



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*November 19, 2018*

## **Sheary scores in 7th round of shootout, Sabres beat Jets 2-1**

Associated Press

November 17, 2018

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (AP) — Conor Sheary and Carter Hutton gave the surging Buffalo Sabres another full two points in the standings.

Sheary scored in the seventh round of a shootout, Hutton stopped 25 shots and the Sabres beat the Winnipeg Jets 2-1 on Friday night for their fourth straight victory.

Sheary beat Laurent Brossoit with a shot over the goalie's glove.

"It should give us some confidence," Skinner said when asked about the last two wins over the Jets and Tampa Bay Lightning. "It definitely gives us some confidence in Hutton (goalie Carter Hutton). I don't think we wanna ask that much of him every night, but he's been huge the last two games."

Buffalo improved to 11-6-2.

"I think we just gave them a little too much respect," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We settled in the second, got our legs underneath us. We starting shooting pucks, getting pucks to the net and it created a lot for us."

Jeff Skinner tied it at 1 for the Sabres on a power play early in the third period. He extended his goals streak to four games with his 14th of the season.

The Sabres went on a power play with 19 seconds left in the second period after forward Brandon Tanev was called for holding. They capitalized 53 seconds into the third when a rebound bounced around a scramble in the crease and Skinner put in a backhand.

"I thought we carried the play most of the way and they potted one and it gave them a bit of a surge, some momentum," Brossoit said. "We weathered the storm and then both teams played good defense."

Kyle Connor scored for the Jets in the second period. He has three goals and two assists in the last four games.

"I think each game I've grown and really taking strides to be a more consistent player day in and day out," Connor said. "I think that's what makes great players in this league great, bringing it every single night."

NOTES: Brossoit made 31 saves. ... Winnipeg captain Blake Wheeler had his points streak end at 11 games.

UP NEXT

Sabres: At Minnesota on Saturday night.

Jets: At Vancouver on Monday night.

## **Pominville's goal completes comeback as Sabres beat Wild 3-2**

By Brian Hall

Associated Press

November 17, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A year after finishing with the worst record in the NHL, the Buffalo Sabres are making a habit of rallying in their second year under coach Phil Housley.

Jason Pominville scored with 1:30 remaining and Buffalo extended its winning streak to five games with a 3-2 come-from-behind victory over the Minnesota Wild on Saturday.

Rookie defenseman Rasmus Dahlin had his second career goal and added an assist for the Sabres, who rallied from a two-goal deficit to post their longest winning streak since 2012.

"I think it just goes to show we have a different group, different mindset and different attitude," Pominville said after his ninth goal of the season. "We stuck with it, found a way, and again it just shows a lot about our group. We had a tough, tough schedule.

"Playing in Winnipeg last night, going through customs, flying here, 5 o'clock game, they didn't play. So, it shows a lot about our team."

Jake McCabe also scored and Linus Ullmark made 37 saves for Buffalo. The Sabres recovered from a 1-0 deficit on Friday in a shootout win in Winnipeg. They've won four times in 11 games when trailing after two periods.

"Coming into training camp, our conditioning, our checking detail, I think they're getting rewarded right now for that hard work," Housley said. "It's tough going into Winnipeg and getting two points there, and then getting two points in Minnesota, where they've only lost one game, they're pretty deadly in this building."

Matt Dumba scored for the third straight game and Devan Dubnyk stopped 26 shots for the Wild. Zach Parise added another goal, becoming the highest-scoring Minnesotan in NHL history. The Wild lost for just the fourth time in their last 15 games and the second time in regulation in 10 home games.

"The back-to-back games, if you could have made it 3-nothing, 4-nothing, then they would have said, 'Let's go home,'" Minnesota coach Bruce Boudreau said. "You're exhausted, you're tired, you're back-to-back and then you come in. But if you let them hang around, fatigue leaves you. You become more into the game and wanting to win it."

Dahlin scored with 7:02 remaining in the third, poking a loose puck past Dubnyk after the goaltender couldn't get a handle on it.

Pominville capitalized after Buffalo's Jack Eichel tried to grab a loose puck in the offensive zone following a dump-in. The puck trickled out to Pominville, who quickly spun and sent a shot past an unsuspecting Dubnyk.

"I think we probably could have stepped on their throats a little bit, the way the first period was going," Dubnyk said. "It's always disappointing to give up a lead and especially when it's late."

Parise scored the 341st goal of his 14-year career, surpassing Dave Christian's 340 goals and previous top mark in league history for a player born in Minnesota.

Dumba, who signed a five-year, \$30 million contract in the offseason, scored his eighth goal of the season. The total is second among defenseman in goals and just six away from the career-high 14 he scored last season.

McCabe scored his second goal of the season to start the comeback after Dahlin, the first-overall pick in this year's draft, cut through the Wild defense to spot a wide-open McCabe on the backside.

"It's so easy to play on this team because we always know, if we're down two goals, we know we're going to get back," Dahlin said. "I love to have that feeling. I love to play on this team."

NOTES: It's Buffalo's first five-game winning streak since March 19-27, 2012. It's the first time since the 2009-10 season that Buffalo has had 26 points through the first 20 games. ... Minnesota is 11-3-2 in its last 16 games against the Sabres, outscoring them 54-31 in the process. ... Wild F Joel Eriksson Ek was a healthy scratch for the first time this season. Eriksson Ek had missed six games earlier with a lower-body injury. ... D Casey Nelson returned to the lineup for Buffalo after being a healthy scratch for four straight games. ... The Sabres scratched D Nathan Beaulieu.

#### UP NEXT

Sabres: Finish their road trip on Monday at Pittsburgh.

Wild: Play the second game of their back-to-back on Sunday at Chicago.

## **Conor Sheary returning to Pittsburgh as catalyst in Sabres' resurgence**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 18, 2018

PITTSBURGH – Since arriving in Buffalo, reporters have interviewed Conor Sheary more frequently than he's accustomed to. He used to watch from his spot inside the Pittsburgh Penguins' locker room as the media horde rushed to speak to Sidney Crosby or Evgeni Malkin after games.

Now, he's part of the Sabres' nucleus, a fast, tenacious winger acquired by General Manager Jason Botterill in June. Sheary previously shared the spotlight with the Penguins' stars, most notably after his overtime game-winning goal for the Penguins in Game 2 of the 2016 Stanley Cup Finals in front of a sold-out crowd at what's now called PPG Paints Arena.

He'll step into the spotlight in Pittsburgh once more Monday night, when the surging Sabres face the struggling Penguins at 7 p.m. Sheary will receive a hero's welcome that will illustrate why Botterill wanted him to be part of the roster overhaul.

"It will be weird staying in the hotel, sitting on the other side of the rink, in a different locker room," Sheary told The Buffalo News on Friday in Winnipeg. "It will be a little different. I've had a lot of good memories in Pittsburgh. Obviously, when you're winning you grow close with that team."

Former teammates have reached out to prepare Sheary for what to expect. Like Casey Mittelstadt's homecoming Saturday in St. Paul, Minn., Sheary wants to get this game out of the way. New York Islanders winger Tom Kuhnhackl, also a member of the Penguins' back-to-back Cup championships, was welcomed with a tribute video when he returned to Pittsburgh last month.

Sheary will likely receive the same treatment. After all, he had 93 points in 184 regular-season games with the Penguins, as well as 19 points in 57 playoff games. His 23 goals in 2016-17 earned him a three-year contract extension.

After many failed attempts to find Crosby a capable winger, Sheary was able to fill the void, and it appeared he would be a foundational piece following those Cup runs. However, Sheary struggled last season, posting 30 points in 79 games and a minus-2 rating in 12 playoff games.

When the Penguins sought to clear cap space, Botterill pounced, dealing a conditional 2019 fourth-round pick for Sheary and defenseman Matt Hunwick. That evoked a whirlwind of emotions that Sheary expects to experience again during his homecoming.

"I don't really know what to expect," Sheary admitted. "Hopefully I can take the crowd and everything else out of it, play my game and not be nervous. I feel like it's going to be my first game again for some reason. We'll see what happens."

Sheary planned to spend Sunday visiting friends and area restaurants he says he "overused" during his three years in Pittsburgh. Then, he'll arrive for Monday's morning skate, where he'll continue to build off what's been a promising start to his first season in Buffalo.

Though Sheary's a minus-2, he's been a pest in the neutral and defensive zones, using his speed to create turnovers. That's led to scoring opportunities for his linemates, Kyle Okposo and Casey Mittelstadt.

Sheary scored the shootout winner Friday night against the Winnipeg Jets and has six goals with four assists through 20 games. He's helped change the way the Sabres practice and play. That's been obvious whenever the Sabres are on the ice at HarborCenter.

"He's got a bit of that (Jeff Skinner) in him, where he can create turnovers and his skating is really good," Okposo said. "He's really quick off the block. He's tenacious. He battles hard. He's going to get to those areas, he's going to fight for pucks."

Sheary wasn't playing that way one year ago. Though he had a fine finish to his final regular season in Pittsburgh, Sheary struggled early on and again in the playoffs. He leaned on teammates and coaches to help him through it.

Those difficult nights in black and yellow, Sheary said, equipped him for his new role as a catalyst for Phil Housley's relentless two-way attack.

"Hopefully we can get a win, get this out of the way and move past it," Sheary said.

## **Pominville's late goal completes Sabres' exhilarating comeback win**

By Lance Lysowski  
The Buffalo News  
November 17, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. — Word has circulated around the NHL about what Phil Housley is building in Buffalo. In only six weeks, the Sabres have developed a reputation of hanging around in games before their skill eventually takes over.

After completing a morning skate Saturday morning at Xcel Energy Center, Minnesota Wild coach Bruce Boudreau cautioned reporters of that change. Buffalo is no longer a pushover, no matter the odds, he said. To his credit, and at his own team's expense, Boudreau was correct.

The Sabres, less than 24 hours after a victory over the Winnipeg Jets, roared back from a two-goal deficit to beat the Wild, 3-2, Saturday night, giving Buffalo its first five-game winning streak since 2012 and improving its record to 12-6-2.

Housley's players went into two of the most difficult road arenas in the league and escaped with two wins. Although there are question marks and red flags surrounding this team, the Sabres have finally established an identity.

"It goes to show we have a different group, a different mindset and a different attitude," Jason Pominville, who scored the game-winning goal with only 90 seconds remaining, said after the game.

His teammates have spoken similar words over the past week, however, there was a particular sense of pride after this win. After all, the Sabres beat two of the Western Conference's best and the Tampa Bay Lightning in a four-day span.

Buffalo's amid a six-game in nine nights stretch that will now take them to Pittsburgh, where they'll play the Penguins on Monday night. The Sabres didn't arrive at the team hotel in Saint Paul until late Friday night, and there wasn't enough time for a morning skate.

Still, they overcame another ugly start. The Wild (12-6-2) outshot the Sabres, 18-9, in the first period and dominated play, thanks in part to three Buffalo penalties. Winger Zach Parise gave the home team a one-goal lead only four minutes in on a turnover by Zach Bogosian, and the lead grew to two with defenseman Matthew Dumba's power-play goal at 7:45.

The Sabres looked exhausted. They couldn't get the puck through the neutral zone and were making elementary miscues in their own end. Yet, Buffalo entered the second period with momentum by scoring on a play that powerfully illustrated just how far this roster has come.

Defenseman Jake McCabe joined the rush and passed back to Kyle Okposo, who dished the puck back to Dahlin. The rookie defenseman skated through the circle and his pass to an open McCabe on the backdoor led to a goal at 14:52 into the first.

"Yeah, we don't like to play in the first period, but it's been working out for us the past couple games," McCabe joked. "In all reality, we're very persistent. We stick to our game plan. We don't change throughout the game, whether we're up two goals or down two goals, whatever the case may be."

The Sabres do change, though. Over the past week, they've survived despite not adhering to Housley's system, and they only get back into games by doing so. They were outshot 12-11 in the second period and fed off backup goalie Linus Ullmark's success, including his save on Jason Tucker's breakaway.

After failing to generate a shot on goal for more than nine minutes, the Sabres had six in under four minutes during a second-period onslaught. They wore the Wild down until finally, with 7:02 remaining in the third, Dahlin again joined the rush and poked in a rebound to tie the score.

"I give a lot of credit to our guys," Housley said. "It just showed the character of this team, the fight and the battle."

While the Wild failed to take advantage of chances, the Sabres continued to have success in the neutral zone and controlled play in the offensive zone. After Housley moved Pominville back to the top line, the winger collected a deflected pass from Jack Eichel and fired a backhand shot that ricocheted off the post and in with only 90 seconds remaining.

The Wild were 9-0-1 this season when leading after two periods and had lost only once at home. Suddenly, the team that finished at the bottom of the standings the past two seasons had just stolen two points behind the play of backup goalie.

Ullmark stopped 37 of the 39 shots he faced, trumping a remarkable performance by Wild goalie Devan Dubnyk, who nearly weathered the onslaught with 26 saves.

"This shows a lot about our group," Pominville said.

## **Dahlin vows teammates with assist, tying goal in comeback win**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 17, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. — Rasmus Dahlin had just scored the tying goal and assisted on another in an unprecedented comeback win for the Sabres, yet the rookie defenseman expressed frustration over his play in the defensive zone.

"Offensively, I think so," Dahlin said when asked if Buffalo's 3-2 victory over the Minnesota Wild Saturday at Xcel Energy Center was his best performance of the season. "Defensively, I could be better."

His teammates and coach disagreed. Dahlin, only 20 games into his first NHL season and less than five months removed from being drafted first overall, was at the center of the Buffalo's fifth consecutive win in a grueling stretch.

He did make a minor mistake in the first period by climbing over to the bench instead of waiting for the puck to exit his own zone, leading to Zach Bogosian's turnover and Zach Parise's goal four minutes in. However, Dahlin responded by showing why he's regarded as a generational talent.

The 18-year-old isn't afraid to take a risk since he has the skill and skating to recover. That led him to join the rush late in the first period, despite his fellow defenseman, Jake McCabe, skating below the faceoff dot and no one around to help in the event of a turnover.

Dahlin received a drop pass from Kyle Okposo, charged through the right circle and made a perfect backdoor pass through traffic to find McCabe, who shot the puck into the open net to cut the deficit to one.

"You could see he kind of had his swagger out there," McCabe said. "He had his confidence and he was moving the puck. He was shaking and baking out there, really. His deceptiveness is really fun to watch, just as a player in general. Tonight he was at the top of his game."

If there was any doubt, Dahlin made another remarkable play in the third period with the game on the line. Again adhering to a directive from coach Phil Housley, Dahlin chose to join the rush. A similar decision nearly backfired on at least two occasions Saturday night. Not this time.

With the Sabres fighting for a loose puck in front of the net, Dahlin skated through and pounded home the rebound to tie the score with 7:02 remaining in regulation.

"We have to give him credit," Pominville, who scored the game-winning goal with 90 seconds remaining, said. "He's going to be a lot of fun to see grow."

Those two points give Dahlin 10 this season, surpassing Rasmus Ristolainen for the most among the team's defensemen. The Sabres' defensemen now have scored 10 goals this season after not having one through 27 games in 2017-18.

Housley laughed when told of Dahlin's self-assessment. It was the rookie who showed the entire team exactly how the the coach wants the Sabres to play.

"He made some incredible plays," Housley said. "Even coming out of our own end. I would call that defense. It creates offense. ... It shows he has a knack to go to the right places."

## **The Wraparound: Sabres 3, Wild 2**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 17, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. — While this season already has given the Sabres years worth of lessons, there was some curiosity as to how they would respond to playing two road games in under 24 hours against two of the Western Conference's best.

They passed the test in a way few expected. The Sabres overcame a two-goal, first-period deficit, and Jason Pominville's backhander with 90 seconds remaining helped them bury the Minnesota Wild, 3-2, Saturday night at Xcel Energy Center. This after Buffalo beat the Winnipeg Jets, 2-1, in a shootout.

The Sabres' five-game winning streak is their first since 2012, and they've earned 26 points through 20 games for the eighth time in franchise history. The other seven teams to accomplish that feat reached the postseason.

Trailing 2-0 after the first period, Buffalo, now 12-6-2, cut the deficit to one with Jake McCabe's goal at 14:52 into the first and tied it 12:58 into the third when Rasmus Dahlin hammered home a rebound by crashing the net.

Backup goalie Linus Ullmark stopped 36 of the 38 shots he faced.

As with each victory during this early-season success, the Sabres achieved yet another minor milestone. The Sabres again started slow, giving the Wild room in the first period. Zach Parise scored four minutes into the game for a 1-0 lead, and Matthew Dumba's slap shot beat Ullmark for a power-play goal less than four minutes later.

Pominville back on top: Housley moved Pominville back to the Sabres' top line in the third period. Pominville replaced Sam Reinhart early in the third period, reuniting what was the NHL's top line.

Second-period onslaught: After going more than nine minutes without a shot, the Sabres had six in under four minutes during another second-period rally. Jack Eichel made a behind-the-back pass to find Reinhart wide open in front of the net but Dubnyk made the stop.

Buffalo's finest chance came without registering a shot on goal. Moments after getting caught joining the rush, Dahlin sprung Conor Sheary for a breakaway with a pass through the neutral zone, but Sheary's shot went wide.

Although the Wild failed to take advantage on two odd-man rushes, the Sabres were only outshot, 12-11, in the second period. Ullmark kept the deficit at one goal by stopping Jason Zucker on a breakaway only 2:21 into the second.

The Rasmus Show: Dahlin again showed why he's regarded as a generational talent. The 18-year-old received a drop pass from Kyle Okposo and skated through the circle before finding McCabe wide open with a perfect backdoor pass through traffic.

McCabe one-timed the puck into the open net to cut the deficit to one 14:52 into the second period. The assist was Dahlin's eighth of the season and came only a few minutes after his decision to join the rush nearly led to a third Minnesota goal.

