



Buffalo Sabres

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Lightning end Sabres 10-game winning streak

By Mark Dittler

Associated Press

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Tampa Bay Lightning left wing Alex Killorn (17) celebrates with the bench after scoring against the Buffalo Sabres during the first period of an NHL hockey game Thursday, Nov. 29, 2018, in Tampa, Fla. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The Buffalo Sabres came up just short of a history-making run.

Cedric Paquette broke a tie with 5:41 left and the Tampa Bay Lightning ended the Sabres' franchise-record-tying winning streak at 10 games with a 5-4 victory Thursday night.

"I thought it was great stretch by us, 10 games in a row," Buffalo star Jack Eichel said. "It shows us we can win every night we go out there, and I think that should be our mindset no matter what. That's the confidence you build through a winning streak like that."

Paquette beat Carter Hutton, who had won his previous eight starts, from the top of the left circle.

Ten of the Sabres' last 11 games have decided by one goal, including seven that needed extra time.

Buffalo also had 10 consecutive victories in January 1984 and October 2006.

Dan Girardi, Alex Killorn, Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos also scored for the Lightning, and Luis Domingue made 18 saves.

"I thought there was a lot of momentum in that game," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "Both teams coughed up leads. There was a ton of swings in that game. I'm pretty sure if you're a fan of hockey and were in the building tonight you would have enjoyed that one."

The Lightning took over the top spot in the Eastern Conference and hold a one-point advantage over the Sabres and Toronto.

"It was kind of a playoff atmosphere," Girardi said.

Sam Reinhart had two goals for Buffalo, and Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson also scored. Hutton stopped 32 shots.

After the Sabres took a 4-3 lead on Thompson's goal at 2:29 of the third, Stamkos tied it 1:49 later on a power play.

"It definitely would have been nice to pull this out," Girgensons said.

Buffalo pulled even at 3 when Eichel's pass from the left wing boards into slot went off Reinhart's skate at 5:39 of the second.

Eichel had two assists, giving him 25 this season.

Kucherov put the Lightning up 3-2 from the slot during a 3-on-1 with 4:05 left in the first. The right wing also had an assist, and has an eight-game point streak (three goals, 17 points). He set career high for points in a single month with 23.

After Girardi opened the scoring, Girgensons and Reinhart scored 63 seconds apart midway through the first. Killorn knotted it at 2-all just 43 seconds after Reinhart's goal.

Girardi couldn't put any weight on his right leg after a collision with Thompson five minutes into the game but returned 10 minute later.

"I got pretty lucky," Girardi said. "My knee really hurt but just a little bump. The pain went away."

Tampa Bay defenseman Ryan McDonagh went to the locker room at 11:50 of the first after being hit at the end boards by Eichel, who received a two-minute boarding penalty.

Cooper had no postgame update on McDonagh, whose status will be evaluated Friday.

Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe departed in the second with an undisclosed injury.

NOTES: Sabres LW Jeff Skinner had a four-game goal streak end. He had one shot on goal. ... Lightning LW Ondrej Palat (foot) returned after missing 16 games. ... Tampa Bay D Anton Stralman (upper body) sat out his 10th consecutive game and will be re-evaluated next week.... Sabres D Marco Scandella (undisclosed) and LW Conor Sheary (upper body) were both out of the lineup but could play this week. Buffalo D Matt Hunwick (neck) has resumed practicing with the team.

UP NEXT

Sabres: At Florida on Friday night.

Lightning: At Florida on Saturday night to start a three-game trip.

Mike Harrington: A remarkable Sabres streak ends. Now the rest of the season begins.

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
November 29, 2018

TAMPA — The Streak Is Over. Long Live the Streak.

We now return you to our regularly scheduled hockey season.

The Buffalo Sabres' franchise-altering winning streak came to an end Thursday night, stopped in its tracks at 10 games as the Tampa Bay Lightning got a tiebreaking goal from Cedric Paquette with 5:41 left and held on for a 5-4 victory in Amalie Arena.

Getting to 11 games would have given the Sabres the longest run of consecutive victories in their history — and it would have been quite a bit of symmetry when you ponder the history of the franchise.

No. 11, of course, is the greatest number in Sabres history, worn proudly for the first 17 years of the franchise by Hall of Famer Gilbert Perreault.

"I thought of Perreault today coming down to the rink. I was thinking, 'Win one for Gilbert and the number here,' " fellow Sabres legend Danny Gare told The Buffalo News following the morning skate. "This is a tough opponent. Tampa Bay is an elite team, a team building for big moments. But they can be beaten."

The Sabres nearly did it for the second time this month, taking a 4-3 lead early in the third period on a Tage Thompson goal before the Lightning surged to their final push. A shame really when you think of what 11 means to the Sabres. It goes all the way back to 1970. To June 11 of that year — there's that number again — when the NHL Draft was held at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal.

The fate of the Sabres and expansion cousin Vancouver would ultimately be decided for many years by the spin of a simple roulette wheel to determine who would get the top pick. Vancouver had lower numbers and the Sabres had higher numbers.

The wheel spun, NHL President Clarence Campbell announced the number was 1 and thus declared Vancouver the winner, to cheers from the Canucks' delegation. But legendary Sabres coach and general manager Punch Imlach politely and properly pointed out the league president's mistake, that the wheel had actually stopped on 11 and the second "1" was simply hidden from view.

Campbell agreed and declared the Sabres the winner, prompting a second set of hooting from a different part of the ballroom. The Sabres drafted Perreault. He wore No. 11 his entire career and the rest, of course, is history.

Gare, who still lives in Western New York but winters in the Tampa area, was part of a Buffalo team that won nine straight to open the 1975-76 season. He remembers the feeling well.

"You got a snowballing effect," he said. "You just continue to think you're invincible almost. It's a fun time when that happens. Everybody is happy and enjoying it."

The current Sabres seem to agree.

"It shows us we can win every night we go out there," captain Jack Eichel said, head held high in the dressing room after the taut thriller. "And I think that should be our mindset, no matter what. ... We should expect to win every night we go on the ice. That's kind of the confidence you build through a winning streak like that."

"Your belief grows and everyone plays looser," agreed Sam Reinhart, whose two goals in the game were both set up by Eichel. "The biggest thing everyone has noticed is how much you start playing for the team."

This streak began with a Nov. 8 overtime win in Montreal. The three weeks since have rejuvenated the franchise and finally brought a bedraggled fan base back to the team. There are now legitimate hopes for a playoff berth for the first time since 2011.

The Sabres entered Thursday nine points inside the cut line for the postseason. There's a lot of season left, but that's a lot of cushion, too.

The Lightning are a veteran group that have been to three Eastern Conference finals the last four years and were two wins from the Stanley Cup in 2015. They were blunt prior to the game about avenging their 2-1 loss Nov. 13 in Buffalo and getting back ahead of the Sabres in the NHL's overall standings.

The Sabres better be used to such feelings. They're going to get everyone's best shot from this point forward. At least Thursday, they had plenty of answers.

It was a game that was played at a frenetic playoff pace. The Sabres were behind, 1-0 and 3-2. They led, 2-1 and 4-3, with the latter coming on Thompson's goal at 2:29 of the third period. Tampa captain Steven Stamkos tied the game on a power play less than two minutes later, setting the stage for the dramatic finish.

The sellout crowd was in uproar all night and it had the feeling of a Sabres-Toronto Maple Leafs game in the stands. Buffalo fans have piled into Florida for the weekend, with Thursday's game here followed by the Sabres' game against the Florida Panthers on Friday night in Sunrise and the Bills' game Sunday against the Dolphins in suburban Miami.

The "Let's Go, Buffalo" chants filled the 300 level of the arena, with the Tampa fans answering back with their own full-throated roars of "Let's Go, Bolts"

"It's all so amazing," Gare said. "No one expected this obviously but when a group gets together, gets good goaltending and timely goals, it happens. When you look at the team confidence-wise, they're all having fun doing it.

"It's awesome. It's great for them. I'm so happy for them. I've never seen crowds going wild like that back home in a while. Just going nuts."

Think of how bizarre this all is. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the Sabres are the first team in NHL history to lead the overall standings 25 games into a season after finishing with the worst record in the previous season.

And forget about a double-digit run. Buffalo had not even won as many as four in a row since 2014 until that streak began.

But now things will be different. There will be expectations, both from the fans and from within the locker room. And the Sabres will be circled on opponents' schedules now.

The rest of the season begins Friday night in Sunrise against the Florida Panthers.

"That's just the way it is," Reinhart said. "When you go on a streak like that, teams are going to take notice and be ready for you."

The streak got so much attention but don't forget the big picture that there's still 56 games to play. Think of one of Van Miller's favorite catch phrases on the radio calls during the Bills' Super Bowl years.

Remember "Fasten your seat belts"?

It's appropriate. This has been a wild ride already. And there's so much season left.

Sabres' winning streak is over as Buffalo falls to Tampa

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA — The Buffalo Sabres' historic win streak is over.

Despite rallying twice to tie the score and taking the lead with Tage Thompson's goal 2:29 into the third period, the Sabres had their run halted at 10 games with a 5-4 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning at Amalie Arena Thursday night.

A win would have given the Sabres, now 17-7-2 with 36 points, their first 11-game win streak in franchise history and kept them atop the Atlantic Division. They had previously won 10 in a row only twice. Instead, they lost in regulation for the first time since a 3-1 defeat against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden on Nov. 4. Buffalo had also won five consecutive road games and had not lost this season when scoring first.

The Lightning, 18-7-1 and now in first place with 37 points, rallied in the third period with goals by Steven Stamkos and Cedric Paquette, whose wrist shot at 14:19 gave Tampa Bay the lead and prevented the Sabres from mounting their sixth third-period comeback of the season.

