



Buffalo Sabres

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Tavares scores twice as Maple Leafs down Sabres 5-3

Associated Press

September 21, 2018

John Tavares scored his first two goals on home ice with the Maple Leafs and Toronto defeated the Buffalo Sabres 5-3 in preseason play on Friday night.

Ron Hainsey, Pierre Engvall and Chris Mueller also scored for the Leafs. Curtis McElhinney stopped all 20 shots he faced after replacing Garret Sparks, who made nine saves, midway through the second period.

Andrew Oglevie, C.J. Smith and Tage Thompson scored for the Sabres. Linus Ullmark made 27 saves in taking the loss.

The teams will play an exhibition rematch Saturday night in Buffalo.

Tavares made it 3-1 with his third of the preseason at 3:42, finishing off a sequence he started in the Toronto zone. The star center fed a stretch pass to Mitch Marner, who in turn dropped it back to Timothy Liljegren. The rookie defenseman blasted a one-timer, and Tavares was there to bury the rebound.

Tavares added an empty-netter with 43.2 seconds remaining.

Smith, Thompson adding to Sabres' offensive talent pool

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
September 21, 2018

TORONTO -- The Buffalo Sabres knew their talent pool of forwards was getting deeper when they mapped it out over the summer. But looking good on paper is one thing.

Seeing it play out on the ice is something else entirely.

The Sabres suffered a 5-3 preseason loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs Friday night in Scotiabank Arena but the game was punctuated by highlight-reel goals from C.J. Smith and Tage Thompson, wingers who are on the bubble to make the NHL club or figure to be key components of the Rochester Amerks to start the season.

Goal scorers don't panic with the puck and both Smith and Thompson were patience personified on their first goals of the preseason.

Smith cut a 3-1 deficit in half at 11:28 of the first period when he took a chip pass from Nicholas Baptiste in the right faceoff circle, cut through the slot past Morgan Rielly -- Toronto's No. 1 defenseman -- and held the puck until he got goalie Garrett Sparks to commit to the ice. By then, Smith had an empty net to flip the puck into.

"[Kevin Porter] was doing a really good job tying up the guy in front," Smith said. "I was able to fake a shot and he went down, I was able to get around and find an empty net. I was surprised on the time I had available. They like to really move and get guys ahead of the play and we were able to catch them on a turnover and get the puck on net."

Smith had 17 goals and 27 assists last year in Rochester, starting hot before injuries slowed the first pro season for the college signee out of Mass-Lowell. He finished tied for the Amerks' team lead in goals.

Thompson got Buffalo even at 3-3 at 6:08 of the second period after swooping in on a loose puck at the Sabres blue line and streaking down the ice with Alexander Nylander on a 2-on-1 break.

Thompson didn't pass, instead toe-dragging the puck around Toronto defenseman Connor Carrick and then rifling a snapshot on the stick side past Leafs goalie Garret Sparks.

The goal reeked of first-round talent. Thompson, remember, was a first-round choice of the St. Louis Blues in 2016 but was sent to Buffalo as part of the Ryan O'Reilly trade in July. He had only three goals in 41 games for the Blues last season and just eight in 30 games for San Antonio of the AHL.

"[Nylander] did a really good job driving that defenseman to the net and making it tough for him to make a decision," Thompson said. "He decided to take the pass away and I waited for him to slide."

"It's great to have the competition," said coach Phil Housley. "Chris Taylor does a great job down in Rochester developing our guys but it's good to see we're scoring more goals."

Thompson was happy to get noticed by the goal but disappointed with his defensive game as he was on the ice for four goals and finished minus-3.

"A lot of the little things you do can be more important to get noticed than scoring," he said. "You have to be strong on 1-on-1 puck battles and get better at them. Today I wasn't good enough there. But you want to show you've got creative ability."

"Especially with the players he was matched up again ... it's great experience and valuable learning you can take to the next game," Housley said. "Try to use that moving forward when you get in the situations, knowing who you're playing against and making the right decisions."

The Wraparound: Maple Leafs 5, Sabres 3

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
September 21, 2018

TORONTO -- West Seneca native and Nichols School product Chris Mueller stung his hometown team Friday night, scoring the tiebreaking goal in the second period to snap a tie and send the Toronto Maple Leafs to a 5-3 preseason win over the Buffalo Sabres.