Slow start: Despite the goal, Buffalo was outshot 18-9 in the first period. Remember, the Jets held a 12-4 advantage after the first period Friday night.

341: Parise's goal four minutes into the first period was the 341st of his career, passing Dave Christian for the most all-time by a Minnesota-born player. Parise, who missed the Wild's game Thursday because of an illness, capitalized when Zach Bogosian turned the puck over near the Sabres' bench.

Bogosian thought Dahlin would be there to carry the pass through the neutral zone, but Dahlin climbed over the wall for a line change, allowing Parise to intercept the pass and beat Ullmark for the 1-0 lead.

0-for-14: Minnesota's power play overwhelmed the Sabres in the first period, as powerfully illustrated by Dumba's power play goal. His one-timed slap shot went over Ullmark's glove hand for the 2-0 lead at 7:45 into the period, ending Buffalo's streak of 14 consecutive penalties killed.

More changes: In addition to inserting Casey Nelson for Nathan Beaulieu, Housley moved Tage Thompson to third line left wing while bumping Patrik Berglund down with Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons on the fourth line.

Again, Dahlin and Bogosian were paired together.

Homecoming: Casey Mittelstadt, named Minnesota's Mr. Hockey as a high school senior at nearby Eden Prairie in 2017, was the first Sabres player on the ice for warmups and skated one lap alone while his teammates remained on the bench. The gesture was met by cheers from Mittelstadt's family and friends.

Next: The Sabres traveled to Pittsburgh following the game, where they'll have an off day Sunday. They'll hold a morning skate at PPG Paints Arena ahead of a 7 p.m. puck drop Monday against the Penguins.

## **Nelson replaces Beaulieu in Sabres' lineup, Ullmark to start in goal**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 17, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. — Amid a four-game winning streak that's included poor play for long stretches, Sabres coach Phil Housley made another change to try to address some issues on the blue line.

Defenseman Casey Nelson will replace Nathan Beaulieu in Buffalo's lineup for the 6 p.m. puck drop tonight against the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center. Also, backup goalie Linus Ullmark will start, giving Carter Hutton a night off after he helped the Sabres defeat the Winnipeg Jets and Tampa Bay Lightning in a span of three nights.

Nelson was a healthy scratch in each of the last four games after registering a minus-1 rating in a 3-1 loss to the New York Rangers on Nov. 4. Beaulieu, a plus-6 in 12 games this season, was on the ice for the Jets' second-period goal Friday night and his offensive-zone turnover moments earlier led to another scoring chance.

The Wild, 12-5-2 and fourth in the NHL with 26 points, has thrived this season by capitalizing on similar mistakes.

"They're a good checking team," Housley said Saturday afternoon. "They take a lot of pride on their checking detail. We're going to have to manage that. We're going to have to be ready. Obviously they know we went into overtime and a shootout last night. That's one thing we have to address and just be ready for that. If we work back as a five-man unit and try to catch them in between with good puck movement, we can get on the attack."

Nelson has two assists and a plus-5 rating in 13 games this season. It's not clear who he'll skate with on the third defensive pairing since the Sabres did not hold a morning skate. After repeated neutral-zone turnovers Friday night, Housley moved Rasmus Dahlin to the top pairing with Zach Bogosian and bumped Marco Scandella down with Beaulieu near the end of the first period.

The Sabres proceeded to outshoot the Jets, 28-14, from the beginning of the second period through overtime. Nelson's proven capable of contributing in Housley's system, and the Sabres are looking for a more conservative approach against Minnesota since this is a back-to-back with only 22 hours between games.

Ullmark will also have the chance to redeem himself after struggling in his last start against the Montreal Canadiens. The 25-year-old allowed five goals on 32 shots before he was relieved by Hutton, who stopped all five shots he faced in a 6-5 overtime win.

Hutton's stopped 54 of the 56 shots in wins over the Lightning and Jets this week. The night off will position him to start Monday night against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

## **Sheary's shootout winner gives Sabres first 4-game streak since 2014**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 17, 2018

With a wrist shot over Laurent Brossoit's shoulder, Conor Sheary undid another uneven game by the Sabres and gave the franchise its first four-game winning streak in nearly four years.

Sheary's goal in the seventh shootout round, one of three by Buffalo, clinched a 2-1 win over the Winnipeg Jets on Friday night in front of a raucous crowd of 15,321 at Bell MTS Place. Only three days after beating Tampa Bay, the Sabres have now proven capable of playing against the league's best.

Buffalo, now 11-6-2, is 5-1 in its last six games and moved into third place in the Atlantic Division, only three points behind the first-place Lightning. Again, the Sabres prevailed despite playing poorly for long stretches and relying on their goalie to steal a win.

"It should give us some confidence," said winger Jeff Skinner, whose team-high 14th goal of the season helped send the game to overtime, said. "It definitely gives us some confidence in [Carter Hutton]. I don't think we want to ask that much of him every night, but he's been huge the last two games. We've played some pretty good teams and gotten the job done."

Again, the comeback started with Hutton. The 32-year-old goalie stopped 25 of the 26 shots he faced, as well as seven in the shootout. This after he saved 29 of 30 against Tampa Bay. Jets winger Patrik Laine, whose scored the second-most goals in the NHL since the start of last season, had a chance at the top of the goal crease as time expired, but Hutton was there to stop him.

When the Sabres were outshot 12-4 in the first period, Hutton was there to keep the game scoreless. It wasn't until 7:10 into the second period that Winnipeg's onslaught finally produced a goal. Tage Thompson's turnover in Buffalo's offensive zone gave the Jets a 2-on-1, which ended with Kyle Connor's shot over Hutton's shoulder for a 1-0 lead.

"Obviously, Carter made some huge saves," coach Phil Housley said. "The one thing for me was just our execution. We were off. They're a team that has a terrific transition game. They can hem you in until we got to the second period, and we started shooting the puck. It started to loosen up for us."

The Sabres had little success pushing the puck through the neutral zone in the first period, leading to turnovers and odd-man rushes. They were completely overwhelmed, much like they were for two periods against the Lightning.

However, they managed to gain momentum in the second period. Buffalo outshot Winnipeg, 28-14, for the rest of the game by following Housley's simple mantra: shoot first. That finally helped their struggling power play break through.

After defenseman Rasmus Dahlin won a battle along the boards, Skinner hammered home a rebound at 53 seconds into the third to tie the score. Hutton and Brossoit then took turns making spectacular saves for the final 19 minutes of regulation.

"It's one of those things where you don't want to have that," Hutton said. "You don't want it to become a habit. I thought in the second we still gave up a lot of chances but we started to get some offense too."

Finally, the Sabres' defensemen were getting involved in the rush, and the passes in the neutral zone were finding open forwards. Once the game got to overtime, they were able to continue to apply pressure, even though the margin for error was even smaller. Defenseman Zach Bogosian's blown assignment gave Laine enough room to give the Jets the win, however, Hutton made the stop.

Jack Eichel and Jason Pominville both scored in the shootout, the latter of which extended Buffalo's chance at escaping with two points. Hutton stopped Mathieu Perreault's wrist in the seventh shootout round after Kyle Okposo failed to end it with his backhand attempt.

Finally, Sheary's wrist gave the Sabres a key win in a grueling stretch where they'll play six games in nine nights. Buffalo showed it had the skill to skate with Winnipeg. The Sabres also showed they're strong enough down low to win loose-puck battles against one of the Western Conference's mightiest teams.

There was some level concern afterwards that they're playing far too inconsistent for this success to continue. Yet, after what most of the players endured during the franchise's lean years, taking two points on the road against one of the league's best was enough to send them to the team charter hopeful the best is still to come.

"I just think we bent a little bit but we didn't break," Housley said. "I think last year we maybe would have broke a little bit more and gave the game away, but we hung in there. That's what's great about this group."

## **The Wraparound: Sabres 2, Jets 1, SO**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 16, 2018

WINNIPEG -- Conor Sheary scored in the seventh round of the shootout to give the Buffalo Sabres a 2-1 win over the Winnipeg Jets on Friday at Bell MTS Place.

The win gave the Sabres, now 11-6-2, their first four-game winning streak since December 2014. Jack Eichel and Jason Pominville also scored in the shootout, while Carter Hutton was outstanding again.

Jeff Skinner's power-play goal, his 14th of the season, tied the score at one 53 seconds into the third when his second backhanded attempt from at the top of the crease went over Jets goalie Laurent Brossoit's shoulder. That ended what was a lackluster night for the Sabres' top line. After being outshot 12-4 in the first period, the Sabres finished with a 32-26 advantage for the game.

Again, the comeback began with Carter Hutton. The 32-year-old goalie stopped 25 of the 26 shots he faced. The Jets, now 11-5-2, took the lead at 7:10 into the second period, on a two-on-one, when Kyle Connor rifled a one-timer past Hutton on a pass from winger Patrik Laine.

Hutton stopped Laine's chance from the top of the crease as time expired in regulation and made another spectacular stop on Connor with 2:45 left in overtime. Brossoit, the Jets' backup goalie, was also able to stop the Sabres' quality chances, finishing with 28 saves in only his third start of the season.

10:27: The Jets did not record a shot on goal in the third period until Hutton stopped Blake Wheeler's wrist shot with 9:33 remaining in regulation.

0-for-12: Skinner's power-play goal broke an 0-for-12 slump for the Sabres. That also tied Skinner for the league lead with 10 goals in 10 road games this season.

Close call: Wheeler rushed the net and hacked Skinner on the left hand while pursuing a loose puck midway through the second period. Skinner was clutching his hand on the bench and held it on a bag of ice before returning to the game.

Growing pains: Hours after receiving praise from Phil Housley, winger Tage Thompson made another egregious mistake that led to the Jets' go-ahead goal. Instead of shooting on a rush up the right side, Thompson passed back toward the left and it was intercepted by Laine for the two-on-one.

Laine then made a perfect pass to Connor, whose high shot beat Hutton.

Two crossbars: Skinner and Sam Reinhart both hit the crossbar during the second period. Reinhart did so on a one-timer with 11.5 seconds remaining and the Sabres on their third power play of the night.

16-8: After an ugly first period, the Sabres outshot the Jets, 16-8, in the second with three of those shots coming on the power play.

Bad pass: Brossoit nearly put the puck in his own net with three minutes left in the second period when he attempted to pass it back behind the goal. Instead, the puck hit the left post, and the Sabres seemingly gained momentum.

Slow start: The Sabres were slowed by sloppy passing in the first period. Like their matchup with Tampa Bay three nights earlier, they were caught looking for the perfect pass instead of passing to the open man.

As a result, they were outshot 12-4 over the first 20 minutes and were outshot 34-12 in 60 minutes dating back to the first intermission Tuesday against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Rough return: Removing Evan Rodrigues from the lineup didn't go as planned. Rodrigues' replacement, Patrik Berglund, struggled at times Friday. He was called for a hooking penalty in the offensive zone with the Sabres on the power play in the first and his turnover early in the first led to jets scoring chance.

Also, his shot from atop the left circle missed the net at 4:10 into the first.

Coast to coast: Remember all that talk about the defenseman getting more involved? Well, it was the youngest of the group that powerfully illustrated how much has changed for the Sabres over the past 12 months.

Following a neutral-zone turnover, Rasmus Dahlin collected the puck at his own blue line and carried the puck all the way down the ice before firing a wrist shot on Brissboit from the left circle at 15:34 into the first.

Shake it up: Housley chose to tinker with his defensive pairings in the first period, moving Dahlin with Zach Bogosian and Marco Scandella with Nathan Beaulieu.

Hip check: Okposo skated slowly off the ice while grabbing at his left hip after being checked during the first period in the offensive zone. He played only 3:31 in the first, sitting on the bench rather than returning to the locker room, and returned for the start of the second.

Up Next: The Sabres traveled to Minnesota, where they'll play the Wild (12-5-2) on Saturday night at 6 p.m. ET. With no morning skate, Housley will address the media at 3:30 p.m.

## **Sabres Notebook: Mittelstadt anticipates hectic homecoming in Minnesota**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 16, 2018

WINNIPEG — When Casey Mittelstadt left for the first time, his parents, Tom and Dede, would make frequent trips to Green Bay from the family's home in Minnesota to check on their oldest son.

When Mittelstadt's hockey journey brought him to Buffalo for his first NHL training camp in August, again, his parents made the trip to make sure their 19-year-old son was settled. The couple has continued to attend Sabres games during Mittelstadt's rookie season, beginning with the season opener and even last weekend when the Vancouver Canucks were at KeyBank Center.

The Mittelstadts' next hockey pilgrimage is much closer to home, and this time they'll be accompanied by dozens of family and friends. Five days before his 20th birthday, Mittelstadt will play his first NHL game near his hometown Saturday night, when the Sabres face the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center.

Drafted eighth overall by Buffalo in 2017, Mittelstadt grew up in Eden Prairie — 30 miles southwest of Minneapolis — and played one season at the University of Minnesota before beginning his pro career. Now, the Sabres center will return to the same sheet of ice where he played his final high school hockey game, a 3-2 loss in the state semifinals, just 20 months ago.

"It should be exciting, I think," Mittelstadt told The Buffalo News. "I haven't seen a lot of those people since I've been to Buffalo in August. It will be fun to see them, see all my buddies from home. They're all going to be there. That will be the best part, I think, and hopefully we can get a win."

Mittelstadt's ready for it to be over. He's expecting anywhere from 40 to 50 friends and family to be attendance. His father joked the guest list is closer to 500. The text messages haven't stopped, either, forcing Mittelstadt to refer all ticket requests and questions to his parents.

This isn't a typical homecoming, after all. Mittelstadt was regarded as one of the state's best high school hockey prospects in more than a decade and was named Minnesota's Mr. Hockey as a senior in 2017. He began that final prep season in Green Bay of the USHL but opted to return to Eden Prairie to try to win a state title.

There were four consecutive state tournament appearances, as well as two Associated Press Player of the Year awards. Mittelstadt then joined the Gophers, a program for which his family held season tickets throughout his childhood. He had 30 points in his 34 games there and tallied an assist in his debut with the Sabres last March.

When Mittelstadt made the Sabres' roster out of camp, the family immediately began planning for the homecoming.

"Obviously, we had this date on our calendar because the family's got tickets and they're all excited," Tom said during a phone interview Friday. "It's going to be hectic but fun. We're all looking forward to it. I think he's playing pretty well. They want him to play center, which is like a third defenseman, so he's been working really hard on the defensive side of things."

Mittelstadt's coach knows what he's going through.

Phil Housley grew up in St. Paul and played junior hockey there before he was drafted sixth overall by the Sabres in 1982. He returned to Minnesota as a rookie to face the North Stars, when his teammates pranked him by remaining on the bench after Housley was the first on the ice for warmups.

"It's going to be special for him," Housley said. "It's the place where he grew up. He has a lot of friends and family there, which is really important to be able to play in front of your friends and family. It's going to be a special honor for him getting back to Minnesota and playing in front of his home crowd."

Housley also knows how difficult the transition can be. Rookies across the league are having success, most notably Elias Pettersson of the Canucks, and the transition to playing center is particularly difficult for a young player. Mittelstadt has more defensive responsibilities than a winger, and he's only two years removed from playing high school hockey.

Still, he's proven his speed and skill are ready for the NHL. Now he gets to show that in front of family and friends.

"This should be fun," Mittelstadt said.

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Wild coach Bruce Boudreau told reporters Friday that winger Zach Parise is expected to return to the lineup Saturday against the Sabres. Parise, who has seven goals and nine assists in 18 games this season, was scratched Thursday because of an illness.

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Penguins center Sidney Crosby was absent from practice again Friday and is day-to-day with an upper-body injury. Crosby has skated by himself but has not rejoined the team. It's looking unlikely he'll return in time to face the Sabres on Monday in Pittsburgh.

## Sabres at Jets: Five Things to Know

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 16, 2018

WINNIPEG – Rather than holding a morning skate at Bell MTS Place on Friday, the Sabres stretched and kicked around a soccer ball in a hallway adjacent to the visitors locker room.

An exhausting schedule of six games in nine days, beginning with tonight's 8 p.m. puck drop against the Winnipeg Jets, led Buffalo coach Phil Housley to make this more of an informal prep for yet another difficult opponent. Make no mistake, though, neither he nor his players expect this test to be any less taxing than the one they experienced at KeyBank Center on Tuesday.

The Jets (11-5-1) are tied for third in the Western Conference with 23 points, only four behind the first-place Nashville Predators, and own the NHL's top power play, led by prolific winger Patrik Laine. A win would give the Sabres their first four-game winning streak since December 2014, and they're currently in a three-way tie with the Boston Bruins and New York Islanders for fifth in the Eastern Conference.

Here are Five Things to Know about tonight's game:

1. Hutton's net: There won't be a change in net for at least one more night. Carter Hutton will start against the Jets after another impeccable performance Tuesday night against the Lightning.

Hutton ranks 10th and 12th, respectively, in save percentage and goals against average among goalies with at least 10 starts this season. Linus Ullmark will likely start against the Minnesota Wild on Saturday night.

Meanwhile, the Sabres will face a backup goalie for the second time in as many games with Jets coach Paul Maurice turning to Laurent Brossoit, a 25-year-old who spent last season with the Edmonton Oilers. Brossoit allowed two goals on 30 shots in the Oilers' 3-1 loss to the Sabres at KeyBank Center on November 24 last year.

2. Killing penalties: The Sabres' penalty kill is tied for ninth in the NHL at 81.8 percent and has not allowed a power play goal in 12 opportunities over the past five games. They'll face their toughest test to date tonight.

The Jets' power play leads the league at 34 percent, scoring at least once in all but three games this season, including 11 straight. They have five players with at least seven power-play points, including a team-high 13 from Blake Wheeler.

Wheeler, regarded as one of the league's top passers, skates on the top pairing with Laine, who has seven of the team's 16 power-play goals. If called for a penalty, Buffalo's singular focus is preventing Wheeler from finding Laine in space and cutting down passing lanes to others.