Dan Girardi, Alex Killorn and Nikita Kucherov also scored for the Lightning. That spoiled a night in which the Sabres nearly overcame the loss of defenseman Jake McCabe to injury.

Sam Reinhart scored twice, including the tying goal 5:39 into the second period to make it 3-3, and Jack Eichel had two assists. Zemgus Girgenson also scored the tying goal 8:42 into the first period to even the score at 1-1. Carter Hutton made 32 saves, snapping his own eight-game winning streak.

The Sabres' first rally came in the first period after Girardi scored 2:59 into the game on a rebound in front of Hutton. Buffalo scored twice in a 63-second span, beginning with Girgenson's deflection of a Rasmus Ristolainen slap shot. Reinhart gave the Sabres a one-goal lead with an awkward shot that went off Louis Domingue's glove and in the net.

Killorn capitalized on another rebound in front of Hutton with a tying goal 10:28 into the first and Tampa Bay took the lead again with Kucherov's wrist on an odd-man rush. Despite being outshot 24-12 through two periods, the Sabres went into the second intermission with the score tied, 3-3, after Eichel's backhanded shot went off Reinhart's skate and in the net.

Thompson then gave them the lead with his shot from the right circle, a play that began with a remarkable drop pass by Casey Mittelstadt. However, Stamkos scored on a one-timer seven seconds into a power play to tie the score and Tampa Bay took the lead for good on Paquette's goal with 5:41 remaining.

One shot: Buffalo center Johan Larsson was assessed a double-minor for a high stick on Tampa Bay center J.T. Miller at 11:45 into the second period. Despite playing without Larsson, one of their best penalty-killers, the Sabres allowed only one shot on goal during the four-minute penalty. By killing off the penalty, Buffalo had allowed only three power play goals in its past 33 penalties.

McCabe down: McCabe left the game late in the first period and was on the bench at the start of the second but walked back to the locker room after helping kill a penalty. With Nathan Beaulieu serving a 10-minute misconduct, the Sabres had to play with only four defensemen for almost half the second period.

Furious first: The Lightning outplayed the Sabres for the first 10 minutes of regulation and broke the scoreless tie when Girardi was left alone in front of the net to capitalize on a rebound as Hutton lost his stick. Buffalo responded with two unanswered goals, including the go-ahead shot by Reinhart off Eichel's faceoff win, but Tampa Bay tied it 43 seconds later with Alex Killorn's rebound goal.

The two teams combined for three goals in 2:43, and the Lightning outshot the Sabres, 16-7, through the first 20 minutes.

Rookie frustrations: Dahlin wasn't pleased with his play in the first period. He slammed the bench door following a shift. The rookie defenseman was partly responsible for the Lightning's go-ahead goal 15:55 into the first. Dahlin pinched too far into the offensive zone to join the rush, and defenseman Erik Cernak's outlet pass started a 3-on-1 rush.

Kucherov's wrist shot went past Hutton and under the crossbar for the 3-2 lead.

Tensions spike: Eichel drew the ire of Lightning players after hitting defenseman Ryan McDonagh from behind five seconds into a Sabres power play during the first period. Ristolainen came to Eichel's defense, fending off Lightning players trying to punch the Sabres captain.

McDonagh was slow to leave the ice, leaving Tampa Bay temporarily with only four defenseman. Girardi was helped off the ice earlier in the first when he took a hip check from Thompson at center ice but returned following McDonagh's injury.

Eichel's hit upset Stamkos. To try to calm both sides, officials spoke to both players after the penalty was served. It didn't work. The first period was filled with late checks and altercations after the whistle. Finally, it boiled over at the end of the first, when Zach Bogosian checked Ryan Callahan in what appeared to be retaliation for an earlier hit on Mittelstadt.

Bogosian and Paquette threw punches at each other. Beaulieu and Callahan exchanged punches. In the end, Bogosian was given a two-minute minor for cross-checking and Beaulieu was assessed a 10-minute misconduct for fighting. No Tampa Bay players were penalized.

Ugly start: Tampa Bay outshot Buffalo, 8-1, during the first eight minutes, as the Sabres struggled to clear the puck from their defensive zone. Hutton helped by stopping two quality scoring chances for the Lightning, a pad save on Yanni Gourde's rebound shot and a glove save on a wrist shot from high in the slot.

Next: The Sabres will not hold a morning skate ahead of the Friday's 7 p.m. puck drop against the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center in Sunrise, Fla. The Panthers, 9-10-4 and at the bottom of the Atlantic Division with 22 points, were idle Thursday after losing to the Anaheim Ducks, 3-2, Wednesday.

Sabres fall short of making history, win streak halted at 10 with loss to Tampa Bay

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA — The mood in the Buffalo Sabres' locker room wasn't somber, even though they fell short of making history Thursday night at Amalie Arena.

With a 5-4 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning, the Sabres were unable to achieve the first 11-game win streak in franchise history. They allowed two unanswered goals in the third period after regaining the lead and twice coming back to tie the game against one of the Eastern Conference's best. The result dropped them out of first place in the Atlantic Division, tied with the Toronto Maple Leafs and one point behind the Lightning.

The 60 minutes of hockey played in front of a sold-out crowd powerfully illustrated the impact of the Sabres' unprecedented run. The Lightning were desperate to put an end to the streak and again assert themselves as one of the league's best. While Buffalo played seven overtime or shootout games during its third 10-game streak in franchise history, its players still had the energy and talent to trade scoring chances with Tampa Bay.

Players expressed pride afterward. After all, in addition to captivating a long-suffering fan base, the streak showed the Sabres, 17-7-2 with 36 points, they are capable of beating anyone, no matter the circumstances.

"I think for one it shows us we can win every night we go out there," Jack Eichel, who assisted on both Sam Reinhart goals, said. "I think that should be our mindset no matter what. We're going out there to play against the best team in the league at home, whatever it may be. We should expect to win every night we go on the ice. I think that's kind of the confidence you build through a winning streak like that."

During the win streak, the Sabres played seven overtime or shootout games and this loss was their eighth game in the past two weeks. They've already made six third-period comebacks, matching the total from all of last season, and had won five consecutive divisional games.

That grueling schedule also included six games in nine nights against some of the league's best and was taxing on the Sabres' health. They were without defenseman Marco Scandella, winger Conor Sheary and center Patrik Berglund Thursday night. A 10-minute misconduct penalty to Nathan Beaulieu and an injury to Jake McCabe forced them to play with only four defensemen for almost 10 minutes in the second period.

Yet, Buffalo was only 17 minutes away from becoming one of only 26 teams in NHL history to win 11 or more consecutive games. The league took notice, if Tuesday night was any indication.

Tampa Bay, 18-7-1, dominated the first eight minutes of the game and scored 2:59 in when defenseman Dan Girardi capitalized on a rebound in front of Carter Hutton, who lost his stick moments earlier. Buffalo responded with another remarkable comeback. Zemgus Girgensons redirected Rasmus Ristolainen's slap shot past Louis Domingue to tie the score 8:42 into the first period, and Reinhart gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead with his shot off a pass from Eichel 63 seconds later.

"We're going to have to expect that we're going to get every team we get, their best game," coach Phil Housley said. "This is a very, very good team. They were ready. We knew that. I think we just didn't execute well. I give our guys credit."

Another rebound led to Tampa Bay's tying goal on an Alex Killorn shot, and the Lightning took a 3-2 lead 15:55 into the first with Nikita Kucherov's wrist shot on a 3-on-1 odd-man rush. This was playoff hockey in November. Tensions escalated in the first period when Eichel hit defenseman Ryan McDonagh from behind, leading to a two-minute boarding penalty.

The officials spoke to Eichel and Lightning captain Steven Stamkos to try to calm both sides. The emotion boiled over at the end of the first with a scuffle behind the net. While punches were thrown by both sides, defenseman Zach Bogosian was assessed a two-minute penalty for cross-checking and Beaulieu was given a misconduct

penalty. To make matters worse, McCabe had left with an undisclosed injury moments earlier and was on the ice for only one shift in the second period.

"That's one of the best teams on home ice for a reason," Eichel said. "They start fast. They always seem to hit you with a lot of pressure in the first period. I thought it was good we were able to get a few back.

Despite playing with only four defensemen and having to kill Johan Larsson's double minor for high sticking, the Sabres went into the second intermission with the score tied, 3-3, and took the lead 2:29 into the third with Tage Thompson's shot from the right circle. Buffalo was 10-0-2 in one-goal games this season and the third period had often been its best.

That wasn't the case against Tampa Bay. Larsson was called for another penalty 4:05 into the third, and Stamkos tied the score seven seconds later with a one-timer power-play goal from the left circle. The Lightning then capitalized after a flurry of chances in the Sabres' zone, taking the lead with 5:41 remaining on Cedric Paquette's wrist shot from high in the slot.

Hutton made 32 saves and the Sabres were able to kill four penalties, however, they made too many mistakes against a team that will stand between them and a division title.

"We gave ourselves a chance to win, but we know we've got more and know we need to be better," Reinhart said.

Lightning veterans impressed by Sabres' streak

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA -- There has been a lot of winning hockey played in these parts the last few years but the Tampa Bay Lightning have never won 10 games in a row in their history.

The Bolts won a Stanley Cup in 2004, got to the Cup final in 2015 (losing to Chicago) and also advanced to the East final in 2011, 2016 and 2018. But in none of those seasons did they ever carry the kind of winning streak the Buffalo Sabres brought to Amalie Arena on Thursday night.

