice on Saturday at HarborCenter.

"I let it eat me up for a little bit. This is kind of new grounds for me, I've never really been in this situation. It's kind of my first year in the NHL that didn't go my way at all personally and from a team standpoint. It was a career-low for me. It's not something I want to define me or I want to see the fans of Buffalo to know me that way."

The Sabres acquired Beaulieu in June of 2017, and shortly after signed him to a two-year deal with an average annual value of \$2.4 million.

Beaulieu was able to make the Sabres' roster from the start of the season, but was hampered during the season by injuries and inconsistent play. The Strathroy, Ontario native is more of the offensive-type of defenseman, but the production on the ice was nothing of which he put up in his time with the Canadiens. Often times, Beaulieu became more of a liability on the ice with his play in all three zones than of him being a contributor to success.

While Beaulieu may have taken last season to heart, it has been made clear that the Sabres organization has all the faith in the world that he can turn things around for the 2018-19 season.

"I've been accepted with open arms here from the top to bottom with [general manager Jason Botterill] and [head coach Phil Housley]," Beaulieu said. "They've been communicating with me, we talked four or five times over the summer. It seems like they believe in me more than I believe in myself. That's awesome. They know what I'm capable of doing. They brought me in here for a reason, and they kept their word in giving me every opportunity. It's my turn to keep my word, play my game and give this team and this city what they deserve out of me."

In the time that he took off to re-evaluate himself, Beaulieu was able to come to a realization that he was going to have to put in some extra work to get back to his game and earn a spot on the roster once again.

"There were some highs, there were some lows, but the biggest thing was to figure out what I was doing wrong and really let it soak in so it doesn't happen again," Beaulieu said. "We had a long offseason, I took a couple of weeks to let it go through my mind and see where everything went wrong. You don't really know how big of a funk you were really in until you get out of it. It was a good stepping stone for me, and I believe as a person and as my career goes on, I feel that was going to be good for me. You know, seeing that low and you don't wanna be back there. I know what I am capable of doing. They believe in me here, and it's my turn to go out there and show everyone what I can do."

Another task that Beaulieu was hoping to get accomplished before coming back to Buffalo this season was getting fully healthy.

"Obviously with my concussions, I worked a lot with my eyes and trying just to get my body back to 100-percent," Beaulieu said. "Working on cardio, getting my legs going. The way we want to play is we're going to be up and down the ice, so you have to be able to skate. Before coming here, I was playing 22, 23 minutes a night, so you have to be able to move. The biggest thing was coming into shape, so I'm in great shape and ready to go."

Heading into training camp this season, head coach Phil Housley made it clear that the players were going to work harder than ever and compete in order to be ready for this season. That came as no surprise to Beaulieu, with the team finishing last season as the worst team in the NHL.

"I had a good talk with Phil, and he talked to all of the [defensemen] the same way - you have to come back and everyone has to earn a spot, you're not going to be given it," Beaulieu said. "With how much depth we have right now, there's a lot of guys that are good NHLers and can play here. It's just a matter of who's going to fill what spot. Competition isn't always necessarily a bad thing. It will bring the best out of all of us."

Another thing that Beaulieu feels will give him an advantage this training camp and preseason is the fact that he has had a full season with the Sabres to finally feel in the loop.

"Obviously a lot more comfortable coming in this year, knowing a lot of the guys throughout the organization," Beaulieu stated. "You want competition coming into camp. It usually brings out the best in everyone. I accept it willingly, and I'm very confident right now. I feel good about myself, I feel good about my game. It's going to be exciting. There's going to be a lot of changes, a lot of moving around, seeing who's going to play with you. Competition is going to be there and I accept it with open arms."

Last year, Beaulieu had gotten some work in with defenseman Zach Bogosian, and both had seemed to play well with one another before an injury to Bogosian set him out of the lineup for an extended period of time. This year, it is Bogosian who is paired with Beaulieu once again as Housley tries to re-ignite the chemistry that was created last preseason.

"Obviously you're a little anxious to see who you be starting out with, but there will be a lot of moving around. Me and [Bogosian] started off the preseason last season, and then he had the unfortunate injury that ended his season, and I was kind of all over the place last season with my injuries and not being healthy. It's good because we started off really well together, we gelled real well on and off the ice. It was nice to see that they gave us that vote of confidence off the top."

At camp on Saturday, things looked relatively the same with line rushes for each session as Group B was first to take the ice at HarborCenter. Defenseman Devante Stephens was on the ice with Group B after spending time with Group A on Friday. He skated on a pairing with Will Borgen. Kevin Porter went from skating with Borgen on Friday to switching in and out of the fourth line center role with Sean Malone.

With Group A, Vasily Glotov was given the job of skating on the blue line alongside defenseman Zach Redmond.

The Sabres return to practice on Sunday at 9:45 a.m. before taking part in a scrimmage at 10:30 a.m. at KeyBank Rink in HarborCenter. The scrimmage is free and open to the public.

## **Sabres end first weekend of training camp with a strong outing in the scrimmage**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

September 16, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres wrapped up the first weekend of training camp on Sunday with an intrasquad scrimmage at HarborCenter.

The group of 48 players were split into two teams with Team Blue, consisting of players like Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner, Rasmus Ristolainen, and Rasmus Dahlin, taking on Team Gold, with players like Casey Mittelstadt, Tage Thompson, Rasmus Asplund, and Brendan Guhle.

In the end, it was Team Blue coming away with a 7-1 win over Team Gold as the Sabres now get ready for their first preseason game of the season on Monday against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"I just like the competition," Housley said following the scrimmage. "Obviously it's the third day of camp - it's almost like that hump day, they've had really two tough practices. I think you can see they're a little tired at times, but [we're] just mainly getting them into game condition. You can prepare yourself, but once you get into the bump and grind it's just a different situation. I was really pleased with their effort. It was good to see that the fans came out, and the guys saluted them at the end of the scrimmage. It was great."