"Wheeler can really dish it out," winger Zemgus Girgensons, who trails only defenseman Marco Scandella in penalty kill ice time for Buffalo, said Tuesday. "You have to be really paying attention to what's going on around you, behind you. He's always trying to find Laine. If he can't find him then he'll try to find someone else. You have to be on your toes at all times."

3. Matchup watch: Housley's fourth line — Johan Larsson, Girgensons and Tage Thompson — held the Lightning's top line of Steven Stamkos, Nikita Kucherov and J.T. Miller to three shots on goal in more than eight minutes Tuesday night.

Keep an eye on how Housley uses his fourth line tonight. He could opt to deploy them against the Jets' top line of Nikolaj Ehlers, Mark Scheifele and Wheeler, or whenever Laine is on the ice. Laine, whose 44 goals since the start of last season rank second behind the Capitals' Alex Ovechkin, has been skating on the Jets' third line.

Laine has eight goals and two assists with a team-worst minus-6 rating in 17 games this season. Since the Jets are outstanding in the faceoff circle, ranking tied for fifth at 51.7 percent, Housley will use his third and fourth lines whenever there's a draw in the Sabres' defensive zone since each has two centermen.

"They've been terrific, especially Zemgus and Larsson," Housley said of his fourth line. "They've done a really great job, even Tage now being in that role — starting in the defensive zone quite a bit. He's learned how to play without the puck. It's going to be important moving forward in his development. I just like the trust and the reliability of those guys. Never afraid to put them up against any line."

4. Berglund in, Rodrigues out: With a surplus of healthy forwards, Housley will make another change, inserting Patrik Berglund and scratching Evan Rodrigues. Berglund will play between Vladimir Sobotka and Jason Pominville on the third line, while Larsson, Girgensons and Thompson will remain together.

Wanting more shots on the power play, Housley plans to also use Berglund with a man advantage. Berglund has logged only 2:47 on the power play this season, but he's experienced and isn't afraid to shoot.

"I think (Jeff) Skinner and him can feed off each other," Housley said. "I like his shot capabilities. He's got a great one-timer, so we've got to get back to shooting the puck on the power play."

5. Home Ice Advantage: This is unlike any arena in the NHL. Bell MTS Place seats only 15,231, yet it's one of the most hostile environments for an opposing team. It's no coincidence the Jets thrive when playing here. They're 8-2-1 at home this season, and they're leading the NHL in goals at home for a second consecutive season with 40 in 11 games.

The Jets also had the NHL's best home record last season at 32-7-2. Meanwhile, the Sabres are 4-4-1 on the road this season.

"The biggest challenge is playing here," Sabres winger Conor Sheary said. "This is a tough place to play and it always has been."

## **What is happening?**

WGR 550

November 18, 2018

They say old habits die hard. But what about new habits? We should get over them relatively quickly, no?

I hope so. Here's why I ask. My Giant Goalie Son's Regals team had a game in Oakville Saturday night. We arrived at the rink at 5:45 for the 7pm face off. The Sabres were just getting ready for a roadie of their own in Minnesota fresh off a 2-1 shootout win in Winnipeg that had ended only 19 hours earlier.

Tough spot for sure. I scrambled to a very busy place up the road after unloading the boy, (yes parents, there comes a day if you've put enough time in with youth hockey where you don't have to even go in the rink until the game starts), hoping to catch some of the Sabres game.

I couldn't even bring myself to ask about Sabres/Wild. A few reasons...

It appeared as though people around the large rectangular bar were into the college football games that were on.

The place was crazy busy and the bartenders were hustling to fill drink orders for a half dozen servers in addition to the crowded bar area.

Despite being in Canada, the place didn't strike me as the sort of place that would have all the NHL games. More likely just the ones being broadcast in Canada

I was only going to be sitting there for about 40 minutes and was alone. Bigger group, longer visit, maybe I ask the busy bartender to look for the Sabres.

I wasn't exactly optimistic about the Sabres chances given the back to back, travel, and the quality of the opponent.

I thought to try and watch on my phone but MSG GO was a NO GO in Canada so I settled for watching ye' old Twitter timeline like the early settlers did. And so here's where the new habit thing comes in to play.

Last Sabres season, for the first time ever, I gave up and stopped regularly watching every game. The losing had finally gotten the better of me after spending most of my life watching nearly every game. I've talked and written about this a few times since last winter so I won't bore you with all the details again. Suffice to say that as a Sabres fan, I was broken.

So the Sabres fall behind quickly. 2-0 before the first period is even half over and it's time for me to pay my tab and head back to the rink to watch the Regals. I put my phone in my pocket and wrote the Sabres off for the night. Not angrily by any means, by the way. Just matter of factly accepting that it's not going to be their night. And despite texting my wife a few times to update her on the Regals game, I never once thought to check the Sabres score.

That's the new habit that I hope doesn't die hard. Maybe last night killed it. By the time The Oakville Rangers were done with the Regals at about 8:30 pm, I remembered the Sabres game. Pomminville had just scored to give them a 3-2 lead and I'm pretty sure I made a sound and my body shook a little. You know, the little kind of jolt that might cause you to drop your phone, which I did.

The week began with games against three of the NHL's best and ends with the Sabres trailing only Tampa, Nashville and Toronto in points, at least as of Sunday morning. Minnesota plays Sunday night and can leapfrog the Sabres but you get the point. It was a great week in the standings.

Things move quickly. As I sit writing this Sunday morning the Sabres are staring at another four game week. They're in Pittsburgh Monday, home for Philly and Montreal Wednesday and Friday, then in Detroit on Saturday night.

One way or another I'm going to see those games and the more the Sabres win the more the games matter. Funny how that works. The Regals have a home game Saturday night and the Sabres game will be on in the lobby. Last year, 100% of the time my choice was the Regals. So far this season, the Sabres are making that a much tougher call for me.

Need I say, I welcome the dilemma.

## **The Sabres keep the streak alive**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 17, 2018

St. Paul, MN (WGR 550) - Casey Mittelstadt played his first NHL game at home against the Wild. The kid said his parents had to deal with over 100 tickets to get family and friends to the game. Mittelstadt said he won't be nervous, "It should be fun, I'll have a lot of people here, but I've played in here before so that helps a little bit."

Hockey is king in the state of Minnesota and it's a big deal to play in this building, "It's pretty special, I had tickets growing up, my dad's business always had them and obviously the State Tournament and the big deal that comes with that, so it's pretty special to come back. It's nice to be in the state of Minnesota."

Mittelstadt hardly had the puck in this game, but there were other plays I want to talk about. The first is the goal by Zach Parise. Everybody wants to blame Zach Bogosian for everything, but maybe blame doesn't always have to be placed.

Bogosian takes a quick look and sees his partner, Rasmus Dahlin open near the bench. There is no way Bogosian can know that Dahlin is thinking of changing and does. All of a sudden, Dahlin sees the puck coming and then doesn't know what to do. At the end of the day, neither one is at fault, it's just a bad break.

Parise winds up with the puck and scores from the right circle. That's where I have the problem, I need my goaltender to make a save for me there.

Same thing on Matt Dumba's power play blast from the point. Linus Ullmark wasn't screened and the puck didn't hit anybody. At the end of the day, Ullmark has to keep his team in the game by stopping both those goals. The Sabres netminder got himself together for the rest of the game and did keep his team in the game slamming the door.

After that poor first period he stopped Jason Zucker on a breakaway and Charlie Coyle on a one-timer from the slot.

Dahlin was a force in this game. I think he really showed us something. He played probably his worst game as a Sabre in Winnipeg and followed it up with his best game in Minnesota.

Jake McCabe scored Buffalo's first goal, but it was Dahlin flying through the slot finding McCabe off the post with a beautiful pass.

In the third period, Buffalo tied it by getting the puck to the paint and guess who led the play and was right in the crease? Yes, it was Dahlin who scored his second goal of the season.

After the game I asked Dahlin if it was his best game as a Sabre and he asked me offensively or defensively? He really didn't like his defensive game.

Later, he turned and got into transition sending Conor Sheary in who shot high and wide. He also found Johan Larsson by himself in the circle, but Larsson took way too much time to shoot.

Just watching Dahlin you can tell he's playing with all sorts of confidence. He's not being timid about trying the things that only Dahlin will try.

This game looked like it was heading to overtime, but Jason Pominville had other thoughts. Phil Housley put him back on a line with Jack Eichel and with 1:30 left, he spun to the backhand and scored the game-winning goal.

I can't lie to you and say I thought the Sabres would do very well during this four game stretch against Tampa Bay, Winnipeg, Minnesota and Pittsburgh, but here they are 3-0-0 and on a five game winning streak. I think the thing that makes it more amazing is Buffalo didn't play well during large parts of the game against the Lightning,

Jets and Wild, but it didn't matter, they stuck with it. Now, they're guaranteed six out of eight points during this stretch and could come home Monday night with all eight.

The Sabres are off in Pittsburgh on Sunday.

## **Sabres shock the Wild, win 3-2 as "The Population" grows late**

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

November 17, 2018

The 18-year-old tied it up, but the 35-year-old got the last laugh. The Buffalo Sabres played comeback yet again and left the Minnesota Wild shaking their heads after the blue and gold scored three unanswered goals en route to a 3-2 victory. The win pushes their current streak up to five games, a milestone this franchise has not reached since March of 2012.

Minnesota winger Zach Parise got the party started early on home ice, as he capitalized on a Buffalo Sabre defensive turnover just four minutes into the game. The goal was Parise's eighth of the campaign. Less than four minutes after Parise's tally, Wild defenseman Matt Dumba cranked a powerplay tally to make it 2-0; already his eighth goal on the blue line.

After a short 4-on-4 powerplay expired, Rasmus Dahlin and Jake McCabe hooked up for a slick goal late in the first period. Both defenders crept up into the play and McCabe deposited the Dahlin feed past Minnesota goaltender Devan Dubnyk. It was McCabe's second goal of the season, and it injected some much needed confidence into a team that had found no luck early against a goaltender with a dangerous track record against them in the past.

After a goalless and, oddly penalty-free second period, the teams went back to work in the final period of regulation. Buffalo was still in search of that elusive game-tying goal. They were showing signs of breaking out of an early-game funk, but could not solve the big-bodied Dubnyk. That changed with just over seven minutes to go, as a scrum in front of the Minnesota net saw rookie Dahlin cleaning up the mess and evening the contest at two goals apiece. It was Dahlin's first goal in 14 games, dating back to October 13th against the Arizona Coyotes.

With the score now tied for the first time all evening, the teams looked to turn to more cautious styles of play as overtime loomed ominously. With 90 seconds left on the clock, the Sabres got deep into the Minnesota zone and the puck found a grizzly veteran who has suited up for both franchises at points in his lengthy career. Jason Pominville found a loose puck in the slot and deposited it far side past Dubnyk on the backhand. If it wasn't for the Buffalo celebration on the ice, you could hear a pin drop across Xcel Energy Center.

Despite some late chances, the Sabres were able to quiet the Wild attack in the dying seconds, making a winner out of Linus Ullmark and continuing their season of daily surprises and, seemingly, nightly comebacks.

The win pushes Buffalo's record to 12-6-2, good for 26 points through 20 games. That is the franchise's best point total through 20 games of a season since 2009-10, and as we stand here at 9:00 p.m., they are in a virtual points tie with the Toronto Maple Leafs in the Atlantic Division Standings. Toronto is not in action this evening. Both teams currently sit one point behind the Tampa Bay Lightning, who the Sabres dispatched of earlier this week.

### GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 14:52 - Jake McCabe (2) (Rasmus Dahlin, Kyle Okposo)

MIN: 4:00 - Zach Parise (8) (Unassisted), 7:45 - Matt Dumba (8) PPG (Nino Niederreiter, Mikko Koivu)

Second Period:

BUF: NONE

MIN: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: 12:58 - Rasmus Dahlin (2) (Jack Eichel, Zach Bogosian), 18:30 - Jason Pominville (9)  
MIN: NONE

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 6:59 - Jack Eichel (Hooking- 2 min.), 12:26 - Vladimir Sobotka (Hooking - 2 min.), 15:52 - Zach Bogosian (Holding - 2 min.)  
MIN: 12:44 - Mikko Koivu (Tripping - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: NONE  
MIN: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: NONE  
MIN: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 29 (9, 11, 9)  
MIN: 39 (18, 12, 9)

Goalies:

BUF: Linus Ullmark - 37 saves  
MIN: Devan Dubnyk - 26 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 0 for 1  
MIN: 1 for 3

Three Stars:

1. Linus Ullmark - BUF
2. Rasmus Dahlin - BUF
3. Devan Dubnyk - MIN

What's Next:

The team is off Sunday, but this stretch of tests continues on Monday when the blue and gold find themselves in Pittsburgh to take on the Penguins. The Sabres have passed nearly every test so far in these last handful of games, and now they take on a Penguins team that might not have Sidney Crosby available. If he is, he may be skating at well under 100%. Crosby already missed Pittsburgh's game on Thursday against the Lightning with an upper-body injury. The road to *\*six wins\** in a row starts Monday at 6:00 p.m. with the Paul William Beltz Pre-Game Show, ahead of puck drop at 7:00 p.m.

## **The Sabres turn to Ullmark in Minnesota**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 17, 2018

St. Paul, MN (WGR 550) - With the Sabres playing a shootout game in Winnipeg, they got in later to Minnesota early this morning. Today is a 5:00 game. It's back-to-back and a short turnaround which means Linus Ullmark gets back in goal. Ullmark got chased his last time out in Montreal giving up five goals in 40 minutes.

That game was not Ullmark's turn to play and Phil Housley was giving him an opportunity to earn more ice-time. Ullmark is 3-0-1 with a 2.79 goals against and .916 save percentage.

The Sabres have won four in a row and five out of six, but with the short turnaround, they are going to make one change. Casey Nelson goes in for Nate Beaulieu. Nelson has been a healthy scratch for the last four games.

Minnesota will counter with Devan Dubnyk in goal. In seven games against Buffalo he's 5-2-0 with a 1.85 goals against and .935 save percentage.

The Wild have won 11-out-of-14 games.

Join Brian Koziol for the pregame at 5:00 when he'll be joined by Phil Housley, Casey Mittelstadt and Kyle Okposo.

## **The Sabres survive and then win in Winnipeg**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 17, 2018

Winnipeg, MB (WGR 550) - Carter Hutton had to once again stand on his head for 40 minutes until his team woke up in the third period. Buffalo started moving their feet and skating and had the game tied with Jeff Skinner's power play goal just 53 seconds into the third.

Yes, Buffalo had 16 shots in the second period, but much of it was from distance and Laurent Brossoit didn't have to make too many big saves.

In that second period, Skinner and Sam Reinhart hit crossbars while Reinhart hit the post. Casey Mittelstadt had deked Brossoit out of his jock in the shootout and had the whole top of the net. His backhander rang the crossbar.

The Sabres got their game back in the third period and beat Winnipeg on Conor Sheary's shootout goal. That means in two games the Sabres have beaten two of the best teams in the NHL in Tampa Bay and Winnipeg and haven't played close to their best game. I think that tells you something about this team.

Phil Housley knows they didn't play their best game, but he said, "We bent a little bit, but we didn't break. Last year we might've broke. That's what great about this group, they stick with it. "Not only did Hutton keep the Sabres in the game for 40 minutes and the shootout, he was lights out in the shootout. He said, "I try to be patient, I try to force them to do something special."

Despite being out played for two periods, Buffalo held a 32-26 shots advantage. The reason the Sabres were under siege in the first 40 minutes was puck management. The turnovers were plentiful, especially from Rasmus Dahlin who maybe had his worst game.

Tage Thompson blindly passed the puck backwards in the offensive zone handing the puck to Patrik Laine who executed an easy 2-on-1 for the Jets only goal. That came in the second period. Thompson has to shoot that puck and not play the game backwards.

When the game was over, the Sabres were 11-6-2 and in third place in the Atlantic Division. Let me repeat that, the Sabres are 11-6-2. That had them back in sixth place in the NHL.

## Hutton stands tall in 2-1 shootout win over Jets

WGR 550

November 16, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres needed Carter Hutton on Friday night, and the netminder came through in a big way. Hutton made 25 saves in regulation and stopped five Jets skaters in a shootout, leading the Sabres to a 2-1 win. The victory marked Buffalo's fourth in a row, good for 24 points and third place in the Atlantic Division. The Sabres' lone goal during regulation came courtesy of Jeff Skinner, who netted his team-leading 14th goal of the season. Jack Eichel picked up another assist on Skinner's goal, giving him 16 helpers on the year.

Hutton was outstanding in the opening 20 minutes, a period that saw Buffalo outshot 12-4 with Winnipeg holding a 9-1 shot advantage at the halfway point of the 1st.

Hutton's strong play continued into the 2nd period, but the Jets finally broke through on Kyle Connor's 9th goal of the season. Winnipeg pounced on a Tage Thompson turnover in the Buffalo zone and came back with a 2-on-1 rush featuring Connor and Patrik Laine. Connor took the pass and snapped a shot over Hutton for the 1-0 lead.

Buffalo put 16 shots on Laurent Brossoit during the 2nd period, but to no avail. Perhaps Buffalo's best chance to get on the board in the middle frame came in the final minute, but Sam Reinhart's power play shot went off the crossbar and out of play keeping the score 1-0.

Skinner's torrid pace continued on the same power play during the opening minute of the 3rd. The Sabres forward put home an Eichel rebound, making the score 1-1. Skinner's equalizer seemed to provide a spark -- Buffalo turned in multiple scoring chances over the final period, including a 2-on-1 break with Conor Sheary and Casey Mittelstadt. Winnipeg nearly ended the game in regulation when, with 4 seconds remaining, Zach Bogosian turned the puck over to Patrik Laine right in front of the Buffalo net, but Hutton came through with the stop.

