



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 20, 2018*

## **Reinhart eagerly rejoins Sabres with new contract signed**

By John Warwow

Associated Press

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — If Sam Reinhart's objective was to carry over his point-a-game pace from the second half of last season, the Buffalo Sabres forward understood that it wasn't doing him much good sitting at home waiting for contract talks to be resolved.

"I don't know if worried's the right word," he said after practicing for the first time Thursday, a day after flying in from Vancouver, British Columbia, and signing a two-year, \$7.3 million contract. "I think the best thing for the team and myself was to be here as soon as possible."

Reinhart missed five days of training camp and two preseason games.

With two weeks to catch up before the Sabres open the regular season by hosting Boston, the No. 2 player selected in the 2014 draft is focused on proving he can consistently produce over the course of an entire season.

That was the knock on Reinhart last year, when he had just seven goals and 13 points in his first 44 games. He then went on a tear, scoring 18 goals and 37 points his final 38 games, and finished with a career-best 25 goals and 50 points.

The down-then-up season was one of the reasons the Sabres balked at offering the restricted free agent a longer-term deal.

"Whether it was a one-year or an eight-year, it's not changing my mentality," Reinhart said. "I know the player I can be."

General manager Jason Botterill said the key to Reinhart's turnaround was how he established himself as a player unafraid of playing in front of an opposing net. He said it's on both Reinhart and his coaching staff to continue his development.

Botterill was impressed with Reinhart's approach during contract talks. He kept in touch with the team over the summer and traveled to Buffalo to take part in informal workouts with his teammates before camp opened, then returned to Vancouver last week.

"I think it's just not words, it was his actions," Botterill said. "It's been evident that Sam wants to be part of our solution here in Buffalo."

The two-time 20-goal scorer has 65 goals and 140 points in 249 career games.

Reinhart rejoins a roster that was overhauled this summer after the Sabres finished last in the standings for a third time in five years. Despite the additions of forwards Conor Sheary and Jeff Skinner, Reinhart is being counted upon to reclaim his role on one of the top two lines.

Coach Phil Housley said there's a chance Reinhart could make his preseason debut as early as Saturday, when Buffalo hosts Toronto.

NOTES: Botterill expects Sheary to be ready for the start of the season despite the forward suffering an upper body injury on Sept. 14. ... The Sabres are buying out the final year of Vaclav Karabacek's contract after the forward cleared waivers. Karabacek was Buffalo's second-round pick in the 2014 draft and had eight goals and 16 assists in 51 games split between the Sabres' two minor-league affiliates over the past two years.

## **After long process and long flights, Reinhart thrilled with return to the ice**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
September 20, 2018

Sam Reinhart came to town without a contract and was on the ice skating with his Buffalo Sabres teammates the day after Labor Day. It was a good-faith sign on his part.

Reinhart left town very disappointed a few days later with no deal. Several weeks of negotiation proved fruitless, making for one long flight home. He had no idea when he'd be back and missing the start of the season seemed like a real possibility.

Vancouver in September is lovely. But it was the last place Reinhart wanted to be.

He skated with the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds hoping to hear good news. He said his surliness for a couple of days was grating on the nerves of his father, former NHL defenseman Paul Reinhart.

Reinhart missed the Sabres' first three days of practice. And their preseason opener Monday in Columbus. He watched Tuesday's home win over Pittsburgh on television while scouring his computer for flights back to Western New York because he knew the news was getting good.

"It wasn't easy. I think my Dad is probably the happiest guy to get me out of the house again," a smiling Reinhart said Thursday in KeyBank Center. "I was pretty miserable for a couple days but I was able to stay on the ice, train back in Vancouver. That's why I went home. It was the easiest way for me to be ready when I did get the opportunity to come back."

Reinhart signed his two-year, \$7.3 million deal with the Sabres on Wednesday and was back on the ice Thursday in HarborCenter. It's uncertain if he'll play in this weekend's home-and-home series with Toronto that opens Friday night in Scotiabank Arena, but what is clear is that both sides are relieved he's returned to practice.

"Ideally you're always getting it done for the start of training camp," said General Manager Jason Botterill. "But the fact we kept the dialogue going, there was no boycott from either side ... was probably the reason we came to a deal now versus having to wait until the start of the season. Both sides realized the importance of a young player being part of training camp with the amount of changes we had."

Reinhart skated Thursday on a line with Patrik Berglund and Evan Rodrigues. Jason Pominville was ostensibly holding Reinhart's place on the top line with Jack Eichel and Jeff Skinner.

"Today was a great practice for me to come back in," Reinhart said. "It wasn't crazy but the pace was up. It felt comfortable. Obviously it's going to take a day or two but I'm happy how it went and how I feel out there."

"I thought he looked great, right up to speed," said coach Phil Housley. "I understand coming off signing a new deal you're going to have that adrenaline. It's the second and third day that we're looking at for him to see where he is. But I was really pleased with his pace and execution and we'll see where he carries on."

Housley, of course, spent 20 years as a player in the NHL so he understands when contract situations crop up. Now he's on the other side, as a coach who wanted those things taken care of so he can have a full team at his disposal.

"It's hard because you do want everybody here but I understand the business as well," Housley said. "You can't control those situations. You try to focus on the players that are here. We've had a really good, upbeat, uptempo camp up to this point. So it's just great to have him back and be a part of the team."

Reinhart, 22, said he learned from the situation. He knows he got some rewards from last year's 25-goal season and that the Sabres are telling him to produce even more so he gets paid when it's time to talk contract again in 2020.

"It was the first time I've really had to experience that business side of it," he said. "At the end of the day I'm a hockey player and this is where I want to be. It's not an easy situation but I accept it and know that's a part of it. I'm just thrilled to be back around the guys. Any time they're all here and you're not, it's not an easy situation mentally to be in."

