



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*October 8, 2018*

## **Sheary scores twice in Sabres' 3-1 win over Rangers**

By John Bronstein

Associated Press

October 7, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — After being booed at home throughout a shutout loss to open the season, the Buffalo Sabres gave their fans something to cheer about.

Conor Sheary scored two goals and Carter Hutton made 43 saves as the Sabres beat the New York Rangers 3-1 on Saturday night for their first victory of the season.

"We knew this was an important one," Sheary said. "We kind of got spanked in our home opener there, so we wanted to come out and have a strong effort and it was good to get two points."

Captain Jack Eichel added an empty-net goal in the final seconds and had an assist for the Sabres, who snapped a six-game losing streak at KeyBank Center dating to last season.

"It's great to get a win on home ice," Eichel said. "We were desperate. We won battles when we needed to. It's great to see us get a team win like that."

Hutton, who led the NHL in save percentage and goals-against average as a backup in St. Louis last season, drew a standing ovation during his first win as the Sabres' starter when he made a sliding save against Howden on a three-man breakaway in the second period. Hutton held up against 14 shots (six on power plays) while the Rangers controlled the action for most of the first period. He made 19 saves in the third period.

"Our goalie was our best player tonight, and sometimes that needs to be the case," Eichel said. "Credit to Hutts. I thought he was tremendous."

Sheary, acquired in an offseason trade with Pittsburgh, scored both of his goals on power plays and played on the Sabres' top line. The former linemate of Sidney Crosby was moved up from Buffalo's second group of forwards in the third period of the 4-0 opening loss to Boston.

Rookie Brett Howden scored off a rebound with 4:39 remaining in the game for the Rangers, who started a two-game trip by falling to 0-2 under first-year coach David Quinn.

"I thought we played pretty well but I don't think we played winning hockey enough throughout the game," Quinn said. "We did a lot of good things better than we did the other night. At the end of the day, though, this is a game of taking advantage of your opportunities and they took advantage of two of theirs and we only took advantage of one of ours."

Henrik Lundqvist made 26 saves for New York. The Rangers outshot the Sabres in all three periods and finished with a 44-29 advantage in shots on goal.

"The difference was special teams," Lundqvist said. "If you look at how hard we played and the amount of chances we had, we should be happy about that. At the same time, this league isn't about playing great, it's just making key plays at the right time and finding a way to win games. That's what it's all about."

Rangers center Filip Chytil went to the locker room in the second period after taking a hit to the head from Buffalo's Patrik Berglund but was able to return.

"I had a big problem with the hit," Quinn said. "He didn't have the puck and they hit him in the head. From what I've been told already, the league is already looking at it."

Sheary skated off the bench to score Buffalo's first goal of the season with 6:45 left in the first period. Rasmus Ristolainen set up Sheary's wrist shot from the left circle on a 2-on-1 rush.

"When that first one went in, truthfully for me, it was nice to hear the roar of the crowd," Hutton said.

Replays showed the Sabres had six men on the ice when Casey Mittlestadt created the scoring chance with a backhand pass from the right board to Ristolainen.

Eichel and Sam Reinhart pinged the puck to Sheary for his second goal from the right side of the net 1:42 into the second period.

NOTES: Sheary recorded his eighth multi-goal game and his teams are 8-0-0 in those games. His last came in a Penguins win over the Sabres on Nov. 14, 2017. ... F Remi Elie made his Sabres debut after being claimed off waivers from Dallas on Thursday. Elie replaced Vladimir Sobotka, who is day-to-day with an upper-body injury sustained during the season-opening loss to Boston. ... Rangers F Cody McLeod entered the lineup in place of Vladislav Namestnikov (healthy scratch). ... Eichel played for Quinn during his lone season at Boston University in 2014-15. ... Hutton is now 4-0-0 with a .960 save percentage and 1.35 goals-against average in five career appearances against the Rangers.

UP NEXT

Rangers: Conclude a back-to-back at Carolina on Sunday. Backup goaltender Alexandar Georgiev will get the start.

Sabres: Continue their four-game homestand with a matinee against Las Vegas on Monday.

## **Carter Hutton making early statement that he's got Sabres' back in goal**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

October 7, 2018

Carter Hutton has had plenty of success stopping the puck in the first two games of the season. But the veteran's most important contribution to the Buffalo Sabres thus far goes well beyond that.

Starting in preseason, the team's new No. 1 goaltender has immediately injected belief into his teammates and the fans. He can cover mistakes with a big save. He can help with his stickhandling and passing. He's not afraid to speak up to his teammates and he's downright loquacious with the media.

There wasn't much Hutton could do on three of the four goals he gave up in Thursday's opener against Boston. There wasn't much the New York Rangers could do with Hutton in Buffalo's 3-1 Saturday night, as he stopped 43 of 44 shots and drew a standing ovation from the KeyBank Center crowd after stymieing a rare 3-on-0 break.

Hutton is more than pleased to earn those plaudits so early in his Buffalo career.

"You have to earn it. You have to play well and battle," he said after practice Sunday in the arena. "Early on, just showing how hard you work and carry yourself goes a long way. It's obviously just a start, but that's the biggest thing here."

"It gives your team a boost of energy and confidence knowing you have a guy who can make a save when you really need it," said coach Phil Housley. "He's a very good veteran. Says the right things in the room and is a very likable guy but at the time he says what's on his chest. It doesn't matter if you're a veteran or rookie, he's going to leave it out there. I think that guys respect that."

Heading into Monday's 3 p.m. matinee against the Vegas Golden Knights (MSG, Radio 550), Hutton has put up a 2.09 goals-against average in his two games – exactly the figure he posted in 32 games for St. Louis last year. His save percentage is a glossy .942.

Hutton quickly signed as a free agent with the Sabres on July 1 and said he didn't anticipate any problems fitting in. He had already gone through the process once, moving from Nashville to St. Louis, and had the added benefit here of the Sabres turning the reins over to him after walking away from incumbent Robin Lehner.

"Hockey is a pretty easy sport to acclimate. You go team to team and most guys are pretty similar," he said. "You can have different cultures and stuff, but most hockey guys are pretty similar, down-to-earth people. So I just try to embed myself in it right away."

"It's really something else what he did last night," said defenseman Casey Nelson. "He won us a game for sure. ... That's what we needed. It was awesome to see him have a big game for us."

The 3-on-0 save on Brett Howden was the marquee moment of the game. Hutton said the Rangers played into his hand by overpassing. Instead of a pass and shot, they tried two passes and Howden was probably in too tight to score.

"Sometimes in situations like that, there's almost too much time and guys overplay it," Hutton said. "You just try to be patient. And the second pass, he got jammed a little bit so he moved it back."

Nelson and defense partner Nathan Beaulieu released out of the defensive zone a shade too early and that left Tage Thompson as the last man back. When he turned the puck over, it was curtains for the Sabres. All three Rangers forwards were in alone.

"Mistakes are going to happen, especially right away with a new team," Nelson said. "Chemistry doesn't happen overnight. We'll have breakdowns and we're human and you have to try to pick each other up.

"So he makes that stop and it's what you need. You need big saves. That's what makes big moments."

Hutton said he's looking forward to the challenge of meeting Vegas, the defending Western Conference champions. The Golden Knights have added former Montreal captain Max Pacioretty and former St. Louis center and Hutton teammate Paul Stastny since losing in the Stanley Cup final in June to the Washington Capitals.

"They transition really fast, turn pucks over on you and come at you," Hutton said. "Stastny is like a Swiss army knife. He can do it all. He's a great pro, good friend of mine. It will be fun to play against him, funny to see him in a Vegas jersey."

Both teams are 1-1 entering the game and the Sabres can push to more wins than losses for the first time since Jan. 24, 2013, when they were 2-1 six games into the lockout season.

While they gave up a lot of scoring chances Saturday, the Sabres got the saves from Hutton they needed. They got the offense from Connor Sheary they needed. They scored twice on the power play and were stout on the penalty kill. As first wins of the season go, there were a lot of positives. Especially in the wake of Thursday's rough opener.

"You said it right there. Second game of the year and we're already taking steps," Nelson said. "Once you get going in the right direction, you want to keep building off that."

## **Sabres bounce back as first win gives fans plenty to cheer about**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

October 6, 2018

With the fan base already down in the mouth just one game into the season, the Buffalo Sabres made sure to send a quick message Saturday night.