Hutton's brilliance carried over into overtime and then the shootout, where he turned aside shots by Mark Scheifele, Blake Wheeler, Bryan Little, Jack Roslovic and Mathieu Perreault. Eichel scored on Buffalo's first attempt, making Eichel 2 for 2 on shootout chances this year. Jason Pominville scored on his 5th round chance, keeping the Sabres alive, and Sheary beat Brossoit for the winner.

### GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: NONE

WPG: NONE

Second Period:

BUF: NONE

WPG: 7:10 - Kyle Connor (9) (Patrik Laine, Bryan Little)

Third Period:

BUF: 0:53 - Jeff Skinner PPG (14) (Jack Eichel, Rasmus Dahlin)

WPG: NONE

Overtime:

BUF: NONE

WPG: NONE

Shootout:

WPG: Mark Scheifele - MISS  
BUF: Jack Eichel - GOAL

WPG: Patrik Laine - GOAL

BUF: Sam Reinhart - MISS

WPG: Blake Wheeler - MISS

BUF: Casey Mittelstadt - MISS

WPG: Bryan Little - MISS  
BUF: Tage Thompson - MISS

WPG: Kyle Connor - GOAL

BUF: Jason Pominville - GOAL

WPG: Jack Roslovic - MISS  
BUF: Kyle Okposo - MISS

WPG: Mathieu Perreault - MISS  
BUF: Conor Sheary - GOAL

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 13:10 - Patrik Berglund (Hooking - 2 min.)  
WPG: 12:19 - Nikolaj Ehlers (Tripping - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: NONE  
WPG: 10:45 - Jacob Trouba (Interference - 2 min.), 19:41 - Brandon Tanev (Holding - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: NONE  
WPG: NONE

Overtime:

BUF: NONE  
WPG: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF: (4, 16, 10, 2)  
WPG: (12, 8, 5, 1)

Goalies:

BUF: Carter Hutton - 25 saves  
WPG: Laurent Brossoit - 31 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 1 for 3  
WPG: 0 for 1

Three Stars:

1. Carter Hutton - BUF
2. Laurent Brossoit - WPG
3. Kyle Connor - WPG

What's Next:

No rest for the Sabres, who are right back at it in an early faceoff on Saturday. Buffalo visits another of the Western Conference's top teams, the 12-5-2 Minnesota Wild, at 6 p.m. The Sabres have won four straight games since December of 2014 -- a win over the Wild would mark the team's first five-game winning streak since March of 2012. Hear tomorrow's call with Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on WGR 550. Brian Koziol has the pregame show at 5 p.m.

## **The Sabres have a big game in Winnipeg**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 16, 2018

Winnipeg, MB (WGR 550) - The Sabres just beat the No. 1 team in the NHL on Tuesday and tonight, they're in Winnipeg to face the NHL's fifth ranked team.

Winnipeg is 8-2-1 in this building and overall it's won four of five games. Phil Housley played in Winnipeg and he said, "It's a great atmosphere. The people are right on top of you. They're a loud crowd. If you're not ready for this game you better be because they're going to try to start fast."

Buffalo has also won four of five games including three in a row. Part of the reason for this success is the Sabres have killed off all 12 of the penalties they've taken in the five games. They've only been scored on shorthanded in just one of their last 10 games. That means they've killed 27-of-29 penalties. Buffalo is now ninth in the NHL while shorthanded.

Buffalo will need that stellar penalty killing because they're facing the league's top power play. Winnipeg scores at 34 percent clip with the extra man. Blake Wheeler leads the league with 13 power play points. Patrik Laine has seven PP goals.

Carter Hutton jumps into the crease for the fourth straight game. He's 3-0-1 with a 1.76 goals against and a .937 save percentage. Overall Hutton is 7-6-1 with a 2.64 goals against and .916 save percentage.

After a good seven game streak of points, Jack Eichel has gone cold going pointless in three out of four games. Jason Pominville has done the same and he's now down on a line with Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka.

Sam Reinhart's up with Eichel and he has seven points in five games.

Jeff Skinner has goals in five out of six games. Skinner has 13 goals and 20 points in his last 14 games.

At 10-6-2 the Sabres are seventh in NHL point percentage. Buffalo has risen from 29th in shots to 12th averaging 32.2 shots per game. Carolina is No. 1 at an amazing 41.7 shots per game.

The healthy scratches will be Evan Rodrigues, Casey Nelson and Remi Elie

Wheeler is the seventh leading scorer in the NHL with three goals and 21 assists for 24 points. Wheeler has points in 11 straight games scoring two goals and 18 assists for 20 points.

Mark Scheifele has four goals and three assists for seven points in three games.

Patrik Laine has eight goals in his 18 games.

Connor Hellebuyck is 8-5-1 in goal with a 2.72 goals against and .915 save percentage. Hellebuyck has played six straight games going 4-2-0, but he won't get the call tonight. Laurent Brossoit plays in only his fourth game, but he's undefeated so far with a 1.68 goals against and .957 save percentage.

Join Brian Koziol for the pregame starting at 7:00 when he'll be joined by Phil Housley, Jake McCabe and Zemgus Girgensons.

## **Russo: Rising Sabres refuse to go away against a Wild team that couldn't close**

By Michael Russo

The Athletic

November 17, 2018

These aren't your father's Buffalo Sabres.

Heck, these aren't your children's Buffalo Sabres.

Patsies the past several years, especially against the Wild, and non-playoff participants the past eight years, the Wild got a painful lesson Saturday night that you can't let this scrappy group from upstate New York hang around.

The Sabres arrived in the Twin Cities on Saturday at 1 a.m. after an opening puck drop 22 hours prior in Winnipeg.

Yet in almost prophetic fashion, Wild coach Bruce Boudreau said Saturday morning that the Sabres would be a dangerous foe if the Wild didn't bury them early. He watched them the night before withstand early pressure from the Jets and hang around long enough to grind out a shootout win.

The Wild would end up being victims of the same thing ... except at least the Jets got a point for their troubles.

The Wild, on the other hand, not only coughed up a two-goal lead at home, they'd give up the tying goal with seven minutes left and the losing goal 90 seconds before the ability to earn a point thanks to old Wild vet Jason Pominville's sneaky back-hander.

Instead of gaining a point or two in the standings, the Wild hopped a chartered flight to Chicago for a Sunday night game against the Blackhawks still stinging and licking their wounds from a most unsatisfying and very stunning 3-2 loss.

"It felt like we were for the most part playing in their zone the whole night, but it's one of those they hang around, they hang around and you just had that bad feeling that they were going to hang around long enough if we didn't get that third one, and they did," said Zach Parise, who along with Matt Dumba helped build a 2-0 lead with goals 3:45 apart in the first period. "But it's disappointing to not get out of there with a point at least."

This honestly was not a case of the Wild sitting back and playing too defensive after building an early lead.

No, the Wild created 26 5-on-5 scoring chances, according to NaturalStatTrick.com, plenty enough to score more than two goals.

They had a 25-9 shot lead at one point and finished with 39.

This was a classic case of not burying Grade-A chances.

"We should have buried them in the second," Dumba said of a period in which the Wild generated 12 scoring chances but started to get too loose and allowed the Sabres to gain life with 10 of their own. "That was kind of our setup period, but we didn't do what we wanted to. We just let them hang around too long. A team like that, they're going to find a way. There's too much skill. We should have capitalized when we could have."

This was a case of Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark impressively not crumbling after allowing two early goals.

This was a case of, especially lately, an uncharacteristic lack of execution offensively by the Wild.

And this was the prototypical case of an opponent smelling blood after being allowed to stay in a game they could have been knocked out of early.

"I think we probably could have put them away earlier, the way the first period was played," goalie Devan Dubnyk said of the Wild's 18-shot first. "I think we probably could have stepped on their throats a little bit, the way the first period was going."

Honestly, you could sense it all game.

"If you could have made it 3-nothing, 4-nothing, then they would have said, 'Let's go home,'" Boudreau said. "It's like us in St. Louis (last weekend), you're exhausted, you're tired, you're back-to-back ... but if you let them hang around, fatigue leaves you. You become more into the game and wanting to win it."

Up 2-0, the Wild had ample opportunity to build on their lead.

Marcus Foligno couldn't convert a 2-on-1 pass from Eric Fehr. The Wild couldn't score on two power plays, one negated almost immediately by Mikko Koivu, who would be on the ice for all three of Buffalo's unanswered goals. The Wild then couldn't regain their two-goal lead after immediately drawing a power play when 2018 No. 1 overall pick Rasmus Dahlin mesmerized five Wild defenders to set up Jake McCabe's goal.

The Wild couldn't get a goal from a big man's line of Jordan Greenway, Charlie Coyle and Foligno, who was by far the Wild's best line all game. And the Jason Zucker-Eric Staal-Mikael Granlund line capped an evening full of pretty plays with absolutely zero finish.

"It was frustrating," Staal said of the game for his line specifically. "You try not to get frustrated, but when there's that much open ice and that many looks around the net and puck touches — you love those games, you just got to make something happen out of them. And we didn't."

Staal, amazingly, finished with no shots. Zucker, with the Wild down 2-1, couldn't bury a breakaway on one of his three shots. And while Granlund had five shots — which is a huge night by anybody's standards, let alone his — it was like he was trying to paint a Picasso every shift for a second game in a row.

Instead of being simple and doing what he normally does to create offense, Granlund took odd routes in the Sabres' end and overpassed often. It resulted in several broken plays or turnovers or wasted chances.

And, as a line, each member fouled up umpteen odd-man rushes that could have demoralized the Sabres.

Granlund could have had a second-period breakaway, but instead of driving Ullmark from the right side, he inexplicably tried to cut inside and lost the puck looking like he was looking for a trailer. A Zucker-led 4-on-2 in the first period ended with no shot. A Granlund-led 3-on-2 and a Staal-led 2-on-1 in the second period ended in turnovers.

"They're getting too cute, they're staying out too long," Boudreau said. "So, we'll see how long they stay together."

Boudreau should keep them together for at least another game, in my humble opinion.

This is a line that two road games ago dominated Anaheim on the second night of a back-to-back, so give them a chance to redeem themselves from Saturday.

I'd come back with the Parise-Koivu-Nino Niederreiter line that played together Saturday and resurrect the Greenway-Joel Eriksson Ek-Coyle line that was so good in L.A., Anaheim and St. Louis.

Greenway was terrific against the Sabres. Coyle had six shots for a second game in a row. But Eriksson Ek, who has a goal and assist in 13 games, was a healthy scratch so Matt Hendricks could play a second straight game.

But Boudreau should remember that with Hendricks out, the Wild's fourth line of Foligno, Fehr and J.T. Brown were outstanding. The Wild are 10-2 with Hendricks out of the lineup, now just 2-4-2 with him in.

Boudreau should go back to the old fourth line and see if the Wild can bounce back against the Blackhawks.

Chicago had to be loving how much energy the Wild expended in a game they could have cruised to a win. But the Wild are 4-0 in the second of back-to-backs for a reason, so with Alex Stalock planned to be in net Sunday, Boudreau should go back to the lines that were so good during most of a 5-2 road trip before this disappointing 1-2 homestand.

"We go out and win the game (Sunday), and we don't have to talk about this again," Dubnyk said.

In the meantime, the Wild better learn something from Saturday's glum feeling exiting Xcel Energy Center.

"Hopefully a week from now, when we look back on it, we're better off for it," Dumba said. "But right now, it's kind of a pissed off thing. You've got 20 minutes. Let's close this thing."

Parise sets record

With his fifth goal in the past eight games, Parise scored his 341st career goal to pass fellow University of North Dakota alum Dave Christian for No. 1 all-time among Minnesota-born NHLers. This came not long after Parise passed Hall of Famer Phil Housley, coincidentally the Sabres' coach, for No. 2.

"People, friends had been telling me about it, but I hadn't been thinking about it," Parise said. "I've gotten to know a few of those guys and some nice people, good company to be with."

Matt Cullen, 42, is still playing and fifth all-time with 260 goals, so Parise joked, "Cully's still playing so who knows when he retires. He's still chasing, so we'll see."

On the rising Sabres

Buffalo won its fifth straight game and improved to 12-6-2 thanks to former Wild 30-goal scorer Pominville's back-hander off a nice board pass from Jack Eichel.

Asked if it was special scoring against the Wild in his second return to St. Paul, Pominville said, "Yeah, for sure. I mean, last year we came in here and didn't play the way we wanted. And today, going down two you're kinda thinking, 'Man, is this going to happen again?'"

"But I think it just goes to show we have a different group, different mindset and different attitude and we stuck with it, found a way, and again it just shows a lot about our group. We had a tough, tough schedule. Playing in Winnipeg last night, going through customs, flying here, 5 o'clock game, they didn't play. So it shows a lot about our team."

Parise said this is a very different Sabres team than the one the Wild traditionally roasts on.

"They're doing the right things," he said. "They're playing a good style of hockey. I thought they made some good moves in the summer to get some depth up front. They're going in the right direction."

Eriksson Ek sent message

Young Eriksson Ek was scratched for the first time this season and one has to wonder if he gets a stint in Iowa at some point soon the way Greenway did for two games late last month.

"I just think he's got to be able to make plays more," Boudreau said. "Defensively, he's good. Effort-wise, he's awesome. Penalty-killing, really good. We just need to see a little more offensive pizzazz or whatever from him because we truly think that, and always have thought, that he could be at minimum a third-line center. But when other people retire or move out, then he'd be a second-line center." ...

Dumba scored his eighth goal, second in the NHL among defensemen. He has goals in a career-best three straight games. The Wild's 18 goals by defensemen is tied for first in the NHL with Ottawa.

## **Judging the impact of each of the 43 trades the Sabres have made since starting their rebuild in March 2013**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

November 17, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. – When trades roll in, players go to their phones just like the fans – albeit with a much different contacts list.

“Oh, yeah,” Sabres right wing Jason Pominville said. “Texting each other, then texting and reaching out to the new guys, trying to accommodate and help them in any way you can. It creates a little bit of excitement as players.”

The guys in Buffalo have messaged often during the past five years. The Sabres embarked on their rebuild in March 2013, and they’ve made 43 trades since then. The moves are finally paying off (with help from the NHL Draft, of course).

Jeff Skinner is one of the most lethal scorers in the league. Pominville is playing a key role along with Conor Sheary, Marco Scandella and Vladimir Sobotka.

“How can you not be excited about that?” Pominville said. “Things needed to change, and new faces helped that.”

As the Sabres take a three-game road trip through Winnipeg, Minnesota and Pittsburgh, it’s an ideal time to look at their recent trade history. After all, some of the Sabres’ biggest deals were with those three teams.

Here are all the trades of the past five years and how they impacted Buffalo. Darcy Regier made the moves as general manager until Nov. 13, 2013. Tim Murray held the job from Jan. 9, 2014, to April 20, 2017. Current GM Jason Botterill was hired May 11, 2017.

1. March 15, 2013 – Sabres acquire a 2013 fifth-round pick (Gustav Possler) from Florida for defenseman T.J. Brennan.

OK, so the first deal is not a blockbuster. Possler never even got a contract and is playing in his homeland of Sweden. The forward has six assists and seven points in 16 games for Djurgården.

Impact: None.

2. March 30, 2013 – Sabres acquire 2013 second-round (Justin Bailey) and fifth-round picks (Anthony Florentino) from St. Louis for defenseman Jordan Leopold.

Bailey and Florentino are still in the organization. The Buffalo-born Bailey has two 20-goal seasons in Rochester but hasn’t found a steady role in the NHL. After being sent back to the Amerks during training camp, he’s stuck on five goals and three assists in 53 NHL games. Florentino is with Cincinnati of the ECHL while playing on his second one-year deal with the Amerks.

Impact: In a historical context, the move was the first clear signal that Buffalo was embracing seller status. While Bailey hasn’t done much in Buffalo, he’s been a key part of the turnaround in Rochester. The forward was the best player in the postseason last year and is on a scoring line during Rochester’s 10-3-1 start. The Amerks are legitimate Calder Cup hopefuls.

3. April 1, 2013 – Sabres acquire a 2014 second-round pick (Alex Lintuniemi) and 2015 second-rounder (Erik Cernak) from Los Angeles for defenseman Robyn Regehr.

3A. March 5, 2014 – Sabres acquire Hudson Fasching and Nicolas Deslauriers from Los Angeles for Brayden McNabb, Jonathan Parker, a 2014 second-round pick (Lintuniemi) and 2015 second-round pick (Cernak).

Basically, the Sabres got Fasching and Deslauriers for Regehr, McNabb, Parker and two second-round draft picks. Deslauriers spent four seasons as a fourth-line spark plug. Fasching had one goal and two assists in 22 games spread over three seasons.

Regehr won a Stanley Cup with the Kings, and McNabb helped Vegas reach the finals last season. Cernak made his NHL debut Tuesday in Buffalo with Tampa Bay.

Impact: Murray shipped out the assets Regier brought in, and his own acquisitions didn't pan out. However, the trade tree didn't end there ...

3B. Oct. 4, 2017 – Sabres acquire Zach Redmond from Montreal for Deslauriers.

3C. June 14, 2018 – Sabres acquire Brandon Hickey and Mike Sislo from Arizona for Fasching.

Redmond split last season between Buffalo and Rochester, and he signed a two-year AHL deal with the Amerks over the summer. The defenseman is having an MVP campaign with 11 goals and 19 points in 15 games. Hickey is also in Rochester and has one goal in his first seven games as a pro. Sislo was a pending unrestricted free agent who didn't get an offer.

Impact: Redmond is the veteran leader that the Amerks needed. He's as calm under pressure as he is active in the offensive zone, and he's helping Buffalo's defense prospects develop. That list includes Hickey, a former captain at Boston University who signed with Buffalo for the rookie maximum of \$925,000.

4. April 3, 2013 – Sabres acquire Johan Larsson, Matt Hackett, a 2013 first-round pick (Nikita Zadorov) and 2014 second-round pick (Vaclav Karabacek) from Minnesota for Pominville and a 2014 fourth-round pick (William Lagesson).