"It's very difficult in today's game with the parity in this league to have a streak like that," Tampa Bay captain Steven Stamkos said after his team's morning skate. "When things are going right like they are for them, you just have that mentality every night you're going to find a way to win. They're playing with confidence in situations where maybe in the past for them, it didn't go their way.

"They have a really good team and when you're feeling like that, it's easy to stay on that train and keep pushing. It's a big challenge for us."

Entering the game, the Sabres led the Lightning by one point in the battle for first place in the Atlantic Division and first place in the NHL's overall standing. That was noted in the Tampa Bay dressing room.

"They're one point ahead of us in the standings. They're in our way for No. 1," said Victor Hedman, the reigning Norris Trophy winner as the NHL's best defenseman. "So we have to make sure that we have a good game tonight. They're finding different ways to win. It's a good team with great additions in the summer. The core players are getting better. We're excited to get a shot at them."

Stamkos has said several times over the last couple years he could see Buffalo as an emerging team in the Atlantic Division and it appears his words are finally coming to fruition. The Sabres, according to Stamkos, are finding the belief winning teams must have.

"It plays a huge part, just like losing and having that snowball effect that way," Stamkos said. "We have that belief we can go out every night and win, which is what they're showing right now. Whether you play great or not, sometimes your goaltender or special teams steal one for you. You find ways to win instead of finding ways to lose."

Sabres Notebook: Hunwick thankful to join teammates on ice for first time

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA — A new acquisition showed up for the Buffalo Sabres at Thursday's morning skate in Amalie Arena but the trade wasn't just announced. It actually happened in June.

Veteran defenseman Matt Hunwick was also a part of the deal that saw the Sabres acquire forward Conor Sheary from the Pittsburgh Penguins for a conditional 2019 fourth-round draft pick, but had yet to skate with his teammates due to a summer training injury.

After working out for the last month, Hunwick took the next step in his return-to-play progression by joining his new team on the ice for the first time.

"It's a little weird to kind of start the season in November, almost December now," Hunwick said prior to the game against the Tampa Bay Lightning. "I felt like I had a great summer and then to have an injury come up late in the summer ... Especially being part of a new organization, you want to be able to come in and put your best foot forward and it's kind of been a slow process. I'm thankful to be back on the ice with the group."

Hunwick said he suffered the unspecified neck injury doing off-ice training and initially expected to be ready for training camp. Things took a turn for the worse and he said there was some initial "haziness" about whether he could play this season.

But several weeks of rest allowed him to heal and no surgery was needed. His return is now simply a matter of when and not if, although it's likely the Sabres will first send him to Rochester to get in a few games of rehab work.

"I think today with a morning skate was a first step. I'm not sure how long it's going to take," he said. "It's going to depend upon how my body responds and how quickly I pick up the pace of play. It's not easy jumping into the middle of the season, especially after taking so much time off. We'll see how acclimated I can get up to speed."

Hunwick, 33, has played 521 NHL games for five teams. He had four goals and six assists in 42 games last year for Pittsburgh, his only season with the Penguins. He has an annual cap hit of \$2.25 million on a contract that runs through next season.

"I'm sure he's glad to get out of the house," said coach Phil Housley. "It's been a long time since he's been on a road trip. It's good to have him around the guys and make him feel part of the team."

Hunwick was a seventh-round draft pick out of the University of Michigan by Boston in 2004 and debuted with the Bruins during the 2007-08 season. His best year there was 2009-10, when he played 76 games in the regular season and all 13 in the playoffs that included a six-game win over the Sabres in the first round.

Hunwick's only other NHL season of more than 70 games was in 2016-17, when he played 72 for Toronto (1-18-19). He said he was excited to learn of the trade to Buffalo.

"I think I was looking for a fresh start and a new opportunity," he said. "I was part of a young team when I went to Toronto and you see how fast that has turned around. With the start we've had this year, I think it's been very similar so I'm real happy to be a Buffalo Sabre."

Hunwick skated with rookie Lawrence Pilut on an extra defense pair. Pilut is on the trip as insurance in case there's another injury on the blue line. Marco Scandella missed his second straight game with an undisclosed injury and the Sabres are thus using all six of their healthy defensemen.

Sheary also missed his second straight game with an upper-body injury.

Housley said both Sheary and Scandella remain day to day, although it would seem unlikely either would play Friday night at Florida because they did not practice with the team on Wednesday or take a morning skate Thursday. The Sabres will not have a pregame skate Friday, with the game against the Panthers on a back-to-back.

Thursday's game marked the 100th all-time matchup between Buffalo and Tampa Bay, and the Sabres entered the contest with a 55-36-8 advantage.

Thursday was also the 25th anniversary of Dominik Hasek's first shutout with the Sabres, a 3-0 win over Toronto in Maple Leaf Gardens on Nov. 29, 1993. The Hall of Famer stopped 24 shots for the first of his franchise-record 55 shutouts with Buffalo. He got offensive support on goals from Wayne Presley, Craig Simpson and Alexander Mogilny.

Five Things to Know as Sabres go for franchise record in Tampa

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA – Welcome to the Quest for 11.

It takes place Thursday night in Amalie Arena as the Buffalo Sabres take on the Tampa Bay Lightning, looking to extend their winning streak to heights it has never reached in their history. The game is at 7:30 p.m. on MSG and WGR Radio.

The Sabres have won 10 straight for the third time since they were born in 1970 but will need to beat one of the favorites in the Eastern Conference to get to 11. Still, Buffalo has won three of its last four meetings with the Lightning – after a stretch that saw them go 1-11-1 against Tampa Bay.

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

1. Lineup news: The injured Conor Sheary and Marco Scandella remain out and the Sabres will make no lineup changes from the group that beat San Jose in overtime Tuesday. The Lightning will get back rugged forward Ondrej Palat, who has missed 16 games with a foot injury. Palat, who has no goals in nine games this year, has averaged 17 goals over the last five seasons.

2. In the nets: Just like his team, Carter Hutton is streaking too, winning his last eight starts while posting a .936 save percentage and 1.97 goals-against average. Hutton has 12 wins on the season, one shy of NHL leaders Marc-Andre Fleury (Vegas) and Frederik Andersen (Toronto).

"He's just a cool customer and he's such a great teammate," said coach Phil Housley. "He really cares about the team. Even when he's not in the lineup, he's trying to get guys revved up. That says a lot about him and his character. I'm really excited for him. He's really taken ownership of this opportunity that has been given to him. He's provided us some solid goaltending."

With Andrei Vasilevskiy sidelined by a broken foot, the Lightning are again going to Louis Domingue in net. He's 8-4-0, 3.19/.903 and gave up a weak five-hole goal to Kyle Okposo in the teams' first meeting, a 2-1 Sabres win Nov. 13 in KeyBank Center.

3. What's at stake: There have been 25 winning streaks of 11 games or more in NHL history. No NHL team has won at least 11 in a row since Columbus (16) and Minnesota (12) hit that figure during the 2016-17 season; the Wild's streak ended during a head-to-head matchup with the Blue Jackets, who were at 14 at the time.

"We're not playing for a streak. We're playing for another two points and that's where our mindset has to be, not anywhere else," winger Sam Reinhart said after the morning skate. "It hasn't been that difficult to not focus on everything else. We're well aware we haven't done anything yet. But our belief grows and our mindset remains on one day at a time. And tonight, we've got one of the best teams in the league to face."

4. Captain Jack's pregame thoughts: What does Jack Eichel think about the Sabres' 10-game run? Losing is no longer a disease here and winning is a mentality that can develop. Going 7-0 in overtime/shootout decisions during the streak proves that.

"Through a streak like this, you can learn a lot," Eichel said. "For one, I think we've learned we can win every game that we play if we give ourselves a chance and play the right way. That's a pretty big characteristic of a winning team. If they don't play well or have their best game, they still try to find a way to get a point or win a game in extra time and we've done that through this stretch."

5. Numbers and history: The Sabres are 12-0-2 when scoring first this season, 10-0-2 when leading after the first period and 8-0-1 when leading after two. ... With a win or overtime loss tonight, the Sabres would have points in 11 straight games for the first time since Dec. 26 to Jan. 18, 2010 (8-0-3). ... Buffalo is seeking its first six-game road winning streak in the same season since the team won its first 10 road games of the 2006-07 season. ...

This is the 100th game all-time between Buffalo and Tampa Bay and the Sabres have a 55-36-8 series record. ... Thursday is the 25th anniversary of Dominik Hasek's first shutout with the Sabres, a 3-0 win over Toronto in Maple Leaf Gardens that saw him stop 24 shots.

Hunwick makes appearance at Sabres morning skate; Sheary, Scandella remain out

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2018

TAMPA – The injured Conor Sheary and Marco Scandella will stay out of the Buffalo Sabres' lineup as the Blue and Gold goes for its 11th straight win Thursday night against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

But the biggest surprise in Amalie Arena was the first appearance of the season from veteran defenseman Matt Hunwick, who was acquired from Pittsburgh along with Sheary in June – but has not been seen on the ice due to a neck injury.

Hunwick, 33, skated on an extra defense pair with rookie Lawrence Pilut, who is up from Rochester to provide depth in case there's another injury on the blueline. Pilut is not expected to play tonight.

Patrik Berglund, who has been on injured reserve with an upper-body injury, was also on the ice.

The Sabres' line rushes indicate they are making no lineup changes today from the group that beat San Jose in overtime Tuesday night to get to 10. Carter Hutton is expected to start in goal.

The Sabres record tying winning streak ends at 10

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 30, 2018

Tampa, FL (WGR 550) - The streak ended on Thursday, but the Sabres went down fighting. Both teams played an entertaining game, but the Sabres couldn't break their team record by getting their 11th straight win.