When they play with pizzazz, they can score. They can also play physical and pack a punch. They also can trust their goaltender more than in the past.

For the ripoff that Thursday night's clunker against Boston felt like, the paying customers of KeyBank Center got more than their money's worth Saturday. There was plenty of entertainment and ultimately what they wanted to see – a 3-1 victory over the New York Rangers that evened the Sabres' record at 1-1.

Conor Sheary scored his first two goals as a Sabre, Carter Hutton starred in net with 43 saves, and captain Jack Eichel scored his first of the season into an empty net as Buffalo was full marks for this win. The fans responded in kind with cheers not heard much in the building the last couple of years.

"I thought we stuck with it as a group," said Eichel, who played a career-high 25 minutes, 45 seconds. "We were desperate and won battles when we needed to. It was great to see us get a team win like that and know we can still play better."

"I'm really happy for our guys because it's going to be hard," said coach Phil Housley. "They found a way to win, so they know they can win."

The win came largely on the shoulders of Sheary and Hutton.

Sheary scored a pair of power-play goals, getting the team's first of the season at 13:15 of the first period by converting a 2-on-1 after a nifty backhand pass from Casey Mittelstadt led to an equally nifty feed from Rasmus Ristolainen.

Sheary then burned goalie Henrik Lundqvist with a quick snap shot.

"I saw a little opening glove side and go low glove," Sheary said. "It hit his elbow a little bit and eventually went in, so it all worked out."

"When that first one went in, truthfully for me it was nice to hear the roar of the crowd," Hutton said. "Just battling, it was a great hockey game. They had their chances, we had ours and we battled right to the end."

The battle included some intrigue. Sheary, as it turned out, jumped on the ice way too early as Sam Reinhart changed his mind about leaving when puck possession was in doubt. The Sabres had six players on the ice for a few seconds but didn't get whistled for the infraction.

"When I came back to the bench I was told that I had jumped a little bit early," Sheary said. "I guess I cheated the system a little bit. ... I jumped when he turned back thinking [Reinhart] was coming to the bench. I saw the opportunity so I couldn't turn around at that point."

"Just a little miscommunication on a change on a power play," Housley said with a smirk. "But sometimes if you're not cheating, you're not trying. We got away with that one."

The Sabres also got away with giving up 44 shots on goal because Hutton didn't get beat until Brett Howden scored with 4:39 left. Howden had been stopped in the second period on a 3-on-0 break after Casey Nelson released too early and Tage Thompson lost the puck at the Sabres' blue line.

"I don't know if I can say exactly what's going through my head there," Hutton said. "It might not be allowed on the air but it's one of those ones you look up and say, 'Oh, dear'. I just tried to be patient on it."

"I think they kinda of overplayed it, made one too many passes and it gets jammed up. I'm patient enough to get my edge, push over and make the save. But it's something we don't want to get in the habit of giving up, that's for sure."

What the Sabres do want to make a habit of is getting team efforts. Housley correctly said Jeff Skinner played "possessed" around the net and down low. Newcomer Remi Elie got time on both special teams units. Defenseman Nathan Beaulieu battled hard in a fight with Rangers tough guy Cody McLeod.

"It was an important game for us," Sheary said. "We wanted to respond the right way. You don't want to lose a couple in a row to start the season and get on that downward trend."

## **The Wraparound: Sabres 3, Rangers 1**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

October 6, 2018

Two goals from Conor Sheary, 43 saves from Carter Hutton.

There's all you really need to know about the Buffalo Sabres' first victory of the season, a 3-1 nailbiter over the New York Rangers Saturday night before 16,824 in KeyBank Center.

Sheary, a former 23-goal scorer with the Pittsburgh Penguins, scored his first two goals with the Sabres and both came on the power play in an eight-minute span stretching over the first and second periods. Thanks to Jack Eichel's empty-net goal with 1.8 seconds left, the Sabres made them stand up to even their record at 1-1.

Hutton, the newly anointed No. 1 goaltender signed as a free agent in the offseason from the St. Louis Blues, kept the Sabres afloat early as the Rangers had nine of the game's first 11 shots on goal and 12 of the first 15.

Hutton also put up a save-of-the-season candidate in the first week of October by snuffing out a 3-on-0 break in the second period. He then made 19 of his saves in the third period as the Rangers finished with a 44-29 advantage in shots on goal.

Rare early success: The victory allowed the Sabres to avoid losing their first two games for the fifth time in six years. They also escaped the indignity of dropping the first two at home for the eighth consecutive season.

Breaking the ice: Sheary snapped Buffalo's season-opening goal-less streak at 73 minutes, 15 seconds with his tally at 13:15 of the first. It came on a wicked wrist shot as he converted a 2-on-1, taking a pass from Rasmus Ristolainen. The play was started with a backhand pass from the boards in the neutral zone by Casey Mittelstadt.

Nice break: The goal was scored even though the Sabres clearly had six men on the ice a few seconds before the puck entered the net. While Mittelstadt and Evan Rodrigues were working on the wall with the puck, replays clearly showed four other blue jerseys on the ice and no one in the vicinity of the Buffalo bench. Sheary was in the center-ice circle buzzing toward the goal while the player he was replacing was still visible on the screen and nowhere near the bench.

Tic-Tac-Sheary: the Sabres pushed the lead to 2-0 at 1:42 of the second period on Sheary's second goal. Jack Eichel briefly lost the puck, then outmuscled the Rangers to get it back and found Reinhart on a diagonal pass to the left of goalie Henrik Lundqvist. Reinhart quickly moved the puck across the crease and Sheary had a tap-in.

On the scoresheet: The Sabres got shut out, 4-0, in Thursday's opener against Boston so assists by Ristolainen, Mittelstadt, Reinhart and Eichel were the first points of the season for four players expected to be key contributors to the Buffalo offense.

Triple trouble: Hutton got a standing ovation from large segments of the crowd late in the second period when he robbed Brett Howden on a 3-on-0 after a Tage Thompson turnover sent the Rangers away.

No shutout: Hutton lost the shutout with 4:39 left when Howden jammed in a rebound from the edge of the crease under a prone Hutton. It came on the Rangers' 41st shot on goal of the night.

Dahlin's quest: No. 1 overall pick Rasmus Dahlin had two close calls for his first NHL goal, hitting the outside of the post on a shot from the faceoff circle in the second period and then being stopped in alone by Lundqvist early in the third period. Thompson batted Dahlin's rebound out of mid-air into the net but the apparent goal was wiped out on a high-sticking decision that appeared to be the right call.

Long time, no see: The Rangers had not played in Buffalo in more than 20 months — since posting a 2-1 overtime win here on Feb. 2, 2017. Last year, they became the first team not to visit every NHL city in a season since the schedule format was changed in 2013 because their lone scheduled "road" game in Buffalo was actually played in New York at Citi Field for the Winter Classic.

Up Next: The Sabres return to practice on Sunday and play a Columbus Day matinee against the Vegas Golden Knights here Monday afternoon at 3. Vegas opened a five-game road trip Saturday night in Minnesota.

## **Sabres Notebook: Dahlin has close calls for first goal against Swedish hero Henrik Lundqvist**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
October 7, 2018

Rasmus Dahlin had two close calls in the quest for his first NHL goal Saturday night. And it would have been epic for him had the moment come against Henrik Lundqvist of the New York Rangers, the greatest goaltender ever produced in Dahlin's native Sweden.

"That would have been huge," a smiling Dahlin told The Buffalo News after practice Sunday in KeyBank Center. "It's too bad I didn't score but maybe it will come next year. I just watch him on TV all my life so that was pretty unreal to see him in warmups, too. It was super cool. He's 'The King' for sure, the guy I always wanted to score on. I hope next time we play against them I score."

Dahlin came close against Lundqvist in the second period of Buffalo's 3-1 win, moving through the left faceoff circle and trying to find a brief opening up high on Lundqvist, only to see the puck skitter off the crossbar.

"I don't want to rush anything. The situation comes when it comes and I can go in the zone," Dahlin said. "I'm getting more comfortable, getting better at it every day. That one, I was looking at it up top but it went bar out."

In the third period, Dahlin saw open ice down the middle and Tage Thompson sent him in alone. Dahlin stayed patient and even worked a deke to the backhand, but Lundqvist made the save. Thompson batted the puck out of the air into the net but the goal was waved off due to a high stick.