The Sabres hoped Larsson would be an offensive catalyst. He had 36 points in 49 games during his final season in Sweden and followed that with 15 goals and 37 points for Minnesota's AHL affiliate. Since coming to Buffalo, he has not produced above fourth-line status, but he's having his most consistent season to date.

Hackett went 1-10-2 with an .898 save percentage during two seasons in Buffalo and is out of hockey. Karabacek was bought out this season and is already on his second team in the Czech Republic.

Impact: The arrivals failed to match up to the departed Pominville. The drafting of Zadorov did help, but only because ...

4A. June 26, 2015 – Sabres acquire Ryan O'Reilly and Jamie McGinn from Colorado for Zadorov, Mikhail Grigorenko, J.T. Compher and a 2015 second-round pick (Jeremy Roy).

On the night Murray drafted Jack Eichel, the GM flipped Zadorov and others for O'Reilly, who was scheduled to join Eichel as a potent one-two center punch for years to come. Murray quickly made O'Reilly the highest-paid player in franchise history – and within days the center was accused of drunkenly driving his truck into a donut shop and leaving on foot. He was eventually acquitted.

The Sabres improved in O'Reilly's first season, dropped in the second and plummeted in the third, becoming the first NHL team to finish 31st last year.

Impact: There's no denying the buzz when O'Reilly came aboard. Things were looking up for the Sabres' short- and long-term future. He performed well with 65 goals and 176 points in 224 games. He was anointed as the ideal leader but struggled in the role and admitted to being OK with losing.

But the trade tree that began with the Pominville deal has three more branches ...

4B. Feb. 29, 2016 – Sabres acquire a 2016 third-round pick (Rem Pitlick) from Anaheim for McGinn.

4C. June 20, 2016 – Sabres acquire rights to Jimmy Vesey from Nashville for a 2016 third-round pick (Pitlick).

Murray gambled that Vesey would sign with Buffalo after winning the Hobey Baker Award as the top player in college, but the winger opted for free agency and the New York Rangers.

Impact: Murray, who had three third-round picks, hoped for immediate satisfaction with Vesey rather than waiting for a prospect to develop. The Sabres got nothing instead.

4D. July 1, 2018 – Sabres acquire Sobotka, Patrik Berglund, Tage Thompson, a 2019 conditional first-round pick and 2021 second-round pick from St. Louis for O'Reilly.

As expected, O'Reilly is performing well for the Blues with eight goals and 21 points in 16 games. But the Sabres needed excitement, leadership and depth more than O'Reilly's two-way game and woe-is-me words. Sobotka and Berglund have added to the third and fourth lines, though Thompson has yet to find a role.

Impact: The Sabres are winning. They're having fun. That's what the trade was about. And the pending picks help immensely, too. Buffalo will get St. Louis' 2019 first-rounder unless it's in the top 10, in which case the first-round selection slides to 2020. O'Reilly will continue to fill the stat sheet, but Buffalo needed a change in leadership and attitude.

5. June 30, 2013 – Sabres acquire Jamie McBain and a 2013 second-round pick (Compher) from Carolina for Andrej Sekera.

McBain spent just one season in Buffalo, recording six goals, 11 assists and a minus-13 rating in 69 games. Sekera has shined in Carolina and Edmonton, but his growth had stopped in Buffalo.

Impact: McBain didn't make one, but Buffalo acquired O'Reilly by using Compher as part of the deal.

6. July 7, 2013 – Sabres acquire Henrik Tallinder from New Jersey for Riley Boychuk.

The move brought back a fan-friendly face from a golden era of Sabres hockey and let Tallinder end his NHL career where it started. Boychuk, a minor-leaguer, was out of hockey within a year.

Impact: Though it was good to see Tallinder, there was little on-ice impact. Still, Buffalo got something out of the trade while the Devils didn't.

7. Oct. 27, 2013 – Sabres acquire Matt Moulson, a 2015 first-round pick (Colin White) and 2015 second-round pick (Brendan Guhle) from the New York Islanders for Thomas Vanek.

It was the rare blockbuster that didn't come at the trade deadline, draft or start of free agency. Vanek and Moulson were both established 30-goal scorers in the final year of their contract, and Regier swapped them while getting a couple of prime picks.

Impact: The Sabres believe the 21-year-old Guhle will grow into a blue-line mainstay. As for Moulson and the first-round pick, let the trade tree sprout and sprout ...

7A. March 5, 2013 – Sabres acquire Torrey Mitchell, a 2014 second-round pick (Vitek Vanecsek) and 2016 second-round pick (Chad Kryz) from Minnesota for Moulson and Cody McCormick.

7B. June 28, 2014 – Sabres acquire a 2014 second-round pick (Eric Cornel) and 2014 third-round pick (Brycen Martin) from Washington for a 2014 second-round pick (Vanecsek).

7C. July 1, 2014 – Sabres acquire Josh Gorges from Montreal for a 2016 second-round pick (Kryz).

7D. March 2, 2015 – Sabres acquire Jack Nevins and a 2016 seventh-round pick (Vasily Glotov) from Montreal for Mitchell.

Because Moulson and McCormick re-signed with the Sabres right after the trade, Buffalo essentially picked up Gorges, Cornel, Glotov, Martin and Nevins for Mitchell and two second-round picks. That's a lot of players and very little production.

Gorges was a consummate professional during four seasons in Buffalo, but the aging vet was miscast as a top-four defenseman on a talent-lacking unit and paid the price. Cornel is in the final year of his entry-level contract and hasn't been close to coming to Buffalo. Glotov is in Cincinnati after signing an AHL deal with the Amerks. Martin and Nevins are out of the organization and in the ECHL.

Impact: The Sabres moved a lot but didn't go anywhere. The 2014 NHL Draft was Murray's first chance to show his scouting acumen, and he missed with Cornel, Martin, Karabacek and others.

8. Dec. 19, 2013 – Sabres acquire Linus Omark from Edmonton for a 2014 conditional sixth-round pick.

The Oilers got the pick if Omark played 15 games with Buffalo. They didn't get the pick. He had no goals in 13 games before departing for Europe.

Impact: Omark is a YouTube legend and NHL asterisk.

9. Feb. 28, 2014 – Sabres acquire Jaroslav Halak, Chris Stewart, William Carrier, a 2015 first-round pick (Jack Roslovic) and 2016 third-round pick (Linus Nassen) from St. Louis for Ryan Miller and Steve Ott.

Few trades in Sabres history have been more emotional. Buffalo said goodbye to Miller, who spent 12 years in the organization and accomplished more than every goalie not named Dominik Hasek. Ott was the team captain.

The move also created the biggest trade tree yet, a seven-branch monster that could keep growing and growing.

Impact: The Sabres picked up a lot of pieces for Miller and Ott. None excelled. None remain. Some never arrived ...

9A. March 5, 2014 – Sabres acquire Michal Neuvirth and Rostislav Klesla from Washington for Halak and a 2015 third-round pick (Robin Kovacs).

After dressing as a backup for one game, Halak quickly departed. Klesla retired rather than come to Buffalo. Read on for Neuvirth.

9B. Feb. 11, 2015 – Sabres acquire Evander Kane, Zach Bogosian and Jason Kasdorf from Winnipeg for a 2015 first-round pick (Roslovic), Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford, Joel Armia and Brendan Lemieux.

Kane was an injured pariah in Winnipeg, and Murray pounced. Kane had already undergone season-ending shoulder surgery, so he was an immediate help in Buffalo's quest to finish last and draft either Eichel or Connor McDavid. The GM banked on long-term upside in Kane and Bogosian.

Kasdorf is gone after playing one game in Buffalo and two seasons in the ECHL. Myers, Lemieux and Roslovic still play for the Jets.

Impact: Injuries have hindered Bogosian's career, but the alternate captain is a top-four defender this season. Kane made as many headlines off the ice as on it before leaving in a trade to be described later. The development of Roslovic and Lemieux will determine if the deal on its own was a loss or a wash because it's relatively even at the moment.

9C. March 2, 2015 – Sabres acquire a 2017 second-round pick (Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen) from Minnesota for Stewart.

The Sabres hope Luukkonen becomes a star in the crease. The goalie is shining in his first year in North America in the Ontario Hockey League, where he's tied for third with a .926 save percentage in 15 games with Sudbury.

Impact: Luukkonen has a long way to go to reach the NHL, but early signs are promising. Ideally for the Sabres, he'd be ready by 2021 – which is when Carter Hutton's contract expires.

9D. March 2, 2015 – Sabres acquire Chad Johnson and a 2016 third-round pick (William Lockwood) for Neuvirth.

Neuvirth posted a .921 save percentage in Buffalo. Johnson had a .920 save percentage. The Sabres gave the third-round pick to Pittsburgh as compensation for hiring coach Dan Bylsma.

Impact: Johnson (22-16-4) won more games than Neuvirth (6-19-3), but Bylsma and the players didn't click, badly setting the franchise back.

9E. June 25, 2016 – Sabres acquire Dmitry Kulikov and a 2016 second-round pick (Rasmus Asplund) for Mark Pysyk, a 2016 second-round pick (Adam Mascherin) and 2016 third-round pick (Linus Nassen).

Kulikov suffered a tough back injury in the preseason when a bench door opened while he was getting checked, and he never recovered (to say the least). Asplund is in his first year with Rochester after playing well in Sweden. He is in line to back up Eichel and Casey Mittelstadt as a two-way center on the third or fourth line.

Impact: The Sabres lost the swap of Pysyk for Kulikov, but Asplund could become the prize of the deal.

9F. Feb. 26, 2018 – Sabres acquire Danny O'Regan, a conditional 2019 first-round pick and conditional 2019 fourth-round pick for Kane.

Murray gave up a first-round pick for Kane, and it was vital that Botterill get one back. He did. The first-round transaction became official when San Jose re-signed Kane in the offseason. If the Sharks opt not to give Buffalo the fourth-round pick in 2019, it becomes a third-rounder in 2020.

So far, O'Regan shines in the AHL and struggles in the NHL. Including five goals and nine points in Rochester's opening 15 games this year, O'Regan has 41 goals and 107 points in 127 AHL games. He has one goal and four assists in 24 NHL outings.

Impact: Teams knew the Sabres weren't re-signing Kane, and Botterill got what he could for the left winger at the trade deadline. The pick will be late in the first round, and O'Regan has a lot to prove. It was not what Murray had in mind when he originally dealt for Kane and Co.

10. July 9, 2014 – Sabres acquire rights to Jordan Samuels-Thomas from Winnipeg for a 2015 conditional seventh-round pick.

The pick was never exercised, and Buffalo got what it paid for. Samuels-Thomas played one uneventful season in Rochester and is skating in Austria.

Impact: None.

11. Dec. 16, 2014 – Sabres acquire Jerry D'Amigo from Columbus for Luke Adam.

D'Amigo had no goals in nine games with Buffalo. Adam had no goals in three games with the Blue Jackets.

Impact: None.

12. Feb. 11, 2015 – Sabres acquire Anders Lindback and a 2016 third-round pick (Casey Fitzgerald) from Dallas for Jhonas Enroth.

Lindback, who was on his way out of hockey with Dallas, prolonged his career for another season after posting a .924 save percentage in Buffalo. Enroth shined after moving on to Los Angeles, and he's in his second season with Minsk of the Kontinental Hockey League.

Fitzgerald is a senior defenseman for Boston College.

Impact: Both goalies were capable backups, so there's no impact unless Fitzgerald turns pro.

13. March 2, 2015 – Sabres acquire a 2016 fifth-round pick (Vojtech Budik) from Montreal for Brian Flynn.

Buffalo has relinquished the rights to Budik, who is playing in Czechia. Flynn spent three years with the Canadiens and helped the Texas Stars come within one win of the Calder Cup last spring.

Impact: Negative.

14. June 26, 2015 – Sabres acquire Robin Lehner and David Legwand from Ottawa for a 2015 first-round pick (Colin White).

Lehner was the odd-man out in Ottawa, suffering a severe concussion to fall behind Craig Anderson and Andrew Hammond on the depth chart. Despite dealing from a position of strength, Murray gave his old team a first-round pick. The public perception of the deal was negative, and it got worse when Lehner suffered a major ankle sprain during his Buffalo debut.

Lehner wanted to win in Buffalo, and he took a leadership role. But things spiraled out of control for him and the organization during his three seasons. The Sabres let him walk as a restricted free agent this summer. He's 4-4-1 with a .921 save percentage for the New York Islanders as he attempts to beat opponents and his demons.

Impact: At one time, Murray had three first-round picks for 2015. He used one on Eichel and traded the other two. The organization hit rock bottom last season.

15. Feb. 23, 2016 – Sabres acquire a 2017 third-round pick (Oskari Laaksonen) from Washington for Mike Weber.

Folks mocked Buffalo when it picked Laaksonen in the third round. NHL Central Scouting listed 149 European prospects, and the defenseman wasn't one of them. It got worse when internet searches showed he weighed 130 pounds.

But the Sabres stood firm in their analysis, and The Athletic's Corey Pronman is a fan.

Impact: The 19-year-old Laaksonen is a fine puck mover, recording nine assists and 11 points in the opening 19 games for Ilves of the Finnish league. His growth is worth watching.

16. Feb. 27, 2016 – Sabres acquire Cole Schneider, Alex Guptill, Eric O'Dell and Michael Sdao from Ottawa for Phil Varone, Jason Akeson and Jerome Gauthier-Luduc.

If Schneider weren't from the Buffalo area, this trade of seven minor-leaguers would be a forgotten footnote. But Schneider got to play his first six NHL games with his hometown team.

Impact: Schneider had no goals and one assist, so it was merely a feel-good story.

17. July 2, 2016 – Sabres acquire the rights to Anders Nilsson from St. Louis for a 2017 fifth-round pick (David Noel).

Murray believed he had reached a verbal agreement with Jeff Zatkoff to be Lehner's backup, but the goalie shocked the GM by signing with Los Angeles. With all the other goalies off the free-agent market, Murray dealt for Nilsson.

Impact: Nilsson went 10-10-4 with a .923 save percentage for Buffalo. Zatkoff was 2-7-1 with an .879 for the Kings. The fifth-round pick was worth the upgrade.

18. Feb. 28, 2017 – Sabres acquire Mat Bodie from the New York Rangers for Daniel Catenacci.

A minor-league defenseman for a minor-league forward.

Impact: None.

19. June 17, 2017 – Sabres acquire Nathan Beaulieu from Montreal for a 2017 third-round pick (Scott Walford).

Beaulieu was a self-admitted disaster last season. He suffered two concussions and was lost on the ice, a huge letdown for someone who was supposed to energize the defense corps. This year is much better. Beaulieu has two goals, four points and a plus-6 rating while playing 12 of the opening 19 games.

Impact: The start certainly wasn't what Botterill or Beaulieu wanted, but the evaluation isn't done.

20. June 21, 2017 – Sabres give Vegas a 2017 sixth-round pick (Jiri Patera) to not select an unspecified player in the expansion draft.

The player was goalie Linus Ullmark, who backstopped Rochester to the playoffs last season and is Hutton's backup this year. He's 3-0-1 with a .916 save percentage.

Impact: Ullmark is way more important to Buffalo than a sixth-round pick or Carrier, who was chosen by the Golden Knights. While many teams gave Vegas too much, Buffalo was spot on.

21. June 30, 2017 – Sabres acquire Pominville, Marco Scandella and a 2018 fourth-round pick (Linus Cronholm) from Minnesota for Marcus Foligno, Tyler Ennis and a 2018 third-round pick (Jack McBain).

It began as a sentimental move, a trade that brought back a fan favorite and former captain in Pominville. But it's grown into a major help. Pominville is still producing, scoring 24 times in his first 100 games back. The 35-year-old is second on the Sabres this season with eight goals in 19 games.

Scandella tried to end the apathy and losing that plagued last year's team, repeatedly calling for pride (but ultimately being ignored). He plays on the top two pairs and in all situations, giving Buffalo a well-rounded D-man.

Cronholm is in the Swedish pipeline that Buffalo wants to ride to success.

Impact: The Sabres seriously needed help on the blue line, and Scandella is helping. Pominville is outscoring Ennis and Foligno over the past two seasons, 24-19. He's made the deal better than expected.

22. Dec. 4, 2017 – Sabres acquire Scott Wilson from Detroit for a 2019 fifth-round pick.

Wilson has a fan in Botterill, who watched the winger grow in Pittsburgh. Wilson broke his ankle during training camp and is scheduled to return by mid-December.

Impact: Wilson can move up the lineup in a pinch, but he's a role player in the mold of Zemgus Girgensons and will provide veteran depth.

23. June 27, 2018 – Sabres acquire Sheary and Matt Hunwick from Pittsburgh for a 2019 conditional third-round pick.

The pick becomes a fourth-rounder if Sheary fails to record 20 goals or 40 points. Buffalo will gladly give up a third-rounder. Sheary is on pace for 26 goals and 43 points. Kane's best totals in Buffalo were 28 goals and 43 points, so Sheary is a comparative steal in trade cost and salary (\$3 million to \$7 million).

Hunwick has yet to be seen because of a neck injury termed "indefinite."

Impact: With Kane's departure, the Sabres had a gaping hole at left wing. Sheary filled it at a bargain price. Fans were excited to see him skate on the No. 1 line with Eichel until ...

24. Aug. 2, 2018 – Sabres acquire Skinner from Carolina for Cliff Pu, a 2019 second-round pick, 2020 third-round pick and 2020 sixth-round pick.

Suddenly, left wing is one of the Sabres' strongest positions. Skinner is a bona fide star, ranking 14th in the NHL in goals since 2010. He has 14 in his opening 19 games with Buffalo.

Sabres fans haven't seen a player with his skill and creativity in years, and his finishing touch is an ideal complement to Eichel's playmaking.