Buffalo had a good push in the third period and took the lead on a Tage Thompson goal, but the Lightning finally got a power play goal followed by a goal where Carter Hutton was screened by Jason Pominville to win it.

The atmosphere in that building was like a playoff game. The fans from Buffalo were loud chanting "Let's go Buffalo" and singing the Shout song after Buffalo went up 4-3. The Sabres left that building knowing they left everything on the ice and served notice to the Lightning that they've arrived.

It didn't help that Jake McCabe only played 7:30 due to an undisclosed injury. The team really missed his play. Nate Beaulieu got a 10-minute misconduct forcing Rasmus Ristolainen to play 28:52, Rasmus Dahlin to play 25:51 and Zach Bogosian to play 25:05. Between that and having to kill five penalties, it's a big reason why the Sabres only generated 12 shots in the first 40 minutes.

The Sabres and Lightning played an exciting first period. Tampa Bay had the first eight shots of the period before taking a 1-0 lead at 2:59. Dan Girardi was allowed to come in from the right point and get two whacks at the puck because Remi Elie never got there.

The Sabres put two goals together in 1:03 when Zemgus Girgensons tipped in Ramus Ristolainen shot. It was a great screen in front by Girgensons who said he didn't know it hit him.

Sam Reinhart was the beneficiary of good work by Jack Eichel and Bogosian to score his fourth. The puck popped up on Louis Domingue and rolled down his arm and in.

Casey Mittelstadt was weak on J.T. Miller cutting to the net and the Lightning tied it and then Dahlin had a horrible read not realizing all three forwards were in deep and stepping up. Nikita Kucherov led a 3-on-1 and he won't miss very often on that.

Eichel sent a puck to the crease and banked it in off of Reinhart to tie the game once again. The Sabres only had 12 shots against a shaky goalie after two periods because they spent too much time in the penalty box.

In the third, Tage Thompson and Steven Stamkos traded goals just about two minutes apart.

Now that it's over, let's take a look at how the 10-game record tying winning streak came about.

If it wasn't for the Rangers Henrik Lundqvist, the Sabres would already had a team record 12-game winning streak heading into the game against the Lightning.

Lundqvist stood on his head beating the Sabres 2-1 at Madison Square Garden. The game before that, the Sabres blasted Ottawa 9-2.

Buffalo went to Montreal on Nov. 8 and won Game 1 of the streak in a track meet over Montreal. Former Sabre Nick Deslauriers scored a shorthanded goal on Linus Ullmark just before the second period ended to give the Canadiens a 5-4 lead.

Hutton started the third period and Jeff Skinner tied the game sending things into overtime. Hutton only faced five shots in his 21:38 of work to earn the win thanks to a Ristolainen goal.

Win No. 2 came at home against Vancouver. The Canucks led 3-1 in the third period and it was a very unexciting affair. Late in the third period, Phil Housley pulled his goalie and Skinner scored at 17:33 and Sam Reinhart tied it at 18:13.

Casey Mittelstadt's slick shootout goal won it for the blue and gold.

In win No. 3, the Sabres got out played by the Lightning, but Hutton stole them the win. Skinner and Kyle Okposo staked the Sabres to a 2-0 lead against Louis Domingue. Anthony Cirelli was the only one that could beat Hutton who made 29 saves. Nikita Kucherov hit the outside of the post just as time was running out, but Hutton was over there with his glove had the puck been on net.

Buffalo took to the road to play three good teams with the first contest in Winnipeg. The Jets again had all sorts of trouble solving Hutton after scoring on him once in the first period. Skinner tied the game on a power play goal early in the third and this time, it was Conor Sheary winning the game in a shootout.

The next night in Minnesota, Linus Ullmark gave up two week early goals and Minnesota had a 2-0 lead. Ullmark slammed the door after that stopping the Wild at every turn. Ullmark finished with 37 saves.

Buffalo got goals from Jake McCabe and Rasmus Dahlin to tie it and Jason Pominville's backhand beat his former team with just 1:30 left to go.

Buffalo had to travel to Pittsburgh next and was down 4-1 in the second period. As you know, this team never panics and they didn't that night either. Bogosian and Casey Nelson hit the back of the net before the period was over and Mittelstadt tied it at the 11:12 mark of the third period.

Jack Eichel came in over the blue line in overtime and fired a shot through goaltender Casey DeSmith and Buffalo had win No. 6.

The fans were primed and ready to welcome home their heroes and the Philadelphia Flyers were totally overmatched. The fans blew the roof off the place as Skinner, Thompson, Evan Rodrigues and Johan Larsson staked Buffalo to a 4-1 lead after 20 minutes. All the Sabres had to do was cruise the game into the garage for a 5-2 victory.

Montreal is the only team the Sabres have beaten twice in the streak. The Habs came to town and took a 2-1 lead in the third period, but the magic was still there as Skinner tied it with 2:26 left and won it with an overtime power play goal.

Win No. 9 came in Detroit with the Sabres blowing a 2-1 lead on a Anthony Mantha goal at 13:52 of the third period, but Ullmark was once again on top of his game stopping six of seven attempts in the shootout as well as 35 pucks in regulation. Reinhart's backhand deke won the shootout.

The Sabres tied the record at home against San Jose blowing a 2-0 lead only to have Skinner once again win it in overtime.

During the 10-game streak, Jack Eichel and Jeff Skinner both had 11 points. Skinner had 10 goals and one assist while Eichel had one goal and 10 assists.

Sam Reinhart had seven assists and nine points, while Rasmus Dahlin had a goal and eight assists for nine points and was plus-9. Rasmus Ristolainen notched eight points while Kyle Okposo had seven points and was plus-10.

In goal, Hutton was 8-0-0 with a 1.97 goals against and .936 save percentage. Ullmark was 2-0-0 with a 3.28 goals against and .917 save percentage.

Last season I think the Sabres might have lost that game 7-2, but now despite mistakes, they stayed in it the whole way

The Sabres look to set the franchise record with an 11th straight win

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 29, 2018

Tampa, FL (WGR 550) - The Sabres get a chance to set a franchise record with a victory in Tampa Bay tonight. Buffalo is looking for its 11th straight win, but Jake McCabe isn't getting too giddy about it, "I'm going to be cautiously optimistic about it, I think it has been a lot of fun, but we're only 25 games into the year. If you talk to me at the end of the year when we actually have done something, then I'll say yes, but winning 10 games in a row is great, but teams have been in this spot before and have had tough stretches, so until we get to the end of the year and hopefully do something special here, then it'll be up there, but it's definitely the most fun I've had playing hockey in a while."

The Sabres lead the league with a .720 points percentage. Tampa Bay is second at .700.

The Sabres have won just three of their last 10 in Tampa. If you flip it, the Lightning are 7-1-1 in their last nine at home against the Sabres.

Buffalo has won its last five road games and are 8-4-1 away from the arena. Jeff Skinner said, "You try to keep it simple on the road, you don't want to get too fancy, especially early on and eliminate momentum swings in their favor."

"We've been getting some big saves, especially on the road that has kept us in games and allowed us to weather those kinds of storms on the road and then we get back to playing our games," McCabe said.

The Sabres beat the Lightning in Game 3 of the streak 2-1 at the arena. Buffalo got out shot 30-19 in that game, but Hutton was spectacular according to McCabe, "We rely a lot on our goaltenders. Linus and Hutts have been great for us making a lot of key saves in key moments of the game and stealing games for us like that Tampa game. He made a lot of big saves after big saves and tonight we don't want to give up that much action, but there are going to be times where we're going to have to weather their storm and bend but not break."

Hutton gets the start in goal. He's 8-0-0 in the streak with a 1.97 goals against and .936 save percentage.

Buffalo has killed 41-of-46 penalties in the last 17 games. That has the Sabres 8th in league penalty killing. They'll be facing the 6th best power play in the NHL.

Rasmus Dahlin has been awarded an assist on Jeff Skinner's overtime goal over San Jose. That gives the rookie points in four straight games and six of the last seven.

Marco Scandella and Conor Sheary didn't skate and will not play. Phil Housley did not rule them out for Friday in Florida.

Patrik Berglund is back skating with the team and Matt Hunwick joined his teammates on the ice for the first time. He injured his neck working out before training camp started. There's no timetable for when either player could return.

Tampa Bay has had to deal with an injury to star goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy putting Louis Domingue in between the pipes. Dominique is 5-3-0 in that time with a 2.90 goals against and .912 save percentage.

Other injuries for Tampa Bay include Ondrej Palat and Anton Stralman.

Second leading scorer Brayden Point has goals in three straight games. Point has nine goals in seven games.

Steven Stamkos is pointless in four out of five games and has just one goal in his last nine games.

Nikita Kucherov leads the Lightning in scoring with 33 points in 25 games. The winger has 15 points in his last seven games.

Join Schopp and the Bulldog for the pregame at 6:30 when they'll have Phil Housley, Jeff Skinner and Jake McCabe.

Brian Koziol will have an interview with Matt Hunwick in the first intermission.

A postseason feel in November: Lightning give Sabres a taste of a big-time atmosphere

By John Vogl

The Athletic

November 30, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — Kyle Okposo and Nathan Beaulieu know what it's like in Tampa Bay at playoff time. Now the rest of the Sabres do, too.

"I've played these guys in playoffs a couple times, and it felt just like it," Beaulieu said after Thursday's slugfest. "That was playoff hockey."

"Yup, sure was," Okposo added. "It was fun. Fun to play in. For a lot of this group, first taste of it, and that was a playoff game."

