



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 30, 2018

Approaching 1,000 games, Jason Pominville still big contributor for Sabres

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

October 29, 2018

Welcome to a big week for Jason Pominville.

The Buffalo Sabres have four games in the next six days, starting with Tuesday night's visit to KeyBank Center by the Calgary Flames. And Pominville will hit a major milestone when he plays his 1,000th career NHL game Thursday night in Ottawa.

At 35, the winger is the elder statesman of the Sabres and one of the most respected players in franchise history. It's a long way from October 2005, when the 22-year-old was on waivers so the Sabres could get him back to Rochester.

Just imagine if Pominville had been claimed and gone somewhere else. No Population. No captaincy. No "scary good" overtime goal to go down in Sabres lore.

"I was disappointed but I kind of figured I wasn't getting taken," Pominville said Monday when asked to reflect on those days. "There's not a lot of guys at training camp that get taken. Most teams know that they think they have what it takes. There's not a lot of injuries. Their teams are built and they have the rosters from the summer.

"I knew I could play. I just had to get that opportunity. I think I was just ready to play when I got the chance. Sometimes you play and you're probably not ready and forced into position. But when I arrived, I was ready to play."

Sure was. Pominville had 19 goals in 18 games at Rochester before getting the call to the NHL for good. It's been quite a career. He just went over 700 NHL points and is a seven-time 20-goal scorer in the league, with six of those seasons coming in Buffalo. His next point will make him just the 10th Sabres player with 500.

And, of course, there's The Goal. Not many players have one goal their career is immediately associated with. Pominville certainly does.

It came in overtime in Game 5 of the 2006 Eastern Conference semifinals in Ottawa. The Sabres were leading the series, three games to one, when coach Lindy Ruff sent out fellow ruffians Pominville and Derek Roy to kill a Jay McKee penalty in overtime.

"I'm a rookie. Roysie is a rookie. And Lindy trusts both of us to go out there in the D zone on the PK," Pominville said. "We're able to get the puck, I put my head up and I see a forward and a 'D.' ... When you're killing penalties, most times you don't go for it – especially in the playoffs in overtime. I don't know why I went for it."

Perhaps, it was suggested, he was being an overzealous rookie.

"Exactly. Probably, now that you think about it," he said with a laugh.

It was the right call. Pominville went for it when he saw Daniel Alfredsson back, curled past the Ottawa forward and stuffed the puck around goaltender Ray Emery. It was the first series-clinching short-handed goal in NHL history.

"I kind of went blank after that until I saw Jay McKee hopping out of the penalty box and the whole team jumping together," Pominville said. "It was pretty cool. You're just going out there and making a hockey play, a hockey read that you see. Now with a step back, you realize how big a goal it was for the team and the organization."

Pominville was also quick to credit play-by-play man Rick Jeanneret for helping the goal stand the test of time with his cries of, "Now do you believe? Now do you believe? These guys are good. Scary good."

"Every time I have a chance to see it, I still get chills hearing RJ's call," he said. "It was a pretty special moment."

Pominville will become the 326th player in NHL history to hit 1,000 games. Tuesday's game will be No. 672 with the Sabres and he played 327 with Minnesota from 2013-17 before being reacquired by Buffalo in July 2017.

"Pommer is just a true pro," said coach Phil Housley. "He comes to the rink, he's focused, he's prepared. Just the way he approaches everything that he does, whether it's a practice or a game, he says a lot of things where guys really respect what he has to say. He's represented this organization as a class act."

Pominville was drafted at No. 55 overall in 2001 and the only players from that draft with more career points are the top two picks, Dallas' Jason Spezza and Los Angeles' Ilya Kovalchuk.

Pominville has five goals and nine points in 11 games this season and has ascended to a top-line wing role after playing a key spot on the team's fourth line with Evan Rodrigues and Zemgus Girgensons.