The game was played before 18,833 in the newly-named Scotiabank Arena, formerly Air Canada Centre. It was the Leafs' first home appearance of the preseason and they improved to 3-0 overall. The Sabres fell to 2-1.

Mueller's goal came unassisted at 10:55 of the second period. Just off a faceoff in the Buffalo end, Mueller pickpocketed defenseman Brendan Guhle to the left of the goal and jammed his own rebound under Linus Ullmark for his first goal of the preseason.

Mueller, 32, had 19 goals and 33 assists last year for the Calder Cup champion Toronto Marlies. The Michigan State product has played 651 career games in the AHL and 53 in the NHL for Nashville, Dallas and the New York Rangers. He has three NHL goals in his career, the last coming with New York in 2015.

The lineup: The Sabres forward lines were Alexander Nylander-Casey Mittelstadt-Tage Thompson, Zemgus Girgensons-Vladimir Sobotka-Andrew Oglevie, C.J. Smith-Kevin Porter-Nicholas Baptiste, Victor Olofsson-Rasmus Asplund-Eric Cornel.

The defense pairs were Brendan Guhle-Casey Nelson, Lawrence Pilut-Matt Tennyson and Brandon Hickey-Zach Redmond. Ullmark went the distance in goal, making 27 saves.

Tage takes the stage: For solo efforts in the preseason, there's Jack Eichel's short-handed breakaway tally Tuesday against Pittsburgh and Thompson's solo beauty in the second period Friday that got the Sabres even at 3-3.

Thompson stole an errant pass at his own blue line and whipped home a wrist shot at 6:08 after a neat toe drag on Toronto defenseman Connor Carrick.

Fast start: The Sabres opened the scoring after just 30 seconds when Ogelvie banged home a Nelson rebound for his second goal of the preseason.

Fast response: The Leafs roared back with three goals in the next 3:12 to take a 3-1 lead. Ron Hainsey's floater from the point 18 seconds after Ogelvie's goal made it 1-1, Pierre Envgall put Toronto ahead at 1:11 and John Tavares drove home a rebound at 3:42 to make it 3-1.

Big night for Leafs: The game marked the home debut of native son Tavares, who electrified the fan base by signing a seven-year, \$77-million contract on July 1 after spending the first nine years of his career with the New York Islanders. There was a huge roar when Tavares was announced in the starting lineup and a bigger one on his goal, his third of the preseason. He then added an empty-netter with 43 seconds left to clinch the win.

Patience personified: The Sabres got within 3-2 at 11:28 of the first on a nifty goal by Smith, who took the puck near the right-wing boards, cut across the slot and held-held-held it until he had goalie Garrett Sparks down and an open net to shoot at.

Saturday night in Buffalo: The Leafs have already announced their lineup for the teams' rematch Saturday in KeyBank Center (7 p.m., MSG, Radio 550) and it features the likes of Auston Matthews, Patrick Marleau and starting goaltender Frederik Andersen. The Sabres are expected to field mostly an NHL lineup, with expected participants including Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner, Rasmus Dahlin and Rasmus Ristolainen.

The Sabres will skate in the arena at 10:30 a.m. The big question will be if Sam Reinhart makes his preseason debut after signing his new contract on Wednesday.

Second case of Moulson ... on waivers: The NHL's preseason waiver period has opened and the Sabres have put Matt Moulson on waivers in likely anticipation of once again loaning him to the AHL's Ontario Reign if he clears.

Moulson, 34, remains Sabres property. He has a \$5 million cap hit for one more season and the team would be on the hook for \$3.975 million if he clears and is returned to Ontario, the top farm club of the Los Angeles Kings. Moulson had 18 goals and 28 assists in 49 games there last season on loan.

Several former Sabres also hit the waiver wire Friday. The list includes T.J. Brennan and Phil Varone (Philadelphia) and the St. Louis trio of Jordan Nolan, Brian Flynn and Chris Butler. Nolan, son of former Sabres coach Ted Nolan, had four goals and four assists in 69 games for Buffalo last season.

Local stripes: One of the referees for Friday's game was Sanborn native Brandon Schrader, a 24-year-old who graduated from Niagara University in May. Schrader, who played for the Wheatfield Blades and Niagara-Wheatfield High School, is slated to work in the AHL this season. As part of that assignment, he was given five NHL preseason games.