It was the first taste of it for 15 of Buffalo's 20 players. Beaulieu and the Montreal Canadiens faced the Lightning in 2014 and 2015, while Okposo and the New York Islanders met Tampa in 2016. Jason Pominville, Vladimir Sobotka and Carter Hutton have made the postseason, too, but no one else in the lineup had ever lived hockey drama at its highest.

Until Buffalo's streak-ending, 5-4 loss Thursday night.

The schedule says it was merely the 26th game of the season, a weeknight in late November instead of a seven-game series in April. But with Buffalo playing for a franchise win record and Tampa trying to reclaim first place in the Atlantic Division, it was a chance for the Sabres to show something to themselves and the rest of the NHL.

They did so even with a loss.

"That was a hell of a game," Beaulieu said. "If you're a fan, that was a hell of a hockey game to watch."

There was a big-game feel from the outset. Before 20 seconds had elapsed, there were dueling chants of "Let's go, Lightning" and "Let's go, Buffalo." There were five goals and three lead changes during the first period, which ended with a fight at the buzzer.

The teams swapped leads two more times, with Tampa scoring the game-winner with 5:21 to play. Cedric Paquette's goal ended the Sabres' winning streak at 10, keeping them in a tie for the franchise record, but the players may have learned more from one intense loss than three weeks of victories.

"You can say a lot about our group and kind of how we've grown," Okposo said. "Tonight was no different."

They learned how to punch and counterpunch against a contender with a crowd roaring for each big moment.

"There was a ton of swings in that game," Tampa coach Jon Cooper said. "I'm pretty sure if you're a fan of hockey and were in the building tonight, you would have enjoyed that."

The Lightning certainly enjoyed the start. They scored less than three minutes in while taking the first eight shots.

"They just thought that they were going to run us out of the building," Okposo said.

"That team, they've got a lot of swagger," Beaulieu said. "They have been tops in the league the last three, four years, and we haven't. So there's definitely that mindset, but I thought we had a great pushback."

Buffalo answered with a 2-1 lead in the first and a 4-3 lead in the third, showing it's no longer the team that disappears when adversity shows up. They're going to have to keep proving it now that opponents know they're in for a fight.

"They're going to be ready for us," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "They're going to look at the record (17-7-2). They're going to look at the streak we had being a top team right now, and they're going to be ready to play.

"We've got to take that into consideration, but I think it's a great challenge, you know? They should embrace that and look forward to teams giving them their best game."

While the Sabres showed fight, it certainly wasn't their best game. They were outshot 25-12 through two periods, a combination of killing four penalties and failing to generate pressure.

"I don't think we created enough to win the game," said two-time scorer Sam Reinhart. "They created a lot more chances."

The team defense collapsed too often. Tampa scored on a three-on-one, hit the post on a two-on-one and missed a wide-open opportunity on the power play. The Lightning finished with a 37-22 shot lead, including 12-2 in high-danger areas, taking advantage of a Buffalo defense that lost Jake McCabe to an injury that will be evaluated Friday.

"We just gave too much, especially off the rush," Housley said. "Our checking has been pretty good, and credit them because they attacked the game as good as we've seen in a long time."

But with three minutes gone in the third period, Buffalo was not only withstanding the attack but leading. Tage Thompson scored for the fourth time in six games, the start of a fantastic finish for the line of Thompson, Okposo and Casey Mittelstadt.

"Tage gets a huge goal there, and that seemed to really spark us," Okposo said. "We had some opportunities all night. Those two guys are just going to get better. I really like the makeup of it, and I like the way we're going."

The Sabres' penalty killers finally cracked against Steven Stamkos on Tampa's fifth opportunity, and Paquette cleaned up a sloppy sequence late for the win.

"We had a one-goal lead in the third period," Housley said. "We just didn't find a way to seal it off."

Normally, that would be a huge disappointment. And there was some of that following the game. But there was also a sense of pride at how much this team has learned through 10 games of winning and one game of losing.

"All good things have to come to an end," Beaulieu said. "There's no good way to lose, but I thought we played well. They just put one more past us.

"But we brought it again tonight. Our team seems to just be sticking games out. It's never fun to lose, but there's a lot of positives we can take out of tonight."

"You just tip your cap to them," Okposo said. "They played well, and so did we. I'm proud of the way we played. I'm proud of the way we stuck with it. We never quit. We never changed the way that we played. They had a lot of chances, but we never stopped playing.

"I wish we had those guys again."

Alas, that's not how it works in the regular season. But it is like that in the playoffs, and Buffalo enjoyed its first taste of a postseason atmosphere.

5 Observations: Streak snapped, Lightning strike Sabres 5-4

By Matt Bove

WKBW

November 29, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - All good things must come to an end. For the first time since Nov 4, the Buffalo Sabres surrendered two points, snapping their 10 game win streak with a 5-4 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning. Sam Reinhart scored twice while Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson added goals for the Sabres, who fall to 17-7-2 with the loss.

5 observations from Thursday's loss:

Streak Snapped

"Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened" - Dr. Seuss

Yeah, that's probably a little dramatic but it seems like it works. Sure, Sabres fans will be upset the blue and gold couldn't set a new franchise record with 11 straight wins. But in the last three weeks, the love affair with the Sabres in Western New York has been reignited. Sabres games are now must-see TV and ticket prices are no longer cheaper than the beers inside KeyBank Center.

To say 10 consecutive wins is impressive would be the ultimate understatement. Regardless of the outcome Thursday, the Sabres deserve a ton of credit for their recent success.

Minus McCabe

After joining his teammates on the ice at the start of the second period, Jake McCabe went back to the locker room and never returned. The team officially announced he'd miss the rest of the game at the start of the third period.

At this point, your guess is as good as mine when it comes to the severity of McCabe's injury. But with Marco Scandella already sidelined [day-to-day upper body injury] the Sabres may need to turn to Lawrence Pilut for their game against the Florida Panthers on Friday.

McCabe has been one of the most important players on the Sabres roster so far this season. If he misses any significant amount of time the Sabres will have to do some scrambling and whoever steps into the lineup will have big shoes to fill.

Humble Pie

It's the perfect time of year to have some pie. Some of you may prefer apple, others pumpkin, but right now I'm cutting up a big slice of humble pie.

Two weeks ago I was pretty adamant that Tage Thompson should have been sent to Rochester. Rather than packing his bags and heading down I-90, Thompson has tallied five points in the last six games and has been a big [literally] part of the Sabres success.

On Thursday he picked up his fourth goal of the season, converting on a wrist-shot in the final period to briefly give the Sabres the lead. Thompson has been playing with confidence and using his size to cause headaches for opponents. His reach can't be taught and his release is elite. Thompson's recent emergence is significant and if he's starting to look like the most significant return in the Ryan O'Reilly trade from July.

Class of the East

For my money, the Tampa Bay Lightning are the top dogs in the Eastern Conference and perhaps the NHL. They are loaded up front with Steven Stamkos and Nitika Kucherov while having arguably the best defender in hockey

with Victor Hedman. These two teams won't play again until January 12 in Buffalo and then again on February 21 in Tampa Bay.

By then, I'm anticipating the Lightning will have separated themselves from the rest of the pack in East. It'll be interesting to see how far behind [or ahead] the Sabres will be for their third and fourth meetings of the year. If nothing else, Thursday should be used as a reminder that despite their massive improvements this season, there are still areas where the Sabres need to be better.

Rivalry brewing?

Thursday's matchup in Tampa Bay got pretty testy. It all started with a boarding penalty halfway through the first frame when Jack Eichel pushed Ryan McDonagh from behind into the boards. Tampa Bay immediately went after Eichel as both teams started pushing and shoving until they were eventually separated.

But wait, there's more! In the final seconds of the first period, Zach Bogosian and Nathan Beaulieu starting chucking knuckles and a big scuffle ensued. From that moment on, the two teams went at it for the rest of the night.

Perhaps this is the first chapter in a new Atlantic Division rivalry? If that's the case, we're going to be in for some fun games for years to come.

Sabres Streak Snapped at 10

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

November 29, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WVIB) - The Buffalo Sabres were going for a franchise record 11 game win streak, but the Tampa Bay Lightning would snap the Sabres scoring stretch 5-4.

Sam Reinhart led Buffalo with two goals on the night.

Zemgus Girgensons opened up the scoring for the Sabres in the first period to tie the game, after Tampa's Dan Girardi beat Carter Hutton. Reinhart's first goal gave Buffalo a 2-1 lead, but less than a minute later Alex Killorn would find the back of the net to tie the game up at two. Tampa added a third goal late in the period, and the Sabres would head into the first intermission trailing 3-2.

Reinhart was the only player to score in the second period, as Buffalo would once again tie things up to make it a 3-3 game.

Just under three minutes into the third period, Tage Thompson would show off his stick skills with a stellar toe-drag that put Buffalo in front 4-3.

Tampa would go on the power play just over two minutes later, and Steven Stamkos would rifle a shot to tie the game once again. With just under six minutes to play, Cedric Paquette would score a one-timer from a feed to put the Lightning out in front for good.

Carter Hutton stopped 32 shots for Buffalo. The Sabres continue their road trip Friday night against the Panthers.

Sabres winning streak ends at 10 in loss to Lightning

By Corey Long

NHL.com

November 29, 2018

TAMPA -- The Buffalo Sabres had their 10-game winning streak end in a 5-4 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning at Amalie Arena on Thursday.

Cedric Paquette scored off a drop pass from Mikhail Sergachev on the rush to give the Lightning a 5-4 lead with 5:41 remaining in the third period.

It was the fifth lead change of the game.