"Tage got the puck and skated hard," Dahlin said. "I had to beat their guy to get free with the goalie. I looked at it and I was trying to score."

Dahlin played 22 minutes, 37 seconds in Thursday's opener against Boston. He did not have a shot on goal and was minus-1. The Sabres kept him at 17:05 Saturday and his two shots on goal were both prime scoring chances.

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Dahlin is looking forward to Monday's matinee against the Vegas Golden Knights, a team he watched from the stands four months ago while attending Game 4 of the Stanley Cup final against Washington in Capital One Arena as part of the NHL's top prospects tour to promote the draft.

Dahlin watched both teams' morning skates and met players in both locker rooms, including Swedes Nicklas Backstrom of the Capitals and William Karlsson of Vegas. Golden Knights General Manager George McPhee also approached him with best wishes during the morning skate.

"That night was wild. The fans in Washington were screaming a lot," Dahlin said. "It was a pretty cool atmosphere. This will be a good game. The speed has been pretty high but it's what I expected. We're getting more comfortable and I'm getting there, too."

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The Golden Knights hit town with 1-1 record. They are on the second game of a five-game road trip after pulling out a 2-1 shootout win Saturday in Minnesota. Max Pacioretty, the former Montreal captain acquired in a trade last month, scored with 1:31 left in regulation to get Vegas even and Erik Haula won the game in the shootout.

Vegas had lost its opener, 5-2, Thursday night in T-Mobile Arena against Philadelphia.

"It's going to be a tremendous challenge," said coach Phil Housley. "When we can play our game and control the game, we're a very good hockey team. When we make bad decisions and defend too much, it looks like we're a slow team. We've got to continue that fast pace north hockey."

The Sabres went 0-0-2 last year against Vegas. They suffered a 5-4 overtime decision at T-Mobile in October on a David Perron goal and endured a 2-1 shootout defeat here in March. Haula got the winning goal in that shootout as well.

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Sabres center Johan Larsson returned to practice Sunday. He has been out since getting struck by a shot in the foot during the Sept. 26 preseason game in Pittsburgh.

"It hit me in the worst spot, it wasn't really comfortable at all," Larsson said. "But it feels good now."

"It was a good day for him," said Housley. "He stepped in and looked really good, and we'll make those decisions tomorrow."

## **Sabres Notebook: College reunion for Jack Eichel, Rodrigues against Rangers' David Quinn**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
October 6, 2018

If Sabres forwards Jack Eichel and Evan Rodrigues took a quick look at the New York Rangers' bench Saturday night, they saw a very familiar face.

Coaching his second NHL game was David Quinn — who was in charge at Boston University in the 2014-15 season. That was Eichel's lone season in college hockey and the year he partnered with Rodrigues and Rochester Amerks forward Danny O'Regan on a team that went all the way to the Frozen Four championship game.

"It's awesome seeing him getting this opportunity but he's not getting his first win tonight," a smiling Eichel said before the game. "He's a friend to me, a mentor and he's been pretty close to me even through my first few years in the NHL. He was so good to me at BU and we have such a good relationship but I think we're all competitors, right? When you get out there, all you're doing is trying to help your team win."

"He was very real with you and honest," said Rodrigues. "He told you when you needed to improve but he also let you know when you were doing things right. He let us play the game, he let us make mistakes. When you're that age, you have to learn from those mistakes but you have to make them to improve."

Quinn lost his NHL debut, 3-2, Thursday to Nashville. He admitted he knew this situation was looming when he looked at the Rangers' schedule.

"It will be a little different, I'm not going to lie," Quinn said of coaching against Eichel before the game. "It will definitely be different. He's a guy that away from the rink continues to grow up. He's 21 years old. I knew eventually he would be named captain of the Sabres. I just wasn't sure when it was going to be. He's a guy that plays with passion. He's got a great personality and great presence about him."

Quinn, 52, posted a 105-68-21 record in five years at Boston University after serving as an assistant coach for the Colorado Avalanche and the head coach of the AHL's Lake Erie Monsters in Cleveland. He made sure things didn't get out of hand around Eichel during the star's lone college season, as the Terriers got far more attention than the average college hockey team because of all the hype surrounding the draft.

"A big thing for him was making sure 'Eichs' was level-headed and just worried about playing hockey and not everything surrounding him," Rodrigues said. "You don't see many college kids getting that type of attention but it was kind of cool for our locker room. We all fed off that a little bit. We obviously had a great year that year and it was a cool experience."

After Eichel was drafted No. 2 overall in 2015, he played it coy about whether he would stay another year at BU or sign with the Sabres and turn pro. As anyone would surmise, the decision had long been made. When Eichel returned from the World Championships in the Czech Republic to meet with Quinn, the coach said he asked Eichel why he would return to college.

"My concern with him coming back was he wasn't going to have the same level of respect for college hockey that would allow him to improve," Quinn said. "It was time for him to go for sure. Not that he needed me to tell him that. I think he was leaving anyway but I would have driven him to Buffalo because it was time for him to go."

"He cares about you a lot as a hockey player but I think he cares more about you as a person, and as players you appreciate that," Eichel said. "I think that's sort of what we took from him. He was really good at that."

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Sabres forward Vladimir Sobotka sat out Saturday's game with an upper-body injury suffered in the opener against Boston and that required a reshuffling of the team's lines.

Coach Phil Housley maintained his shift of left wings on the top two lines he started Thursday, keeping Conor Sheary with Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart, and putting Jeff Skinner with Patrik Berglund and Kyle Okposo.

With Sobotka out, Casey Mittelstadt centered Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson on the third line and the fourth line had Rodrigues centering Jason Pominville and newcomer Remi Elie, who was making his Buffalo debut.

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There are several connections with the Sabres in the Rangers organization. Quinn retained longtime former Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff on his staff as an assistant; Ruff coached last year under Alain Vigneault.

New assistant Greg Brown, who came from Boston College, was selected by the Sabres in the second round of the 1986 draft and played 49 games with the club over parts of two seasons in the early 90s. The assistant general managers are former Sabres captains Jim Schoenfeld and Chris Drury. Schoenfeld is also the team's senior vice president while Drury is the GM of the AHL's Hartford Wolf Pack.

The Wolf Pack's captain is former Sabre, St. Joe's product and Williamsville native Cole Schneider. He had 16 goals and 50 points for the Wolf Pack last season.

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Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist entered the game with 431 career wins, eighth on the NHL's all-time list, and is the only goalie in league history with 20-plus wins in 13 consecutive seasons. He entered the game six wins shy of tying Hall of Famer Jacques Plante for seventh on the win list. He needs to get to 455 to move into the top five.

## **Hutton and Sheary sparkle as the Sabres get their first win**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 6, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The Sabres finally found a way to get the fans out of their seats with Conor Sheary scoring two power play goals.

The first one came at 13:15 of the first period and honestly, they really needed it. Buffalo had gone 0-for-the-season and had not scored in the first 73:15 of the year.

It was a play started by Casey Mittelstadt who got the puck up quickly to Rasmus Ristolainen who engineered the 2-on-1 perfectly. Sheary didn't have much to shoot at, but beat Henrik Lundqvist far side.

Buffalo got a power play to start the second period and Sam Reinhart found Sheary cross-crease with a perfect pass and a wide open net.

The goals were nice, but the Sabres wouldn't have left the second period with a two goal lead if it wasn't for Carter Hutton and Mittelstadt. Tage Thompson tried to get through a host of Rangers and turned the puck over producing a 3-on-0 on Hutton. Mittelstadt hustled to get back and bothered Brett Howden who was robbed by Hutton.

In the third period, it appeared to be 3-0, but Thompson scored after knocking a Rasmus Dahlin rebound into the net with a high stick.

The Sabres seemed more engaged during the game as they weren't backing down and getting in the faces of the Rangers.

Make no mistake, there was a play in the first period that really sparked the team. Nate Beaulieu was sticking up for a teammate and fought a real tough player in Cody McLeod. Beaulieu ignited the building and his teammates appreciated it.

In the end, this was the Carter Hutton show. Hutton made 43 saves. In addition to the 3-on-0 save he robbed Jesper Fast in the third period keeping the game at 2-0.