Impact: Pu projects into a solid third-line forward who could be in the NHL in 2020. The second-round pick might make the NHL in 2021. Buffalo needed to win now, and Skinner is a major part in the impressive start. The long-term question is whether the Sabres will re-sign the pending UFA, but the short-term impact is ridiculously huge.

25. Oct. 1, 2018 – Sabres acquire Jack Dougherty from Nashville for Nick Baptiste.

Baptiste was a goal scorer in juniors and Rochester, but he couldn't continue the trend in Buffalo. The winger failed to make the roster this season, so Botterill sent him to the Predators for Dougherty. The stay-at-home defenseman suffered an injury blocking a shot early in the year for Rochester and has played just three games.

Impact: Baptiste's time was up in Buffalo and the team hopes a fresh start helps both players. Dougherty, 22, has yet to play an NHL game.

26. Nov. 10, 2018 – Sabres acquire a conditional 2020 seventh-round pick from Dallas for Taylor Fedun.

Buffalo won't get anything from the Stars if Fedun plays in fewer than 25 games this season. He's at zero after reporting to their AHL club.

Impact: The trade loosened the blue-line logjam in Rochester, but there's no impact in Buffalo.

Though these trades started and ended with a whimper, other moves have certainly been impactful. The playoff-hopeful Sabres will attest to that.

"It's just been phenomenal additions so far," Pominville said. "Botts had said at the end of the year, 'Our team wasn't working, changes needed to be made.' For him to say it is one thing. To go out and do it got everyone pretty fired up."

## **Stimson: How Rasmus Dahlin's underlying stats make a strong argument to give him more ice time**

By Ryan Stimson

The Athletic

November 16, 2018

Last time, I took you all down a deep dive into the forward production beyond on-ice results and point totals. In today's piece, I'll dig into the backs on the Sabres and what to expect going forward. Many, many thanks to Corey Sznajder for his tireless efforts to provide the community with more detailed data to better analyze hockey. The man is a gift and you can support his work here. Let's get to it.

No surprise that Rasmus Dahlin is the most involved offensively, right? What may be surprising is just how damn effective he's been at generating offense through his passing. 9.5 primary shot assists per 60 minutes is incredible for someone playing his position. Going back to 2015 when we started collecting this data, the backs that create the most shots through primary passes and have at least 1000 minutes tracked in the data set are Erik Karlsson, John Klingberg, and Victor Hedman. Karlsson is at 8.8 per 60 minutes.

Now, obviously there's a sample size warning here, but the point is that Dahlin has been as advertised offensively. Even his shooting is better than the rest of the blue line due to how active he is in the zone. Observe the below clip.

As Kyle Okposo climbs high in the zone, Dahlin is forced to make a decision. He opts to cut across the top of the zone, which opens up some space for Okposo to skate into and leave the puck for Jake McCabe as he reenters the zone. Dahlin then activates deeper in the zone and is able to get a close, albeit from a poor angle, shot off. Movement looks nice on goals and big scoring chances, but it's the awareness to activate as Okposo climbs that creates the space and 2v1 on McCabe's overlap that even allows the play to develop.

And if Dahlin does this often enough, it should at the very least impact the average distance he shoots from, right? Observe.

These plots come from Sean Tierney, who is a good follow on Twitter. What it shows is that Dahlin's shots, on average, are from about 44 feet out from the net. Everyone else on the back end is over 52 feet per shot. Dahlin is eight feet closer on average. Part of this is his willingness to activate, evidenced by his being the recipient of passes from below the goal line in dangerous positions. He leads the back end with 2.4 dangerous shot contributions per 60 minutes, which is a good mark for backs. They rarely turn provider in these situations, but can help the forwards create these chances by providing a target later on in a possession when defenders are looking down low.

Marco Scandella is the next highest in terms of primary shot contributions. However, he arrives there mostly from shooting. Unless Scandella is exceptional at activating off the blue line and getting into closer shooter positions, you don't want to see that sort of volume shooting from the point. Unfortunately, this is the case as most of his contributions are from the left point.

Backs with high shot contribution numbers can be misleading if a majority are shots like these. If they can get closer on average like Dahlin that's an improvement, but generally better passing opportunities open up as well. When backs activate down the middle or down a wall, it's similar to dribble penetration in basketball as now you command another defender to try and stop you and someone else opens up who wasn't earlier. About a third of Dahlin's shot assists occur from the center lane of the ice, which typically lead to higher shooting percentages than passes from the outer lane (lane here being between or outside the faceoff dots).

This proportion is shared by Ristolainen. He simply doesn't generate the volume Dahlin does. No one has really ever had issues with Risto's offensive abilities, but those have really only manifested on the power play. Over his career, his expected primary points per sixty minutes, based on about 1700 minutes prior to this season, we'd expect him to score at a similar rate to Brent Seabrook, David Schlemko, Brian Dumoulin, and Sami Vatanen. This would put him in a mid-pairing role offensively.

You can go through Sean's viz to see the rest of the group's shots at 5v5 play.

Now, looking at a back's volume in shots and shot assists has been shown to be more predictive of how many points they'll score. Adding in quality doesn't change it that much, but I include here to once again show that Dahlin is top of the class. His expected scoring rate early on in his career is on par with other elite offensive blue line talents like Roman Josi, Kris Letang, and Shayne Gostisbehere.

## Entries

Entries will only be a fraction of the volume of forwards here. We can look at a back's entry shot assists, which has some predictive properties as well. Adding these helps Jake McCabe, Casey Nelson, and Dahlin the most in terms of their overall entry contributions now.

If anything, the team should strategize to get more looks for either Rasmus in transition. While Ristolainen is prone to dumping the puck in over Dahlin, both have decent passing percentages and could take the team's transition game up a notch.

In fact, they can do so without even touching the puck. Simply being an option near the blue line can cause momentary confusion among defenders and allow forwards the time and space needed to enter the zone.

## Exits

When we look at the exits, we see some similarities to Jack Eichel here: it's either a possession exit or a failed exit, with little room for dumping the puck out. Exceptionally skilled players want the puck on their stick and want to make a play, which isn't something you want to deter. Like Eichel, you'd love it if Dahlin could keep his possession exit numbers high and lower the fail rate, but you do not want to turn him into a player that throws the puck out to be a "safe" punter.

Scandella and Risto have had the worst start to the season as far as exiting the zone. It's not unexpected. Here's a look at the last two years.

Seeing as how the two have played a lot of minutes together, this makes sense. After all, if one partner struggles moving the puck it'll affect the other to some degree. But how can we isolate which one is truly at fault here? Or, is it both? This is where regression models help answer questions like this.

Here's a two-year regression from Micah Blake McCurdy (write up on model here) that tells us Scandella breaks even in his own zone, while being a net drag on the team offensively. If you look at the Isolated column, this gives us Scandella's offensive and defensive impact by way of "threat" which is Micah's version of expected goals. So, offensively, after accounting for teammates, competition, zone and score, Scandella subtracts 6.2% threat to the team's offense, while giving back adding 0.1% defensively. This would make him a negative 6.1% player at 5v5.

And here is Ristolainen's regression output from Micah. A large portion of this are his faults in the defensive zone. In addition to my own research in predicting favorable on-ice results for backs, CJ Turtoro shared some research on which individual event metrics predict on-ice results, and so when we want to dive into a player's performance, those are the ones we should use to guide us. Exiting the zone with possession matters for backs. Coupled with my work at the team level on forechecking, this makes sense. Now that we can key in on his inability to exit with possession, we can review the video to understand what it is he does differently than Dahlin and why.

## Clips of breakout plays – habits of successful exits and contrast with Risto

My biggest issue with Risto is that he seems to suffer from the same disease many backs suffer from – hot potato puck. Too often players get the puck and just throw up the boards without getting their head up or skating hard. The entire play is flowing to the boards, but there is a huge lane opening up if he simply takes one step, crosses over, and accelerates through the center. That will create an easy exit and now he can assess his options as the environment changes. His problem is he slows and comes to a stop at the boards. Even if this is a perfect chip up to Jason Pominville, Pommers is blanketed.

Here's a situation where Risto is set up for a failed exit and then makes a simple play needlessly difficult. For starters, I'm not a fan of this alignment pre-faceoff. Ristolainen is the right-handed player lined up inside left and Dahlin is a left-handed player on the right hashmark. Dahlin bumps it to Risto who never looks anywhere and just coasts into the corner to send it up the boards. Had he opened up his stance upon receiving the puck, maybe there's an opportunity to Conor Sheary, all alone. If Dahlin and Risto switch places, there are more options for a left-handed player there.

So, the first failed exit is partly on the player, but also on Phil Housley here. The second part is what could have been a simple pass to Dahlin, but instead is rimmed around to another 50/50 situation. Dahlin eventually picks it up and gets an exit and entry here.

Again, some rushed moments and given his numbers in this area, we know it's something that can be targeted for improvement.

## Conclusions

It's very likely, if not certain, that Dahlin is already the best back on this Sabres team. The question then becomes: "Why isn't Phil Housley giving him more minutes?" If we remove the Ottawa game he left early from, Dahlin averages a little over fifteen minutes a game at even strength. This is behind everyone except for Casey Nelson and Nathan Beaulieu. I suppose one could try and make the argument that Dahlin is only this effective because he sees fewer minutes, but it's not like the Sabres have a top four like Nashville ahead of Dahlin. I say give him the minutes and see how it goes. When looking at the components of play that we have to evaluate how players arrive at their on-ice results, Dahlin is clearly top of the class.

I've written how it may not take as long as backs to develop as is the prevailing wisdom, but it's also not a guarantee Dahlin's sterling numbers continue with greater minutes. However, would the team rather continue with subpar results from many of the other backs on the roster? Or, take the opportunity to give Dahlin more minutes and see if he can improve the team's fortune more often? If he's able to keep his numbers, then the team stands to improve in multiple categories: breakouts, entries, shot locations, etc.

Using data to make decisions is never a sure thing, but it's about taking calculated risks. Based on his performance in all areas of the game, Dahlin deserves more ice time. Give it to him.

## **As Sabres hit the road, Casey Mittelstadt looks ahead to his first NHL game in his home state of Minnesota**

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

November 16, 2018

Making that first trip back home is almost a rite of passage in the NHL. Whether it's going the city you grew up in or one that molded the early part of your career, home can take a few different forms.

The Sabres have started a three-game road trip that includes a game with the Minnesota Wild on Saturday, where rookie Casey Mittelstadt, who grew up in nearby Eden Prairie, will be making his first NHL appearance in his native state just five days before his 20th birthday, which should provide a good reason for an early celebration.

"It'll be good, I haven't seen a lot of people from there in a while," Mittelstadt said. "I've got a lot of people that'll be at the game so it'll be good to see them. At the same time I'll be ready to get over it, too. It turns into a bit of chaos, especially when it's your first time back there. It'll be good to see that though, I haven't seen my friends from home in three months now so it'll be good to say hi to them, see my brothers, see my parents, things like that. It should be good."

Chaos has been kept to a minimum in Buffalo for the rookie. After a difficult preseason and some frustrations through the first few games, he's found a home for the time being playing on a line with Conor Sheary and fellow Minnesotan Kyle Okposo. After one assist in his first nine games, he's got two goals and three assists in the past nine.

The points are coming and his defensive responsibility has been good, but those things won't come up too much when he's got family and friends to spoil with tickets. Playing at Xcel Energy Center means a lot to Mittelstadt after growing up watching the Wild.

"There's a few times for me you get a few reality checks where you realize what you're doing," Mittelstadt said. "I probably went to five or six Wild games a year growing up. Getting there and seeing that and realize that you're playing on the ice there I'm sure will be a bit of a reality check for me, but it'll be a lot of fun. It'll be fun for my friends to be able to be there, my parents, my whole family. I think I've got every relative that's going to be there. I think it'll be a lot of fun for them and it'll be fun to see them for sure."

The former Mr. Hockey in Minnesota as a high school senior at Eden Prairie in 2017, Mittelstadt spent last season playing for the University of Minnesota before joining the Sabres in March. Asked which jerseys he expects to see more of in the crowd on Saturday, he was pretty methodical.

"Pretty much all my friends from high school go to Minnesota and the Gophers play that night so I'm guessing it'll be a heavy Eden Prairie night. All of my high school buddies are going so there's probably going to be about 15 of them. I think the Eden Prairie jerseys are going to win but by now most of them have got Sabres stuff so hopefully it'll be Sabres night."

So many players have come from Minnesota to play in the NHL and playing at home is special no matter where home might be, but given the way hockey ties into the lifeblood of Minnesotans, returning at the top of your game is special... even if things don't go according to plan the first time.

"I was pretty nervous, just a lot of memories flooding back and being really excited to play," Sabres right wing and St. Paul native Kyle Okposo said. "I definitely put too much pressure on myself, I played terrible. (Casey) won't, he won't do that, but I was just so excited, it didn't feel like a regular hockey game."

For the record, Okposo had no points and was a minus-2 for the Islanders in his first game back in Minnesota back on Dec. 19, 2008. In coach Phil Housley's case, returning to Minnesota to face the North Stars went a little bit differently when he had no points in a 2-1 loss Nov. 18, 1982. His teammates also had jokes for him.

"They played a trick on me, number one, I went out on the ice first and they all stood out by the bench and I was skating around because I was excited to be back in Minnesota," Housley said. "It's going to be special for (Casey), it's the place that he grew up, he's got a lot of friends and family there which is really important to be able to play in front of your friends and family. It's going to be a special honor for him getting back to Minnesota playing in front of his home crowd."

## **Nothing was going to keep the Sabres' Mat Myers from living his NHL dream**

By Chad Graff

The Athletic

November 16, 2018

Phil Housley was barely a day into his new job as head coach of the Buffalo Sabres in the summer of 2017 when he began to make a to-do list of all that lay ahead with the new gig, including the hiring of assistant coaches and the search for a new home.

But there was a curious item at the top of the list. First things first, he decided, he wanted to hire Mat Myers.

Myers was the Nashville Predators' second-in-command video coordinator, an increasingly important job in the modern NHL, though hardly a position that figures to be of utmost importance to a brand-new coach. But Housley insisted.

The two had become close over two years in Nashville. Myers was single and Housley was living the bachelor's life with his wife and family still based in Minnesota, so they became dinner dates and concert cohorts for the steady stream of live music that rolled through the city. They bonded over long conversations in the midst of exhausting road trips, Housley reflecting on his time as a South St. Paul superstar who went on to become a Hall of Fame defenseman, and Myers detailing his winding path from a hockey family in New Hampshire to the NHL.

And now, Housley figured, he needed to make Myers his right-hand man, his lead video coordinator whom he'd lean on to dissect opponents and to teach players the system he wanted to install in Buffalo. Before he hired another coach or found a place to live, Housley hired Myers.

Mat Myers

Mat Myers, second from left, and Phil Housley, second from right, became buddies while taking in concerts together during their days in Nashville, including this one with Kings of Leon. (Courtesy of Mat Myers)

"I just fell in love with him," Housley said. "We have a unique relationship. That's why I fought for him to come to Buffalo. He was my first thought after I got hired — I've got to get Mat Myers."

The two now help lead a resurgent Sabres team that has gone from dead-last in the NHL a season ago to one of the early surprises of this campaign, with more wins than losses overall and riding a three-game winning streak entering a tough road back-to-back Friday in Winnipeg against the Jets and Saturday in St. Paul against the Wild.

Along the way, Housley has watched as players gravitated to Myers, seeking input on various video breakdowns and gameday strategies. "The guys really respect him," Housley said.

But he's also seen the looks and pointing that can come from early-arriving hockey fans who see Myers stand on the Sabres' bench for warm-ups, the occasional reminder of something that's easy to forget once getting to know Myers.

He stands 4-foot-nothing.

I first met Mat in high school. Four years later, we were college roommates. My now wife used to joke that she was the third wheel when the three of us would hang out.

School, though, isn't always easy on those who don't look like everyone else. A mix of immaturity and liquid courage sporadically left some feeling emboldened to take less-than-stealthy photos from across the room or point at the guy just trying to have a fun night. But Mat was always adamant that we not pay any attention to that. Sometimes, he'd end up striking a conversation with the person pointing or snapping photos. Ten minutes later, it would seem like they'd been friends for a decade.

Mat was born with achondroplasia, a type of dwarfism. He jokes that the world is his gym and that he became the planet's best climber, mostly out of necessity. It wasn't uncommon to come home to Mat standing on the kitchen counter, there to grab something out of a cupboard. A few toes were stubbed over the years on the step-stools that laid scattered throughout the apartment.

Mat Myers

Among his many talents, Myers can also officiate a wedding, as he did for writer Chad Graff and wife Sam this summer after the power vested in him by "10 minutes on the internet." (Courtesy of Chad Graff)

He had dreams of working in hockey after college, ones that would've seemed overzealous had we not all known Mat. When we sat in the back of classrooms at the University of New Hampshire, most of us just tried to get by without the professor noticing the headaches we were sporting from the previous night, but Mat was busy scrawling new practice drills in his notebook.

While most of us slept in on weekend mornings until dining halls had long since put away breakfast, he talked at local schools about the importance of inclusivity and to raise awareness about dwarfism. He had an ability to inspire — and he wasn't shy about cracking a few jokes, too, which made for some creative Halloween costumes. Our rendition of The Hangover's Alan and baby Carlos was a hit in 2010 — though it's probably for the best that most of those photos have since vanished.

This summer, my wife and I chose Mat to marry us. "By the power vested in me by the great state of New Hampshire," he said at the ceremony, "and 10 minutes on the internet, I now pronounce you husband and wife!"

In the fall of 1990, Marty and Sue Myers were nearing the birth of their first child. A routine doctor's appointment came with two pieces of news. You're having a boy, the doctor said. And he's going to be born with achondroplasia, which affects roughly one in 30,000.

The couple knew nothing about dwarfism. No one in their family had it.