"It's a great feeling to see that shot go in against a team like that," Paquette said. "It was a playoff atmosphere. They were playing hard, they won 10 straight, and we really wanted the challenge."

Dan Girardi, Alex Killorn, Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos scored for the Lightning (18-7-1), who have won four of five games and moved past the Sabres (17-7-2) for first place in the Atlantic Division. Louis Domingue made 18 saves.

Sam Reinhart scored two goals for the Sabres, who lost for the first time since Nov. 4. Carter Hutton made 32 saves.

"I thought it was a great stretch by us, 10 games in a row is pretty good," said Buffalo captain Jack Eichel, who had two assists. "It shows us we can win every night we go out there, and that should be our mindset."

Tage Thompson gave the Sabres a 4-3 lead at 2:29 of the third period with a shot that beat Domingue to the far post.

Stamkos tied it 4-4 at 4:12 on the power play on a one-timer off a pass from Victor Hedman.

"Our penalty kill was solid, great double-minor penalty kill in the second," Buffalo coach Phil Housley said, referring to the high-sticking call against Johan Larsson at 11:45. "But when you get into those penalty situations, it disrupts our bench and the flow of our lines."

The Sabres and Lightning combined for five goals in the first period.

Girardi gave Tampa Bay a 1-0 lead at 2:59 when he followed up his own shot after Killorn set up him up in the low slot.

"I thought it was a really good first period, really physical and in each other's faces," Girardi said. "On the goal, somehow I got down there and no one covers me. [Killorn] made a great play and gave me a good look."

Zemgus Girgensons tied it 1-1 at 8:42 when he tipped a Rasmus Ristolainen shot.

Reinhart gave Buffalo a 2-1 lead at 9:45 with a shot that bounced off Domingue's shoulder.

"When you go on a streak like that, teams are going to take notice and be ready for you and they certainly were tonight," Reinhart said. "We have another opportunity, another crack at it to get two more points tomorrow."

Killorn tied it 2-2 at 10:28 when he put in the rebound of a J.T. Miller shot.

"Both teams coughed up leads," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "There were a ton of swings in this game, and I'm pretty sure if you're a fan of hockey and in the building tonight, you enjoyed this game."

Kucherov put the Lightning ahead 3-2 at 15:55 when he shot into the left corner from the slot on a rush. He has 17 points (three goals, 14 assists) during an eight-game point streak.

"It was a 3-on-1, and I decided to shoot the puck," Kucherov said. "That's it."

Reinhart scored his second goal of the game to tie it 3-3 at 5:39 of the second period when Eichel's shot deflected off his skate.

Lightning defenseman Ryan McDonagh left the game at 11:50 of the first period after he was checked from behind into the end boards by Eichel, who received a minor penalty for boarding. Cooper said there would be an update on McDonagh's injury Friday.

They said it

"That game could have gone either way. I wish we had those guys again, but we don't. It's an emotional game, but we have to make sure we're ready for tomorrow too." -- Sabres forward Kyle Okposo

"It was great to see [Cedric Paquette] get that winner. I thought he had an outstanding game tonight. That line was great, and they got rewarded for it in the end." -- Lightning coach Jon Cooper on the line of Paquette, Ondrej Palat and Ryan Callahan

Need to know

Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe left the game with an undisclosed injury at 5:13 of the second period. Housley said he would have an update Friday. ... Sabres defenseman Nathan Beaulieu, playing his 300th NHL game, was assessed a 10-minute misconduct penalty at the end of the first period. ...Kucherov had 23 points (five goals, 18 assists) in 15 games in November. ... Sabres forward Jeff Skinner's five-game point streak ended. ... Eichel has 11 points (one goal, 10 assists) in the past eight games. ...Lightning center Brayden Point, who set up Kucherov's goal, has seven points (four goals, three assists) in his four-game point streak. ... Hutton won his previous eight games (seven starts).

Sabres at Lightning preview

By Corey Long

NHL.com

November 29, 2018

The Game

The Buffalo Sabres will try to win their 11th straight game for the longest winning streak in their history when they visit the Tampa Bay Lightning at Amalie Arena on Thursday.

The Sabres have won 10 consecutive games, matching streaks from Jan. 4-23, 1984, and Oct. 4-26, 2006.

Carter Hutton will attempt to win his ninth straight game, which would tie the second-longest streak by a goalie in Buffalo history (Gerry Desjardins, 1976-77). Martin Biron won 11 consecutive games from Nov. 23-Dec. 17, 2005.

Hutton is 8-0-0 with a 1.97 goals-against average and .936 save percentage in his past eight games (seven starts).

Forward Ondrej Palat will return to the Lightning lineup after missing 16 games with a lower-body injury. Goalie Louis Domingue will make his ninth start in a row for Tampa Bay, 5-2-0 in its past seven games.

Players to watch

Sabres forward Jeff Skinner has six points (five goals, one assist) in a five-game point streak and 15 points (13 goals, two assists) in his past 13 games.

Lightning center Brayden Point has six points (four goals, two assists) in a three-game goal and point streak and 13 points (nine goals, four assists) in his past seven games.

They said it

"It's another game but obviously it's against a top team in the League so it's going to be a good challenge. You use this game as a good test, especially on the road. You give this team too much time, too much space and they will hurt you." -- Sabres forward Jeff Skinner

"Right now they are one point ahead of us in the standings and they are in our way for No. 1, so we have to make sure we have a good game tonight." -- Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman

Sabres projected lineup

Jeff Skinner -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart

Tage Thompson -- Casey Mittelstadt -- Kyle Okposo

Evan Rodrigues -- Vladimir Sobotka -- Jason Pominville

Remi Elie -- Johan Larsson -- Zemgus Girgensons

Jake McCabe -- Rasmus Ristolainen

Rasmus Dahlin -- Zach Bogosian

Nathan Beaulieu -- Casey Nelson

Carter Hutton

Linus Ullmark

Scratched: Lawrence Pilut, Matt Hunwick

Injured: Scott Wilson (ankle), Patrik Berglund (upper body), Conor Sheary (upper body), Marco Scandella (undisclosed)

Lightning projected lineup

Yanni Gourde -- Steven Stamkos -- Mathieu Joseph

Tyler Johnson -- Brayden Point -- Nikita Kucherov

Alex Killorn -- Anthony Cirelli -- J.T. Miller

Ondrej Palat -- Cedric Paquette -- Ryan Callahan

Victor Hedman -- Dan Girardi

Ryan McDonagh -- Erik Cernak

Braydon Coburn -- Mikhail Sergachev

Louis Domingue

Connor Ingram

Scratched: Slater Koekkoek, Danick Martel

Injured: Anton Stralman (upper body), Adam Erne (illness), Andrei Vasilevskiy (left foot fracture)

Status report

Hunwick, who has not played this season because of a neck injury, returned to the ice for the first time and skated in an extra group with Pilut. ... Gourde skated with the first power-play unit and Miller moved to the second group. ... Stralman will be re-evaluated in a week and could miss significant time.

Stat pack

Eichel has nine points (one goal, eight assists) in his past seven games. ... Kucherov has 15 points (two goals, 13 assists) in a seven-game point streak.

Buffalo fans have endured pain, crave a winner. Are the Sabres the team they've been waiting for?

By Kevin Allen

USA TODAY

November 29, 2018

Dave Hassett owns the T-shirt company Born in Buffalo and one of his leading sellers is a shirt that reads "1 B4 I Die."

"Because every Buffalo person has thought, 'Just one -- give me one championship before I die,'" Hassett said. "We've sold that shirt to people in every country in the world."

The Sabres have the NHL's best record (17-6-2) and take a 10-game winning streak into tonight's road game against the Tampa Bay Lightning (17-7-1).

Fans truly don't know what to make of this success.

"I think we are at 'Prove that you can keep it up,'" said Buffalo fan Tom O'Connor, 28. "I think we are sold on the talent."

The sports misery index for Buffalo fans has long been off the charts. The Sabres have never won a Stanley Cup and the Bills have never won a Super Bowl.

The Bills, who are on the road to missing the playoffs for the 18th time in 19 seasons, lost four consecutive Super Bowls under coach Marv Levy from 1990-93.

The Sabres last reached the Stanley Cup Final in 1999 and lost to the Dallas Stars on a controversial goal by Brett Hull, whose foot was in the crease. There's a T-shirt for that event as well: It shows a skate in a crease, with the words "Brett Hull is a cheater."

"Hull is the No. 1 purchaser of that shirt," Hassett said. "When you win a Stanley Cup, everything is hilarious. He has probably bought 75 of those shirts over the years to give as gifts."

It has been difficult for Buffalo fans to keep the faith. O'Connor, 28, owned tickets for 12 seasons and gave them up after last season. He sat in the arena's highest row, in the least expensive seat, and estimates he spent \$20,000 to watch a team that has missed the playoffs for seven consecutive seasons.

"To see it fail time and time again led to the ultimate frustration," O'Connor said. "I felt like my hand was forced and I couldn't continue to spend that kind of money to watch that product on the ice."

This team has potential. Center Jack Eichel was selected No. 2 in the 2015 NHL draft and defenseman Rasmus Dahlin was taken No. 1 last June. But few expected this team to come together this quickly.

"We knew we had more depth and we addressed our speed element," Buffalo coach Phil Housley told USA Today Sports. "Give our leadership group full credit for having hard conversations in the summer and getting things out of the table. We realized we had to change. There were tough conversations."

Although the Sabres' younger players -- Eichel, Dahlin, Casey Mittelstadt, Tage Thompson and Sam Reinhart -- are fueling hope for long-term consistency, the additions of established players such as Jeff Skinner, Carter Hutton and Jason Pominville have played a significant role in the turnaround. This team has not had a winning record since 2010-11.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill changed 10 defensemen and forwards entering this season, and added Hutton to play in net. Skinner is leading the team with 19 goals in 25 games.