Maple Leafs ride fast start to 5-3 win over Sabres

WGR 550

September 21, 2018

John Tavares scored twice and Curtis McElhinney stopped 20 shots in relief, leading the Maple Leafs to a 5-3 win over the Sabres at Scotiabank Arena on Friday.

The goals came early and often -- four in the first 3:42 to be exact -- resulting in a quick 3-1 lead for the Maple Leafs. Buffalo actually opened the scoring only 30 seconds in on Andrew Oglevie's 1st goal of the preseason, but Ron Hainsey responded only 18 seconds later. Just 23 seconds after Hainsey tied from the point, Pierre Engvall beat Linus Ullmark for the 2-1 lead. John Tavares slammed home a big rebound a few minutes later to put the Leafs ahead by two goals.

C.J. Smith's strong preseason continued later in the period -- a nice move by the Buffalo forward off the faceoff resulted in his 1st goal, cutting the lead to 3-2. The Sabres tied things up 3-3 at 6:08 of the 2nd period thanks to a pretty toe drag and snap shot by Tage Thompson. Toronto struck back, however, on Chris Mueller's 1st goal of the preseason. The West Seneca native pushed his way to the net and beat Ullmark, putting the Leafs ahead 4-3. Tavares tucked home an empty-netter for his 2nd goal of the night, good for a 5-3 final.

After allowing three goals in less than four minutes to open the game Ullmark settled down, making several strong stops along the way and finishing with 27 saves. McElhinney stopped all 20 shots he faced in relief of Garret Sparks, who allowed three goals on 12 shots.

GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 0:30 - Andrew Oglevie (2) (Casey Nelson); 11:28 - C.J. Smith (1) (Nicholas Baptiste)

TOR: 0:48 - Ron Hainsey (1) (Unassisted); 1:11 - Pierre Engvall (1) (Colin Greening, Rasmus Sandin); 3:42 - John Tavares (3) (Timothy Liljegren, Mitch Marner)

Second Period:

BUF: 6:08 - Tage Thompson (1) (Unassisted)

TOR: 10:55 - Chris Mueller (1) (Unassisted)

Third Period:

BUF: None

TOR: 19:16 - John Tavares EN (4)

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: None

TOR: None

Second Period:

BUF: 3:23 - Matt Tennyson (2 min., slashing)

TOR: 19:47 - Josh Jooris (2 min., tripping)

Third Period:

BUF: None

TOR: 6:44 - Timothy Liljegren (2 min., holding); 9:47 - Timothy Liljegren (2 min., hooking)

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 32

TOR: 32

Goalies:

BUF: Linus Ullmark (27 saves, 31 shots)

TOR: Garret Sparks (9 saves, 12 shots), Curtis McElhinney (20 saves, 20 shots)

Power Plays:

BUF: 0 for 3

TOR: 0 for 1

Three Stars:

1. TOR - John Tavares (2 G)
2. BUF - Tage Thompson (1 G)
3. Curtis McElhinney (20 saves)

What's Next:

The Sabres and Maple Leafs meet up for the second straight night, this time at KeyBank Center. Faceoff on Saturday is set for 7 p.m. Catch all the action on WGR 550.

Sabres start slow, but some players showed well in Toronto loss

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 21, 2018

(WGR 550) - The Sabres had a real rough start in Toronto, but came back to play much better. Phil Housley has said all along that his coaching needs to be better and I thought it was in this game.

At 19-years-old, Casey Mittelstadt showed in the first period that at this point in his hockey development, he's no match for a star like John Tavares. Showing no hustle on the backcheck when Tavares scooped up a rebound is not what I'm talking about. He just looked very confused and Housley saw pretty quickly and inserted Rasmus Asplund in between Tage Thompson and Alex Nylander. Asplund is a terrific two-way center and should be a good NHL player at some point, but the 20-year-old gave the puck away on a regular basis, so Housley turned to the old, reliable veteran in Vladimir Sobotka. That settled everything down and the Sabres played much better.

Brendan Guhle is only 21 and has not had a good preseason at all. He was weak in front of Linus Ullmark when Chris Mueller simply lifted his stick and scored. You can't be that casual and expect to stay in the NHL. He also is not fighting to get himself free of checkers who are taking his ice away from him immediately. Don't get me wrong, I still think Guhle is going to be an excellent NHL player, but if I were Jason Botterill, a message would be sent and he would be part of Rochester's camp by Monday. It's possible he still may need a whole year of development.