Housley wondered about breaking up the line because it was creating time in the offensive zone but remembered some chemistry Pominville had at the start of last season with Jack Eichel, so he reunited Pominville with Eichel and added Jeff Skinner to what's become an elite top line.

The Sabres are a building franchise trying to crack the playoffs for the first time since 2011. Pominville fondly remembers the days of 2006 and 2007, when the city was abuzz for weeks during the postseason runs. He'd love to get one more chance.

"My first two years, we're there back to back and you're like, 'Wow, this is cool. We're going to be there a lot,' " he said. "Then you realize there's a business side of it. ... You need to have your good pieces. I think this team is getting there and it should be nice."

Pominville said his wife is quietly planning a gathering of family and friends for the Montreal native as he plays in Game 1,000 Thursday night.

"It will be a nice week for sure. Time goes by fast," he said. "I still remember my first call-up in Washington, playing my first game [in 2004]. You dream your whole life of having a chance to play one day. Being able to stick around and play that many games is definitely overwhelming. A lot of good memories, ups and downs, good stories, was able to meet some great people and meet some great friends along the way."

Sabres Notebook: Evan Rodrigues back after son's birth; Jake McCabe's status uncertain

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
October 29, 2018

When the Sabres finished practice Monday in HarborCenter, coach Phil Housley chose which player was heading into the center circle to lead the final stretching sequence.

"Papa," Housley called, as players laughed and tapped their sticks.

Evan Rodrigues took instruction as his coach asked. Rodrigues was back at practice Monday after missing Saturday's game in Columbus for what the team had termed personal reasons.

The news was good: His wife, Christina, gave birth to their first child Sunday.

Rodrigues flew to Columbus with the team Friday night but returned Saturday morning as his wife went into labor. Their son's name is Grayson Michael, and he weighed in at 7 pounds, 10 ounces.

"It was just: Get home, spend time with my wife and go," Rodrigues said. "We knew it was very close."

The baby was born on time, but Rodrigues said it was a little nerve-wracking being out West for 10 days on the team's recent road trip.

"Signs were pointing to him not coming that early," Rodrigues said. "Once I got back from that trip, everything went smoothly. We just kind of took it day by day and here he is."

Rodrigues is likely to return to his regular spot with Casey Mittelstadt and Kyle Okposo for Tuesday's game against Calgary in KeyBank Center. Tage Thompson took his place Saturday and posted his first Buffalo point, an assist on Okposo's goal that opened the scoring in the 5-4 overtime loss to the Blue Jackets. Mittelstadt's first goal of the season early in the third period forged the OT.

Asked what sport his new son is going to trend toward, Rodrigues said, "I feel like there's going to be a push towards hockey. But hey, whatever he wants to be. If he wants to be a golfer, I'll go down to Florida and follow him."

•••

Defenseman Jake McCabe missed practice Monday with an upper-body injury suffered Saturday. McCabe played only a little more than three minutes of the second period before leaving, but he gutted out more than seven minutes of the third period against the Blue Jackets.

Housley said his status will be determined around Tuesday's morning skate. Rasmus Dahlin skated in McCabe's place alongside Rasmus Ristolainen on Monday. Dahlin and Ristolainen have yet to play together this season in a game.

•••

The Flames come here Tuesday on the second half of a back-to-back after playing Monday night in Toronto. Calgary is on a brutal stretch of the schedule, with the game against the Sabres being its sixth in nine nights. Overall, the Flames will play eight games in 13 nights before finally getting a three-day break next week.

Calgary suffered the worst loss in its history Thursday night in the Saddledome with a 9-1 drubbing at the hands of the Pittsburgh Penguins. The Flames played much better at home Saturday, suffering a 4-3 overtime loss to Stanley Cup champion Washington.

After coming East for the quick back to back, the Flames have to head immediately home to face Colorado on Thursday and Chicago on Saturday.

Struggling starter Mike Smith got the call in goal for the Flames Monday, and he entered the matchup the Leafs sporting a 3.91 goals-against average and .869 save percentage. The Sabres are thus likely to see backup David Rittich, who is 2-1, 2.37/.933 in five games.