"Both sides understand that at the end of the day, we all wanted Sam to be part of our group here," said Botterill. "Sometimes it takes a little longer to go through the entire process. But from Day One, it's been evident Sam wants to be part of our solution here in Buffalo. Today was a great day to see him back on the ice."

## **Sabres Notebook: Bogosian back after brief absence; Sheary could play in opener**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

September 20, 2018

After three days away from the team on the road back from hip surgery, veteran defenseman Zach Bogosian returned to practice with the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday and fully took part in all drills at HarborCenter.

Bogosian, who had not been seen since practicing in the first two days of camp, revealed he has been skating on his own.

"Coming back from a major surgery, you're trying to check off all the boxes and I think it's just precautionary stuff," Bogosian said. "They had a plan in place to get me back to playing. There's certain stages you have to go through coming back from surgery even though I got it a long time ago."

A real test Thursday for Bogosian came when players were engaged in a 2-on-2 scrimmage with both nets placed on a small parcel at one corner of the ice. There was plenty of hard contact.

"The battle drills are fun to get some bumps in when you haven't been in a battle in quite some time," said Bogosian, who said he didn't know if he would play in either game of this weekend's home-and-home series against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

"He looked really good," said coach Phil Housley. "We'll have to evaluate after and see what the trainers and our doctors say but I thought he looked really good in the practices and the bump and grind of it, too. It was physical. Take caution with it and we'll monitor it every day."

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General Manager Jason Botterill said he's hopeful that winger Conor Sheary (upper body) could be ready for the season opener Oct. 4 vs. Boston. Sheary was injured during the first two days of practice last weekend.

"It's disappointing that Conor can't partake in practice and get that chemistry with centermen out there," Botterill said of the two-time Stanley Cup champion. "But we're hopeful next week he can get back to the mix."

The news is not as good for defenseman Matt Hunwick (neck). Botterill classified his injury as longer term and has already ruled Hunwick out for the start of the season. Hunwick, acquired with Sheary from Pittsburgh, has yet to practice with the club.

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The Maple Leafs announced their lineup for Friday night's game against the Sabres in Scotiabank Arena and big names slated to play include John Tavares, Mitch Marner, Nazem Kadri and Morgan Rielly. West Seneca native Chris Mueller, who won a Calder Cup last season for the Toronto Marlies, is also slated to be in the Toronto lineup.

Auston Matthews and former Sabre Tyler Ennis are not in Friday's lineup, meaning they're a good bet to play in Saturday's rematch at KeyBank Center. Ennis, who signed with the Leafs after his contract was bought out in Minnesota, had two goals in Wednesday's 4-1 win in Ottawa.

The Sabres are expected to field teams built in the same manner as they were for their first two exhibitions. That means many of their Rochester-bound players will form the roster for Friday's road game and most of the big Buffalo names – including Jack Eichel and Rasmus Dahlin – will meet the Leafs at home on Saturday.

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Buffalo's nongame players will skate Friday at HarborCenter beginning at 9:15 a.m. The players in the game will have a morning skate at 10:30 in KeyBank Center before boarding the bus to Toronto. Both sessions are open to the public.

After the two games this weekend, the Sabres are off on Sunday and it's expected a large group of roster cuts will be made.

That's because the Rochester Amerks open their training camp Monday at Bill Gray's Regional Iceplex on the campus of Monroe Community College. The Amerks have an exhibition game next Thursday night in HarborCenter against Toronto. Tickets for that game are \$10 for the public and \$5 for Sabres or Amerks season ticket holders.

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The Sabres waived 2014 second-round pick Vaclav Karabacek and are terminating the forward's contract after he cleared. Karabacek, 22, never played in the NHL. He combined to play 61 games the last two years between Rochester and two ECHL clubs. The native of the Czech Republic did not score in 28 games in Cincinnati last season.

Botterill declined to go into details on the decision other than to say the contract was being terminated. Karabacek was not invited to development camp in June or the Prospects Challenge, a clear sign his days in the organization were numbered.

Karabacek was still on his entry-level deal, making \$70,000 in the minors. He was taken 49th overall in what's considered a very down draft. Only three of the 30 players taken in the second round have played more than 25 NHL games, topped by the 156 games played by Arizona center Christian Dvorak.

## **Sabres goalie Scott Wedgewood: 'I think I can be a No. 1 in this league'**

By Bill Hoppe

The Buffalo News

Updated September 20, 2018

Longtime Sabres beat writer Bill Hoppe of BuffaloHockeyBeat.com, will be writing about Sabres prospects, the Rochester Americans and related topics this season.

In his first substantial NHL action last season, goalie Scott Wedgewood compiled some pretty underwhelming numbers.

By late February, Wedgewood, who posted a bloated 3.45 goals-against average and a weak .895 save percentage backstopping the hapless Arizona Coyotes, was back in the minors.

But just sticking in the NHL for 20 games of a dizzying season in which he played for three organizations was significant for Wedgewood.

"I appreciated that opportunity that Arizona gave me a chance to play," said Wedgewood, who signed a one-year, two-way contract with the Buffalo Sabres on July 1. "I played well. The numbers were a little tough at times, the situation we were in."

The Sabres clearly believe Wedgewood, 26, played better than his statistics would indicate.

"They kind of spoke to me on my level and how I felt," said Wedgewood, a third-round pick by the New Jersey Devils in 2010. "What they had (seen) was similar to what me and my agent, goalie coach and personal development people in my tight circle felt as well."

Wedgewood possesses notable confidence despite limited NHL experience, only 24 appearances since turning pro in 2012. On paper, he's the Sabres' third goalie. Still, instead of wearing Rochester Americans logos and colors, he has been sporting a Sabres mask and blue and gold equipment in training camp.