Lawrence Pilut was not good in the Prospects challenge, but he has shown well in two preseason games. He played 25:31 against the Leafs and was good for most of the game. Pilut has five years in the SHL and will be 23 before the year ends, so with Matt Hunwick injured, he could earn a spot on opening night. It depends if Housley wants to keep seven or eight D-men.

I did not like Nylander's game in the first period, but this season is different for this 20-year-old. He went out and did something about it. I thought he played well in the final 40 minutes and almost scored on a breakaway after picking Tavares' pocket.

Tage Thompson wired a goal that many would not be capable of scoring. Thompson has been good since he arrived in Buffalo in August. On the goal he made a move to the slot that put down defensemen Connor Carrick and then did a toe drag before quickly rifling a shot past Garret Sparks. Thompson had a chance to tie the game in the third period when he did it again, but he ripped the shot over the net.

Thompson is one of the few forwards that can get to Rochester without being waived and he's making things difficult on Housley.

Mittelstadt struggled a lot during this game and it's just going through growing pains for him as the highly talented kid finds his way in the NHL. There will be stretches where he plays very well and then stretches where he struggles.

C.J. Smith has had two very good training camps and is also making things hard for the final roster scoring a skillful goal after a good play along the wall by Nick Baptiste.

No cuts yet as the same two teams play in Buffalo on Saturday although it's likely none from Friday's game will play in Saturday's. Amerks training camp starts Monday in Rochester and some of these players will be there.

Sabres implode early, rally in loss to Maple Leafs

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
September 21, 2018

TORONTO – Following a three-year AHL apprenticeship, the Sabres expect goalie Linus Ullmark to play around 30 games this season as their new backup.

So watching the Maple Leafs score on their first two shots and three of their first eight in the opening 3:42 of Friday's preseason tilt had to be concerning.

Then Ullmark, 25, settled down nicely after the Sabres, who opened the scoring 30 seconds in, fell behind 3-1. Over the final 50 minutes or so, the Swede looked sharp, making some strong saves and allowing the Sabres to tie the game.

Still, it wasn't enough, as the Leafs beat a Sabres squad comprised mostly of youngsters and AHL players 5-3 in front 18,833 fans inside Scotiabank Arena.

"I love the way we responded," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We were facing some big-time adversity there when it was 3-1. Our guys came back, got that period back."

He added: "I thought our compete, our effort, our conditioning is right where it needs to be. Give them credit, they scored some opportunistic goals. But even saying that, Linus makes a couple huge saves for us to keep it at one."

Ullmark finished with 27 saves. What helped him settle in?

"Nothing really, just watching the puck," Ullmark said. "I don't really care about what's happened. It's just about focusing on what's next."

Second-period goals from wingers C.J. Smith and Tage Thompson helped the Sabres tie it. Then West Seneca's Chris Mueller, a top player for Toronto's AHL team, the Marlies, scored the winner 10:55 into the second period.

Star John Tavares, who played his first home game, scored early for the Leafs and added an empty-netter. Ron Hainsey and Pierre Engvall scored the other goals.

The Sabres fell to 1-2 this preseason.

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Since a slew of talented youngsters, including first overall pick Rasmus Dahlin, are among the 49 players left in training camp, some rookies get a bit overlooked.

Take, for example, winger Andrew Oglevie, a free agent the Sabres signed out of Notre Dame earlier this year.

The 5-foot-10, 179-pound Oglevie scored 30 seconds into Friday's tilt, potting defenseman Casey Nelson's rebound past Leafs goalie Garret Sparks at the bottom of the right circle.

Oglevie, 23, scored a similar goal in Monday's 4-1 win in Columbus.

What has helped Oglevie stand out? Getting to the net.

"I just really like the way he's playing," Housley said. "He's finding the holes, he's got a good knack of knowing where the puck's going to be."

Oglevie said: "Good things happen when you go to the blue paint. I'm trying to get there and get my stick on some pucks that are laying around."

On Friday, Oglevie mostly skated at right wing with center Casey Mittelstadt and Zemgus Girgensons. Oglevie also earned action on the power play.

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The Sabres waived winger Matt Moulson on Friday. Assuming the veteran clears today – given he is owed \$2 million in 2018-19, the final season of his five-year, \$25 million contract, he should – they will likely assign him to an AHL team.