It was a good showing for Dahlin, as the 2018 first overall pick scored twice for Team Blue in the win. Aside from his two goals, the 18-year-old rookie continued to display his excellent tape-to-tape passing skills, his reliable play in his own end, while also skating well with the puck and creating some good offensive possession.

"I think his timing has been impeccable," Housley said of his young defenseman. "He jumps into the play at the right time. When he beats a guy, he moves the puck right away and gets it up ice. Overall, I like the way he's developed so far in this camp."

So far in the three days of training camp, Dahlin has fully displayed his abilities in all three zones of the ice, as well as his puck skills and vision on the ice.

"He's an amazing player. He's gonna be great," said Sabres defenseman Lawrence Pilut on Dahlin after practice. "Just watching him out there today, he does some stuff [where] you have to blink twice. But it's real. He's gonna grow up to be a great player, and playing against his is always hard because you never know where he's gonna go. He's just an amazing player."

With the Sabres set to play two preseason games in as many days, Dahlin will get his chance to suit up in, at least, one of the two games. However, it's unclear, at this point, which game he will play.

"We're going to evaluate that shortly," Housley said. "We'll have a roster coming out... We'll make that decision some time this afternoon."

The Sabres also got goals on the afternoon from forwards Jeff Skinner, Kyle Crisculo, Scott Wilson, Eric Cornel, and defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Brandon Hickey.

Zach Bogosian and Conor Sheary did not take part in the scrimmage, but Housley said afterwards that they were given maintenance days.

"Those two practices, the guys [got] a lot of bumps and bruises," Housley said. "We wanted to slow it down a bit today in practice and give them some game condition. For [Bogosian and Sheary], it was just precautionary."

Sabres goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen was not listed as part of the roster for the scrimmage on Sunday. It was announced after the scrimmage that the team had assigned him back to the Sudbury Wolves in the Ontario Hockey League.

One other note from the Sabres as they have added goalie Michael Houser to the training camp roster after he signed an AHL contract with the Amerks on Tuesday.

The Sabres will travel to Columbus on Monday afternoon before their 7 p.m. faceoff at Nationwide Arena. Catch all of the action on WGR with Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on the call.

## **Training camp is everyday battle for Nathan Beaulieu, others after Sabres overhaul roster**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

September 15, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. — After the worst season of his life, Nathan Beaulieu didn't know what to expect. The Sabres had repeatedly shown faith in him during the summer, but the proof would be on the depth chart.

"I was a little anxious to see who I'd start with," the defenseman said Saturday.

Buffalo's brass continues to show faith. Beaulieu has opened training camp in a starting role, skating alongside Zach Bogosian. They could be considered the second pair, slotting in behind Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen.

Of course, Rasmus Dahlin and Jake McCabe might have something to say about that second-pair status. So might Brendan Guhle and Casey Nelson.

The Sabres looked much more competitive on paper after general manager Jason Botterill overhauled the roster. They look more competitive on the ice, too.

"There's going to be a lot of tough decisions," coach Phil Housley said in HarborCenter.

Through the opening days of camp, the Sabres have embraced the battle for roster spots. For the first time in a long time, those battles are legitimate.

"You can't slack off any day," left wing Evan Rodrigues said. "You have to give it your all or someone's going to be there to take your spot. It drives guys, pushes guys."

If the competition keeps up, it'll be a refreshing change. The Sabres were, to be frank, a bunch of slackers last season. It's part of the reason they finished last overall for the third time in five seasons.

It's only been a few sessions, but the laziness is gone. During offensive-zone battle drills, guys are running each other into the boards, throwing shoulders in front of the net and trying to stand out.

"Each and every rep that they're doing is meaningful," Housley said. "When they get bumped around it's not a slash to the back (in retaliation). They understand that everybody's trying to get better, and that's part of the game. It's good to see."

The drive is necessary because the players can see what they're up against. There are eight forward spots locked down: Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner, Kyle Okposo, Conor Sheary, Casey Mittelstadt, Jason Pominville, Patrik Berglund and Sam Reinhart, whenever the restricted free agent comes to terms on a new contract.

That means four starting jobs and a reserve role are up for grabs with 15 guys feeling they have a legitimate chance to claim them.

"You relish the competition, and at the end of the day you make everyone better," right wing Nick Baptiste said. "I'm becoming a better hockey player because there's four, five guys battling for the same job I am."

He's not exaggerating. Here are the eight forward lines in camp, ranked by perceived depth.

The Sabres are skating in two groups, and Housley said he assembled lines to keep balance within the groups (which presumably will stay together through the opening two preseason games Monday and Tuesday).

But there are guys who should be excited and guys who should be nervous. Alexander Nylander and Justin Bailey are in a prime spot to shine while flanking Berglund. Rasmus Asplund was a star of the Sabres' Prospects

Challenge, and he gets roster holdovers in Rodrigues and Baptiste. Tage Thompson and C.J. Smith are skating with a proven NHLer in Vladimir Sobotka.

Johan Larsson, meanwhile, is with two players who have yet to play a professional game in North America. Zemgus Girgensons and Scott Wilson are alongside guys hoping to make the jump from the American Hockey League.

The demotions could be because the coaches know what they're getting from Larsson, Girgensons and Wilson, and they want to try out young guys instead of the NHL veterans. But it's also because the Sabres have real competition.

"Everybody's got to earn a spot," Beaulieu said. "You're not going to be given it. It's just a matter of who's going to fill what spot."

How the players perform will go a long way toward who's on the ice opening night. But it'd be foolish to think that will be the only factor. Contracts come into play.