"I think I'm an NHL goaltender," Wedgewood said. "I think I can be a No. 1 in this league, no problem."

Wedgewood senses an opportunity with the Sabres. New starting goalie Carter Hutton, 32, has never been a No. 1 in the NHL. Meanwhile, backup Linus Ullmark, 25, just graduated from the AHL. The Swede has made only six NHL appearances over the last two seasons.

"Talking to Buffalo, they said it was a good possibility to come in and battle for a job," Wedgewood said.

The 6-foot-2, 195-pound Wedgewood said he simply needs "a chance to make the NHL."

"I believe I'm ready to do that and stay there," he said. "I got a lot of it last year, a taste of it (two years) before."

So far, Sabres coach Phil Housley said Wedgewood has acclimated quickly.

"He's had a really good camp," Housley said. "He's been pleasant to be around, he's been fighting, battling for pucks and those second opportunities, and his work ethic is really solid, so it gives us some stability at that position."

Wedgewood first cracked the NHL in 2015-16, playing four games with New Jersey. A shoulder injury limited him to only 10 AHL games in 2016-17.

Last season, Wedgewood experienced an odd five-month odyssey. The Devils traded him to the Coyotes on Oct. 28. Following a long look, they dished him to the Los Angeles Kings on Feb. 21.

"I wore a few different jerseys," he said. "But the thing was the year before that I didn't play (an NHL) game."

Wedgewood finished the season with the Kings' AHL affiliate, the Ontario Reign, backing up former Sabres draft pick Cal Petersen.

"The hardest thing for me mentally was getting to LA and them not giving me a chance to stay in the NHL," Wedgewood said.

Wedgewood said he had to reset mentally and remind himself he did not do anything wrong.

"Someone had a different view," he said. "Sometimes you get caught in the business side of it. So that was really hard."

The season took its toll on Wedgewood and his girlfriend, Brittany, in other ways. The Coyotes told him to find a place to live, so he moved his belongings across the country.

"Then I got traded again," he said. "That was tough just as an individual, my girlfriend and I having to coordinate moving around, having to coordinate where we're going, packing things up and then getting settled, and then having to do it all over again."

But Wedgewood is grateful for the experience.

"Fortunately, the hockey part worked out well," he said. "You went around the world a little bit there and experienced different sides of it."

The season also developed a little chip on Wedgewood's shoulder. Three teams owned his services and did not want him.

He wants to prove the doubters wrong.

His expectation is to have what he called "kind of an I told you so moment."

## **Sabres' Reinhart gets in his first training camp practice**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 20, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Sam Reinhart had his first practice on Thursday after signing his new two-year contract. The winger really didn't say if he was hoping for more, but he did say, "I want to be here as long as possible and whether it's a one-year or an eight-year, it's not changing my mentality, that's not who I am and I want to be a part of the solution."

Reinhart was here in Buffalo skating with his teammates until camp started. He then flew home to Vancouver to work out with the UBC Thunderbirds. Reinhart said, "It was probably one of the most challenging week in a half I've been a part of. The best thing I did was come in early and be around the guys because now it just feels like I missed a few days."

The two sides couldn't come to terms before training camp started, but GM Jason Botterill said it wasn't a difficult negotiation, "No not at all, both sides understood that at the end of the day, both sides wanted Sam part of our group here and sometimes it takes a little longer to go through the entire process."

Botterill knew Reinhart wanted to be a part of this group when he came back to Buffalo for two or three weeks to work with his teammates.

I asked if Reinhart getting a two-year contract means he has something more to prove. Botterill said, "I think it's a situation where all our young players have more to prove, whether it's Eichel, Ristolainen or Sam, players that have been in the National Hockey League.

"I think it was a great step for Sam last year in the second half and our job is to carry it into this season."

Botterill thinks there's a chance Conor Sheary could be ready for opening night. Botterill said, "We're hopeful that within the next week here he can be back into the mix. That is certainly our hope that he'll be ready for the start of the regular season."

Zach Bogosian was back at practice going full speed. He said the team has protocols in place for players coming off of surgery and that's why he missed a few days. The team did the same thing to Marco Scandella last season.

Phil Housley confirmed that the team in Toronto will come from Group 1 that skated on Thursday. The lines were:

Nylander - Mittelstadt - Thompson

Girgensons - Sobotka - Oglevie

Smith - Porter - Baptiste

Olofsson - Asplund - Cornel / Glotov

Guhle - Nelson

Pilut - Tennyson

Hickey - Redmond

Stephens - Fedun

Ullmark

Johansson

Wilcox

Group 2 will likely play in Buffalo on Saturday:

The lines were:

Skinner - Eichel - Pominville

Rodrigues - Berglund - Reinhart

Bailey - Larsson - Okposo

Wilson - Criscuolo - O'Regan

Scandella - Ristolainen

Dahlin - McCabe

Beaulieu - Bogosian / Borgen

Hutton

Wedgewood

Houser

## **Stimson: What we can learn from expected goals models and the impact on the Sabres**

By Ryan Stimson

The Athletic

September 21, 2018

The other night I discovered an interesting nugget of information while looking through some data. I was digging into some of the passing data collected during the 2015 – 2016 season and found that of the 9,000 point shots at 5v5 play, you have an equal chance to score or give up an odd-man rush. This stuck with me for a day or two and I had to dig deeper.

If there are levels of risk associated with shooting or passing to and from specific areas of the ice, are there ways we can quantify the total expected value from both an offensive and defensive standpoint? Are there more valuable areas of the ice to create offense from based not on the shot or pass taken from that area, but because of the follow-up play? What kind of stress does a pass across the slot, to the point, from the walls or from below the goal line put on teams for the next 10, 20 or 30 seconds?