Nathan Paetsch develops into mentor for Sabres prospects with Amerks

By Bill Hoppe
The Buffalo News
October 29, 2018

ROCHESTER – Nathan Paetsch signed for his 16th pro season knowing this could happen: So far, the popular former Sabres defenseman has been scratched for all 10 of the Americans' games.

On a blue line that goes 10 deep, Paetsch, 35, ranks last on the depth chart.

But the affable Paetsch, who played 167 NHL games, understands why the Amerks brought him back for another year.

"The situation going in, I wasn't naive by any means," Paetsch said during the second intermission of a recent game in Blue Cross Arena. "That's really why I'm here, to help develop the younger guys, move them along. It's just as important as what I do."

Paetsch considers himself a mentor for Sabres prospects.

"He is kind of almost like another coach sometimes," Amerks defenseman Brendan Guhle said.

But Paetsch is careful about using the word "coach."

"I would never step on their toes," Paetsch said. "I'm here to help with them."

So Paetsch might watch video with a youngster, an activity he has done for years, or talk to a defenseman during practice at the coaching staff's request. He said he wants to do whatever he can to "help build the organization."

"He's a classy guy," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor, who played three seasons with Paetsch in Rochester. "He teaches young kids how to practice every day, he loves the game. ... He's just a guy that you want in the dressing room for young people to watch and learn."

Having played 849 pro games, including 630 in the AHL, Paetsch is uniquely qualified for his role. He developed in the Sabres system, spending three seasons with the Amerks.

In his early days, he fought for playing time, even occasionally skating at forward.

"He was just one of those guys he did anything," Taylor said.

Paetsch quietly developed into a strong prospect. After a 50-point season and an appearance in the AHL All-Star Game in 2005-06, he graduated to Buffalo, where he spent the next three and a half years.

When Paetsch's NHL career ended following a brief stint with the Columbus Blue Jackets in 2010, he transitioned into a new phase with the Grand Rapids Griffins.

He won two Calder Cups with the Detroit Red Wings' affiliate, morphing into one of the AHL's top veteran defensemen.

Paetsch re-signed with the Amerks last year, coming full circle and returning to his adopted home. He and his wife, Jaclyn, live in Spencerport with their children.

He played only 22 games in 2017-18, partly because he broke a leg early in the season. Still, the Amerks re-signed him to a one-year AHL contract in June.

"I've taken pride in that part of what I (do)," Paetsch said. "I think that's the reason why a guy like me gets re-signed after playing (22) games. It's not because I tore up the league by any means, it's to help out the young guys. ..."

"Guys just don't want to hear from coaches all the time. But when they can hear from a guy that's still playing, maybe sometimes the message gets through a little better, I hope."

Paetsch's warm personality might enhance that message. He always seems to have a smile etched on his face and some positive words to share.

"He's a good people guy," said Sabres winger Jason Pominville, who played with Paetsch in Rochester and Buffalo. "He's a guy that was always fun to hang out with, a guy I could see him probably coaching when he's done. I can see a lot of guys look up to (him) because of that, because you kind of get drawn into him because of his personality."

Not surprisingly, Paetsch said he would like to coach after he's done playing.

"I love this organization and the area and I want to stay within the organization," Paetsch said. "What capacity it is, I don't know. I'm not getting any younger and I know where I'm at in my career."

But Taylor, who played until he was 39, knows retiring isn't easy.

"He's pretty similar to what I was at that age," Taylor said. "I wanted to be a player and only a player. But you can see the attributes that he brings that he will be a coach someday just because of how he talk to players, how he handles players."

"But he's definitely a player, and that's what I like about him, he doesn't try to do both. He's just an extension of us. He fits in perfect. We couldn't have a better guy in our dressing room."

Paetsch knows how to handle sitting out. During his NHL days, he was usually the Sabres' seventh or eighth defenseman, meaning they sometimes scratched him for weeks at a time.