Nylander, Asplund, Thompson, Smith, Andrew Oglevie, Victor Olofsson, Danny O'Regan, Sean Malone and Eric Cornel could report to Rochester without waivers. They'll have to clearly beat out their competition. Though waiver claims during preseason aren't plentiful, it would still be a risk for Buffalo to try to slide Girgensons, Larsson, Wilson, Bailey, Baptiste or Rodrigues down to Rochester.

Whoever does go to the Amerks in the coming weeks will be expected to push for a return to Buffalo.

"You look at other teams in the league that have had great NHL teams, it's because their guys in the American League and the guys that they bring into camp are pushing each other," Baptiste said.

Here's a rundown on some of the hopefuls up front:

- Nylander had an impressive prospects tournament. His skill is needed, but he has to prove he has consistency and intensity.
- At 6-foot-4 and 214 pounds, Bailey has the size to make an impact on the third and fourth lines. His speed is evident in camp.
- Rodrigues, already one of the shiftiest Sabres, says he worked even more on his power skating this summer. He shined during camp last year, but a broken thumb in preseason limited him to 48 games. He had seven goals and 25 points.

"I'm trying to do the exact same thing I did last year," Rodrigues said, "prove myself, show that I can be a high-end player on this team and show that I could be a go-to guy."

- Asplund dominated the Prospects Challenge with a two-way game that he's trying to find in his first NHL camp.

"He looks really good at certain times, but when he's faced with stiffer competition he gets beat once in a while," Housley said. "But I just like the way he's working through everything. He's been a good spark for us."

- Baptiste wants to show the speed and net-driving ability that kept him in Buffalo for the second half of last season.

"That's what you dream to do is play in the National Hockey League and win a Stanley Cup," the 23-year-old said. "That's my ultimate goal, to stay in the National Hockey League, help this team win hockey games."

- Thompson is an early camp standout. The 6-5 winger has been successful with skilled plays around the net, connecting on no-look passes and close-range shots.
- Sobotka has a reputation for being feisty and agitating, which are traits the Sabres lack.

The defense corps doesn't have as much competition for spots, especially with Matt Hunwick nursing an upper-body injury. But the four pairings — Scandella-Ristolainen, Beaulieu-Bogosian, Dahlin-McCabe and Guhle-Nelson — will definitely fight for playing time.

Beaulieu is eager to get going. The Sabres acquired him from Montreal last summer and signed him to a two-year, \$4.8 million contract. He suffered two concussions, missed time with the flu and recorded one goal, eight assists and a minus-19 rating in 59 games.

"The whole year was just kind of a disaster for me," the 25-year-old said. "It's not something that I want to define me. I don't want to see the fans in Buffalo and the people of Buffalo to know me that way."

Apparently, Botterill and Housley don't want Beaulieu to be defined that way, either. The GM and coach talked to Beaulieu multiple times this offseason.

"It seems like they believe in me more than I even believe in myself," Beaulieu said. "They kept their word of giving me every opportunity. It's my turn to keep my word and play my game and give this city and this team what they deserve out of me."

He has little choice. As the opening days of camp have shown, anyone who doesn't give their best risks getting left behind.

"We knew we were going to come here and work," Beaulieu said. "We've got a lot to prove to this city and this organization."

## **Sabres focused on upping pace this training camp**

By Bill Hope

Olean Times Herald

September 15, 2018

BUFFALO – A year ago, coach Phil Housley and his staff were so busy installing a new system and teaching during training camp, the Sabres never established much of a pace that could lead to regular-season success.

Not surprisingly, it hurt the Sabres, who plodded through a miserable campaign and wound up finishing dead last in Housley's first year.

This year, even with a slew of new faces, most of the roster knows Housley's system, meaning the Sabres can go full-throttle throughout their early practices.

The Sabres skated aggressively during Friday's opening sessions inside HarborCenter.

"I mean, it was a tough go," Housley said. "Both sessions (had) a lot of skating after the play, which we're trying to encourage our guys. Part of our identity is back pressure and reloading them from the offensive zone of the ice. You could see a lot of the drills the guys were bent over. We pushed them to the limit in each drill and then we could see that the pace was going down, so we let them get some water, regain their composure and their wind.

"It was a tough go today, but I'm really pleased the way the guys responded. These guys are ready to go. They've trained hard throughout whole summer. They know what's at stake, there's competition for places. Everybody's trying to make a good first impression."

Of course, it helps most of the Sabres' new additions possess speed, a critical asset in today's game.

"It was high-temp, high-paced," Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe said of his session. "Guys were going up the ice competing and that's all you can ask for, especially on Day One when you're knocking off the rust a little bit."

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The Sabres announced Friday an upper-body injury will sideline defenseman Matt Hunwick, an offseason acquisition from the Pittsburgh Penguins, for the first part of training camp.

## **Humble approach should help Sabres rookie Rasmus Dahlin**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 15, 2018

BUFFALO – Rasmus Dahlin secured his roster spot the second the Sabres drafted him first overall almost three months ago. The ultra-talented Swedish defenseman is expected, even as a rookie, to help transform the franchise into a winner.

But Dahlin, 18, isn't taking anything for granted. He sometimes talks about if he makes the Sabres. He said it again Friday after his first official NHL practice.

"I will do everything I can to make the team, and if I make it, I'm just going to play the best I can and enjoy," Dahlin said between the first sessions of training camp inside HarborCenter. "Yeah, we'll see after the camp how this goes. I'll do my best."

If? We'll see? Seriously, Rasmus?

To Sabres coach Phil Housley, a Hall of Fame defenseman, Dahlin possesses the proper attitude to make him successful amid a tremendous amount of hype.

"Every year I was prepared to make the team," said Housley, who played 21 seasons. "It's a great attitude, because you have to strive for excellence. You're striving for perfection and you're not letting yourself off the hook; you're holding yourself accountable."

There has been some intrigue over which defenseman Housley would pair Dahlin beside right away. Given the slick Dahlin is a left-handed shot, Zach Bogosian and Rasmus Ristolainen, two righties, seemed like prime candidates.