When we talk about expected goals, a pass back to the point and shot from that location is a simple 0.016 xG, or an expected shooting percentage of 1.6%. Expected goals are historical shooting percentages based on location, type, distance, and a host of other factors. In this data, we're only looking at the pass that preceded the shot and a rough estimation of distance (point shots are generally categorized as being within a stride or so of the blue line), along with shot type. With enough data, you see patterns start to emerge based on pass type. And this has proven to be successful for predictive purposes at both player and team level.

When we build expected goals models, we should account for the various probabilities of what happens after a shot from a specific location. After accounting for the likelihood of rebounds occurring after specific passing plays, we arrive at the following values. All data is from 5v5 and the 2016 passing data collected by myself and other volunteers. The number of shots are below.

Anything with a center, right, or left designation is separated based on the lanes of the ice inside the offensive zone. These are anything outside the faceoff dots (not circles, but the actual faceoff dot), from the offensive perspective. So, a right lane pass is coming from the left side of the defending team. There's an interesting trend in the data that right lane passes have a significant advantage over left lane passes, especially from down low. This could be due to sample size, but I wonder if there's something about the goalie equipment at work here. Maybe nothing, but an interesting observation.

Nevertheless, regarding point shots, this is case closed from a standard look at expected goals. If you set up in the center of the ice below the goal line, you're generating a pass that is almost four times as likely to result in a goal than a shot from the point. Why could this be? Now that we have actual 2018-19 Buffalo Sabres hockey (or at least the preseason version of it), let's take a quick look at some examples from Tuesday night before we get deeper.

Here is an example of playing the puck down low and creating a chance in front of the net. As you can see from the above chart, there's about an 8.6% chance of scoring when factoring in the possible rebound opportunity. Luckily, this play comes to nothing. The puck is knocked away up the boards, but sent right back down. The Penguins forwards are able to establish more low puck possession.

Here is the rest of this possession for the Penguins. Rather than play it back down low, the Penguins move the puck to the point to reset. However, a rushed shot results in a change in field position. After watching a couple other instances where play ended up after passes were made, it made sense to try and quantify how often the team could change field position in the way of transition plays. The idea would be to assign a value to specific areas of the ice to understand how decisions made affect the rest of the player's shift.

Observe the following possession.

When Rasmus Dahlin retrieves this puck, a lot of fans thought he might throw it on net. The Sabres have Kyle Okposo at the net and there are a few layers that the goaltender has to see through. A lot of players would throw

this on net and have a low percentage scoring play. Instead, Dahlin lays the puck down low and the Sabres generate a much better scoring play. Small plays like this in the battle for controlling field position increase expected scoring rates about six percent.

The play continues as the puck comes to the right point and Jake McCabe sends the puck back down. After some good edgework, the Sabres climb in the zone and McCabe activates down the wall. The Sabres almost get another chance in the slot from this possession.

A reason why moving the puck low to high and then high to low is that the defending team expands. A team that isn't compact is easier to break down and will reveal if the puck carrier can create space on their own. One could argue that Dahlin should have activated about 10 seconds into this clip as the open ice was begging for someone. The entire Penguins team was overcommitted.

Total value

How can we use this data to extract more value from these plays? Because if you watch any hockey game, you'll notice that teams that move the puck back to the point and shoot will often see possession lost more often than if they had moved the puck elsewhere in the zone and shot. Let's try and quantify that.

To connect it all back to the original tweet that launched this idea, I looked at all the transition plays against that occur immediately within 20 seconds following each of these passing plays. Why 20 seconds? In their THoR paper, Michael Schuckers and James Curro found that goal rates stabilized around 10 seconds after various play-by-play events, and they used 20 seconds as the cutoff to feel safe. While I'm doing something very crude in comparison, I felt that cutoff also worked as transition plays are typically quicker and so 20 seconds felt safe.

So, for each of these passing plays, what percentage of them gave up a transition (weighted by danger of odd man, stretch, controlled entry with zero, one, or two passes) play?

It makes sense that transition plays often lead to transition plays the other way. We've all seen this play out in real-time, so this gave me a good feeling about attacking this idea in this fashion. Nearly 10 percent of point shots result in a transition play the other way in 20 seconds, which makes sense when we see these shots blocked, missed, or fanned on that leads to a turnover. So, when you take a point shot, you're getting a little less than about half of the risk of a full-on transition play the other way with about 12% of the value (original xG of 2.2 divided by Rush xG of 18.2).

Playing out of the corners has the least amount of risk as far as a transition play against over the next 20 seconds. Things like this can have tremendous impact with regards to players deciding when and where to pressure the puck. Now we can assign values to the above clips that incorporate expected rates of scoring when including the following 20 seconds of play. That type of thinking can better frame how teams should attack and decision-making by players. After all, if a player sends the puck down low rather than firing from the point, they are more likely to pass up a shot knowing they increase their chances of scoring by not shooting. This idea of field position again is present. What areas of the ice provide maximum value to create offense from?

Finally, we can now weight our original expected goal value by the probability of these plays occurring and their level of danger.

When accounting for tips, rebounds, and risk of a transition play the other way, here are our final expected goal values of these types of passing plays that we have data on. I've also included a column that tells you how many low-to-high plays are needed to equal one of each of the other pass types.

Strategic considerations for the Sabres?

Taking steps like this improves the total value of specific plays in specific areas of the ice. This can help frame how we should approach team strategy. Offensively, this evidence should rightfully make you cringe when teams work the puck back to the point and let it rip.