"When you look at Buffalo the last two years, even strength scoring hasn't been good enough," Botterill said. "We looked at different options, but we thought that was one of his (Skinner's) strengths."

The Sabres love Skinner's practice habits. "We are a young team and we need guys to come in and teach guys how to be professional," Botterill said.

The Sabres' offense ranks 16th (3.04 goals per game), but it's their defensive play and 2.72 goals-against average that is making a difference.

Nashville Predators broadcaster Pete Weber lived 20 years in Buffalo and understands what a title would mean to the city.

"This is the Sabres team they've been waiting for, and painfully so," Weber said.

He recalls seeing bumper stickers in Buffalo that read: "Go Sabres and take the Bills with you."

Hassett is 48, meaning he's been alive as long as the Sabres franchise. He remembers a time when he didn't have a car or job, but had Sabres season tickets.

When the Sabres marched to the Stanley Cup Final in 1999, he almost cleaned out a wedding fund he built with his fiancée to purchase tickets. "With her blessing," he said.

Hassett said the last five or six years of games was like attending a funeral. "You wouldn't even hear boos. You wouldn't hear anything," Hassett said. "At the end of the last year, I said it again: 'I can't keep coming down here and sitting like a pallbearer for this team.'"

It's different now. There's a buzz about these Sabres, who have come from behind six times during this streak.

"If you watched the last five games, you could see that the fans have really been craving this," said Housley, who also played for the Sabres from 1982-90. "I give them credit because they have stuck with us through thick and thin, especially last year. It's great to see excitement back in Buffalo."

But some will hold back out of fear their heart will once again be broken.

"Let's see where they are in February," one fan sitting near Hassett said last game.

"There's always going to be that guy or woman," Hassett said. "They aren't going to put their heart all the way in. Because how much more can their heart take?"

Bolts end Sabres' 10-game winning streak

TSN

November 29, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — The Buffalo Sabres came up just short of a history-making run.

Cedric Paquette broke a tie with 5:41 left and the Tampa Bay Lightning ended the Sabres' franchise-record-tying winning streak at 10 games with a 5-4 victory Thursday night.

"I thought it was great stretch by us, 10 games in a row," Buffalo star Jack Eichel said. "It shows us we can win every night we go out there, and I think that should be our mindset no matter what. That's the confidence you build through a winning streak like that."

Paquette beat Carter Hutton, who had won his previous eight starts, from the top of the left circle.

Ten of the Sabres' last 11 games have decided by one goal, including seven that needed extra time.

Buffalo also had 10 consecutive victories in January 1984 and October 2006.

Dan Girardi, Alex Killorn, Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos also scored for the Lightning, and Luis Domingue made 18 saves.

"I thought there was a lot of momentum in that game," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "Both teams coughed up leads. There was a ton of swings in that game. I'm pretty sure if you're a fan of hockey and were in the building tonight you would have enjoyed that one."

The Lightning took over the top spot in the Eastern Conference and hold a one-point advantage over the Sabres and Toronto.

"It was kind of a playoff atmosphere," Girardi said.

Sam Reinhart had two goals for Buffalo, and Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson also scored. Hutton stopped 32 shots.

After the Sabres took a 4-3 lead on Thompson's goal at 2:29 of the third, Stamkos tied it 1:49 later on a power play.

"It definitely would have been nice to pull this out," Girgensons said.

Buffalo pulled even at 3 when Eichel's pass from the left wing boards into slot went off Reinhart's skate at 5:39 of the second.

Eichel had two assists, giving him 25 this season.

Kucherov put the Lightning up 3-2 from the slot during a 3-on-1 with 4:05 left in the first. The right wing also had an assist, and has an eight-game point streak (three goals, 17 points). He set career high for points in a single month with 23.

After Girardi opened the scoring, Girgensons and Reinhart scored 63 seconds apart midway through the first. Killorn knotted it at 2-all just 43 seconds after Reinhart's goal.

Girardi couldn't put any weight on his right leg after a collision with Thompson five minutes into the game but returned 10 minute later.

"I got pretty lucky," Girardi said. "My knee really hurt but just a little bump. The pain went away."

Tampa Bay defenceman Ryan McDonagh went to the locker room at 11:50 of the first after being hit at the end boards by Eichel, who received a two-minute boarding penalty.

Cooper had no postgame update on McDonagh, whose status will be evaluated Friday.

Sabres defenceman Jake McCabe departed in the second with an undisclosed injury.

NOTES: Sabres LW Jeff Skinner had a four-game goal streak end. He had one shot on goal. ... Lightning LW Ondrej Palat (foot) returned after missing 16 games. ... Tampa Bay D Anton Stralman (upper body) sat out his 10th consecutive game and will be re-evaluated next week.... Sabres D Marco Scandella (undisclosed) and LW Conor Sheary (upper body) were both out of the lineup but could play this week. Buffalo D Matt Hunwick (neck) has resumed practicing with the team.

UP NEXT

Sabres: At Florida on Friday night.

Lightning: At Florida on Saturday night to start a three-game trip.

Lightning-Sabres: How Buffalo went from bottom-feeder to contender

By Nick Kelly

Tampa Bay Times

November 29, 2018

TAMPA — Most who looked at the Nov. 29 game at Amalie Arena on the schedule before the NHL season would not have labeled it as a premier matchup.

It wasn't hard to find power rankings that put the Lightning in the top five, but not the Buffalo Sabres. After all, the Sabres team that finished last in the NHL last season with 62 points. The next closest team in points — Ottawa — finished with 67. Nowhere near the Lightning's 113 points.

Yet somehow, Thursday night's game featured two of the NHL's top teams. Coming into the game, the Lightning held the No. 4 spot with 35 points while the Sabres held the No. 1 spot with 36 points.

A mix of personnel changes, more experience and a confident defensive core have made the ascension — and 10-game win streak prior to Thursday — possible. It took a stellar game from the Lightning to snap that streak with a 5-4 victory Thursday.

"Tip your cap to (Buffalo general manager) Jason Botterill for bringing the guys in, and (coach) Phil (Housley) has got them playing as a unit," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "It's not been fun for the Atlantic Division, but it has sure been fun for the city of Buffalo."

One major addition: left wing Jeff Skinner. Acquired via trade from the Hurricanes this offseason, Skinner scored 10 goals over Buffalo's 10-game winning streak. His 19 goals prior to Thursday were tied for the NHL lead. He was pointless against the Lightning.

Skinner is a far cry from his slow start. He didn't score his first goal until Buffalo's fifth game.

"I think those four games as a team we didn't play how we wanted to," Skinner said. "Since then, we have started to get to where we want to be."

Ask captain Jack Eichel and he will point to the first couple of weeks of the season as the foundation that built the hot streak in November. Buffalo's blowout losses at San Jose and Vegas forced the team to come together, Eichel said.

"I thought it was good to have a trip like that where you are away as a team for a while," Eichel said. "We all got to know each other. But other than that, I just think that guys come to the rink every day with a good attitude and want to work and just want to be around each other. It's been real contagious."

That description fits goaltender Carter Hutton better than most in the Sabres locker room. Housley said Hutton has been a great teammate.

"He cares so much about the team," Housley said. "Even when he's not in the lineup, he is trying to get a lot of guys revved up."

And when he is in the lineup, his play accomplishes the same. Hutton, who the Sabres signed this offseason, came into Thursday on an eight-game win streak. Even in the loss Thursday, Hutton stopped 32 of 37 shots faced.

"He's been exceptional," Cooper said before the game.

The word exceptional fits Buffalo's November. It remains to be seen whether the Sabres can maintain this pace and become a playoff team. But not even two months into the season, Buffalo is already more than halfway to 62 points.

"I just think that the group is all on the same page," Eichel said. "Everyone is pulling the rope in the right direction. When that happens, a lot of good can come from it."

Sabres' win streak comes to an end with hard-fought battle in Tampa

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 29, 2018

TAMPA - In what felt like a heavyweight bout, the Buffalo Sabres and Tampa Bay Lightning traded blows, goals and saves Thursday night.

The Sabres' 10-game winning streak came to an end with a 5-4 loss to their divisional rival at Amalie Arena, but the team certainly didn't go down without a fight.

Cedric Paquette netted the winner with 5:41 left in the third period to put the Lightning ahead both in the game and in the league standings.

Sam Reinhart scored twice for Buffalo while Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson also tallied. Carter Hutton made 32 saves as the Sabres were outshot 37-22 overall.

The Sabres' 10-game streak matched the franchise record set in 1983-84 and matched during the 2006-07 season. They have an opportunity to start another streak tomorrow night against the Florida Panthers.

"It shows us we can win every night we go out there and I think that should be our mindset no matter what," captain Jack Eichel said. "We're going out there to play against the best team in the league at home, whatever it may be. We should expect to win every night we go out on the ice."

"That's kind of the confidence you build through a winning streak like that. We built some camaraderie and some chemistry and I thought, just that never-quit effort. You saw it again tonight. Obviously, we come up short but did a lot of good things."

The 19,092 fans at Amalie Arena were rowdy from start to finish and a mix of "Let's go Buffalo" chants could even be heard as the game progressed.

"You could say a lot about our group and how we've grown. Tonight was no different," alternate captain Kyle Okposo said. "There are some guys that haven't played in games like that and that was as close to a playoff game as you're going to get. I really liked the way that we hung in there and now we just have to make sure that we're moving on to the next game and we come out strong tomorrow."