But Housley put Dahlin beside Jake McCabe, whose 2017-18 season ended in February after undergoing shoulder and thumb surgeries.

"I just felt it was a good combination," Housley said. "We're trying to look for some good chemistry early, in the exhibition games. Rasmus is going to be playing with different partners."

"I just felt that Jake could play the right side and it was a good mix. You could have a veteran guy with a young guy trying to mentor him."

McCabe said of Dahlin: "He's one of those guys that's going to push me and make me a lot better player. I'm going to try to help along with the North American game and talk to him as much as I can."

McCabe, 24, hasn't played a game since Feb. 6. While the American established himself as a versatile and underrated presence in his first two full seasons, he struggled last year, compiling three goals, 12 points and a minus-11 rating in 53 contests.

When McCabe broke his thumb in early February, the last-place Sabres decided he should have his nagging shoulder injury repaired.

"It'd been lingering for a couple years," McCabe said of his shoulder. "It was kind of ... like, do I rehab my thumb and come back for 10 games but then maybe not be ready for training camp? I was kind of weighing the pros and cons and ultimately we all felt like it was the right decision for me to be 100 percent for training camp."

McCabe said he had some "jitterbugs" entering Friday's practice.

"It's my fifth year going into training camp, but I was just as excited, probably even more than my first, because it has been that long," he said. "It's nice to be here 100 percent healthy. It was unfortunate last year, the series of events, but it's in the past."

In the past, the Sabres' defense depth has often been weak. But this training camp, perhaps 10 or 11 players are competing for spots. A strong camp could lock youngster Brendan Guhle into a spot. Veteran Matt Hunwick offers depth. Newcomer Lawrence Pilut gives them an intriguing talent who excelled in Sweden.

"You go seven, eight, nine deep, every single guy can be put in the lineup at one point or another and contribute and skate," McCabe said. "That's something that we've lacked in the past. It's really exciting that we have that depth this year."

Even with more options, Housley figures to rely heavily on Dahlin this season. Before that, however, Housley said Dahlin "is going to get a lot of action" during the preseason.

Opponents, of course, will be keying on him.

"There's going to be guys that challenge him," Housley said. "He's got a lot of competitive fire and competitive spirit and he's going to want to do well and make an impression."

After months and months of hearing about Dahlin, he was finally on the ice Friday in a full-fledged NHL practice. The pace of the session was something he had never experienced.

"He's just trying to get adjusted to another level of speed," Housley said. "So he's done a terrific job in that regarding his preparation. He loves the game, loves to compete."

Dahlin said: "It's for real now, it's serious. The pace is higher. Yeah, it feels good."

## **Sabres' Nick Baptiste on new season: 'We're sick and tired of losing'**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 15, 2018

BUFFALO – In his first six seasons, Sabres winger Nick Baptiste has participated in training camps run by four different coaches.

So while Baptiste, having played just 47 games, is an NHL neophyte, the former third-round pick has experienced all sorts of camps.

This year, he said, "has been the most fun camp we've had."

Why?

"The jump and the impact the coaches have put forth, and just the mood everywhere is we're tired of losing, we're sick and tired of losing," Baptiste said this afternoon following another session inside KeyBank Center.

Camp, of course, is just two days old. Everything usually feels fresher at the beginning of a season.

But the new energy the Sabres possess is understandable.

The Sabres overhauled the roster during the offseason, making a slew of significant moves, including drafting defenseman Rasmus Dahlin first overall. Many players also embraced general manager Jason Botterill and coach Phil Housley's challenge to change during the offseason.

"When the drill starts, they're into it, they're focused, they're concentrating," Housley said. "When they get bumped around, it's not (responding with a) slash to the back. They understand that everybody's trying to get better and that's part of the game. It's good to see. It's a really tight-knit group."

After playing a career-high 33 games last season – Baptiste spent most of the winter in Buffalo – he is fighting for one of the final forward spots with several other players.

Since Baptiste must clear waivers if the Sabres want to send him to the AHL, he has a good chance to stick around.

"I'm becoming a better hockey player because there's four or five guys butting for the same job I am," he said. "It's internal competition that's going to make everyone better and ultimately make this team better."

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After four injury-plagued seasons, Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian has switched from No. 47 to 4.

Bogosian, who underwent season-ending hip surgery after playing only 18 games last year, said he had worn No. 4 his entire life before coming to Buffalo.

When 4 and 44 were taken in 2015, he settled on 47.

"Didn't really like the way that went, so just trying for a fresh start, go back to my youth," he said.

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The Sabres will practice Sunday morning inside HarborCenter before scrimmaging for the first time in camp.

## **Sabres' Nathan Beaulieu motivated to prove last season was fluke**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 16, 2018

BUFFALO – Nathan Beaulieu had never experienced anything as trying as last season, so when it mercifully ended, the Sabres defenseman said he “let it eat me up for a little bit.”

“This is kind of new grounds for me,” Beaulieu said Saturday following another session of training camp inside HarborCenter. “I’ve never really been in this situation. It’s kind of my first year in the NHL that didn’t really go my way at all, personally and (from) a team standpoint.”

If you need a refresher, the offensive-minded Beaulieu, 25, was downright awful last season, becoming the team’s biggest liability on defense. In 59 games – injuries and illnesses cost him playing time – he mustered just one goal, nine points and a wretched minus-19 rating. The Sabres, meanwhile, finished dead last.

“The whole year was just kind of a disaster for me,” said Beaulieu, who was acquired from the Montreal Canadiens in June 2017.

So Beaulieu, the 17th overall pick in 2011, said he let the awful season “soak in so it doesn’t happen again.”

“I took a couple weeks to kind of let it go through my mind, see where it went wrong,” he said. “You don’t really know how big a funk you were in until you get out of it. It was a good stepping stone for me. I believe as a person and as my career goes on, I feel like that’s going to be a good thing for me, seeing that low. You don’t want to be back there. I know what I’m capable to do.”