Even the final goal into an empty net was a GREAT effort by Eichel. He blocked a shot, fought off a Ranger defenseman holding and hooking him and scored into the empty net. Eichel played a career high 25:45 and said after the game there is still better to come from him.

The Sabres went 2-for-4 on the power play and that was the difference in the game. The Rangers went 0-for-3 and had 10 shots.

Buffalo will practice on Sunday then host Vegas at 3:00 on Monday afternoon. Brian Koziol will have pregame starting at 2:30.

## **Sabres defeat the Rangers, 3-1 for first win of the season**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

October 8, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres notch their first win of the season 3-1 over the New York Rangers on Saturday night at KeyBank Center, thanks in part to a pair of power play goals by Conor Sheary.

Kyle Okposo was called for the game's first penalty when he was whistled for a holding the stick minor. Despite being peppered with shots on goal, Carter Hutton kept the game scoreless while Buffalo was shorthanded.

The Sabres enjoyed a 4-on-3 power play when Chris Kreider was called for holding. Evan Rodrigues and Jimmy Vesey were already in the penalty box for roughing when they jostled following a whistle. Buffalo would convert on the power play later in the chance when Sheary wristed the puck past Henrik Lundqvist. Rasmus Ristolainen fed the puck to Sheary on a cross-ice pass to help setup the goal. He was rewarded with an assist on the power play score.

Buffalo was called for a too many men on the ice penalty with just over three minutes to go in the opening period. New York failed to score on the man advantage.

The blue and gold opened the second period with a power play chance thanks to a Vinni Lettieri high sticking penalty right at the end of the first. Sheary again scored on the man advantage. Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart each had tape-to-tape passes that helped create the goal that extended Buffalo's lead to 2-0. Reinhart and Eichel assisted on Sheary's second goal of the night.

Buffalo failed to score on their second power play of the period. Adam McQuaid was called for a hooking minor, but his teammates were able to kill it off.

Tage Thompson nearly added to Buffalo's lead, but his goal was waved off with his stick being above the crossbar.

The Rangers enjoyed a man advantage thanks to an Eichel minor penalty for hooking.

The Blueshirts got on the score sheet with under five minutes to go in regulation with a sustained offensive attack. Brett Howden was credited with the goal that halved New York's deficit to 2-1. McQuaid and Ryan Spooner were credited with the assists on the even strength goal.

Eichel scored the final goal of the night with just seconds to go after New York pulled the goaltender. It was Eichel's first goal of the season to salt the game away.

### GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 13:15 - Conor Sheary (1) PPG (Rasmus Ristolainen, Casey Mittelstadt)

NYR: NONE

Second Period:

BUF: 1:42 - Conor Sheary (2) PPG (Sam Reinhart, Jack Eichel)

NYR: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: 19:58 - Jack Eichel (1) ENG (unassisted)

NYR: 15:21 - Brett Howden (1) (Adam McQuaid, Ryan Spooner)

#### Penalty Summary:

##### First Period:

BUF: 7:17 - Kyle Okposo (Holding the Stick - 2 min.); 10:57 - Evan Rodrigues (Roughing - 2 min.); 14:35 - Nathan Beaulieu (Fighting - 5 min.); 16:43 - Team (Too many men on the ice - 2 min.)  
NYR: 10:57 - Jimmy Vesey (Roughing - 2 min.); 11:53 - Chris Kreider (Holding - 2 min.); 14:35 - Cody McLeod (Fighting - 2 min.); 20:00 - Vinni Letteri (High Sticking - 2 min.)

##### Second Period:

BUF: NONE  
NYR: 11:10 - Adam McQuaid (Hooking - 2 min.)

##### Third Period:

BUF: 6:19 - Jack Eichel (Hooking - 2 min.)  
NYR: 0:41 - Mika Zibanejad (Tripping - 2 min.)

##### Shots on Goal:

BUF: 29 (7, 8, 14)  
NYR: 44 (14, 10, 20)

##### Goalies:

BUF: Carter Hutton - 43 saves  
NYR: Henrik Lundqvist - 26 saves

##### Power Plays:

BUF: 2 for 4 (50%)  
NYR: 0 for 3 (0%)

##### Three Stars:

Carter Hutton - BUF  
Conor Sheary - BUF  
Jack Eichel - BUF

##### What's Next:

Buffalo's season opening four-game homestand continues on Monday afternoon. The Sabres will welcome the Vegas Golden Knights to KeyBank Center for a three o'clock face-off Monday afternoon. Catch all of the action on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sportsradio 550. Pregame coverage with Brian Koziol will begin at 2:30 p.m.

## **The Sabres look for their first win against the Rangers**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 6, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The Sabres couldn't have played much worse in their opener, losing to Boston 4-0. Buffalo gets another chance as the Rangers come to town. New York lost its first game, 3-2 to Nashville.

Jack Eichel was minus-2 in the first game and he didn't like the way he played against the Bruins, "I wasn't too happy with my game, maybe I was thinking a little too much, trying to force things.

"I just want to come out in the first period and try to attack their defensemen and put them on their heels and try to get pucks to the net. I think that's what usually sparks my game."

Vladimir Sobotka is still day-to-day and, despite skating, won't play. Remi Elie will play his first game as a Sabre.

In the preseason, Zemgus Girgensons played a game on the left wing with Casey Mittelstadt. Phil Housley said he will again tonight. Conor Sheary will remain on Eichel's left wing.

The young core of this team has never had a lot of respect for the crest on the jersey and the history of the Sabres. Housley is changing that with pictures of Sabre greats over the player's lockers. Eichel said he really likes that and has learned to appreciate the past, "I think it's pretty cool. You're able to meet some of the Sabre greats that paved the way who have written the history of this franchise, the pride they took in wearing the uniform and you see them still around and the pride that they take in being part of this organization and city, so I think he's trying to instill that in us and what it means to be a Buffalo Sabre, so we should take pride in putting this jersey on every time we do it and it should mean a lot."

The new coach of the Rangers is former BU head coach David Quinn. He was Jack Eichel's coach in college and Eichel has a lot of respect for him, "He's a friend to me, he's a mentor, he's been pretty close to be even through my first few years in the NHL and he was so good to me at BU.

"I think he'll do great and he can win all the games he wants except when he plays us. It's awesome he's getting this opportunity, but he's not getting his first win tonight."

Carter Hutton gets the call in net. He's 0-1-0 with a 3.27 goals against and .880 save percentage. Hutton is 3-0-0 against New York with a 1.45 goals against and .953 save percentage.

Kyle Okposo has 20 points in his last 17 games against the Rangers.

The Sabres are 2-5-3 in their last 10 games at home against the Rangers. The Rangers did not play in Buffalo last season because of the Winter Classic. They will play in Buffalo twice this season.

The Rangers have won 13 of their last 16 games against the Sabres.

The team did not have a morning skate, but did have morning meetings.

I'll be joining Brian Koziol at 6:00 for a Sabres roundtable to kick off the pregame. Brian will also be joined by Phil Housley and Patrik Berglund.

## How Carter Hutton's stellar save recharged the Sabres

By John Vogl

The Athletic

October 6, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sabres fans normally cringe when the team gives up a breakaway. Those haven't been friendly to Buffalo's most recent netminders.

This time, the guy in the fifth row behind the net seemed to sense something great was coming. As the Rangers approached the Sabres' cage, the fan with the Rasmus Dahlin jersey and backward cap rose to his feet. His anticipation was rewarded as Carter Hutton made the save of the night. The fan emphatically pumped his fist four times, and the rest of the crowd joined him in a standing ovation.

As a sustained roar filled the goaltender's ears, Tage Thompson stopped by to drop in one more sound.

"I was just telling him, 'Thanks,'" Thompson said after Hutton bailed him out and propelled the Sabres to a 3-1 victory Saturday night.

Few things in hockey get fans going like a stellar breakaway stop. Watching the goaltender get the best of a shooter in a one-on-one just feels good. But to see a goalie stop three players at once? Well, that's what got the folks in Buffalo excited.

"I don't even know how to explain it," Sabres center Casey Mittelstadt said. "It was too good of a save."

Obviously, three-on-zero rushes aren't supposed to happen. Thompson tried to carry the puck out of the Sabres' zone. With hopes of a quality rush, defensemen Nathan Beaulieu and Casey Nelson joined him.

"Me and Nelly kind of got above the puck there, and it wasn't the best decision we made," Beaulieu said.