"When the situation does arise (to play), I'll be ready," Paetsch said.

That opportunity could materialize soon.

"There's no doubt in my mind he'll be playing lots of games for us," Taylor said. "It's one of those situations he understands. But he hasn't complained. He's one of the guys that just keeps working harder and keeps pushing the other guys."

Sabres' McCabe is questionable for Tuesday's game

By PAUL HAMILTON

WGR 550

OCTOBER 29, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Phil Housley said Jake McCabe has an upper-body injury, but he wouldn't say if McCabe will be able to play Tuesday. McCabe missed practice which vaulted Rasmus Dahlin up with Rasmus Ristolainen. Nate Beaulieu played with Casey Nelson and Marco Scandella stayed with Zach Bogosian.

Up front, I find it interesting that as Kyle Okposo's ice-time dwindles, his production increases. For the first six games of the season the winger played between 14:44 and 20:34. He had no goals and three assists in that time.

In his last four games, Okposo has played 10:12, 11:09, 11:51 and 11:40 and he has three goals and an assist for four points. The former Islander has noticed his ice-time is down and he's not sitting on his laurels just because he has goals in three straight games, "I think I can do more with it, definitely some good things, but I think there's still a lot more.

"I think in the offensive zone especially I can be more dynamic, more of a force. I know I'm not playing that much right now, but the team's playing well and that's it, I mean we're doing a lot of good things, we're growing as a group."

When I spoke to Okposo in August he said he spent a lot of the summer working on his skating. There have been a couple of times this season I've noticed that he's is moving faster. He said, "I think of all of us have the mindset of playing quick, playing fast and it's not necessarily skating fast, it's working hard to get in the right spots and as a team we look faster because we're all in the right spots."

When Tim Murray signed Okposo to a free agent contract, he said he came to Buffalo because it had a better chance of winning the Stanley Cup than the Islanders. After two seasons of historic losing, Okposo said this year's team is more like what he was expecting, "Yes I think you could say that, but I think when you come in, you don't know what's going on behind the scenes and I think that we just had a lot of growing to do as a team and we're still doing it. You can see the signs and the work that we've put into it. We did a lot of things to become a tighter knit group and everybody's committed to doing the right things on and off the ice and that's going a long way in our game."

Okposo has played on a line at times with Casey Mittelstadt and sits next to him in the locker room. Phil Housley has spoken about how hard Mittelstadt is working to become a better all around player and Okposo has taken the fellow Golden Gopher under his wing, "I talk to him all the time and I know how passionate he is and I love it.

"I tell him all the time that don't discount your instincts. He's such a powerful offensive player in what he can do and at the same time, his play away from the puck and being good defensively, he's definitely committed to it and he's going to be a really good player."

Evan Rodrigues said his wife gave birth to a boy on Sunday. Rodrigues served with Remi Elie as an extra defensive pair in practice. As far as I'm concerned, that was a wasted day of practice for those two as they get nothing out of playing defense. How do either one of the two young forwards get better playing defense in practice? They could've gotten just as much out of being in the gym or watching video.

The Sabres keep talking about accountability. But what exactly does that mean to them?

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

October 29, 2018

There's a change in the air around the Buffalo Sabres these days.

It may be in part to getting off to their best start since 2011-2012, when they started 6-5-0. Now 6-4-1, with three straight games in which they rallied to win or send it to overtime, that kind of excitement is making people pay attention. Part of the recipe for early success comes from the players making sure everyone is doing their part.

"Accountability" is almost a buzzword in the hockey world. Everyone from GMs to coaches to players talk about needing it in order to have a good team and to win games, so when you hear it being mentioned when there aren't results to back it up, it almost seems like a myth. It's an element that's in the ether but isn't quantifiable. For the Sabres, being accountable is their new reality.

In talking with Sabres defensemen about how their offensive abilities are helping change the way the team attacks play, they all mentioned accountability in a way that made it a central focus of what the entire team is doing.