Beaulieu said he doesn’t want last season to “define me.” Buffalo fans, he said, have welcomed him warmly. He appreciates their support and the belief Sabres general manager Jason Botterill and coach Phil Housley have shown in him.

Botterill and Housley communicated with Beaulieu throughout the offseason.

“It seems like they believe in me even more than I believe in myself, so that’s awesome,” Beaulieu said. “They know what I’m capable of doing. They brought me in here for a reason and they kept their word of giving me every opportunity.”

“It’s my turn to keep my word and play my game, give this city and this team what they deserve every night.”

Of course, thanks to an influx of talent, Beaulieu is fighting for playing time or even a roster spot. Suddenly, the blue line is crowded. The Sabres drafted Rasmus Dahlin first overall and have prospect Brendan Guhle, 21, making a push. They also acquired Matt Hunwick and signed Lawrence Pilut, a top defenseman in Sweden.

“I had a good talk with Phil,” Beaulieu said. “He talked to all the D the same way. You’re not going to be given anything. With how much depth we have right now, there’s a lot of guys who are good NHLers and can play here.”

Housley said: “Nathan did a terrific job this summer. ... He’s well conditioned, he’s focused on every drill, his focus is really good. There’s going to be a lot of tough decisions.”

Through two days of camp, Beaulieu has a spot beside defenseman Zach Bogosian, his partner last September.

“A little anxious to see who you start with,” Beaulieu said.

The duo could conceivably offer the Sabres a speedy third pair capable of producing points. Remember, Beaulieu compiled a career-high 28 points in 74 games in 2016-17.

He believes last season was an aberration.

"(I'm a) lot more comfortable coming in this year, knowing a lot of guys and everything throughout the organization," Beaulieu said. "You want competition coming into camp. You know it usually brings the best out of everyone. For me, I accept it willingly. I feel good about myself, good about my game."

"It's going to be exciting, (there's) going to be changes and it's going to be a lot of movement around – who's going to play with who and so (on). The competition's going to be there and I accept it with open arms."

## **Poor season forced Sabres' Johan Larsson to change**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 16, 2018

BUFFALO – Instead of talking about Johan Larsson's rough season, Sabres coach Phil Housley chose to praise the Swedish center for the transformations he has made.

Larsson struggled mightily in 2017-18, enduring his worst NHL campaign. How bad was he? His wretched minus-30 was the fourth-worst rating among NHL forwards. He scored two of his career-low four goals into empty nets.

But Larsson, 26, accepted Housley and general manager Jason Botterill's challenge to change following last season's embarrassing 31st-place finish.

"Regardless of the first year, I see him now, I think he's had three really good days (of training camp)," Housley said after the Sabres scrimmaged Sunday morning inside HarborCenter. "He's come into camp in really good shape, probably the best shape that he's been in. So it's good to say he took the words in the right way at the end of the year. But he's been really, really good so far in camp."

He looks a lot like the Larsson from two or three years ago, when he morphed into an aggressive, two-way pivot with a knack for scoring timely goals. Then last year, after returning from season-ending elbow and wrist injuries, he looked lost.

Suddenly, given the Sabres' new depth up front, Larsson is fighting for a roster spot.

The team's other three established centers – Jack Eichel and newcomers Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka – aren't going anywhere. The Sabres also have Casey Mittelstadt, perhaps the NHL's top center prospect, and Rasmus Asplund, another talented youngster, gunning for roster spots.

Someone could get squeezed out or moved to another position.

"I got to be on my toes every day, prepared, battling, compete every day," Larsson said. "(There are) so many good players here, so you got to be ready to go every day. It's kind of fun, because it brings everything out of you."

The 5-foot-11, 198-pound Larsson has experienced just about everything but winning since the Sabres acquired him from the Minnesota Wild on April 3, 2013. Having debuted Oct. 4, 2013, he's one of three Sabres remaining from former GM Darcy Regier's tenure. Winger Zemgus Girgensons and defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen are the others.

In three of Larsson's five seasons, the Sabres have finished dead last.

"It's been tough, it's not been easy," Larsson said of the losing. "But it's that kind of environment we were in, so you got to perform. We haven't done that in a couple years. It feels different now and everyone's feeling way better."

Larsson's feeling so good he has started showcasing signs of his old form.

"He's tenacious, he gets underneath your skin," Housley said of what Larsson does at his best. "I just feel that his upper body's gotten a lot stronger, (he has) a lot more power in his lower body ... he's first on the puck. He's a great forechecker."

Larsson's versatility should help him in his roster battle. He can also play the wing and has moved up and down the lineup at times during his career.

Remember, late in 2014-15, the Sabres' first tank season, Larsson was the No. 1 center. If he makes the team this year, he would likely be a fourth-liner.

"I'm kind of good in the checking role, for sure," Larsson said. "But I can always move up and down in the lines, so I'm kind of all around. You always want to be a guy who produces more than you do last year. ...

"I want to start over and have a fresh, good year here."

He added: "It definitely feels way better. I feel just coming in, seeing the guys, everyone, the excitement. It's a different feeling."

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Not surprisingly, first overall pick Rasmus Dahlin looked impressive during Sunday's scrimmage, pinching in to score two nifty goals.

"His timing's really impeccable," Housley said of the slick defenseman. "He jumps into the play at the right times, and when he beats a guy, he moves the puck right away and gets it up ice. Overall, I just like the way he's developed so far in this camp."

Housley did not say if Dahlin will play in Monday's preseason opener in Columbus against the Blue Jackets.

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Housley said defenseman Zach Bogosian and winger Conor Sheary missed the scrimmage for maintenance.