No one — except for Hutton — was back when New York picked off the puck and started the odd-man opportunity.

"I don't know if I can say what exactly was going through my head there," Hutton said. "It might not be allowed on the air. It was one of those ones where you look up and go, 'Oh, dear.'"

It was just one save of 43 for the netminder, but it put a lot of people at ease. Robin Lehner got hurt during his debut with Buffalo in 2015, and over three seasons he never really gained his footing. When Hutton dug his skate into the crease and slid to his left, it was more than a highlight-reel stop.

"Your goalie's back there and he's bailing you out like that, it gives you confidence," Thompson said. "He's just security. He's fun to watch. He's so calm in net. Even when things get a little crazy out there, he's steady back there."

And it was certainly crazy watching so many Rangers and so few Sabres.

"I mean, I was freaking out," Mittelstadt said.

Emotions got the best of the Rangers, too. Jesper Fast, Brett Howden and Ryan Spooner made four passes in five seconds. They got Hutton moving, but they never got him out of position.

"I just tried to be patient on it," the goalie said. "I think they kind of overplayed it. I think they made one too many passes and it kind of gets jammed up. I'm patient enough that I get my edge and get a push over and make a save."

Since Hutton credited his edge for making the stop, it's possible Lehner never makes it. He made waves recently when he announced he sharpened his skates only once per season, which helps explain why he slid out of position at times.

Hutton was in place to take the shot away.

"He's the guy who pulled the win for us," said left wing Zemgus Girgensons, who was also on the ice for the marquee stop. "Hell of a goalie. As you can see, he made a ton of beautiful saves."

It was only the second game of the season, but the Sabres needed the win. The sellout crowd of 19,070 that watched Thursday's season-opening loss had dropped to an announced count of 16,824. After Buffalo suffered a 4-0 shutout against Boston, some folks stayed away in case there was again nothing to cheer.

When Conor Sheary scored his first of two goals with 13:15 gone to make it 1-0, there was a sense of relief.

"When that first one went in, truthfully for me it was nice to hear that roar from the crowd," Hutton said.

He made them cheer louder with his second-period gem.

"That just sums up how his night was," Beaulieu said. "He was real dialed in. He's one of our biggest leaders in here. He's very vocal and obviously extremely experienced. He's a breath of fresh air back there. He keeps everything real calm."

That's what the goalie is supposed to do for the team. For the fans — like the guy in the fifth row behind the net — the goalie is supposed to create excitement. Buffalo hopes it has found the guy to do that for the foreseeable future.

## **Sabres goalie Carter Hutton instilling confidence, becoming leader**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 7, 2018

BUFFALO – In just a few weeks, goalie Carter Hutton has already instilled loads of confidence in the Sabres and established himself as one of the team's strongest voices.

How has Hutton, 32, done it so quickly?

Well, for starters, Hutton often looked dynamic making 43 saves against the New York Rangers in Saturday's 3-1 win. He even stymied a three-on-zero break, a stop that will probably be remembered in these parts for a long time.

The loquacious Hutton also isn't afraid to say what's on his mind. He experienced a lot during his first nine years as a pro, consistently improving while playing in five organizations.

"He's a very good veteran and he says the right things in the room," Sabres coach Phil Housley said Sunday. "He's a very likable guy. But at the same time, he says what's on his chest. It doesn't matter if you're a veteran or rookie, he's just going to leave it out there. I think the guys respect that. He's provided us with some very good leadership."

While Housley wouldn't confirm it, Hutton will almost certainly receive his third straight nod Monday afternoon against the Vegas Golden Knights at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres want Hutton to become their backbone and help change the culture of a team with recent history of losing and a slew of new faces. That's why they signed the UMass Lowell product to a three-year, \$8.25 million contract on July 1.

"It's more important they trust me," Hutton said. "You always have to earn it, you got to play well, you got to battle. I think early on, just showing how hard you work and the way you carry yourself goes a long way."

"It's obviously just a start, but I think that's the biggest thing here. I think we've talked about it a ton, just trying to get a better culture and just getting everyone on the same page."

Yes, it's very early. But so far, Hutton's impact in his first days as an NHL starter has been notable.

"He's confident," Sabres defenseman Nathan Beaulieu said. "He's one of our biggest leaders in here. He's very vocal and obviously very experienced. So he's a breath of fresh air. He keeps everything real calm."

Hutton keeps things calm by talking a lot on the ice.

"That's when I'm playing my best," he said. "I like to have fun and enjoy it. It is what it is. There's obviously a lot of pressure that comes with our position, our sport. But I don't try to really overthink it. I just have fun with it."

Hutton believes it's easy to acclimate to a new team. Most hockey players, he said, share the same qualities.

"You go team to team and most guys are pretty similar, right?" he said. "You have your different kind of cultures and stuff, but for the most part, most hockey guys are similar, mostly down-to-earth people. So for me, I just try to embed myself in it right away."

Of course, given the dues the undrafted Hutton paid to reach where he is today, his teammates might've had a healthy respect for him before he arrived.

"He puts the work in, he's a professional," Sabres winger Kyle Okposo said. "He's worked for everything he's gotten in his career. I think that's a testament to him, his mindset and the way that he prepares, the way that he believes in himself.

"He's really got that confidence in himself. It definitely shows in the way that he plays."

Hutton earned his first NHL appearance in 2012-13, his third full pro season. He played a career-high 40 contests with the Nashville Predators a year later.

Still, he did not crack the 30-game mark again until he played 32 times with the St. Louis Blues last season. That terrific campaign – he posted an NHL-best 2.09 goals-against average – landed Hutton his starting gig.

"You look at the way he's climbed up in the NHL, he's mainly been in the backup role and now he's been put to the forefront," said Housley, who knows Hutton from his days as a Nashville assistant. "It's a different kind of mindset that he has and he's got to regain that focus. When he's playing, he's a really focused individual. But it says a lot about him and his work ethic to get where he's gotten."

## **Sabres must make decision on Johan Larsson soon**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 7, 2018

BUFFALO – Johan Larsson probably isn't quite ready to play yet. While the center rejoined the Sabres for today's practice, it was a lighter session. He might need more time.

But in the near future, Larsson, one of the longest-tenured Sabres, will be able to return from the lower-body injury he suffered Sept. 26 in Pittsburgh.

"It was a good day for him," Sabres coach Phil Housley said this afternoon inside KeyBank Center. "He stepped in and looked really good. We'll make those decisions tomorrow."

It could be a tough decision. The Sabres already have 13 healthy forwards and 23 players on the roster, the maximum allowed.

They also have two injured defensemen, Zach Bogosian and Matt Hunwick, who will likely be added to the roster when they're ready.

The Sabres haven't possessed this much depth in a long time.

"You look at the players that are out, certainly there's going to be decisions to be made," Housley said. "That always pushes players' game to a higher level. It's a good situation to be in.

"It's unfortunate our guys are banged up a little bit. It's good to have depth."

Larsson, 26, hasn't played since blocking a shot in the preseason game.

"It hit me in the worst spot, it wasn't really comfortable at all," he said. "But it feels good now."

Larsson, who had a rough 2017-18 season coming back from a dislocated elbow and wrist, said he knows he's fighting for a roster spot.

"There's a lot of good players," he said. "I think you look around and it's competition. Obviously, it's tough to sit out. I'm ready if they want me. I felt good out there."

The Sabres host the Vegas Golden Knights on Monday afternoon.

## **Conor Sheary, Carter Hutton push Sabres past Rangers**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 7, 2018

BUFFALO – It was hard to tell which moment in Saturday's 3-1 win against the New York Rangers generated the bigger roar from Sabres fans.

Winger Conor Sheary's power-play goal 13:15 into the tilt, a perfect shot from the left circle into the far corner, ignited the crowd of 16,824 fans inside KeyBank Center.

So did goalie Carter Hutton's splendid save on Rangers center Brett Howden, which stymied a three-on-zero shortly after Sheary's second power-play goal.

Sabres coach Phil Housley said that dynamic stop even brought the bench to its feet.

"We fed off Carter's energy," Housley said.

Hutton, who made 43 saves in the Sabres' first win, said: "It was nice to hear the roar of the crowd."

Unlike Thursday's 4-0 opening-night loss to the Boston Bruins, the Sabres gave their fans plenty to cheer about Saturday.