"We're more comfortable as a group holding each other accountable," defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "I think everyone knows what being accountable is and means, but as a group we're probably a little more comfortable holding each other accountable. In the same sense, you have to hold yourself accountable too before you can hold anyone else accountable. But I think we're just at a point as a group we've probably gotten more comfortable in that sense of things."

Being accountable in the NHL means knowing when you've made mistakes and doing your part to make sure they don't happen again whether that's over the course of a full season or during a single game or period. Players that are new to Buffalo within the past season or two and had experience of what it was like on playoff teams know what accountability means and how important it is.

"Guys are making the right plays at the right times," defenseman Marco Scandella said. "I feel like everyone is doing their job, doing their part, and when you do that you win a lot of hockey games. We're starting to figure that out now and we're getting a taste of it so we've just got to stay hungry."

The Sabres haven't had it easy and a lot of that was their own doing on the ice. Correcting a prolonged period of mistakes or making amends on a brain fart during a game goes a long way towards having sustained success. For a team that's still young and is made up of young stars and future stars, it's a lot of learning on the fly.

"We have made a concerted effort to, one, be more accountable to yourself and, two, hold other guys accountable," right wing Kyle Okposo said. "I think that when you have the majority of the group pulling in the right direction, then people that aren't, they stand out. They don't want that, so you're held accountable just by that, just by standing out in a poor way. Too many times we had the group that was pulling in probably not a great direction. I think the guys that were doing the right things, they stood out a little bit and now it seems to have shifted."

Peer pressure, in this case, works out well because while the leadership group includes Jack Eichel as captain with Okposo and Bogosian as alternate captains, there's enough room for everyone to say what they feel is needed.

"I don't know how many instances there's been so far this year, but I think the guys are comfortable with each other in the room," Eichel said. "I think guys are comfortable enough to say something if something needs to be said. I think that's pretty important."

Although it's early in the season, the Sabres have had moments already to have an open forum to discuss their feelings. It's not a closed-door meeting where words are more shouted than spoken, but more of a tow-hall type of situation or, at the worst, a Festivus-like airing of grievances with coach Phil Housley allowing the players to do what they need to get it right.

"We had a really good meeting in Los Angeles where we talked about a lot of things and it was open and (Housley) challenged us and we just had an open dialogue," Okposo said. "That's the kind of thing you need on a team, you need openness, you need constructive criticism, you need guys pulling for each other. Everybody's happy when people do well. That's what it's like to be on a team and I think that's what's been missing here for a long time and we're starting to get it back. But it's a long process and it's a long season; you can't get too high, you can't get too low. Obviously there's a good feeling in the room right now, but the second that you take it for granted that's when you get beat and we're not going to do that."

A funny thing happened in Los Angeles. The Sabres rolled the Kings 5-1 and followed that the next day rallying back from down 2-0 to beat Anaheim 4-2 to end the five-game road trip with a 3-2-0 record. Upon returning home, they overcame the Montreal Canadiens in a 4-3 win in which they came back from down a goal three times.

On Saturday against the Columbus Blue Jackets, Buffalo got out to a 2-1 lead, but got snowed under by the Jackets' attack and were outshot 16-4 and headed to the third down 4-2. Goals from Jason Pominville and Casey Mittelstadt (his first of the season) helped send the game to overtime where Artemi Panarin ended hopes of yet another comeback win.

The resilience Buffalo has shown early is something that hasn't been seen in years and is a product of not allowing the new standards to slip. But they know the next step to take is to play a complete game more often than not.

"(Coming back three straight times) says that when they faced adversity they looked it right in the eye and they've come back hard," Housley said. "But on the other hand we can't keep putting ourselves in this position. One of these days it's going to bite us in our you-know-what and we can't do that. We've got to learn from it and we've got to clean up that area of our game."

Sabres' Kyle Okposo producing offense with limited minutes

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
October 29, 2018

BUFFALO – In his 12-year career, Kyle Okposo has never played so little over a four-game stretch. The Sabres winger hasn't even cracked the 12-minute mark.