Here are the Sabres shot rates relative to the league average from last season. You can clearly see pockets along the point and just above the faceoff circles that are red. Considering the Sabres shoot so much from this perimeter area and are below average where it counts, you would hope that the team can reallocate some of their offense this year through better decision making and improved skill throughout the lineup.

But what areas to target? With the point shot equivalent column it's possible to now look at types of plays as slices of other, better plays and know exactly how many you have to create to equal one higher up in the chart. It can be as simple as encouraging the backs to fake more at the point if faced with hard-charging forwards closing them down. The defending team is just begging for you to execute a give and go play in this fashion. It's these little triggers that teams should use to manufacture small advantages on routine plays.

Here were the shots the Sabres gave up relative to league average. Some elevated rates to the left of goal, but most of the excess volume came from low-danger areas. The Sabres were not a good shot suppression team but weren't atrocious. I think this goes hand-in-hand with their overall pace in that if you slow the game down you don't expose the team to too many rush opportunities.

However, if the team wishes to pay with more tempo and attack in transition, they will invite more pressure of that same kind on average. It's likely coming as Phil Housley came into Buffalo envisioning that type of attack. Knowing the risks associated with that type of play, the team should hedge their expectations in such a way that they should not be alarmed at the rise in rush chances against. Considering the Sabres had a pretty bad rush differential according to Corey's data last season, any increase in pace and/or transition plays for the team, could end up backfiring while they attempt to sort this out.

#### Conclusions, limitations and future research

After accounting for some of the additional value (rebounds) and risk (transition plays against) following each of the passing plays recorded, we can get an idea of the value associated with creating offense in certain areas of the ice. I've long since argued that more teams should find ways to play below the goal line and one of the common arguments against it is that a turnover could lead to an odd man situation the other way due to the forwards being so far from their own goal. The data here provides evidence this concern is possibly overstated.

I say evidence and not proof because of the data limitations. We don't have failed passes by location which could tell us more. We also don't have anything in the way of what other shots were available. Being able to quantify what other options were passed up would be great to know. Also, while we can dig into this type of analysis from a sequencing standpoint, the data is limited in what it can do. That being said, I have heard from a couple people with access to Good Data and they've said point shots are even worse off than I'm making them out to be, so someday we'll see some of that Good Data. Hopefully.

I also think this raises an intriguing question surrounding expected goals models: do we only want the value of a specific shot, or do we want to include the subsequent tradeoff? At the end of the day, it may mean only so much, but I think there's value to having a deeper conversation on this idea. After all, we don't know what we are leaving out or failing to include.

## **Sabres' Swedish rookies dealing well with accelerated pace of an NHL training camp**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

September 20, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. – A quick look was all it took. Rasmus Asplund glanced at the Sabres' training camp schedule and roster, and he knew he wasn't in Sweden anymore.

Buffalo opened camp with 51 players, so the competition for NHL and AHL spots is real. The first nine days feature four preseason games, an intrasquad scrimmage and three days with double workouts. The opening exhibition game was about 72 hours after the team first took the ice. The Oct. 4 start to the regular season is rapidly approaching.

There's not much time to take your skates off, let alone put your feet up.

Asplund thought back to his four years with Färjestad of the Swedish Hockey League. The team started camp Aug. 1 with only 23 players, so pretty much everyone was assured of a job. The season began Sept. 15, giving the organization six weeks to get ready, more than double the time in Buffalo.

"It's intense here," Asplund said Thursday, "but I'm enjoying it."

The center is part of the Sabres' Swedish invasion, a group of four NHL rookies who enjoyed professional success in their homeland. No. 1 draft pick Rasmus Dahlin showed during his preseason debut that he's quickly grown acclimated to North America. Asplund, left winger Victor Olofsson and defenseman Lawrence Pilut aren't far behind.

"They've really adjusted well," coach Phil Housley said. "I really like the way they've developed. They haven't looked out of place one bit."

While they look good in camp, it's certainly a different camp.

The disparity in the number of players is huge. The Sabres can field two full teams and start a third. They're using three locker rooms. It wouldn't be a surprise if a few players haven't even met each other yet.

In Sweden, the camp roster mimics the regular roster. There aren't invitees or players on tryout contracts.

"It's the team that's going to be playing and maybe a couple junior guys that get the chance to show what they've got," Asplund said.

In Buffalo, even the veterans have to show what they've got on a daily basis. A few bad outings can lead from the first line to the fourth line to Rochester.

"Everyone is battling for a spot," Olofsson said. "I think that brings out the best in everyone. You've got to be ready when you show up to camp."

The intensity was obvious from the first practice. That's not always the case in Sweden. With six weeks to sort things out, guys can go at a slower pace. It's not that they lollygag, but the urgency just isn't the same.

"They take a little more time back home," Asplund said. "It's pretty hard in the beginning of August, but then it slows down a little bit."

The extended camp also allows the Swedes to do more team-building exercises, as Pilut experienced last year with HV71.

"We went away for two, three days to a different city and played a team there," he said. "We had some team-building things like paintball and stuff like that. It was fun."

What's fun for Pilut this year is how quickly he's adapting. The rinks in Europe are 200 feet long by 100 feet wide. The North American rinks are 200 by 85.

"It's kind of different angles in the D-zone, but it feels like I'm adjusting well," said Pilut, who was voted the top defenseman in the Swedish league last season. "So far, I think I have a lot more steps in me that I can take and more adjustments that I can do. I'm trying to transition my game over here, and it feels like it's coming every day."

Pilut made his preseason debut Tuesday against Pittsburgh, recording an assist and a plus-1 rating in a 3-2 victory. He skated alongside William Borgen and got 17:58 of ice time.

While the on-ice activities have been his best teachers so far, he's been meeting with the coaches, watching video of the Sabres and looking at clips of players from around the league. He's also reached out to his father, Larry, who played professionally in Sweden for nine seasons.