In the pre-Google days, there wasn't much to read besides the encyclopedia entry and a book offered by the doctor. At that time, the doctor outlined a projected life. He won't play team sports, the doctor told the parents. And driving will be a challenge.

They left and got in touch with Little People of America, a non-profit set up to help support people with dwarfism and help them and their families prepare for what lies ahead.

"We didn't know what to expect," Marty said. "It was just very comforting knowing that other than your child being small, the challenges were just within that — clothing and driving, that sort of thing. Everything else is normal. The education is normal, the friendships and relationships are normal, and that's really how we approached it."

Mat's balance lagged behind toddlers his age and he struggled to walk until after he was two. But he was born into a hockey family 45 minutes north of Boston, so that just made for a convenient excuse for Marty to get him a hockey helmet that he wore around the house to protect from the falls. Elbow pads ensued, but his shins were too small for hockey shin pads, so he wore soccer ones. He ice skated, though, practically as well as he walked.

He was playing organized hockey by the time he was five, already defying the doctor's prediction. He played mites and squirts while Marty coached, reluctant then to take a high school job. Since, Marty has gone on to become one of New Hampshire's most prolific coaches, winning a high school state title in five of the last seven years.

"Just because Mat was smaller, I never really treated him any different," Marty said of their time as coach and player. "I yelled at him just as much as everyone else. Mat was my official get-in-the-box guy for a too-many-men penalty."

Mat Myers

"I yelled at him just as much as everyone else," Myers' dad, Marty, says of his days coaching his son. "Mat was my official get-in-the-box guy for a too-many-men penalty." (Courtesy of Mat Myers)

Mat played baseball and soccer, too, though soccer was tougher for a guy with short strides. Practice started with two long laps around the field. The team often finished and moved onto drills while Mat was barely halfway through his warm-up run. The coach told him he didn't have to go all the way around. But he insisted.

"There were times when I'd say to myself, 'Geez, Mat, would you just run in with the rest of the kids,'" Marty said.

"But he was determined to prove that he could do it," Sue said.

Mat played an extra year of squirts in hockey, but after that Marty had to sit Mat down for a tough conversation. It was time to give up his playing days as the kids his age began to sprout far taller.

Around that time, Marty provided a metaphor, telling Mat that people weren't going to hire him to dig holes, but they might if he could think of the best way to dig them. His point was to stay focused on school, use your brain to make up for your size.

But Mat took it another way. He didn't want to give up on hockey. If he couldn't play hockey, he'd find a way to use his brain to stay around the sport. As a teenager, he kept score at all his dad's games, then stayed after his dad left to do the same for other teams, eventually finding a ride home. In high school, he served as the team's manager. He tried to do the same in college, but they had enough managers, so they told him to come back when he knew video technology. So he learned it.

He became self-taught in video breakdowns and 5-on-5 systems. Four years of that at UNH led to a gig with the U.S. women's hockey team where he helped win a 2015 World Championship in Sweden, and that eventually led to the job with the Nashville Predators.

Housley still remembers seeing Mat there that first year and wondering who the guy that was constantly in a good mood was. Now, they work together each day. Housley relies on him to study an opponent's last three games and put together a video breakdown of their forecheck and breakout. When Housley is deciding whether to challenge a play, he gets his feedback from Mat, who studies the replay in the locker room.

"Every day I come to work and see him walk in with a smile on his face," Housley said. "He's got an infectious personality. I'm just so proud of him."

Now, Marty and Sue are on the other end of those phone calls from soon-to-be parents. Not long ago, a family from Canada called. They're in the same shoes Marty and Sue were in 28 years ago, filled with nerves and questions about what life will be like for their son.

Will he drive? Yes, he'll just need hand controls on his car like Mat has.

Will he date? Yup, and he'll get the same ribbing from his buddies about missed opportunities that they'd give anyone else.

Can he play hockey? Sure can, including for Mat the pick-up games the Sabres coaching staff throws together — though Housley's claim that, "Mat can really dangle," didn't yield many collegiate intramural floor hockey wins.

What else should we know? Well, it wouldn't hurt to know someone that's a wizard on the sewing machine like Mat's grandmother.

Beyond that, Marty and Sue can provide another message that exceeds the immediate ones the expecting couple faces. It's OK to dream big, they can say. Don't let a doctor temper expectations. If your child wants to work in the NHL one day, tell them to go for it. One day you might see your son on the bench before a Stanley Cup Final game, as they did two years ago.

During Mat's time in Nashville, Marty wasn't able to make it on the father's trips that are standard across the league and offer the dads a window into their sons' NHL lives. Work gets busy and there's the high school team Marty coaches, too, so it was hard to pull off.

But last season, Mat's first in Buffalo, the dates aligned just right. The father's trip was to Boston, so Marty made the excursion for the first time.

There was plenty to be awed by in the pro lifestyle, from the fancy dinners to the first-class travel. And there was plenty for a hockey nut and high school coach to study, including the fathers' invitation into the locker room for a pregame speech.

Marty, though, was overwhelmed by something else. He thought back to the lessons his son had taught him, how he learned not to worry about the public comments or awkward stares. And he thought about the example Mat has become to those following their aspirations.

Twenty-eight years ago, he didn't know if his son would be able to live a normal life. Now he was watching him live out his dream.

"It's hard to describe that moment other than just saying it's been a long time since Mat was a little boy loving the game of hockey to now participating at the professional level," Marty said. "I'm just so proud of him."

## **Scorching Sabres rank among NHL's early-season elite**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
November 18, 2018

PITTSBURGH – You have to go back nine years to find the last time the Buffalo Sabres ranked among the NHL's heavyweights like they do right now.

The upstart Sabres haven't roared out of the gate this fast since the 2009-10 season, when they also earned 26 points in their first 20 outings, their second-best 20-game start of the overtime era.

Entering Monday's tilt against the Penguins at PPG Paints Arena, the Sabres are enjoying their first five-game winning streak since March 2012.

They haven't won six straight games since Dec. 27, 2009 to Jan. 8, 2010.

Incredibly, the NHL's worst team a year ago ranked sixth overall and third in the ultra-competitive Atlantic Division as of Sunday afternoon.

The 12-6-2 Sabres have quickly morphed into the league's biggest surprise. They won their 12th game last season on Jan. 22, their 47th contest.

Yes, it's still early. But the Sabres haven't slowed down. Their ability to find a way to triumph is quickly becoming remarkable. They're a force to be reckoned with.

On Saturday, they zoomed back from an early 2-0 deficit to beat the Minnesota Wild 3-2, getting the late winner after tying it in the third period. Last season, the Wild throttled the Sabres 6-2 on Jan. 4 at home after opening up a 6-0 lead.

"Going down two, you're kind of thinking, 'Man is this going to happen again?'" Sabres winger Jason Pominville, who scored Saturday's winner with 1:30 left, told reporters in Minnesota. "But I think it goes to show we have a different group and different mindset and different attitude. We stuck with it, found a way.

"It just shows a lot about our group. We had a tough, tough schedule."

The Sabres' hectic schedule only enhances the victory. On Friday night, they rallied to beat the Winnipeg Jets, the NHL's best home team, 3-2 in a shootout after tying it in the third period.

Then they went through customs, flew to Minnesota and faced a 26-point team in an afternoon start.

"It just showed the character of this team, the fight and the battle," Sabres coach Phil Housley said.

The Sabres started their run Nov. 8 in Montreal, erasing a late deficit to beat the Canadiens 6-5 in overtime.

On Nov. 10, the Sabres rallied from two goals in the final 2:27 to defeat the Vancouver Canucks 4-3 in overtime. On Tuesday, they beat the Eastern-Conference leading Tampa Bay Lightning 2-1.

So far, the Sabres are 4-6-1 when trailing after two periods. Only the Calgary Flames, who are 6-7-1, have earned more points.

Many observers thought the Sabres would improve this season following a wretched 62-point campaign. Still, what they've accomplished so far is remarkable.

Sure, there will be struggles ahead. But the Sabres are clearly far ahead of schedule.

"I give the players credit, it's all them," Housley said. "They're doing the work and it started in training camp (with) our conditioning, our checking details."

xxx

Offensively, Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, 18, believes he had the best game of his short NHL career on Saturday.

"Defensively, I can be better," Dahlin said after recording a goal and an assist.

Some miscommunication between Dahlin and Zach Bogosian – the rookie went to the bench instead of grabbing his new partner's pass – created Minnesota's first goal.

"It was some small details, but overall it was a great game for me, great game for this team," Dahlin said. "It's so easy on this team, we have a great feeling. Yeah, I love to play on this team."

The first overall pick more than made up for his miscue. First, he slickly created Jake McCabe's goal, feeding the defenseman from the right circle in close.

"Oh my God," Pominville said of the pass. "I mean, his first play there."

Dahlin tied the game late, pinching in to score his second NHL goal.

"He made some incredible plays, even coming out of our end," Housley said.

xxx

Pominville showcased some supreme chemistry beside center Jack Eichel and Jeff Skinner before Housley replaced him with Sam Reinhart against Vancouver.

But Housley promoted Pominville, a former Wild star, to the top line again late Saturday.

"Just looking for a spark," Housley said. "Pommer's minutes were a little bit low, so we got him up there with Jack. It's just funny how things work out."

The late goal was Pominville's eighth this season. Of course, Pominville, 35, cooled off after leaving Eichel's side.

Still, having compiled 17 points in 20 appearances, he's on a 33-goal, 70-point pace over an 82-game campaign.

"Everyone's just willing to play wherever, that's what's fun about the group," Pominville said. "We're just not concerned about ice time."

Notes: At 7-8-3, the Penguins rank last in the Metropolitan Division. ... Penguins superstar Sidney Crosby is day-to-day with an upper-body injury and possibly won't play Monday. ... The Sabres are 6-0-2 in one-goal games this season. ... The Sabres had Sunday off.

## **Sabres rally back in 3rd period in win over Wild**

By Franz Ross

WIVB

November 17, 2018

BUFFALO, NY (WIVB) - The Buffalo Sabres extended their win streak to 5 games on Saturday night.

The Sabres scored two goals in the 3rd period in their 3-2 win over the Minnesota Wild. The last goal came with 90 seconds left in the game from Jason Pominville.

Jake McCabe and Rasmus Dahlin also scored. Linus Ullmark had 37 saves on the night.

The Sabres are now 12-6-2 on the season.

They will next journey to Pittsburgh for a Monday night game against the Penguins.

## **Sheary, Hutton lift Sabres to 4th straight win**

By Nick Filipowski

WIVB

November 16, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - For the first time in nearly four years, the Sabres have won four straight games.

Behind another stellar performance in the crease by Carter Hutton, and goal-scoring heroics from Jeff Skinner and Conor Sheary the Blue and Gold outlast Winnipeg for a 2-1 shootout win.

The last time Buffalo won four in a row: December of 2014.

Trailing 1-0 in the third period, Skinner collected his 14th goal of the season on the power play to pull the Sabres even at a goal a piece.

Sheary provided the game winner in the shootout as the Sabres have now climbed to third in the Atlantic Division with an 11-6-2 record (24 points) record.

Hutton turned away 25 of the 26 shots he faced.

The Sabres will go for a fifth straight win Saturday when they battle the Minnesota Wild.

## **Surging Sabres Attract Attention**

By Stu Boyar

WGZR

November 18, 2018

BUFFALO, NY- Riding a five game winning streak people around North American are beginning to notice the Buffalo Sabres.

There's a belief that there's something special going on with the Sabres.

They are in third place in the Atlantic Division. One point behind Toronto and three behind Tampa Bay, a team they beat last Tuesday in Buffalo. They have 26 points. That's tied for fourth most in the NHL. Only Nashville, Tampa Bay and Toronto have more points than the Sabres.

This story from NBC Sports is an indication of the kind of respect the Sabres are suddenly getting.

The Sabres will try to stretch their winning streak to six straight Monday night in Pittsburgh. The Sabres haven't won six straight games since January of 2010.

## **Soak it in: Buffalo Sabres are good**

By Scott Billeck

Pro Hockey Talk

November 17, 2018

Remember when the Buffalo Sabres were bad?

The answer is we all do. You don't have to go that far back in the annals of hockey history to find some woefully bad Sabres teams.

But those days of Buffalo being the butt-end of jokes and all of that sort of thing seem to be over with. The western New Yorkers aren't simply toiling as an embarrassing team anymore. It's been a bit of a process to turn the ship around, but the fruits of that labor seem to be flourishing so far this season.

Case and point: Buffalo has now cobbled together five straight wins, including triumphs over the Tampa Bay Lightning — tops in the Atlantic Division — and the Winnipeg Jets and Minnesota Wild, teams sitting second and third in the Central Division, respectively.

They've embraced the grind, have learned to weather storms and are still standing at the end of it.

In Winnipeg on Friday, the Sabres were outshot 12-4 in the first period and survived. In Minnesota on Saturday, they were again pelted in the opening frame, doubled up 18-9 on the shot counter, and still found a way to only be down by a single goal.

And in both games, they battled back in the third, tied the game and then won it late in regulation or in extra hockey, as was the case in Winnipeg. And they did it on back-to-back nights when you'd have forgiven them for packing it in early against Minnesota after Friday's game, which needed 65 minutes and seven rounds of a shootout.

Summer acquisitions of Jeff Skinner and Carter Hutton have played massive roles in Buffalo's ascent up the standings a month-and-a-half into the season.

Skinner has 14 goals and 21 points in 20 games this season after coming over from the Carolina Hurricanes.

Hutton is 4-0-0 in his past four games with a 1.42 goals-against average and a .950 save percentage.

Linus Ullmark is 4-0-1 in his backup role and Buffalo had the 11th best team save percentage coming into Saturday.

Their penalty kill is in the top 10

Jason Pominville has turned back the clock with nine goals and 17 points thus far. Thirty-five years old and the wear and tear of 1,000 games? Pfft. Pominville is laughing at Father Time.

And most importantly, they're resilient.

"I just think we bent a little bit but we didn't break," Sabres head coach Phil Housley said after Friday's win in Winnipeg. "I think last year we maybe would have broke a little more and gave the game away. We hung in there. That's what's great about this group, that they stick with it. We make some adjustments in between periods and they follow through with those adjustments. But it's great for them, they've shown the resiliency up to this point in the season."

The Sabres are simply an exciting team to watch these days and they're positioning themselves to be in the playoff hunt, both this year and in the future.

Imagine that.

## **Sabres rally past Wild for fifth straight win**

by Jessi Pierce

NHL.com

November 17, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- Jason Pominville scored the go-ahead goal with 1:30 remaining in the third period, and the Buffalo Sabres rallied to win their fifth straight game, 3-2 against the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center on Saturday.

Pominville beat Devan Dubnyk on a backhand from the right face-off circle.

Buffalo (12-6-2) last won five in a row March 19-27, 2012. It was the second comeback win for the Sabres in two nights; they won 2-1 in a shootout at the Winnipeg Jets on Friday.

"I give a lot of credit to our guys, it just showed the character of this team," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "The fight and the battle. Obviously the first period didn't go the way we wanted it to go. ... With the shortened schedule, overtime [and] shootout (on Friday), you have to go through customs and get in here late and turn around. I give a lot of credit to our guys that they found the energy to get the job done."

Jake McCabe and Rasmus Dahlin scored for Buffalo, which is 6-1-0 in its past seven games.

Zach Parise and Matt Dumba scored for the Wild (12-6-2).

Parise capitalized on a Sabres turnover in the neutral zone and scored unassisted to give the Wild a 1-0 lead at 4:00 of the first period. Parise has 341 goals in his NHL career, the most of any Minnesota-born player.

Dumba scored from the point on the power play at 7:45 to make it 2-0. It was Dumba's eighth goal of the season, second-most among NHL defensemen (Morgan Rielly of the Toronto Maple Leafs has nine). He has scored a goal in each of the past three games.

"When you get a lead early, you definitely think you're going to catch that groove and hopefully fill it up but that wasn't the case tonight," Dumba said. "We should have buried them in the second. That was kind of our setup period but we didn't do what we wanted to. We just let them hang around too long. A team like that, they're going to find a way. There's too much skill. We should have capitalized when we could have."

McCabe made it 2-1 at 14:52 after Dahlin worked the puck through the middle and found him on the doorstep.

Dahlin poked a rebound past Dubnyk (26 saves) at 12:58 of the third period to tie it 2-2.

"It's so easy to play on this team because we always know, if we're down two goals, we know we're going to get back," Dahlin said. "I love to have that feeling."

Linus Ullmark made 37 saves for Buffalo.

"This whole stretch coming up here, we've got six games in nine nights and especially this stretch here, these back-to-backs are probably the toughest I've done in my time in the League," McCabe said. "These are two tough buildings to win in and to pull the wins out like we did, it's just phenomenal and it gives us a lot of confidence moving forward."

They said it

"I give the players credit. It's all them. They're doing the work and it started in training camp. Coming into training camp, our conditioning, our checking detail, I think they're getting rewarded right now for that hard work. It's tough going into Winnipeg and getting two points there, and then getting two points in Minnesota where they've only lost one game (in regulation), they're pretty deadly in this building. We stayed the course, it was much like the game yesterday where we bend a little bit but we didn't break, and that's a credit to our guys." -- Sabres coach Phil Housley

"When you had the 2-0 (lead) and you had the chance to make it three, and then you had another chance to make it three, and then another chance and then you let them hang around. And then the second period when you have 2-1, then (Jason) Zucker has a breakaway and we have some good chances. And then in the third when (Matt) Hendricks missed that in front, I said -- obviously I wouldn't say it out loud -- but I knew we were in trouble." -- Wild coach Bruce Boudreau

#### Need to know

Sabres forward Jeff Skinner had a four-game goal streak end. ... Buffalo forward Jack Eichel had two assists and has five in his past five games. ... Wild center Mikko Koivu had an assist and has six points (two goals, four assists) in a three-game point streak. ... Parise passed Dave Christian for the most goals by a Minnesota-born player. Housley is third (338).