Okposo, 30, received more minutes as a teenage rookie in 2007-08 and in 2012-13, when he struggled so badly he scored just four goals in the lockout-shortened season.

Of course, Okposo's recent ice time hasn't hurt his production. In fact, he's producing more.

Despite averaging only 11 minutes, 13 seconds over the past four outings, the likable veteran has scored a goal in three straight contests entering tonight's tilt against the Calgary Flames inside KeyBank Center.

"I'm not playing that much right now, but the team's playing well," Okposo, who has averaged 14:38 on the ice this season, said Monday. "We're doing a lot of good things. I think we're growing as a group. I just want to work on even being more dynamic in offensive zone, offensive side of the puck."

After two rough seasons, Okposo sounds happy. Even with ice time shortened, he has a spot beside slick rookie center Casey Mittelstadt and skates on the power play. And for the first time since Okposo signed a seven-year, \$42 million contract in 2016, the Sabres are winning.

Right now, they're on a four-game point streak (3-0-1) and 6-4-1 overall.

When Okposo left the Islanders, he said he believed the Sabres were closer to the Stanley Cup than New York. Last season, the Sabres finished dead last.

"When you come in, you don't know what's going on behind the scenes," said Okposo, who scored the late power-play winner in Thursday's 4-3 victory against the Montreal Canadiens. "I think that we just had a lot of growing to do as a group and as a team. We're still doing it."

These days, everything feels fresher around the Sabres. A slew of notable offseason moves, including drafting defenseman Rasmus Dahlin first overall, certainly helps. But the commitment Okposo and others made to change has also transformed them from an also-ran into one of the NHL's biggest surprises.

"You can see the signs of the work that we've put into it, especially the latter half of the summer and training camp, we did a lot of things in order to become a tighter-knit group, and everybody's committed to doing the right things on and off the ice," Okposo said. "I think that's went a long way in our game and the way we play."

Following a poor season in which he started slowly and compiled a ghastly minus-34 rating, Okposo spent the summer focusing on his skills and skating. A year earlier, as he recovered from a scary concussion he suffered late in 2016-17, he couldn't do much of anything during the offseason, and it showed early.

Okposo scored his first goal in his 11th appearance in 2017-18. Through 11 contests this season, he has scored three goals and seven points, a 22-goal, 52-point pace over a full campaign. He also has a minus-6 rating.

So far, thanks to his work in the summer, he feels a difference.

"I feel like I'm in more control and I've been able to not get stuck so much," Okposo said. "That was the biggest thing I was working on, not getting stuck. I'm probably taking less strides to get where I want to go. I'm just trying to have my form be really good."

"But when you're playing, you're not really thinking about your skating, right? You want it to become second nature. I try not to think about it, but in practice, definitely, I'm trying to emphasize the good habits, the technique."

Okposo, who doesn't kill penalties, could eventually be rewarded with more minutes.

"I really like Kyle's game," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It's tough because you have power-play and penalty-kill situations, it breaks up the flow of your bench. You try to find him more minutes, but it's just the way the games have been going. He's going to get his minutes if we stay out of the box and can roll four lines."

Sabres' Jake McCabe day-to-day with upper-body injury

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 29, 2018

BUFFALO – Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe is day-to-day after suffering an upper-body injury in Saturday's 5-4 overtime road loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets, coach Phil Housley said.

With McCabe absent from this morning's practice inside HarborCenter, rookie defenseman Rasmus Dahlin skated in his spot beside Rasmus Ristolainen.

Housley said McCabe's status for Tuesday's home tilt against the Calgary Flames won't be decided until later.

McCabe has been one of the Sabres' best defensemen this season, compiling all seven of his points – one goal and six assists – in the last six outings. He had two assists in Columbus before briefly leaving the game and returning.