"It just feels like you take it in from everywhere you can," Pilut said.

Learning new angles and routes has been an adjustment for Olofsson, too. He's a sniper from the top of the faceoff circle and led the Swedish league with 27 goals in 50 games last year. The offensive zone in the NHL is 15 feet thinner.

"It's a lot tighter," Olofsson said. "You don't have as much space to find open ice. I feel that's the biggest difference. Maybe you've got a little bit less time with the puck, too."

A look back at clips from Olofsson's breakout season with Frölunda shows how much space the left winger was able to get.

He typically hasn't been that open for the Sabres, but he was able to regularly get his shot off during the Prospects Challenge. He didn't need much space, either, but he got plenty on this power play goal.

Olofsson had one shot during his preseason debut, a 4-1 victory Monday in Columbus, and he'll look to increase that total when Buffalo plays in Toronto on Friday and hosts the Maple Leafs on Saturday.

"The good thing is when I do find that open ice I'm closer to the net all the time, so most often when you get the puck you're in a spot where you can shoot it," Olofsson said.

Asplund centered the fourth line for left winger Zemgus Girgensons and right winger Nick Baptiste during the win over the Penguins. The rookie had one shot in 11:56 of ice time while going 9-5 in the faceoff dot.

"I'm just trying to bring my two-way game, and I think I did," said Asplund, who is relishing his first NHL camp. "I'm enjoying it so far. I'm happy with my game."

## **Sabres notebook: Sam Reinhart, Zach Bogosian both return to the fold**

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

September 20, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. — A day after signing a two-year, \$7.3 million deal, Sam Reinhart was back on the ice with the Sabres.

Reinhart joined the second group at practice Thursday and skated on the right wing next to Patrik Berglund, with Evan Rodrigues on the left. All right, so it's not quite getting the band back together with Reinhart and best friend Jack Eichel, but hey, it's still Reinhart's first day and he's ecstatic to be back.

"It was the first time I ever had to experience that business side of it," Reinhart said. "At the end of the day, I'm a hockey player and this is where I want to be. It's not an easy situation, but I accept it and know that's a part of it. I'm just thrilled to be back and back around the guys because, you know, any time they're all here and you're not, it's not an easy situation or easy mentally to be in. Obviously, I kept in touch with all the guys over the week-and-a-half and, at the time, it seemed like probably two years being away but now it seems like two days. I'm thrilled to be back."

Reinhart spent the week away from camp back home in Vancouver after he's spent a couple weeks ahead of camp in Buffalo taking part in informal skates with teammates. Reinhart wasn't too worried about missing out, but he was anxious just the same.

From the Sabres perspective, having Reinhart back in the fold for two years is a good thing for them on the ice but also off of it. It's also the last bit of business that needed to be taken care of before things got too far along in camp.

"I think both sides understand that at the end of the day we all wanted Sam as part of our group here," general manager Jason Botterill said. "Sometimes it takes a little longer to get through the entire process there, but from day one it's been evident that Sam wants to be part of our solution here in Buffalo and today was a great day to see him back on the ice. It's not just in his words; it's in his actions in that he came to Buffalo before camp here, interacted with our guys, interacted with our staff throughout the summer. Now I'm very glad we got the contract worked out and we can move on with the season."

Reinhart said he flew back to Buffalo on Wednesday from Vancouver, where he skated with the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds as he was away from the start of training camp.

"I think my dad (former NHLer Paul Reinhart) was the happiest to get me out of the house again, I was pretty miserable for a couple days," Reinhart said. "But I was able to stay on the ice and train back in Vancouver. Ultimately it was the easiest way for me to be ready whenever I did get the opportunity to come back."

Reinhart will look to build off a season in which he set career-highs in goals (25) and points (50), most of which he put up late in the season when he had 37 points in the final 38 games.

"I know the player I can be, I know how I was able to turn things around and I think just keeping that confidence and having that self-belief goes a long way in my game. It was important for me to get back as soon as possible because training camp is a really important time to get that and get things started off on the right note."

A two-year bridge deal could be viewed as a sign to Reinhart that he needs to prove the second-half of last season wasn't just a hot streak but who he really is. The Sabres, however, won't put that pressure on just him to show what he's got.

"I think it's a situation where all of our young players have more to prove," Botterill said. "That's part of what we have to do here is develop our young players and Sam is a part of it. Whether it's Eichel, Ristolainen, Sam – players who have been in the National Hockey League – people always focus on Dahlin and Mittelstadt and some of our guys who haven't played, but it's important to develop our guys who have been in the National Hockey League. I think it was a great step in Sam's development in the second half and came on really strong. There

were elements of battling down low around the net and capitalize on those chances and that's our job now to carry that over to this season."

Defenseman Zach Bogosian was back on the ice Thursday after he'd been held out of practice since Sunday. Bogosian said he skated on his own on Wednesday (the Sabres were off as a team) and said he's feeling good.

"Obviously coming back from major surgery you're trying to check off all the boxes and I think it's precautionary stuff. You're trying to make sure everything's going as smooth as possible and it's been good."

Bogosian was again paired with Nathan Beaulieu as part of the second group. Coach Phil Housley said it's up to the trainers and doctors to make sure everything is going well enough for him to possibly play against the Toronto Maple Leafs this weekend. For Bogosian, however, having to take things methodically is the biggest challenge.

"It's tough, it is tough; it's not in my nature to be someone that holds back on a lot of things," Bogosian said. "The way I was raised was you got 110-percent no matter what you're doing and at times that's hurt me in the past. I think right now I'm doing a good job of being conscious of how I feel, listening to my body, and reacting that way. Coming back from a surgery you're going to have ups and downs, I'm anticipating that. You're going to have good days and bad days, but I'm just trying to get through every day, work hard, and try to be as smart as possible about it."