After the Sabres waived Moulson early last season, they sent him to the Ontario Reign, the Los Angeles Kings' AHL affiliate. The Sabres did not want Moulson taking ice time away from their prospects with the Rochester Americans.

Moulson, 34, is not in training camp with the Sabres.

The three-time 30-goal scorer had zero goals in 14 games with the Sabres last season. However, he thrived back in the AHL, compiling 18 goals and 46 points in 48 contests.

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Housley dressed one intriguing line Friday, assembling three first-round picks: Mittelstadt, Thompson and Alexander Nylander.

The trio, which was on the ice for two of the Leafs' first three goals, lasted just a few minutes together.

On Friday morning, Housley said he was only concerned about the line's checking, especially if they faced Tavares, who would score against the trio hours later.

"If they take care of that, they're going to get turnovers and they're going to create offense," he said. "But they got to pay attention to the players they're playing against."

Housley replaced Mittelstadt with veteran Vladimir Sobotka. Thompson scored an unassisted goal in the second period, utilizing his wicked shot to beat Leafs goalie Curtis McElhinney.

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Leafs coach Mike Babcock on the Sabres: "They should be a good team. I've known (Sabres general manager Jason Botterill) for a long time, he's a good man, a good hockey man and he'll fix things there over time."

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Many of the Sabres' biggest names – Dahlin, center Jack Eichel, defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen and others – are expected to play in tonight's tilt against the Leafs at KeyBank Center.

Leafs star Auston Matthews is expected to dress.

Sabres' Alexander Nylander enjoying strong camp

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
September 21, 2018

BUFFALO – Coaches regularly jumble their preseason line combinations as they evaluate their talent and move players in and out. What you see during exhibition games usually doesn't stick together for the regular season.

Still, one intriguing trio the Sabres will utilize tonight could remain intact.

This morning inside KeyBank Center, coach Phil Housley assembled three first-round picks – center Casey Mittelstadt and Alexander Nylander and Tage Thompson – for the Sabres' road tilt against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The youngsters recently played together in the final game of the Prospects Challenge. In Monday's 4-1 win in Columbus, Patrik Berglund centered the wingers.

Nylander enjoyed a strong outing against the Blue Jackets, recording two assists in the preseason opener.

"I thought that (the Nylander) line was really a difference-maker," Housley said this morning. "But tonight, it's a combination we're just looking to put people in different places to get an evaluation. But I like the makeup of that line. They're young, they're fast, they're skilled.

"The only thing I'm concerned about is just the checking portion of it. If they take care of that, they're going to get turnovers and they're going to create offense. But they got to pay attention to the players they're playing against."

Stars forwards John Tavares and Mitch Marner will dress for the Leafs, so if the line gets matched up against them, they'll have a stiff test.

"It could be a Tavares line, a Marner (line)," Housley said. "They're very good hockey players. They have speed, they have experience. So it's a great test. It's good to see them and evaluate them in those situations."

In what many observers believe is a pivotal season for Nylander, 20, he has looked noticeable from the get-go, showcasing the tenacity to complement his talent.

Monday's effort showed he might hang around and compete for a roster spot.

"I was moving my feet, working hard, trying to get pucks deep and trying to create scoring chances offensively," Nylander said. "I thought our line was really good that night, we were helping each other out."

A solid start was critical for the Swede, who missed all of rookie and training camp last year before struggling throughout much of the regular season.

"He's just moving his feet really well and showing the speed that he has," Housley said. "He's getting on pucks on the forecheck, he's willing to get into the tough areas, he's going to the net hard. He's really improved from last year."

Thompson, an offseason acquisition from St. Louis, has learned Nylander possesses skill at different speeds.

"He's able to make plays at top speed," Thompson said. "A lot of guys can only make plays at one speed, but he can slow it down, too."

Here's the rest of tonight's likely lineup against the Leafs:

Forwards

- Zemgus Girgensons, Vladimir Sobotka and Andrew Oglevie
- C.J. Smith, Kevin Porter and Nick Baptiste
- Victor Olofsson, Rasmus Asplund and Eric Cornel

Defense

- Brendan Guhle and Casey Nelson
- Lawrence Pilut and Matt Tennyson
- Brandon Hickey and Zach Redmond

Linus Ullmark will start in goal and be backed up by Adam Wilcox.

Check back later for updates from Toronto.

Sabres fall to Leafs 5-3

By Nick Filipowski

WIVB

September 21, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - Andrew Oglevie opened the scoring but it was the Leafs newest offseason addition, John Tavares, scoring last to power Toronto to a 5-3 win over the Sabres Friday night.