## **5 Observations: Day One of Buffalo Sabres training camp**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

September 14, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Sabres hockey is officially back. On Friday the blue and gold opened training camp at HarborCenter with two separate practice sessions featuring the new additions from the offseason and the familiar faces from years past.

5 Observations from Day 1 of training camp:

Still no Sam

To the surprise of no one, Sam Reinhart was not on the ice for the Sabres first practice of training camp. Reinhart is one of the final restricted free agents in the NHL without a deal and could choose not to skate until he's signed on the dotted line.

Sabres GM Jason Botterill has said on multiple occasions he's confident the two sides will come to an agreement in the near future. Perhaps a deal happens soon or maybe we're still a few weeks away. At this point, it's a waiting game.

Size matters

Friday morning was the first time I watched Patrik Berglund play since joining the Sabres. The first thing anyone will notice about the 30-year-old center is his size. He's massive.

In the second session, Tage Thompson, another player acquired in the Ryan O'Reilly deal, towered over his teammates. While adding size to the roster wasn't something I thought needed to happen after last year, it's clear Botterill thought different. Conor Sheary is certainly an outlier but he's proven he can handle himself just fine at the NHL level.

Humble pie

Rasmus Dahlin just wants to make the team.

Seriously.

When asked if he had any expectations for his rookie season in comparison to some of the other players who have recently been drafted with the first-overall pick, Dahlin said he needs to make the team before he thinks about the season.

Skinner-Eichel getting early work

When the Sabres acquired Jeff Skinner from the Carolina Hurricanes in the offseason it was obvious they'd at least see how he looked on a line with Jack Eichel. It didn't take long for Sabres head coach Phil Housley to give the duo a chance to show their stuff -- pairing the combination alongside Kyle Okposo on the "top" line of the first practice session.

If you're into day one line combinations we've got you covered

Skinner - Eichel - Okposo

Sheary - Mittelstadt - Pominville

Nylander - Berglund - Bailey

Smith - Sobotka - Thompson

Olofsson - Larsson - Oglevie

Rodrigues - Asplund - Baptiste

Girgensons - Malone - O'Regan

Wilson - Criscuolo - Cornel

\*Other players skates but these combinations were used for much of practice. They are in no particular order, these are just where I'd put them\*

Defensive depth

When speaking with reporters after practice, veteran defender Jake McCabe said it best.

"It's not even just Rasmus [Dahlin], it's the fact that we brought in these other guys like Lawrence [Pilot], Guhles [Guhle] and Nelson," McCabe said. "You go down the list and there are not just six guys competing for a spot, there are eight or nine guys. It just pushes everyone to be better."

While day one defensive pairings don't mean much -- this is how the "main" pairings looked on Friday:

Scandella - Ristolainen

Dahlin - McCabe

Beaulieu - Bogosian

Guhle - Nelson

Pilot - Fedun

\*Hunwick did not skate due to an upper-body injury\*

The aforementioned pairings might not be rock-solid but they are a heck of a lot better than what the Sabres have put on the ice in recent memory.

## **Sabres season preview: Dahlin heads revamped roster**

by Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

September 17, 2018

The 2018-19 NHL season begins Oct. 3. With training camps open, NHL.com is taking a look at the five keys, the inside scoop on roster questions, and the projected lines for all 31 teams. Today, the Buffalo Sabres.

Coach: Phil Housley (second season)

Last season: 25-45-12; eighth place Atlantic Division

### 5 KEYS

#### 1. Dahlin's impact

Rasmus Dahlin, chosen with the No. 1 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, is expected to be a top-four defenseman and contribute at even strength and on the power play from the start of the season. The 18-year-old appears well-equipped to handle the pressure. He has dominated players his age and excelled playing the past two seasons against men in the Swedish Hockey League.

#### 2. Change in net

Carter Hutton, 32, will be a No. 1 NHL goaltender for the first time this season after agreeing to a three-year, \$8.25 million contract (average annual value \$2.75 million) on July 1. He replaces Robin Lehner, who signed with the New York Islanders as a free agent. Among goaltenders to play at least 30 games last season, Hutton led the NHL in goals-against average (2.09) and save percentage (.931) in 32 games with the St. Louis Blues. That was the second-most games he has played in six NHL seasons, but Sabres general manager Jason Botterill is confident Hutton can handle the increase in playing time and pressure. "We were very impressed with Carter's work ethic and his consistency as goalie," Botterill said. "Not only last year but over the last couple years. We think he's ready to get that opportunity and run with it."

#### 3. Influx of offense

The Sabres' 198 goals last season were the fewest in the NHL, but scoring should come a bit easier this season with the additions of forwards Jeff Skinner, Conor Sheary and Patrik Berglund. Skinner, acquired in a trade from the Carolina Hurricanes on Aug. 2, is a three-time 30-goal scorer who could play left wing on the top line with center Jack Eichel. Sheary, acquired in a trade from the Pittsburgh Penguins on June 27, scored 41 goals the past two seasons. Berglund, part of the return from the St. Louis Blues in the Ryan O'Reilly trade July 1, has three 20-goal seasons in the NHL.

#### 4. Mittelstadt at second-line center

Casey Mittelstadt had five points (one goal, four assists) in the final six games last season after signing his entry-level contract March 26. Now the 19-year-old will have the first shot at replacing O'Reilly as second-line center. "A year ago he's playing public high school hockey (Eden Prairie High in Minnesota), and now he's got a year of college hockey under his belt and a couple NHL games," Sabres assistant GM Steve Greeley said during development camp. "I think ... the Casey we're seeing now is more mature, more refined in terms of trying to become an everyday great National Hockey League player."

#### 5. Winning at home

The Sabres won 11 home games last season, fewest in the NHL, and haven't won more than half their home games in a season since 2011-12, when they won 21 of 41. Three teams in the past five seasons have reached the Stanley Cup Playoffs with fewer than 21 home wins: the San Jose Sharks with 18 in 2015-16, the Detroit Red Wings with 18 in 2013-14 and the New York Rangers with 20 in 2013-14.