– The Sabres placed forward Vaclav Karabacek on \$125 waivers for the purpose of terminating his contract. Cutting him loose will put the Sabres at 47 contracts, three below the roster maximum. Karabacek was a second-round pick by the Sabres, no. 49 overall, in 2014 by then-GM Tim Murray.

## **Sabres notes: Zach Bogosian being eased along after hip surgery**

BY Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 20, 2018

BUFFALO – The Sabres have a plan for Zach Bogosian. Instead of throwing the oft-injured defenseman right into the fray, they're easing him into training camp.

Bogosian, 27, underwent hip surgery last winter and hasn't played a game Jan. 9. So the Sabres held him out of practice earlier this week before letting him skate on his own.

Bogosian practiced with his teammates again Thursday inside HarborCenter.

"Coming back from a major surgery, you're trying to check off all the boxes," Bogosian said after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road preseason tilt against the Toronto Maple Leafs. "Just precautionary stuff, just trying to make sure everything's going as smooth as possible. It felt good."

Bogosian did everything, including battle drills.

"He looked really good in the practices and in the bump and grind of it, too," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He was physical. It's one of those scenarios where we're just going to be cautious with it and evaluate it every day."

Bogosian said: "(It's) fun to get some bumps in when you haven't been in a battle in quite some time."

Bogosian likely won't play tonight. The Sabres also host the Leafs on Saturday.

Holding back and waiting isn't easy for the Massena native.

"The way I was raised it was you go 110 percent at all times no matter what you're doing," Bogosian said. "At times, that's hurt me in the past. I think right now I'm doing a good job of being conscious of how I feel, listening to my body and reacting that way."

"Coming back from surgery you're going to have ups and downs, I'm anticipating that. You're going to have good days and bad days."

In other injuries news, Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said he's hopeful winger Conor Sheary, who suffered an upper-body injury the first day of camp, can practice next week and be ready for the season opener Oct. 4.

Meanwhile, Botterill said defenseman Matt Hunwick (neck) won't be ready for the opener.

xxx

After Vaclav Karabacek cleared unconditional waivers Thursday, the Sabres terminated the contract of the former second-round pick.

The Czech forward, 22, endured an awful season in 2017-18, scoring zero goals and five assists in 28 games with the Cincinnati Cyclones, the Sabres' ECHL affiliate.

The Sabres drafted Karabacek 49th overall in 2014. He wasn't invited to camp this year.

Botterill offered no insight into the move, only saying the termination had been made.

Karabacek also played 24 AHL games with the Rochester Americans over the last two seasons, compiling three goals and eight points.

xxx

Most of the Sabres' big names, including center Jack Eichel and rookie defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, likely won't play tonight.

Based on Thursday's practice groups, tonight's lineup will mostly feature AHL players and youngsters. Saturday's lineup will have bigger names.

xxx

The Sabres sent goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and center Matej Pekar back to their junior clubs earlier this week. They'll likely assign a group of players to Rochester this weekend.

The Amerks open their camp Monday.

## **Sam Reinhart practices, happy to be back with Sabres**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 20, 2018

BUFFALO – Sam Reinhart's week in Vancouver tested his patience, even made the Sabres winger miserable.

Sitting at home as a contract holdout can do that, especially when your teammates start a training camp filled with optimism.

By Tuesday night, as the Sabres played the Pittsburgh Penguins, an antsy Reinhart began looking for flights to Buffalo. On Wednesday morning, he signed a two-year, \$7.6 million deal.

Today, Reinhart, a two-time 20-goal scorer, rejoined his teammates for practice inside HarborCenter.

"It wasn't easy," Reinhart said of his holdout. "I think my dad's probably the happiest guy to get me out of the house again."

He added: "It was probably one of the most challenging week and a halves that I've been a part of."

Fresh off a 25-goal, 50-point season, Reinhart is expected to be a major contributor to the Sabres. Considering the fast pace of camp throughout the first week, if he missed more time, he might've fallen behind.

"The fact that we kept communication going was probably one of the reasons we came to a deal now versus having to wait for the start of the season," Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said. "Both sides realized the importance of a young player being a part of training camp."

Sabres coach Phil Housley said Reinhart looked "right up to speed today."

"I understand coming off and signing a new deal, you're going to have that adrenaline," Housley said. "It's the second and third day we're looking at for him to see where he is. But I was really pleased with his pace and execution."

Reinhart credits the skating and other work he did in Buffalo before camp started for allowing him to jump into practice so easily.

"It just feels like I missed a few days and I'm right back with the team," he said.

The Sabres are a team Reinhart, 22, wants to stay with for a long time.

"I would like to be here as long as possible, but whether it was a one-year or an eight-year, it's not changing my mentality," he said. "That's not who I am. My focus, my excitement is here with this group of guys and I want to be part of the solution. I think the best thing for the team and myself was to be here as soon as possible."

Check back later for more on Reinhart, who skated at right wing beside center Patrik Berglund and Evan Rodrigues.

In other news, after Vaclav Karabacek cleared unconditional waivers today, the Sabres terminated the contract of the former second-round pick.

The Czech forward, 22, endured an awful season in 2017-18, scoring zero goals and five assists in 28 games with the Cincinnati Cyclones, the Sabres' ECHL affiliate.

The Sabres drafted Karabacek 49th overall in 2014.

Botterill offered no insight into the move, only saying the termination had been made.

## **Sabres' Sam Reinhart rejuvenated as he reports to training camp**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

September 20, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - At long last, Sam Reinhart has reported to training camp. On Thursday he hit the ice with the rest of his teammates after signing a new two-year deal on Wednesday.