The two teams will play again Saturday night in Buffalo. Puckdrop is set for 7 p.m. at Keybank Center.

Oglevie continued his strong performance dating all the way back to the Prospects Challenge, finding the back of the net 40 seconds into the first period.

He also scored in the preseason opener against Columbus.

Toronto answered back with three straight goals, including a tally from Tavares to give the Leafs a 3-1 lead.

Buffalo battled back as CJ Smith continued his hot streak with a tally midway through the opening period, cutting across the crease and firing home his first goal of the preseason to pull the Blue & Gold within one.

Tage Thompson tied the game with a beauty of a goal in the second period. After an errant pass bounced off the boards, Thompson sped into the Leafs' zone and showed off his lethal shot, netting his first goal of the preseason.

However, four minutes after Thompson's tally, West Seneca native Chris Mueller put the Leafs out front for good, stealing the puck from defenseman Brendan Guhle and burying what proved to be the game winning goal.

Sabres-Maple Leafs rivalry should start heating up

By Lance Hornby

Toronto Sun

September 21, 2018

This weekend will be a teaser of what should be a much more meaningful Toronto-Buffalo rivalry.

After injuries to both Jack Eichel and Auston Matthews the past couple of seasons put a damper on things, not to mention a dip in Sabres fortunes as the Leafs improved, Buffalo added its own No. 1 overall pick to the picture in Rasmus Dahlin.

Both he and Eichel are expected to play on Saturday at KeyBank Center, while Matthews didn't play on Friday to prepare to face his off-ice pal Eichel on the road.

Matthews will have his new first-line wingers Patrick Marleau and former Sabre Tyler Ennis, who scored 20 goals three times there before an unsatisfying diversion to the Minnesota Wild. Frederik Andersen likely sees action in goal on Saturday as well.

"We'll get to see (Buffalo's) best tomorrow and we'll be shorter in some ways, not so much on the back end, but up front," said Toronto coach Mike Babcock of Saturday's lineup plans.

"They should be a good team. I've known (GM) Jason Botterill for a long time, he's a good man, a good hockey man and he'll fix things there over time."

The teams don't play a regular-season game until Dec. 4, but then play three times between Feb. 24 and March 20.

Tavares scores twice as Maple Leafs top Sabres

Sportsnet

September 21, 2018

TORONTO — John Tavares didn't need to plug in GPS co-ordinates for the drive to his first game at Scotiabank Arena as a member of the Maple Leafs.

Toronto's new star centre also had little trouble finding the scoresheet for a second straight pre-season outing.

Tavares buried his first two goals on home ice to double his exhibition total as the Leafs downed the Buffalo Sabres 5-3 on Friday.

The 28-year-old stunned the hockey world by signing a US\$77-million contract on July 1 with the team he cheered for as a kid growing up in the suburbs west of Toronto, and got an ovation unlike most in pre-season when his name was announced before Friday's opening faceoff.

"You know your way around a little bit," Tavares said of his commute to Scotiabank Arena, formerly Air Canada Centre. "I know my north, south, east and west. I've got an idea where I'm headed, so even if I make a wrong turn I've got an idea where I am.

"I just try to enjoy it," he added of the experience. "I don't try to think about it too much. I think you just try to live in the moment and embrace this opportunity."

Tavares has certainly done that in two exhibition games, registering four goals and an assist as Toronto improved to 3-0-0 following consecutive 4-1 wins over the Ottawa Senators.

"It's quite the atmosphere for a pre-season game," he said. "The passion for this team in this building and this city is pretty special."

John Tavares loved Scotiabank Arena's fans & atmosphere

Ron Hainsey, Pierre Engvall and Chris Mueller also scored for the Leafs. Curtis McElhinney stopped all 20 shots he faced after replacing Garret Sparks, who made nine saves, midway through the second period.

Andrew Oglevie, C.J. Smith and Tage Thompson replied for the Sabres. Linus Ullmark made 27 stops in taking the loss.

The teams will play an exhibition rematch Saturday night in Buffalo.

Despite the victory, Leafs head coach Mike Babcock wasn't pleased with significant stretches of Friday.

"It's real important when you find a way to win," he said. "It's also important you establish work ethic and structure at home where it becomes automatic. You win every night and you play hard every night and the other team knows they have no opportunity.