#### What's next

Sabres: At the Pittsburgh Penguins on Monday (7 p.m. ET; SN1, SNE, SNP, ATTSN-PT, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Wild: At the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday (6 p.m. ET; NHLN, WGN, FS-WI, FS-N+, NHL.TV)

## Sabres at Wild preview

NHL.com

November 17, 2018

### The Game

The Buffalo Sabres will try for their fifth straight win when they play the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center on Saturday.

The four-game winning streak is the Sabres' longest since they won four straight Dec. 9-Dec. 15, 2014. They last won five in a row March 19-27, 2012. Buffalo, which is 5-1-0 in its past six games, is playing the second half of a back-to-back; it won 2-1 in a shootout at the Winnipeg Jets on Friday.

The Wild are 4-1-0 in their past five games and 11-3-0 in their past 14. They have allowed two goals or fewer in four of their past five games.

### Players to watch

Sabres forward Jeff Skinner has five goals in a four-game goal streak and 19 points (13 goals, six assists) in his past 13 games.

Wild forward Mikael Granlund has six points (four goals, two assists) in his past five games and is one assist away from 200 for his NHL career.

### They said it

"Early on in the season we've overcome a few deficits and showed some resiliency. Hopefully we can keep that going." -- Sabres forward Conor Sheary

"The one thing you can expect is [Buffalo is] an awful lot better of a team than they have been in the past. When a team has been in the dumps and then they start to play and they realize that they're good, all of a sudden it becomes a tougher out and I firmly believe that they'll put their best foot forward." -- Wild coach Bruce Boudreau

### Sabres projected lineup

Jeff Skinner -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart

Vladimir Sobotka -- Patrik Berglund -- Jason Pominville

Conor Sheary -- Casey Mittelstadt -- Kyle Okposo

Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Tage Thompson

Jake McCabe -- Rasmus Ristolainen

Marco Scandella -- Zach Bogosian

Nathan Beaulieu -- Rasmus Dahlin

Linus Ullmark

Carter Hutton

Scratched: Remi Elie, Casey Nelson, Evan Rodrigues

Injured: Scott Wilson (ankle), Matt Hunwick (neck)

### Wild projected lineup

Jason Zucker -- Eric Staal -- Mikael Granlund

Zach Parise -- Mikko Koivu -- Nino Niederreiter

Marcus Foligno -- Jordan Greenway -- Charlie Coyle

Matt Hendricks -- Eric Fehr -- J.T. Brown

Ryan Suter -- Matt Dumba

Jonas Brodin -- Jared Spurgeon

Nick Seeler -- Greg Pateryn

Devan Dubnyk

Alex Stalock

Scratched: Nate Prosser, Joel Eriksson Ek

Injured: None

Status report

The Sabres did not skate. ... Parise practiced Friday and is expected to return after missing one game with an illness.

Stat pack

Eichel has three assists in his past four games. ... Zucker has five points (two goals, three assists) in his past four games. ... Koivu has five points (two goals, three assists) in his past two games. ... The Wild are 6-1-2 at home and one of three teams with one regulation home loss (New York Islanders, 5-1-2; New Jersey Devils, 6-1-1).

## **Dahlin following 5th straight win: 'I love to play on this team'**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 17, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. - Rasmus Dahlin and the Buffalo Sabres celebrated their shootout win in Winnipeg around 9:45 p.m. CST on Friday night. They departed Winnipeg International at 11:47 p.m., landed at 12:45 a.m. and arrived at their hotel in Saint Paul at 1:20.

Only 17 hours passed before they were celebrating yet another comeback win, this time over the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center on Saturday. Dahlin was left smiling at his stall in the visiting dressing room, describing a team that doesn't know when to quit.

"It's so easy to play on this team because we always know, even if we're down two goals, we're going to get back," he said. "I love to have that feeling. I love to play on this team."

The rookie defenseman was instrumental in helping the Sabres erase a 2-0 deficit, assisting on Jake McCabe's goal with a highlight-reel pass in the first period and then pouncing on a loose puck to tie the game with 7:02 remaining. Jason Pominville tallied the winner with 1:30 left on the clock.

The 3-2 victory gives Buffalo its first five-game winning streak since March 2012 and, with 26 points in the standings, their best 20-game start since 2009-10. The Sabres have put up 26 points in 20 games seven times in franchise history. Each time, they've gone on to make the playoffs.

"I give the players credit," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It's all them. They're doing the work and it started in training camp, coming into training camp. Our conditioning, our checking detail. I think they're getting rewarded right now for that hard work."

Pominville, a former member of the Wild, saw his return to Minnesota go awry in a 6-2 loss last season. He admitted to wondering if this game would play out the same way after Zach Parise and Matt Dumba scored to give Minnesota its 2-0 lead in the first period.

Tickets for Wednesday vs. Philadelphia

But this team is different, as they've continued to show. Four of their wins on this run have required third-period comebacks. All have been against teams that currently occupy playoff spots. Oh, and their last two opponents had a combined three regulation losses at home before the Sabres came to town.

"This whole stretch coming up here, we have six games in nine nights and especially this stretch here, these back-to-backs, is probably one of the toughest I've done in my time in the league," McCabe said. "These are two tough buildings to win in and to pull the wins out like we did, it's phenomenal and it gives us a lot of confidence moving forward here."

Like in recent wins over Tampa Bay and Winnipeg, the Sabres had to rely on their goaltender to keep them in it early. Linus Ullmark made 37 saves in his first start since Nov. 8, bidding the Sabres time to stage their comeback.

It was Dahlin who spearheaded the effort with what was perhaps his best offensive game to date. The first overall pick found a way to weave through four defenders and create a passing lane to find his defense partner in McCabe, stationed at the back door for a one-timer.

Pominville, a veteran of 14 seasons, couldn't help but laugh while describing his 18-year-old teammate.

"Oh my God. I mean, his first play there, we have two D - him and [McCabe] are down basically below the top of the circles," Pominville said. "He gets the puck and makes a great play and then at the end, again, he joins the rush."

Dahlin's second NHL goal was a lot like his first. Zach Bogosian took a hard shot, leaving Jack Eichel to fight for the rebound in front of Wild goalie Devan Dubnyk. Dahlin saw the puck lying still in the blue paint and dashed in from the blue line to tie the game.

The defenseman's brilliance wasn't limited to his scoring plays, evidenced in clips like the one below.

"You could see he kind of had his swagger out there, he had his confidence," McCabe said. "He was moving the puck, he was shaking and baking out there, really. His deceptiveness is really fun to watch as just a player in general. Tonight, he was at the top of his game."

Housley reunited the line of Jeff Skinner, Eichel and Pominville - one of the NHL's best for a stretch of nearly three weeks beginning in late October - to begin the third period, and they picked up right where they left off. Pominville's winner came on a turn-around backhand off an Eichel feed.

"I was trying to go far-side and I think it ends up going post and in," Pominville said. "I mean, I'll definitely take it."

The Sabres will take the day off on Sunday before concluding their road trip against the Penguins on Monday night. Fair to say the rest is well deserved.

"I give a credit to our guys," Housley said. "It just shows the character of this team, the fight and the battle. ... With the shortened schedule, overtime, shootouts, you have to go through customs and get in here late and turnaround. I give a lot of credit to our guys that they found the energy to get the job done."

Eichel things

This faceoff play from Eichel didn't lead to a goal, but it's still worth watching a few times.

Tweet from @BuffaloSabres: Jack working his magic off another faceoff, nbd. [pic.twitter.com/ucjfpseYTI](https://pic.twitter.com/ucjfpseYTI)

Eichel, by the way, tallied two assists to bring his point total to 22 in 20 games. That's a 90-point pace.

Up next

The Sabres conclude their road trip in Pittsburgh on Monday night. Coverage on MSG-B begins at 6:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night pregame show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.

The team returns home on Wednesday to host the Philadelphia Flyers. The first 15,000 fans in attendance will be able to prepare Thanksgiving dinner in style:

## **Mittelstadt returns home as Sabres visit Wild**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 17, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Casey Mittelstadt has rejected the notion of nervousness already at multiple points of young NHL career, be it his debut as a 19-year-old last season or his first career shootout attempt last Saturday.

But his first time playing in the Minnesota State Boys Hockey Tournament at Xcel Energy Center as a sophomore at Eden Prairie High School - now that was enough shake him.

"I was nervous, man," Mittelstadt said. "I don't get nervous very much, but I was nervous that day. Warmups, I was probably skating 200 miles an hour. I was probably completely tired after warmups. But the adrenaline's pumping, the stands are full.

"When you're that young, you've never seen anything like it."

Mittelstadt scored two goals in that game. He doesn't imagine he'll be nearly as nervous when he dresses for his first NHL game in his hometown on Saturday, when the Buffalo Sabres visit the Minnesota Wild looking for their fifth win in a row..

Kyle Okposo, his linemate and a fellow St. Paul native, disagreed.

"Oh yeah, he'll be nervous for sure," Okposo said, smiling ear-to-ear. "My first time playing here, I put a lot of pressure on myself. It felt like a different game. It just wasn't hockey, it was, 'Oh man, I've got to play good.'

"You kind of have an out-of-body experience. I'm just going to try to calm him down and make sure that he's just thinking about playing and not trying to impress everybody."

Mittelstadt has spoken highly of his hometown since his draft year of 2017, when he opted to forego a full season of junior hockey for a chance to make one last run at the state championship with Eden Prairie. Prior to his draft, he compared the dream of winning that title to that of winning a Stanley Cup.

"For a young hockey player like me growing up, it was pretty much everything," he said. "I think that's what we always dreamed of. Those high school players became celebrities, they were pretty much even with an NHL player."

Mittelstadt grew up coming to Wild games with his father, Tom, who received tickets through his business. He estimates he'll have somewhere around 115 friends and family members in attendance on Saturday.

"One of my old coaches rented out a bar or something for everyone," he said. "There's like 85 of them going to that, plus all my friends which is like 30 more. I don't know. My parents did a good job of handling the whole thing."

Coverage on MSG-B begins at 5:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night pregame show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 6.

Linus Ullmark will start in net, while Minnesota State alum Casey Nelson will step in on defense in place of Nathan Beaulieu.

The Sabres are looking to win five straight games for the first time since March 19 to 27, 2012. To do so, they'll have to build on a third period in Winnipeg on Friday in which they erased a one-goal deficit and outshot the Jets, 10-5.

"We got back to the way we want to play, and that's having a shot mentality," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "With the short turnaround, we're going to have to be smart and really manage our game today and not force things that aren't there, so we can use our energy in the right way."

## **Hutton comes up big again in shootout win over Jets**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 16, 2018

WINNIPEG - It's become a winning recipe as of late for the Buffalo Sabres - stellar goaltending from Carter Hutton, a timely goal from Jeff Skinner and a belief that they're never really out of a game.

All those ingredients came together once again in a 2-1 shootout win over the Winnipeg Jets on Friday. Hutton kept them in it when the Jets made an early push, Skinner erased a one-goal deficit 53 seconds into the third period and Jack Eichel, Jason Pominville and Conor Sheary tallied goals in the seven-round shootout.

The Sabres have won four games in a row for the first time since December 2014. They've done it against opponents with a combined record of 44-25-8.

"We bent a little bit, but we didn't break," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "I think last year we maybe would have broken a little bit more and gave the game away. We hung in there. That's what's great about this group, that they stick with it.

"We make some adjustments between periods and they follow through with those adjustments. It's great for them. They've showed the resiliency up to this point in the season."

Video: Skinner, Sheary lead Sabres to shootout win over Jets

As with their win over Tampa Bay on Tuesday, the Sabres had to rely on Hutton more than they'd like. They struggled to maintain offensive-zone time during a first period in which they were outshot, 14-2. Hutton had to rob Mark Scheifele of a back-door deflection to keep the game scoreless.

The Jets didn't break through until 7:10 in the second period, when Kyle Connor buried a 2-on-1 feed from Patrik Laine. All said, the damage could have been worse.

"That's a good hockey team over there," Hutton said. "We expected them to tilt the ice a little bit, especially at home. I've played against them enough in my career to know that they're going to come. Fortunately enough, we kept them at one there."

The Sabres began the third period down a goal with 1:42 remaining on their third power play of the night. They entered the night amid a 0-for-10 drought with the extra man, and Housley stressed getting pucks to the net as a remedy.

Skinner's tying goal was vindication. Patrik Berglund - a new addition to Buffalo's top unit - won a battle along the boards down low and passed to Rasmus Dahlin at the point, who then moved the puck to Eichel on the left flank. Eichel took a quick shot, and Skinner was able to go top shelf with the rebound.

"You look at the power play, we just kept trying to shoot, trying to get the puck to the net," Housley said. "The volume of shots was there. And then we get in there and it creates second and third opportunities. That's a perfect example."

The goal was Skinner's team leading 14th of the season, which ranks second in the NHL, and fifth during a four-game point streak. It also marked the 400th point of his career.

"I think sometimes that's just the way it goes," he said. "D-men, they've got such good sticks and they're in such good position sometimes, you've got to find little opportunities to get pucks off. Fortunately for me I think today it kind of bounced right on my stick off of a rebound. I was able to get it up pretty quick."

The Sabres dominated for much of the period from that point on, holding the Jets without a shot until 10:37 had ticked off the clock.

"I think we just got back on our toes," Skinner said. "I think early in the game they did a great job of sort of clogging up the neutral zone. ... We tried to bring the puck up, they sort of clogged everything up and didn't allow us to get in and sustain any forecheck or gain any momentum in the offensive zone.

"I think we got on our toes a little bit in the third. We got to spend some more time in their end and it helped out a lot."

The game bled into a back-and-forth overtime affair, which paved the way for an equally compelling shootout. Eichel scored on the Sabres' first attempt, Pominville buried a wrist shot in the fifth round to keep them alive, and Sheary ended it by scoring on his first NHL shootout attempt.

Hutton stopped five of the seven shots he faced in the shootout, on top of the 25 saves he made in regulation.

The Sabres have a chance to extend their win streak to five when they continue their three-game road trip in Minnesota on Saturday.

"It should give us some confidence," Skinner said. "It definitely gives us some confidence in Hutts. We don't want to ask that much of him every night, but he's been huge the last two games. We played some pretty good teams and we've gotten the job done. Hopefully we can use this at the start of a road trip to sort of build some confidence and maybe build some momentum."

Up next

The Sabres head to St. Paul to play the Wild on Saturday. Coverage on MSG-B begins at 5:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night pregame show on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 6.

## Special teams will be at forefront of matchup with Jets

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 16, 2018

WINNIPEG - What happens when an immovable force meets an unstoppable object? Pay attention to the special teams battle between the Buffalo Sabres and Winnipeg Jets on Friday, and you might find out.

Winnipeg boasts the NHL's best power play at 34 percent, a mark that ticks up to 40 percent on home ice. Blake Wheeler leads the league with 13 power-play points, all assists, while Patrik Laine's seven goals with the extra man rank second.

But the Buffalo penalty kill is no pushover, either. The Sabres are a perfect 12-for-12 in their last five games, which includes a couple of 5-on-3 kills, and 27-for-29 in 10 games dating back to Oct. 21. Their success rate of 93.1 percent in that span ranks second in the NHL.

Force, meet object.

"I think we all know they're probably the best in the league or they're definitely up there," Sabres forward Patrik Berglund said. "They have a lot of skilled guys that make a lot of good plays, guys that can really score. We've got to bring our best game for sure."

Berglund will step back into the lineup in place of Evan Rodrigues and will likely be one of the players tasked with killing penalties against the five-man unit of Wheeler, Laine, Mark Scheifele, Kyle Connor and Dustin Byfuglien.

Laine has established himself as a one-time threat from the left faceoff circle, a la Alexander Ovechkin, while Wheeler has shown a penchant for feeding him passes through traffic.

"We've got to pay special attention to him, for sure," Housley said. "They find that seam really well. Wheeler does a great job of getting that puck to him, so we'll make some adjustments to our penalty kill tonight, but I think the most important thing for us is just to stay out of the box."

The Sabres will look to ignite their own power play, meanwhile, after going 0-for-10 over the past four games. Their new units at practice on Thursday looked like this:

Unit 1: Berglund, Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart, Jeff Skinner, Rasmus Dahlin

Unit 2: Conor Sheary, Casey Mittelstadt, Jason Pominville, Kyle Okposo, Rasmus Ristolainen

Berglund's time on the power play has been limited this season, but Housley said he likes the potential for the forward skating on the right flank.

"I think he's got very good instincts offensively," Housley said. "Being in that role where he can be in the middle of the ice or get out on the flank, I think Skinner and him can feed off each other. I like his shot capabilities. He's got a great one-time. We've got to get back to shooting the puck on the power play."

Both teams enter the contest amid three-game win streaks. The Sabres have beaten opponents with a combined record of 33-20-6 during their run. The Jets are 11-5-1 this season, including 8-2-1 in front of their raucous home crowd.

"It's a great atmosphere," Housley said. "The people are right on top of you, they're a loud crowd. If you're not ready for this game, you better be, because they're going to try and start fast. It's a great atmosphere."

Coverage on MSG-B begins at 7:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night pregame show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 8.

## Projected lineup

Berglund will replace Rodrigues on a line with Vladimir Sobotka and Jason Pominville. Carter Hutton will start in net.

After being matched up primarily with Tampa Bay's top line of J.T. Miller, Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov on Thursday (and holding them without a goal), expect to see the trio of Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson and Tage Thompson to continue to play a key role in defensive-zone matchups.

"They've been terrific," Housley said. "Especially Zemgus and Larsson have done a really great job and even Tage now being in that role, starting in the defensive zone quite a bit, is learning how to play without the puck which is going to be important moving forward in his development."

Here's the full projected lineup, based on Thursday's practice:

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

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
6 Marco Scandella - 4 Zach Bogosian  
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 26 Rasmus Dahlin

40 Carter Hutton  
35 Linus Ullmark