"We knew this was an important one," Sheary said. "We kind of got spanked in our home opener."

When the Sabres added Sheary and Hutton during the summer, they believed they would be huge contributors to a team whose feeble offense and wonky goaltending contributed to a 31st-place finish.

Sheary, 26, won two Stanley Cups with the Pittsburgh Penguins and scored 23 goals two years ago. Meanwhile, Hutton, 32, posted a league-low 2.09 goals-against average with the St. Louis Blues last season.

In Buffalo, Sheary, who often skated beside superstar Sidney Crosby in Pittsburgh, is playing with top center Jack Eichel. Hutton, a career backup, is in his first days as a regular starter.

It took just two games for them to provide an impact. Fresh off an ugly effort, the Sabres looked sharper throughout Saturday's contest.

Sheary scored his second goal 1:42 into the second period, one-timing winger Sam Reinhart's pass from below the left circle.

"We knew this was an important one," Sheary said. "We kind of got spanked in our home opener so we wanted to come out and have a strong effort. It was good to have two points tonight."

That was enough offense for Hutton, who won his 64th NHL game.

Housley said Hutton's save on Howden 4:54 into the second period – he moved over and blocked the shot with his arm – is one of the saves of the year.

"One of those ones you just look up and you're like, 'Oh dear,'" Hutton said. "I just tried to be patient on it. I think they kind of overplayed it. I think they made one too many passes and it gets jammed up. I'm patient enough that I get my edge and get a push over and make a save."

Late in the game, Hutton made a point-blank stop on winger Jesper Fast.

"He changed the momentum for us a few times in that game," Sabres center Evan Rodrigues said.

Howden finally beat Hutton 15:21 into the third period on the Rangers' 40th shot.

Eichel, who played a career-high 25 minutes, 45 seconds, scored an empty-net goal to seal it. He set his previous high (24:23) on Feb. 18, 2017 against St. Louis.

## **Sabres notes: Remi Elie believes he can produce more offense**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 6, 2018

BUFFALO – In his 91-game NHL career, Remi Elie has compiled seven goals and 21 points. The Dallas Stars utilized him as a checker, a role he continued Saturday as a fourth-line winger in his Sabres debut.

But in Elie, 23, Phil Housley sees a youngster who possesses the talents to morph into a scorer. Since the Sabres claimed him on waivers Tuesday, the coach has been praising the former second-round pick.

"When he gets up the ice, he sees plays," Housley said prior to Saturday's tilt inside KeyBank Center. "He's got good vision, he's a really good passer, has a heavy shot. But I think he just sees a game like an offensive forward, where it's off his stick before he gets it and it's a flat pass. I just think he processes the game the right way."

Housley's words are meaningful to Elie, who skated at left wing beside center Evan Rodrigues and Jason Pominville against the New York Rangers.

"He believes I can bring a lot to this team and help this team win games," Elie said.

Elie said getting waived by Dallas "shocked" him. Last season, he played 72 times, earning regular NHL duty for the first time.

"I didn't expect it," he said.

So right away, Elie said he called his agent, who explained the waiver process to him.

"(He) just told me to keep my head up and relax and everything's going to come back to normal," Elie said. "(He said), 'Let me do my job and you'll go somewhere else.'"

The 6-foot-1, 215-pound Elie said that his job is performing as a power forward.

"A guy that's very strong on the forecheck that finishes my checks and likes doing battles down low and just bring offense to the team, energy," he said.

Like Housley, Elie thinks he can showcase more offense. After Dallas drafted him in the second round in 2013, 40th overall, he averaged 29 goals over his final two junior seasons.

"As a rookie, I just (had) to get to know the league, how you play in this league," Elie said. "Now I'm just more comfortable and I (have) more confidence than I did last year. I think my game's going to keep improving every year."

Elie moved in because winger Vladimir Sobotka is day-to-day after suffering an upper-body injury in Thursday's 4-0 loss to the Boston Bruins.

Housley also used Elie to kill penalties and a little bit on the power play. Elie skated 11 minutes, 47 seconds.

xxx

David Quinn, who coached Rodrigues and Sabres center Jack Eichel at Boston University, is in his first season leading the Rangers.

"It's a little weird," Eichel said. "He's a friend to me, he's a mentor and he's been pretty close to me even through my first few years in the NHL. He was so good to me at BU and we have such a good relationship, but I think we're all competitors, right? ...

"I'm just so happy for him. I think he'll do great. He can win all the games he wants except for when he plays us. Other than that, I wish him all the best."

Quinn said he sees "a maturity level that continues to grow" in Eichel, who was named captain Wednesday.

"He's 21 years old," he said. "I knew eventually he'd be named captain of the Sabres. I just wasn't sure when it was going to be. He's a guy that plays with passion and he's got a great personality and a great presence about him."

xxx

Rangers center Filip Chytil went to the locker room in the second period but returned after Sabres center Patrik Berglund hit him in the head.

"I had a big problem with the hit," Quinn said. "He didn't have the puck and they hit him in the head. From what I've been told already, the league is already looking at it."

xxx

Former Sabres coach Lindy Ruff is in his second season as a Rangers assistant. Ruff played for the Rangers from 1989 to 1991.

Former Sabres defenseman Greg Brown is also an assistant.

Notes: Saturday marked the Rangers' first visit here since Feb. 2, 2017. They did not play here last year because the Sabres had home status in the Winter Classic at Citi Field. ... Sabres winger Zemgus Girgensons moved up from the fourth line to a scoring trio beside center Casey Mittelstadt and Kyle Okposo. ... The Sabres also scratched defensemen Zach Bogosian (lower body) and Matt Tennyson (healthy).

## **Remi Elie to make Sabres debut**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 6, 2018

BUFFALO – In his 90-game NHL career, Remi Elie has compiled seven goals and 21 points. The Dallas Stars utilized him as a checker, a role he will continue tonight as a fourth-line winger in his Sabres debut.

But in Elie, 23, Phil Housley sees a youngster who possesses the talents to morph into a scorer. Since the Sabres claimed him on waivers Tuesday, the coach has been praising the former second-round pick.

"I just liked the way when he gets up the ice, he sees plays," Housley said this morning inside KeyBank Center. "He's got good vision, he's a really good passer, has a heavy shot. But I think he just sees a game like an offensive forward, where it's off his stick before he gets it and it's a flat pass. I just think he processes the game the right way."

Housley's words are meaningful to Elie, who will skate at left wing beside center Evan Rodrigues and Jason Pominville against the New York Rangers.

"He believes in me I can bring a lot to this team and help this team win games," Elie said.

Check back later for more on Elie, who said he "was just shocked" when the Stars waived him.

"I didn't expect it," he said. "But once I got on there, I called my agent right away, he explained it to me a little bit, the process of it, and just told me to keep my head up and relax and everything's going to come back to normal. Let me do my job and you'll go somewhere else."

Elie will move in because winger Vladimir Sobotka is day-to-day after suffering an upper-body injury in Thursday's 4-0 loss to the Boston Bruins.

Housley said Zemgus Girgensons will move up from the fourth line to a scoring trio beside center Casey Mittelstadt and Kyle Okposo.

Tonight marks the Rangers' first visit here since Feb. 2, 2017. They did not play here last year because the Sabres had home status in the Winter Classic at Citi Field.

Sabres goalie Carter Hutton will start in goal, his second straight nod. Henrik Lundqvist will oppose him.

Hutton is 3-0-0 with a 1.45 goals-against average and a .953 save percentage in his career against the Rangers.

## **5 Observations: Hutton shines as Sabres take down Rangers 3-1**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

October 6, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Carter Hutton is here to ease your concerns about the Sabres goaltending situation. On Saturday Hutton was outstanding, turning away 43 of the 44 shots he faced, leading the Sabres to a 3-1 win, their first of the season. Conor Sheary scored twice while Jack Eichel sealed the game with an empty-netter.

5 Observations from Saturday's win:

Red Hot Hutton

Carter Hutton was hands down the Sabres best player on Saturday evening. In the first period, he turned away all 14 shots he faced, including some pretty quality chances from the boys in royal blue.

But that was just the appetizer. In the middle frame, it was time for the main course. After an egregious turnover by Tage Thompson and Casey Nelson, Hutton robbed Brett Howden who was flanking a Rangers 3-on-0. Hutton slid across the crease and snagged what looked like a sure goal for the Rangers, protecting the Sabres two-goal lead.