"They wouldn't be leaving here tonight thinking that."

Oglevie opened the scoring half a minute into the first period when he slid a rebound past Sparks, but Hainsey's shot through traffic tied it 18 seconds later. Engvall continued the chaotic opening 23 seconds after that when he beat Ullmark for a third goal in the game's first 1:11.

Tavares then made it 3-1 with his third of the pre-season at 3:42, finishing off a sequence he started with a stretch pass to Mitch Marner, who in turn dropped it back to Timothy Liljegren. The rookie defenceman blasted a one-timer at Ullmark, and Tavares was there to pop the rebound upstairs.

Smith continued the deluge at 11:28 when he won a battle following an offensive zone faceoff and drove to the net to pull Buffalo within one.

Tavares, who inked a seven-year deal with the Leafs after nine seasons with the New York Islanders, was helped out by his goalie early in the second after a turnover, with Sparks making a toe stop on an Alexander Nylander breakaway

But Sparks was unable to bail out another defensive miscue later in the period on a bad pinch as Thompson pulled the puck past a sliding Connor Carrick on a 2-on-1 and ripped a shot home at 6:08.

The Leafs retook the lead at 10:55 when Mueller plowed forward off a faceoff in the Sabres end before picking the pocket of the Buffalo defender and stuffing a shot past Ullmark.

Sabres' Nylander talks brother's contract stalemate with Maple Leafs

By Chris Johnston

Sportsnet

September 22, 2018

TORONTO – Alexander Nylander says his brother William is doing “good” while waiting for a new contract from the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The Buffalo Sabres prospect has kept in touch with his older sibling since returning to North America at the start of September but doesn't know much about the current state of his contract talks.

“He wants to be here, obviously, he wants to play,” Nylander said after Friday's 5-3 pre-season loss in Toronto. “That's the way it is right now and I just hope everything goes well with him and good stuff will happen.”

William Nylander is skating back home in Sweden. He's missed the first nine days of Maple Leafs training camp because of the contract stalemate and has kept a low profile during his absence – save for an Instagram post earlier this week touting a new apparel deal with Reebok.

The next pressure point in negotiations won't arrive until just before Toronto's Oct. 3 season opener against Montreal, when Nylander would officially start losing pay if he remained unsigned.

Leafs general manager Kyle Dubas continues to project confidence when asked about negotiations. Earlier this week, he told Sportsnet that “it's our full intention that all these young guys are here for a long time and the impediment right now is we're trying to go through a process with them, with [agent] Lewis Gross and William Nylander and their camp and we'll continue to work away at it.”

Nylander is coming off consecutive 61-point seasons and is the first of the Leafs young stars in need of a second NHL deal. Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner will each see their entry-level contracts expire next summer.

Should he sign a long-term deal rather than a bridge contract, he's likely to receive somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6-million to \$6.4-million – falling in a similar range to what Winnipeg's Nikolaj Ehlers and Calgary's Sean Monahan received coming out of entry level.

Alexander, meanwhile, is looking to make his first big breakthrough in Buffalo. A No. 8 overall pick just like William, he was slowed by a nagging groin injury last fall but is feeling healthy now and earning praise in training camp.

“I'm obviously here focusing on trying to make a spot here,” he said. “I mean I know I can do it with the way I can play. I feel really good coming into the season – obviously last season I missed the training camp and everything – so I'm just trying to play my best every game and improve.”

Sabres respond to slow start, but fall short in Toronto

By Jourdon LaBarber

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TORONTO - Linus Ullmark offered the most succinct description of the way the Buffalo Sabres began their game at Scotiabank Arena on Friday night.

"We were off to a really good start," the goaltender said. "And then it turned into a bad start."

Andrew Oglevie opened the scoring for the Sabres thirty seconds into the contest, only to see the Toronto Maple Leafs answer with a barrage of three goals over the next 3:11. The end result was a 5-3 loss, but when it was all said and done the Sabres' response stood out more than the start itself.

Goals from C.J. Smith and Tage Thompson had the game tied early in the second period. When the Sabres surrendered the lead again shortly after, they kept the deficit at one goal until John Tavares buried an empty-netter with 44 seconds remaining.

"I loved the way we responded," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We were facing some big-time adversity there when it was down 3-1. Our guys came back and got that period back."