### ROSTER RUNDOWN

#### Making the cut

Defenseman Brendan Guhle, 21, could push for a top-six spot this season. Last season, his first as a professional, he had five assists and averaged 18:06 of ice time in 18 NHL games. He has an offensive game the Sabres would

like to add to their defenseman group. "He brings an element to our back end there just with his speed," Botterill said. "Nowadays in the National Hockey League, teams backchecking so much, so hard, the back pressure, you have to have your defensemen be able to create offense, and he certainly brings that dynamic there."

#### Most intriguing addition

Lawrence Pilut, voted the best defenseman in the Swedish Hockey League last season, signed a two-year, entry-level contract May 15 and will have a chance to make the NHL roster this season. The 22-year-old led SHL defensemen with 30 assists and 38 points last season, and his eight goals were second. Last season, Buffalo finished last in the NHL in goals (19) and points (113) by defensemen.

#### Biggest potential surprise

Center Tage Thompson, acquired from the Blues with Berglund and center Vladimir Sobotka in the O'Reilly trade, has the size (6-foot-5, 205 pounds) to have a big impact. The 20-year-old turned pro last season and had nine points (three goals, six assists) in 41 games with the Blues and 18 points (eight goals, 10 assists) in 30 games with San Antonio of the American Hockey League. He could slide to the wing to stay in Buffalo as a top-nine forward and also could provide a strong net-front presence on the power play.

#### Ready to break through

Alexander Nylander, the No. 8 pick in the 2016 NHL Draft, scored his first NHL goal last season. His development hasn't gone as quickly as hoped, but the 20-year-old forward has two full seasons of pro experience in North America and could be ready to take a top-nine spot this season.

#### PROJECTED LINEUP

Jeff Skinner -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart

Conor Sheary -- Casey Mittelstadt -- Kyle Okposo

Evan Rodrigues -- Patrik Berglund -- Jason Pominville

Vladimir Sobotka -- Zemgus Girgensons -- Tage Thompson

Marco Scandella -- Rasmus Ristolainen

Rasmus Dahlin -- Zach Bogosian

Brendan Guhle -- Jake McCabe

Carter Hutton

Linus Ullmark

## **Asplund looking to prove he belongs at Sabres camp**

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 15th, 2018

If training camp goes anything like the Prospects Challenge for Rasmus Asplund, it's safe to say it will have been a success. The 20-year-old stood out in all three games for Buffalo at the tournament, which he capped with a four-point outing in the finale against Boston.

Asplund scored what might have been the goal of the tournament in that last game, slicing through a trio of defenders and burying a shot from in-tight. But what was equally impressive was how he carried himself - poised and strong with the puck, defensively aware and always ready to hit the open man.

It was the first step in an effort to prove he's ready to stick in the NHL, one that's continued through two days of his first North American camp.

"I want to make this team," Asplund said. "That's a good tournament to show that you really want to make the team and I think I really tried to bring my game out there. I think I did, too."

He made an impression on Phil Housley, who said Thursday that the young center will be given plenty of opportunity to show he belongs. That said, nothing will be given. Asplund's forward line, with Evan Rodrigues and Nicholas Baptiste on his wings, is a portrait of the internal competition occurring at camp.

Like Asplund, Baptiste and Rodrigues are still looking to solidify themselves as full-time NHLers. The difference is that they already have NHL experience under their belt, whereas Asplund has yet to play a season in North America. So far, he's embraced the competition.

"He looks really good at certain times but when he's faced with stiffer competition, he gets beat once in a while," Housley said. "I just like the way he's working through everything. He's been a good spark for us."

"I want to contribute to that compete level out there, too," Asplund added. "I want to make this team, so I try to compete as hard as I can."

If Asplund hasn't seemed phased by the transition to playing with pros, it may be because it's not totally new to him. Like several of the prospects at camp, he's spent the past few seasons playing amongst men in the Swedish Hockey League.

"I was very, very young when I did my first season in the SHL," he said. "I was a kid, basically, and I was just happy to be on that team. I just tried to, I don't know, to get used to playing against men. It was hard.

"It's been a couple years for me to get used to that. I've been growing every year. ... I've been saying the whole summer, I think I'm more ready than ever to take the next step."

Here are more observations from Saturday's sessions at Harborcenter.

**Beaulieu is staying accountable**

Nathan Beaulieu wasn't shy about his disappointment with the way things went in his first campaign with the Sabres. He missed multiple stretches due to illness and injury and never truly became comfortable with his new team.

Now, he's come to camp looking to prove that last season was an aberration.

"I let it eat me up for a little bit," Beaulieu said. "This is kind of new grounds for me. I've never really been in this situation. It's kind of my first year in the NHL that didn't really go my way at all, personally and from a team standpoint.

"It was a career low for me and it's not something I want to define me, nor do I want to see the fans in Buffalo, the people in Buffalo to know me that way."

Beaulieu is aware that he, like all players, will have to earn his spot this preseason given the amount of competition set to take place on the backend. He's embraced that challenge, thanks in part to confidence instilled in him by Housley and general manager Jason Botterill during the summer.

"It seems like they believe in me even more than I believe in myself so that's awesome," he said. "They know what I'm capable of doing. They brought me in here for a reason and they kept their word of giving me every opportunity. It's my turn to keep my word and play my game, give this team and this city what they deserve every night."

Housley said Beaulieu's commitment has already been apparent through two days of camp.

"Nathan did a terrific job this summer, really focused on his conditioning," he said. "You can see it out there. He's well-conditioned. He's plugged in on every drill, his focus is really good. There's going to be a lot of tough decisions. He's doing a good job these first few days."

#### Sunday's scrimmage

With the Sabres set to hold their first scrimmage of the preseason on Sunday, Housley said he had a message for his second practice group once the first session was complete.