"I am just thrilled to be back around the guys because anytime they are all here and you are not it is not an easy situation to be in," Reinhart said. "So, obviously I kept in touch with all the guys over the week and a half. At the time, it seemed like two years being away but now it seems like two days so thrilled to be back."

For months, Reinhart and Sabres GM Jason Botterill insisted they were confident a new deal would get done. They admitted negotiations lasted longer than the two sides would have liked but now none of that matters.

"At the end of the day we all wanted Sam as part of our group here," Botterill said Thursday. "Sometimes it takes a little bit longer to go through the entire process. But from day one it has been evident that Sam wants to be part of our solution here in Buffalo and today was a great day to see him back on the ice."

In his first official skate with the team, Reinhart worked on a line with Evan Rodrigues and Patrik Berglund. After practice he said he felt pretty good and his coach Phil Housley agreed.

"I was really pleased with his pace and execution," Housley added. "We will see where it carries on but I am just really happy that he is back and back part of our team."

## **Reinhart Hits Ice With Excitement At Sabres Training Camp After Contract Extension**

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

September 20, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - The contract is inked, the skates were laced up and the excitement was evident as Sabres forward Sam Reinhart joined his team for his first day of training camp Thursday.

Reinhart and the Sabres finalized a 2 year \$3.65 million dollar deal Wednesday. The forward took the ice at HarborCenter for the first time with his new and former teammates Thursday morning.

He participated in summer skates with teammates ahead of training camp, but missed the first six days of the preseason holding out for a new contract. Reinhart says now thanks to his contract being finalized, he's exactly where he wants to be.

"It was probably one of the most challenging week and a halves that I've been a part of," said Reinhart. "I think looking back on it the best thing I did was come in early and be around the guys, because now it feels just like I've missed a few days and I'm right back with the team after you usually would with an injury. That's made me feel really comfortable coming back in and I really jumped right back into things.

Reinhart was very content with how day one of camp went for him.

"I think today was a great practice for me to come back in," said Reinhart. "It wasn't crazy by any means, but the pace was up. It felt comfortable. Obviously it's going to take a day or two you know I'm happy with how it went, I'm happy with how I feel out there."

Head Coach Phil Housley said he was pleased with Reinhart's performance in his first day of camp, and is happy to have the forward back on the team.

"I thought he looked great. he was right up to speed," said Housley. "I understand, coming off of signing a new deal you're going to have that adrenaline. It's the second or third day that we're looking at for him to see where he is. I was really pleased with his pace and execution and we'll see where it carries on. I'm just really happy that he's back and back part of our team."

The Sabres get set for a home-and home against Toronto this weekend.

## **NHL preseason game comes to Clinton: 10 things to know about the historic arena**

By Lindsay Kramer

Syracuse.com

September 20, 2018

Clinton, N.Y. -- The NHL's preseason action will swing through Clinton on Tuesday when the Buffalo Sabres take on Columbus in a Kraft Hockeyville game.

Clinton Arena landed the contest as the winner of the national promotion. The arena will also get \$150,000 in upgrades.

The arena is a classic community rink loaded with history. Here's 10 fun facts to know about it:

It was originally built in 1948-49 but burned down on Sept. 11, 1953 when a fan at a wrestling match dropped a lit cigarette in the wooden bleachers. It was rebuilt in 1954.

It hosted the Eastern Hockey League's Clinton Comets from 1954 to 1973. In 1977, portion of Slap Shot was filmed in the arena.

In 1993, the New Jersey Devils (affiliate of the AHL's Utica Devils) played an NHL exhibition game against Minnesota there.

According to Mike Orsino, who runs the rink, it will have a capacity of about 1,750 for Tuesday's game, plus about 300 more in standing room.

The arena had to temporarily remove about 85-90 seats to make room for NBC Sports Network's broadcast of the game.

The seats currently in the arena were formerly used in the Syracuse Chiefs' MacArthur Stadium and were purchased when that park was torn down in favor of NBT Bank Stadium in 1997.

The rink is only 190 feet long, which is 10 feet shorter than NHL regulation. Orsino said the ice looks longer than it is because its corners are in a 14 degree radius, which is a little tighter than usual.

The arena had to install higher glass along the sides. It had been three feet tall; it now extends to 6-foot-6.

The nylon safety netting around the rink has been replaced by a kevlar protection that is easier to see through.

The locker rooms were upgraded to include enclosed plumbing and new curtains and flooring in the showers.

Orsino said some of the cost of the improvements came out of the town budget while others will be reimbursed through the award grant. He said he'll seek community input on how the remainder of the improvement money will be spent.

Here's a schedule of events for the weekend:

Saturday: Pancake breakfast benefitting the local food pantry at Lutheran Care Church, followed by the Clinton Youth Hockey BBQ and NHL Alumni Autograph session at the Village Green & Park Row.

Sunday: Join Clinton Youth Hockey, Figure Skating Club, Clinton High School and Hamilton College Players for a community skate at Clinton Arena, followed by a Clinton Central School Alumni Game and a visit from the Stanley Cup. The Stanley Cup will be in the arena from 1-4:30 p.m.

Monday: A fundraising dinner at Hamilton College featuring former NHL player and current NBC sports analyst Jeremy Roenick. Tickets to the dinner are \$50 per person, and can be purchased by visiting the Clinton Arena - Kraft Hockeyville USA 2018 Facebook page.

Tuesday: Welcome the Columbus Blue Jackets and Buffalo Sabres on the red carpet and join the pep rally leading up to the game at 7 p.m. The red carpet and pep rally are free and open to the public.

More information on activities, times and locations can be found on the Clinton Arena - Kraft Hockeyville USA 2018 Facebook page.