"... I thought our compete, our effort, our conditioning is right where it needs to be. Give them credit, they scored some opportunistic goals. But even saying that, Linus made a couple huge saves for us to keep it at one and we had a couple really good looks right down towards the end."

The Maple Leafs were always going to be a tall order for the Sabres, given the composition of their lineups. Toronto had a veteran-laden lineup headlined by Tavares, Mitch Marner, Nazem Kadri and Morgan Reilly. Buffalo's was largely a mix of prospects, some new to the pro game.

Add in the fact that it was the Maple Leafs' (and Tavares') first home game of the preseason and the atmosphere that comes with that, and you have a good test for a young team.

"I think a lot of our young guys got a really valuable experience," Housley said. "Not only just the atmosphere, the building and the history here, but just the pace of play and just processing that because it was a high-tempo game and they looked a little bit faster than us early on."

Toronto applied pressure following Oglevie's early goal, forcing the Sabres into costly turnovers and defensive lapses. The line of Thompson, Casey Mittelstadt and Alexander Nylander was on the ice for two of Toronto's first three goals, and Thompson acknowledged that the skill of the opposition was a step above what they had seen to this point in the preseason.

"I think it was a good learning lesson," Thompson said. "I think as a team and individually, we didn't come out the way we needed to. They're a very fast and skilled team and if you give them time and space, they're going to make you pay out there."

Housley was quick to make changes, shifting the veteran Vladimir Sobotka between Thompson and Nylander and placing Mittelstadt on a line with Zemgus Girgensons and Oglevie. The Sabres began to settle down, taking an 18-16 lead in shot attempts by the end of the first period.

"It wasn't working, right? So, you try to make some changes and they got some momentum off of it," Housley said. "It was great that they responded the right way. I mean we were down 3-1, it could have been ugly. But the guys scraped their way back into the first period and gave us some life going into the second."

The names that showed up in the goal column were promising for a team looking to foster internal competition. Oglevie, Smith and Thompson have a combined 43 NHL games under their belts, but all three are promising prospects with aspirations of making the Sabres roster this season.

Smith scored his goal off an offensive-zone faceoff, beating a defender as he cut across the net to create a wide-open shot. Thompson's goal was the product of a toe-drag followed by a laser of a wrist shot from the slot.

Oglevie, meanwhile, had earned more ice time with his play in the preseason opener in Columbus, when he scored by crashing the net and cashing in on a rebound. He repeated that effort to begin the game on Friday.

"I just really like the way he's playing," Housley said. "He's finding the holes, he's got a good knack of knowing where the puck's going to be, and he buries another one. It's just great to see him contribute to our team and he's had a terrific camp."

The Sabres will rematch with the Maple Leafs at home on Saturday, this time with a lineup that should more closely resemble what we're going to see on opening night. As for Friday, Ullmark summed up the outcome as well as he had summed up the start.

"We had a lot of new guys coming in here, first game, big scene against Toronto, hockey's mecca. I think a lot of the guys really enjoyed it and hopefully [they] did, because I did," he said. "Even though we came out with a loss, it was a lot of fun."

"It sucks that we lose, I never want to go home with a loss, but we've got to be humble and just got with the flow, you know? It was something that was definitely a learning experience."

Pilut continues his strong camp

Lawrence Pilut has been among the standouts at training camp, earning praise from Housley for his poise and creativity with the puck. The rookie defenseman continued his strong showing in Toronto and was rewarded with a team-high 25:31 of ice time.

Pilut also led the Sabres with four shots and seven shot attempts to go along with three blocked shots.

"I love it," he said. "I love to play a lot, that's what I want to do all the time. I just want to be out there and contribute with my game and try to create stuff all the time."

Pilut said he's grown more confident with each passing game, and it's been evident. He stands out with his offensive talents and hasn't shied from leading the rush, but he's poised in his own end as well. At one point of the third period he was making a diving poke check to prevent a would-be goal for Toronto. Later, he was winning a battle with Tavares and calmly executing a breakout.

"I just thought he was pretty savvy and poised with the puck," Housley said. "He was into the game, he made some really nice plays joining the rush. Sometimes he gets a little bit antsy and tries to do too much with good intention. We've just got to reel that in a little bit, but you can't fault him for his effort."

The Sabres play the home portion of their back-to-back set with the Maple Leafs at KeyBank Center on Saturday. The game can be seen live on MSG-B, or you can listen to Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on the call on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 7 p.m.