"I said to the second group, 'You know, they were talking trash about you guys,'" Housley said. "I was just trying to set the tone. I just want to see some competitive fire, I want to see some speed, I want to see our checking come into play. We've been working on that the past two days, trying to squeeze off people in the neutral zone and they've done a good job adjusting to that, so it'll be interesting."

The scrimmage at Harborcenter is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m., following a brief practice that will begin at 9:45. It will be free and open to the public. The teams are expected to mirror the practice sessions from Saturday, which looked like this:

#### Group A

53 Jeff Skinner - 15 Jack Eichel - 21 Kyle Okposo  
92 Alex Nylander - 10 Patrik Berglund - 95 Justin Bailey  
41 Victor Olofsson - 22 Johan Larsson - 52 Andrew Oglevie  
20 Scott Wilson - 51 Kyle Criscuolo - 46 Eric Cornel  
73 Matej Pekar - 77 Vasily Glotov

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 19 Jake McCabe  
24 Lawrence Pilut - 27 Taylor Fedun  
38 Zach Redmond

35 Linus Ullmark  
31 Scott Wedgewood  
34 Jonas Johansson

#### Group B

49 C.J. Smith - 17 Vladimir Sobotka - 72 Tage Thompson  
43 Conor Sheary - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 29 Jason Pominville  
71 Evan Rodrigues - 74 Rasmus Asplund - 13 Nicholas Baptiste  
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 12 Kevin Porter - 65 Danny O'Regan  
42 Sean Malone - 64 Tyler Randell

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 4 Zach Bogosian  
45 Brendan Guhle - 8 Casey Nelson  
44 Brandon Hickey - 5 Matt Tennyson

61 Devante Stephens - 33 Will Borgen

40 Carter Hutton

32 Adam Wilcox

1 Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen

## **Dahlin nets a pair of goals in intra-squad scrimmage**

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 16th, 2018

The Sabres concluded their first weekend of practice with an intra-squad scrimmage on Sunday morning, offering players a taste of game-like action before their preseason schedule kicks off on Monday night. They played with a running clock of 45 minutes in front of a mostly-filled house at Harborcenter.

That left plenty of time for Rasmus Dahlin to make an impression. The defenseman continued to show the promise he displayed at the Prospects Challenge, netting a pair of goals from low in the offensive zone to lead his team to a 6-1 victory.

"I just think his timing's really impeccable," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He jumps into the play at the right time. When he beats a guy, he moves the puck right away and gets it up nice. Overall, I've just liked the way he's developed so far in this camp."

The goals drew reactions from the crowd, but Dahlin offered more than just scoring. He once again showed his ability to find passing lanes without hesitation and picked his spots well when it came to joining the rush.

These are all abilities that fellow defenseman Lawrence Pilut has become accustomed to, having played as Dahlin's opponent in the Swedish Hockey League.

"He's an amazing player," Pilut said. "He's going to be great. Just watching him out there today, he does some stuff you're like, you have to blink twice [to know] that it's real, you know? He's going to be a great player. Playing against him is always hard because you never know where he's going to go."

Individual Tickets and Mini-Packs are on sale now

Jeff Skinner, Rasmus Ristolainen and Scott Wilson were also among the goal-scorers for the winning blue team. More so than the results, Housley was watching to see how players reacted to game situations after back-to-back days of intense, 90-minute practice sessions.

"I just like the competition," Housley said. "Obviously, it's the third day of camp, it's almost like that hump day where they've had two really tough days of practice. I think you could see they're a little tired at times. But just mainly getting them into game condition."

"You can prepare yourself, but once you get into the bump and grind it's a different situation. I was really pleased with their effort."

The Sabres will begin their preseason schedule with back-to-back games, beginning in Columbus on Monday night. Housley said the roster for that game is still being determined, but it will likely be a mix of the two teams that competed on Sunday.

Here are more notes from Sunday's scrimmage.

**Pilut impresses**

Pilut is another defenseman looking to make the transition from the SHL to North America, and he's looked the part through three days of camp. On his very first shift, the 22-year-old was extending possession down low on the forecheck, which led to a scoring chance.

"I think he's done a terrific job and it goes back to the Prospects Challenge," Housley said. "... He's been terrific. I really like his poise with the puck. He has a very strong threshold, even at the blue line in the offensive zone. He's been a pleasant surprise."

Pilut was the SHL's Defenseman of the Year last season, when he tallied a career-high eight goals and 38 points. He feels he's already adjusting to the smaller North American ice, and he's showed a knack for getting shots through to the net.

"It's always been part of my game to try and get pucks through to the net, always," he said. "I felt like last year I worked on it a lot and it's just been better and better. My main focus is just to get the puck to the net, so the forwards can work on it and try to get it in."

Larsson's offseason is paying off

Johan Larsson is looking to keep hold of his spot in the Sabres' lineup, with the amount of internal competition higher than it's been at past training camps. He's impressed thus far, which Housley said is the result of a productive summer.

"He's come into camp in really good shape, probably the best shape that he's been in," Housley said. "It's good to see that he took the words the right way at the end of the year, but he's been really good so far in camp."

Larsson was tenacious and physical during Sunday's scrimmage. His net-front presence was a key factor for the blue team's offensive output.

"I just feel that his upper body's gotten a lot stronger, a lot more power in his lower body, and you could see it," Housley said. "He's first on the puck. He's a great forechecker. A lot of those goals we scored, he was in front of the net as a great net-front presence. It was great to see him contribute."

UPL assigned to Sudbury

The Sabres assigned goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to Sudbury, where he'll begin his first North American season in the OHL. Michael Houser has been added to the training camp roster after signing an AHL contract with Rochester on Tuesday.

Medical Report

Conor Sheary and Zach Bogosian were held from the scrimmage for maintenance days, Housley said. In both cases, the coach said their absence was precautionary.