The atmosphere translated onto the ice where it a chippy, hard-hitting game broke out.

"You could tell on the ice, there was a lot of emotion. It was a tough game. You could tell they wanted it and I thought we answered the call," Eichel said. "But obviously we come up a goal short. It's frustrating. You want to keep winning and it's a little bit of a bummer, but it's a quick turnaround. We're playing another divisional opponent tomorrow and it's a good opportunity for us to go in there and get two points.

The Lightning started the game off strong, outshooting Buffalo 8-0 to start with the eighth shot, off the stick of Dan Girardi, finding the back of the net to open the scoring 2:59 in. The Sabres battled back to take a 2-1 lead thanks to a deflection by Girgensons and Reinhart's first marker. Tampa finished the opening period with a 3-2 lead and a 16-7 edge in shots.

Buffalo went into penalty-kill mode in the second while shorthanded in the personnel department on the bench. With Nathan Beaulieu already in the box for a 10-minute misconduct, the Sabres also lost the services of Jake McCabe early in the period due to injury. Coach Phil Housley said he'd have an update on McCabe's status Friday.

With a nearly all-hands on deck approach, the Sabres successfully killed off a four-minute double minor midway through the period and held the Lightning's power play, one of the deadliest in the NHL, to one goal on five opportunities.

Reinhart tied the game again, redirecting the puck off his skate 5:39 into the second and Thompson gave them the lead 2:29 into the third.

However, the Lightning kept pushing and eventually broke through twice more in the third to earn the victory. Despite a few late pushes and some particularly strong shifts in the offensive zone by the line of Okposo, Thompson and Casey Mittelstadt, Buffalo couldn't get one more puck past goaltender Louis Domingue.

"I'd like us to limit their chances a little bit more, not give them as much, and create more ourselves," Reinhart said.

"...I loved our compete halfway through that period to claw and get our way back in the game. We gave ourselves an opportunity to win. We know we've got more, and we've got to be better."

The Sabres will face the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center on Friday as the three-game road trip continues. Coverage on MSG begins with the GMC Game Night pregame show at 6:30 p.m. Faceoff is slated for just after 7 on MSG and WGR 550.

Bryson shouldering more responsibility at Providence

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 29, 2018

Jacob Bryson has his sights set on Buffalo, in more ways than one.

Long-term, the Buffalo Sabres' fourth-round pick in 2017 projects to be a promising prospect on the backend. In the short term, the junior defenseman at Providence College believes his team can win a national championship at the Frozen Four in Buffalo this spring.

The Friars came within a game of reaching the semifinal round last season, falling 2-1 in a quarterfinal matchup with Notre Dame. Bryson remembers the scene in the dressing room afterward.

"I know how everyone felt in the room, especially the seniors that are leaving," he said by phone Thursday. "You kind of see the expression on their face and learn that, as you get older and go through years of college, you don't want to be in that same situation.

"... I think a lot of the juniors, sophomores and freshmen from last year really felt that. I think this year with the team we have, we're definitely capable of not only making it to the Frozen Four but winning a national championship. That would be such an amazing feeling."

Frozen Four tickets on sale now

If the Friars do reach the pinnacle of college hockey, Bryson will have something to do with it. He was approached midway through his sophomore season by his coach, Nate Leaman, about serving as an alternate captain. This year he's been elevated to co-captain with junior forward (and Penguins prospect) Kasper Bjorkqvist.

Leaman says that Bryson's play was the driving force behind his co-captaincy - he scored 25 points (4+21) and was named a second-team All-American - but so were his actions off the ice. The Providence coach said Bryson's leadership qualities were apparent even going back to the recruitment process.

"My first impression of him was, he's a Friar," Leaman said. "Really, that's what you're looking for when you meet kids the first time. Are they going to fit in with our culture? Are they one of you?"

"When I first met him, I was really impressed with the family values. I was really impressed by everyone involved on his trip, meeting his parents also. We knew he was a ballplayer, but we really were just checking out what type of kid he was. He checked all the boxes."

With the leadership role comes added on-ice responsibility. Bryson has 14 points in 13 games, tied for ninth among NCAA defensemen. He's the sort of puck-moving defenseman that the Sabres have emphasized bringing into the organization in recent years, a potential fit one day in Phil Housley's system.

But for all Bryson's offensive contributions, Leaman is quick to emphasize the other areas of the game in which he excels: breakouts, gapping, playing in his own zone. The next step in his development, according to his coach: "Being the best player in all the big games, every night."

"We play him in every situation, period," Leaman said.

Leaman pointed to a series with UMass in early November as evidence of Bryson's ability in that regard. The defenseman scored a goal and two assists in those games, a pair of one-goal losses. Leaman thought he was the best player on the ice in both instances.

"He holds me accountable for kind of playing on the power play and the penalty kill, things like that, in all those situations," Bryson said. "I think that's an honor as well. I like to be put out there in situations where he can trust me. It's been good. I've added more aspects to my game playing different positions and I think with the trust from Coach Leaman, it's been good so far."

Sabres can set franchise record for most consecutive wins tonight

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 29, 2018

TAMPA - It's been a wild ride for the Buffalo Sabres this month. A win tonight would give the Sabres 11 straight victories for the first time in franchise history.

Since their 10-game winning streak began on Nov. 8, 18 different players have recorded points and 17 have scored. Jeff Skinner (10+1) and captain Jack Eichel (1+10) lead the way over that stretch.

"You go down the list, everyone that's come into the room has contributed in one way or another. I'd say that's probably the biggest part of our success, is everyone's contributing," alternate captain Zach Bogosian said. "First line all the way down to fourth line, first D pairing all the way down to the third, and whatever goalie's playing has been keeping us in every game and has been closing out games for us. It's been fun."

With 36 points, they're currently tied for first place in the NHL with Toronto, but have a game in hand on the Maple Leafs. They'll go up against a Tampa Bay Lightning team tonight that's just one point behind.

A win tonight would top the franchise record for most consecutive wins, set in January 1984 and tied during October 2006.

Faceoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. from Amalie Arena with the GMC Game Night pregame show on MSG kicking off our coverage at 7 p.m. Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will have the call after the opening faceoff on MSG and WGR 550.

"You obviously have to believe in yourself and believe in team. Through a win streak like this, you can learn a lot," Eichel said. "For one, I think we've learned that we can win every game we play in if we give ourselves a chance and play the right way."

"That's a pretty big characteristic of a winning team. If they don't play well, if maybe they don't have their best game, they still find a way to get a point or win a game in extra time. I think we've done that through this stretch and it's so important. In an 82-game season, you're not going to play your best every night and if you're able to try and hang around the game, it's real important."

Through it all, Buffalo has found different ways to win. They've come from behind, they've weathered the opposition's rallies, they've won in overtime and in the shootout.

In fact, nine of the 10 wins have been by one goal, and seven have been decided in overtime or the shootout. According to NHL.com, the only other team in NHL history to have as many one-goal victories as part of a winning streak of at least 10 games was the Pittsburgh Penguins, who won nine one-goal games during a 15-game run from March 2-30, 2013.

"We're not playing for a streak, we're playing for another two points tonight, and that's where our mindset is - not anywhere else," forward Sam Reinhart said. "It hasn't been that difficult to not focus on anything else. We haven't really done anything yet and we're well aware of that, but as that belief grows, our mindset is to take it one day at a time. And today, we've got [a game against] one of the best teams in the league."

The Lightning are 17-7-1 on the season with 35 points. They're coming off a 3-1 loss to Anaheim on Tuesday.

"We're looking forward to playing a great team," Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman said. "They're one point ahead of us in the standings and they're in our way for No. 1 so we've got to make sure we have a good game tonight."

Ondrej Palat, who has missed 16 games due to a lower-body injury, is expected to return to the lineup for Tampa. Louis Domingue will start in net as Andrei Vasilevskiy is out with a broken foot.

The Sabres defeated the Lightning 2-1 back on Nov. 13, which accounted for Win No. 3 of the streak.

"It's going to be a terrific challenge for us. Obviously, we know we've played some good hockey, but that's a good hockey team over there," coach Phil Housley said. "They're really going to challenge us for 60 minutes. The thing that I look at in Tampa Bay, they work extremely hard, especially without the puck. We have to play to our identity tonight for 60 minutes."

Projected lineup

Conor Sheary and Marco Scandella, who both missed Buffalo's last game, will be out again tonight. Housley said they could be available for tomorrow night's match against the Panthers.

Carter Hutton will be the starting goalie.

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

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 4 Zach Bogosian
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 8 Casey Nelson

40 Carter Hutton
35 Linus Ullmark

Hunwick skates with team for 1st time

Defenseman Matt Hunwick was on the ice for the morning skate, taking line rushes with Lawrence Pilut. Hunwick, who was acquired with Sheary in a trade with Pittsburgh over the summer, has been out with a neck injury since the start of training camp.

He's been looking forward to a fresh start in Buffalo and has had to wait to really assimilate himself with his new teammates.

"It's a little weird to start the season in November, almost December now," he said. "I felt like I had a great summer, then to have an injury come up late in the summer and not being able to participate, especially being a part of a new organization, you want to come in and put your best forward. It's been a slow process, but I'm thankful to be back on the ice with the group."

He sustained the injury while training over the summer and the timetable for his return is still indefinite.

Housley anticipates Hunwick being able to return to game action at some point this season. Getting back on the ice with his teammates is another good step in the recovery process.

"I think it's great. Obviously, it's been a tough year for him, but he's finally getting back to skating with us and progressing," Housley said. "I'm sure he's glad to get out of the house. It's probably been a long time since he's been on a road trip. But it's good to have him around the guys and making him feel part of the team."