Despite allowing three goals in the Sabres 4-0 loss to the Bruins on Thursday, Hutton has played very well in his first two games. Against the Rangers, Hutton appeared locked-in from the opening face off and was the biggest reason why the Sabres picked up their first win of the season.

Sheary the Sniper

Jason Botterill has to be grinning from ear to ear.

On Saturday in the first period, Sheary scored his first goal with the Sabres and the first goal of the season for his team, firing a wrister past Henrik Lundqvist on a 2-on-1 with the man advantage. But the winger acquired from Pittsburgh in the offseason was just getting started.

In the second period, Sheary replaced Skinner on the Sabres top power-play unit and the decision paid off. After about a minute and a half of a consistent cycle, Sheary converted on a pretty passing play to double the Sabres lead.

While Sheary doesn't do anything incredibly well, he's an all-around solid player who converts on the chances he should. Buffalo has lacked these types of players in years past and if Saturday is any indication, Sheary could be poised to have a great season, especially if he keeps playing alongside Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

Minute Monsters

Both Rasmus Ristolainen and Marco Scandella played great games against the Rangers on Saturday. But I'm a bit concerned that both will be relied upon too heavily as the season moves along.

Last year, the top-pair was asked to do a whole lot. Not much has changed two games into the season. Injuries to Zach Bogosian and Matt Hunwick haven't given the team a whole lot of options. But Phil Housley needs to be careful just how much he rides his top-pair. In the past, it has gotten the team in trouble. That wasn't the case on Saturday but this will be a concern until Dahlin is ready to take on an expanded role.

Already time for a change?

Just like many of you, I thought Tage Thompson was one of the most impressive Sabres during the preseason. But in his first two regular season games with the Sabres, he has struggled.

On two separate occasions, Thompson turned the puck over at his own blue line, leading to odd-man rushes in the opposite direction. Luckily for him and his team, Hutton was there to keep the Rangers off the board.

To be fair, the third period was his best. His efforts were nearly rewarded when he found a streaking Rasmus Dahlin with a perfect saucer pass. Thompson followed the play and batted the puck into the net but it was with a high-stick.

But with Alex Nylander off to a hot start in Rochester, maybe the Sabres will swap their first-round picks. I don't think Housley will pull the trigger after just two games but I wouldn't be shocked either. Classic cop-out answer, I know.

#### Doubled Up

After getting shut out against the Boston Bruins on Thursday the Sabres came out of the gate flat, getting outshot 14-7 in the first frame. To be fair, the numbers were a bit inflated by an exceptional power play from the Rangers where they tallied six shots in two minutes. Once the penalty was killed off it was a pretty even period by the two sides. But if it wasn't for some great saves by Carter Hutton the Sabres would have found themselves trailing once again after 20 minutes. For a team in their position, they need fast starts. The Sabres won't win many hockey games playing from behind.

## **Larsson returns to practice with Sabres**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 7, 2018

Johan Larsson came into training camp prepared to fight for his spot in the lineup. The Sabres had made it a point to increase internal competition during the offseason, and Larsson returned - in his coach's words - in the best shape he's been in.

It showed on the ice. Larsson's game was always defined by his work on the forecheck and in front of the net, but Phil Housley said that his increased upper-body strength gave him an added edge in those areas.

Then it came to an early end. Larsson was injured blocking a shot during the team's preseason game in Pittsburgh on Sept. 26. While the competition continued around him, Larsson began the regular season on injured reserve.

"It's always tough," Larsson said. "It hit me in the worst sport, I wasn't really comfortable at all. But I feel good now. It's good to be back."

Tickets for Monday vs. Vegas

Larsson was back on the ice for practice on Sunday, a low-volume session that lasted just over a half hour. He rotated on a line with Jeff Skinner, Patrik Berglund and Kyle Okposo. Housley said the forward's game status has yet to be determined.

When Larsson does return, he'll join an environment that remains competitive. The Sabres had 13 forwards at practice, with Vladimir Sobotka remaining absent due to an upper-body injury. Remi Elie was a sparkplug in his debut on Thursday, while Zemgus Girgensons and Evan Rodrigues have had strong starts to their season.

"I mean, you look at the players that are out, certainly there are going to be some decisions to be made," Housley said. "That always pushes players' games to a higher level. It's a good situation to be in. It's unfortunate that our guys are banged up a little bit but it's good to have depth."

Larsson recognizes the competition. He'll look to pick up where he left off and fight his way back into the lineup.

"I mean, there's a lot of good players," Larsson said. "I think you look around and it's competition. It's obviously tough to sit out. It happened. I'm ready if they want me. I felt good out there, so we'll see."

Elie's debut

Housley remarked on multiple occasions that he liked the offensive instincts he saw from Elie - known primarily as a physical presence - on film. Still, it was a surprise to see the forward step onto the ice for a 43-second shift on the power play in his first game as a Sabre on Saturday.

It turns out that shift wasn't by design. Elie laughed while explaining how he found his way out there.

"Honestly, I don't think I was supposed to go," he said. "We were missing a forward on the ice, so I just jumped on and I just tried to fill a couple spot there."

Power-play time aside, Elie was a force in his debut. He was an integral part of the team's 3-for-3 night on the penalty kill, accumulating 1:53 of shorthanded ice time, and came as advertised on the forecheck.

Elie wasted no time in making his presence felt, either. He delivered a loud hit on Adam McQuaid just five minutes into the game that Marco Scandella said provided a spark to the Buffalo bench.

"Absolutely," Scandella said, smiling. "Absolutely. He's a big body. You can see him out there, he's thick, and he's thicker than people realize. He's a pretty strong guy."

Killin' it

The Sabres won their game against the Rangers thanks in large part to their penalty kill, which came up big at crucial moments. Their kill of a holding the stick penalty against Kyle Okposo in the first period set the table for Conor Sheary to open the scoring, and they delivered again while protecting their two-goal lead in the third.

The Rangers generated 10 shots on goal between their three power plays, but the Sabres were ultimately happy with the job they did preventing quality chances. The key, Scandella said, was aggressiveness.

"We just pressured, pressured hard," Scandella said. "We got our chances to clear the puck and we got it out. I just felt like we were a box of four, five with the goalie, and we played smart. I feel like we're more aggressive this year and we have to keep doing that."

Housley echoed the sentiment.

"They're still getting used to the rotations and where the trigger points are to bring the pressure but for the most part, we're doing a good job of trying to keep the other team from picking pucks up off the wall and not get those good looks," he said.

"Obviously, New York had a really good power play yesterday. They shot the puck a lot. It required these guys in front to get sticks and try to box out as best as they could, but they did a very good job and they're getting used to it."

## **Hutton, Sheary lead Sabres to first victory of season**

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 6, 2018

With 1.8 seconds left on the clock, Jack Eichel was finally able to exhale.

The Buffalo Sabres captain had already broken his career-high in ice time when he stepped in front of New York Rangers defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk to block a shot from point-blank range in the game's final minute on Saturday, temporarily protecting his team's one-goal lead.

When the puck was iced to set up another defensive-zone draw, Eichel did it again. This time when he blocked the shot, he sped past Shattenkirk and buried the puck into an empty-net to put the finishing touches on a 3-1 win.

Watching Eichel smile at his stall afterward, the team's opening-night loss to Boston on Thursday felt like a distant memory.

"It's awesome," Eichel said, unaware that his 25:45 of ice time was the highest of his career. "It's great to get a win on home ice. There's a lot of stuff we want to get better and clean up. They played well, give them credit.

"I thought they came at us fast, they transitioned the puck well and our goalie our best player tonight."

The goalie in question was Carter Hutton, who made 43 saves and came within minutes of securing his first shutout as a Sabre, broken when Brett Howden scored on the Rangers' 41st shot of the game with 4:39 remaining. Fellow newcomer Conor Sheary added a pair of power-play goals to give Buffalo a 2-0 lead.

Sabres coach Phil Housley promised that learning to win wouldn't be easy, and the game was no exception. The Sabres battled adversity throughout the third period, between a highlight-reel save from Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist on Evan Rodrigues, a Tage Thompson goal that was called back due to a high-stick and the late blow from Howden, which cut their lead in half.

In the end, the Sabres rolled with the punches - and Eichel said he knows his team has more to show.