In other news, forward Evan Rodrigues returned to practice after missing Saturday's game because his wife, Christina, gave birth to a baby boy, Grayson Michael.

"Mom's healthy, baby's healthy," Rodrigues said. "So far, so good."

The Sabres, of course, returned from 10-day road trip early last week.

"Being out west for those 10 days was a little concerning, but I think signs were pointing toward him not coming that early," Rodrigues said. "Once I got back from that trip, everything went smoothly."

Check back later for more updates!

Thompson hopes to build off return in Columbus

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 29, 2018

Tage Thompson waited nine days for his chance to return to the lineup. Once he did, he barely had to wait at all for an opportunity to impact the scoresheet.

Just over a minute had ticked off the clock in the Sabres' game in Columbus on Saturday when Casey Nelson made a quick pass to set Thompson free on a 2-on-1 rush with Kyle Okposo. Thompson waited for defenseman David Savard to drop to the ice before sending a pass across to the other side of the net.

Okposo went five-hole to beat goalie Joonas Korpisalo at the 1:38 mark, giving Thompson his first point as a Sabre.

"It definitely feels good, especially getting right back in the lineup and then catching a lucky bounce there and getting a 2-on-1 with Okie," Thompson said. "It feels good to get on the board and help contribute a little offense to the team, I guess.

"It was definitely nice getting a monkey off my back in terms of getting a point but there's still a lot I've got to do in terms of helping the team."

Thompson sat three games as a healthy scratch after going scoreless in seven games to begin the season. The 20-year-old could have gone to Rochester without passing through waivers, but coach Phil Housley felt it was best to give him another perspective before inserting him back in the lineup.

Tickets for Tuesday vs. Calgary

Taking a step back and watching those three games left Thompson with the sense he had more time to make plays on the ice. Housley felt he got the response he was looking for in Columbus.

"I thought Tage had a really strong game," Housley said. "He showed his speed, he was going to the net hard, he made that nice play on the 2-on-1 with that reach he has and I like him shooting the puck, especially on the power play off the flank there. It was good for him that he had a good showing."

Thompson tallied three shots (matching his season-high) and five attempts in 11:32. He skated 3:59 on the power play, using his shot to create chances from the left circle.

"I think it's a little bit of work in practice and spare time, just trying to work on his release," Housley said. "The power play's a different situation, he was off the flank and had a couple good one-timers there. His shot is his weapon. If he can get it off quick and get it to the net, good things are going to happen."

If practice on Monday was any indication, Thompson is poised to be in the lineup again when the Sabres host Calgary on Tuesday. He practiced on a line with Vladimir Sobotka and Kyle Okposo, with Evan Rodrigues and Remi Elie skating as extra forwards.

"I thought it was a good first game back," Thompson added. "Obviously, there's things I've got to get better at and build on, but I was pretty happy with the effort, the work ethic I had."

Monday's practice

Jake McCabe did not practice and is currently considered day-to-day with an upper-body injury, Housley said. The defenseman missed time in the second period on Saturday but returned to skate 7:15 in the third.

Rasmus Dahlin skated on a pair with Rasmus Ristolainen in his absence.

"He just went in, got a little dent and came back out and finished the game," Housley said. "I'm going to talk to the trainers after this and see where he's at, but right now as far as I know it's day-to-day."

After heading home from Columbus for personal reasons, Rodrigues was back at practice with good news. His wife gave birth to their first son, Grayson, early Sunday morning. Both mom and baby are healthy.

Here's how the full lineup looked on Monday:

53 Jeff Skinner - 9 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville
43 Conor Sheary - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 23 Sam Reinhart
72 Tage Thompson - 17 Vladimir Sobotka - 21 Kyle Okposo
10 Patrik Berglund - 22 Johan Larsson - 28 Zemgus Girgensons
71 Evan Rodrigues - 81 Remi Elie

26 Rasmus Dahlin - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Marco Scandella - 4 Zach Bogosian
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 8 Casey Nelson

40 Carter Hutton
35 Linus Ullmark