"I thought we were desperate, and we won battles when we needed to," he said. "It's great to see us get a team win like that and know that we can still play better.

"Overall it's a good team win for us, it's two points, and we should feel good about ourselves."

Here's on Buffalo's first win of the season, beginning with the anchor in net.

"Oh, dear"

Before Howden was responsible for the only blemish on Hutton's night, he was the victim of a save you might see on SportsCenter Sunday morning. A turnover at the Buffalo blue line in the second period led to a 3-on-0 rush, leaving Hutton little time to react.

"I don't know if I can say exactly what was going through my head there, it might not be allowed on the air," Hutton said. "It was one of those ones you just look up and you're like, 'Oh, dear.' I just tried to be patient on it."

Howden, in the middle, passed to Ryan Spooner on his right. Spooner passed across to Jesper Fast, who delivered one final pass back to Howden as the trio closed in on the net.

Hutton lunged to his left and swallowed the shot with his glove.

"I think they kind of overplay it," he said. "I think they make one too many passes on it and it gets jammed up. I'm patient enough that I get my edge to push over and make the save. It's something we don't want to get in the habit of giving up, that's for sure."

Hutton was a voice of reason following the team's shutout loss on Thursday, downplaying it for what it was: one game in a season of 82. He led with his play on Saturday, whether he was aggressively playing the puck or swallowing shots to prevent second chances.

"I definitely saw the puck well tonight," he said. "I think that's a real strength of my game, is just feet work, competing to find pucks and tracking, being patient. Tonight, I thought I did a great job on my edges, battling to find pucks and staying on my feet a little longer."

"I find sometimes if I start dropping too early, that's when I get myself in trouble, so I thought tonight I was shifting with the puck well and finding it. It gives me a good chance to eat up a lot of rebounds."

### Two for Sheary

Phil Housley swapped Conor Sheary's and Jeff Skinner's spots in search of an offensive spark, both on their forward lines and on the power play. The switch worked for both players - Housley called Skinner "a man possessed" in the offensive zone - but it was Sheary who benefitted on the score sheet.

Sheary scored Buffalo's first goal of the season on the power play with 6:45 remaining in the first period, shooting far-side on Lundqvist on a 2-on-1 rush with Rasmus Ristolainen. He said afterward that the goal was a weight off his shoulders; it snapped a 14-game drought dating back to last season (including playoffs).

It was a weight off for the Sabres, too. The goal livened the crowd and set the tone for the night.

"Yeah, definitely," Hutton said. "When that first one went in, truthfully, for me it was nice to hear the roar of the crowd."

Sheary's wait for a second goal would be considerably less short. That came 1:42 into the second period, when he buried a feed across the net from Sam Reinhart, with Eichel winning a battle and notching the secondary assist. It was Sheary's first time scoring multiple power-play goals in a single game.

"We knew this was an important one," he said. "We kind of got spanked in our home opener so we wanted to come out and have a strong effort. It was good to have two points tonight."

### Up next

The Sabres continue their homestand with a matinee against the Vegas Golden Knights on Monday. Coverage on MSG-B begins at 2:30 p.m. the GMC Game Night Pregame Show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 3 p.m.

## **Eichel, Sabres look to get back on track vs. Rangers**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 6, 2018

Jack Eichel still maintains a close relationship with David Quinn. He refers to his former coach at Boston University as a friend and a mentor, and he was thrilled to see Quinn earn his first NHL head coaching gig with the New York Rangers during the offseason.

None of that will stop Eichel from doing everything in his power to make sure Quinn doesn't earn his first career win in Buffalo.

"He was so good to me at BU and we have such a good relationship," Eichel said. "But I think we're all competitors, right? When you get out there, all you're doing is worrying about trying to help your team win.

"... I'm just so happy for him. I think he'll do great. He can win all the games he wants except for when he plays us. Other than that, I wish him all the best."

Eichel and the Sabres will look to rebound from an opening-night loss to Boston when they host the Rangers on Saturday night. Coach Phil Housley spoke passionately about the areas in need of correcting for the Sabres following that 4-0 loss to the Bruins, namely puck management and defensive detail.

Housley thought more of the team's performance after reviewing the film and getting his emotions in check, but his message of simplifying the game stood.

"It's those plays as we're entering the zone where we've got to be smarter," Housley said. "We look like a much faster team when we keep pucks moving ahead and we're able to get on the forecheck. The worst thing out of that [for the opponent] is when the other team's got to earn a breakout.

"When we don't do that, we come back, we defend, and on that next rush we don't seem like we have the speed we had in the initial rush. That's a little bit of focus for us, maybe just simplifying our game."

Eichel echoed that message, admitting after the game on Thursday that he felt he forced passes in situations that warranted a shot mentality. His objective against the Rangers is to play fast and take what's given.

"I don't think I was too happy with my game," Eichel said. "I thought maybe I was thinking a little bit too much and trying to force things. I just want to come out first period and try to attack their defensemen, put them on their heels and try to get pucks to the net. I think that's normally what sparks my game."

That's the exact approach that made another BU alum, Evan Rodrigues, successful against the Bruins. Rodrigues centered a line with Zemgus Girgensons and Jason Pominville; together they combined for five shots and arguably Buffalo's two best scoring chances at the net front.

"I think we got pucks deep," Rodrigues said. "We won some battles and once we got it behind their D, we kind of took over in the corners and that led to some good chances. We have to continue to do that again today and hopefully bury some of the chances we get."

Tickets for tonight

Saturday's contest will be the second of a four-game homestand for the Sabres, giving them an opportunity to get back on track at home before leaving for a long five-game homestand on the West Coast next week.

"It's a tough test," Eichel said. "No games in this league are easy so we know it's going to be hard. We're excited about the challenge. It's a good opportunity for us to get our first win in front of our home fans. But we know it's not going to be easy. We've just got to be ready to go when the puck drops."

Lineup notes

Vladimir Sobotka will not play after missing practice on Friday with an upper-body injury. Sobotka skated on his own Saturday morning and remains day-to-day. He'll be replaced in the lineup by Remi Elie, making his Sabres debut.

You can read more about Elie, who was claimed off waivers from Dallas earlier this week, [here](#).

Sobotka, who has experience at center and on the wing, was used in a support role on Casey Mittelstadt's line against Boston, often taking defensive-zone draws in place of the young center. Zemgus Girgensons will be bumped up to Mittelstadt's line in his absence.

Housley used Girgensons in that role alongside Mittelstadt during the team's preseason game in Toronto on Sept. 21, when the young center often found himself lined up against Maple Leafs star John Tavares. While Housley still found it important to give Mittelstadt veteran support against the Rangers, the coach has seen improvements in his defensive game in recent weeks.

"He's put a lot of time and effort into his game since the start of training camp," Housley said. "His first couple exhibition games there were some defensive breakdowns, but he's really worked hard on that part of his game and you could see the development in the [preseason finale against the Islanders] and even in the game against Boston.

"I really liked the way he attacked the game. He was very defensively sound, he came through the neutral zone with speed, so his development's moving in a good direction."

Conor Sheary will remain on the top line with Eichel and Sam Reinhart, while Jeff Skinner is expected to skate alongside Patrik Berglund and Kyle Okposo. Here's how the lineup could look based on Friday's practice, with Carter Hutton slated to start in net:

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

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
19 Jake McCabe - 26 Rasmus Dahlin  
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 8 Casey Nelson

40 Carter Hutton  
35 Linus Ullmark

### Scouting the Rangers

The Rangers have a new coach and new system, but Housley expects much of the same from a lineup headlined by Mats Zuccarello and Mika Zibanejad: speed.

"Well, they still are incredibly fast," Housley said. "They've got a lot of team speed, so we have to be aware of that. They'll still stretch the zone. There're some little tweaks in their system structure, I think they're trying to attack the game more, their forecheck in the neutral zone forechecks a little different so we look at that through film.

"But their characteristics are the same. They've got a lot of team speed, especially up front. We have to be aware of that and that goes back to simplifying our game, so we can try and take away some of that speed."

New York lost its season opener at home to Nashville on Thursday, 3-2. Jesper Fast and Pavel Buchnevich scored goals for the Rangers in that game and Henrik Lundqvist made 30 saves.

How to watch

Tonight's game can be seen live on MSG-B, with pregame coverage set to begin at 6:30 p.m. You can also listen to the game on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.