



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*January 12, 2018*

## **The Wraparound: Hurricanes 4, Sabres 3**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — After seven straight losses, the Buffalo Sabres finally solved the riddle of the Florida Panthers last week with a victory in KeyBank Center. The Sabres now have to unlock a similar key to beating the Carolina Hurricanes.

It's seven losses and counting for Buffalo against the Hurricanes, who scored three goals in the second period and held on for a 4-3 win Friday night that spoiled Jeff Skinner's homecoming to PNC Arena.

Sebastian Aho scored twice for Carolina, which got three goals that deflected past Sabres goalie Carter Hutton off Buffalo defensemen. The Sabres are 0-5-2 against the Canes since last beating them on March 22, 2016.

Playing his first game in Carolina after being traded by the Hurricanes to Buffalo in August, Skinner became the Sabres' first 30-goal scorer in seven years with a power-play tally late in the first period. But that was one of the few highlights for the Sabres (23-15-6), who have now gone nearly a month without winning two in a row.

The Sabres are 4-6-2 in their last 12 games and things are really spiraling on the road — where they have lost four straight and are 1-6-2 on their last nine. After starting the year 8-4-1 away from KeyBank Center, Buffalo's road record is now 9-10-3.

Weird Bounce I: Michael Ferland gave Carolina a 1-0 lead at 10:25 of the first period when Marco Scandella knocked a puck out of midair into his own net. Ferland's shot was flubbed by Hutton's glove, floated in the air and landed on top of the net before bouncing off. Scandella was trying to sweep it away but missed his swipe and knocked the puck in.

Spirit of 30: Skinner became Buffalo's first 30-goal man since Jason Pominville in 2011-12, and was the sixth-fastest in team history to 30. He was the fastest (44 games) since Pat LaFontaine did it in 42 games in 1993.

Quick strikes: Justin Williams beat Hutton bar down at 4:30 of the second, Pominville tied the game at 2-2 with a one-timed slapshot at 5:00 and Aho put Carolina back in front, 3-2, at 5:42. That was three goals in 72 seconds.

Weird Bounce II: The Aho goal came on a backhand from behind the goal line that deflected off Dahlin's left skate and got past Hutton.

Pommer Power: Pominville's goal was his 10th in the season and first in 18 games — since he scored the game winner in the final two minutes Nov. 17 at Minnesota.

Weird Bounce III: Aho got another lucky bounce for his second of the game at 12:27 of the middle period. With Hutton scrambling in the crease trying to find the puck, Aho's pass to the front went off Jake McCabe's stick and through Hutton's legs.

Weird Bounce IV: Kyle Okposo got the Sabres within a goal with 3:12 left by sending the puck in front — and having it bounce home off Carolina defenseman Saku Mäenalanen.

Up Next: It's a quick turnaround for the Sabres, who flew home and will host the league-leading Tampa Bay Lightning Saturday night at 7 in KeyBank Center. Tampa Bay is a white-hot 17-1-1 in its last 19 games and beat Carolina, 3-1, on Thursday night. That will be the Sabres' last home game until Feb. 1. The next five games will be on the road, three before the All-Star break in Western Canada.

## **Sabres lose but All-Star nod, 30th goal makes Skinner's night finer in Carolina**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — It was a whirlwind of a day for Jeff Skinner in the old homestead.

Swarmed by media in the morning, Skinner got the word he was an All-Star for the second time in his career in the afternoon. Then, under the bright lights Friday night in PNC Arena, Skinner got an ultra-warm welcome from Carolina fans he played in front of for eight seasons and became a 30-goal scorer for the fourth time in his career.

"It's a little different, exciting but it's a big game for us too," Skinner said prior to the Buffalo Sabres' 4-3 loss to the Hurricanes. "There's a lot of stuff that goes through your head when you look back on my whole time here. I have nothing but great memories here and good friendships. I'm excited to see a lot of guys. The fans treated me exceptionally well and I had a great time playing here."

Skinner played 539 games for the Canes after getting drafted seventh overall in 2010. He won the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year in 2011 after a 31-goal season and had a trio of 30-goal campaigns in Carolina. He finished with 204 goals and 379 points in 579 games.

At the first TV timeout, the Canes showed a video presentation on their jumbotron with highlights of Skinner's career in red and black and some of his moments interacting with fans and children in the community. One clip had him wearing a penguin suit while he was visiting a hospital.

Skinner was circling in front of the Buffalo bench during the video and was smiling as he took several peeks up at the board. By the time the video ended, most of the fans were on their feet cheering and a smiling Skinner waved to the crowd to salute them back.

"It was cool. Obviously a lot of memories come back when you watch it," Skinner said. "It was nice, a good feeling. It sort of summarizes my time here, the way I feel. I had a good time as a player here and as part of the community."

The fans were cheering for an all-star, as Skinner won the Atlantic Division "Last Men In" vote announced by the NHL Friday and will join Jack Eichel at the game Jan. 26 in San Jose. Also chosen were Pittsburgh's Kris Letang (Metropolitan Division), Colorado's Gabriel Landeskog (Central) and Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl (Pacific).

The Sabres will thus have multiple representatives for the first time since Daniel Briere, Ryan Miller and Brian Campbell suited up for the Eastern Conference in Dallas in 2007. Lindy Ruff was the East's coach in that game. It will be Skinner's second all-star appearance and his first was in 2011, when it was hosted by the Hurricanes.

"Obviously getting in a little bit of a different way, it's pretty cool to share it with the fans and my teammates," Skinner said. "You're not going to have a good season unless your teammates are playing well. That's the cool part. ... My family was thinking about it more than me. It just shows the passion and how much the fans love the Sabres. It's a pretty cool feeling."

"It's going to be a blast having him there," said Eichel, who had no points in his return to the lineup after missing three games with an upper-body injury. "I'm really excited to be there with him. For him to come in here and get the standing ovation from the fans and all the support and love, it was great. He's such a good dude and we're really happy for him."

Skinner said he's quickly learned about Buffalo as a hockey market during his 4 1/2 months in the city.

"When you're a visiting team member, you get a snapshot," he said. "Once you get into a city, become part of a community and are walking around every day seeing how much they love sports there, how much they love the Sabres, how much they love the Bills, it's definitely something I didn't really grasp fully until I moved to Buffalo. It's pretty special to be part of that."

Skinner joined the 30-goal club for the fourth time in his career on a power-play tally with 20.7 seconds left in the first period, as he batted a Rasmus Dahlin rebound out of midair past Carolina goalie Curtis McElhinney. Skinner became Buffalo's first 30-goal man since Jason Pominville in 2012.

"It's nice to contribute and get an early PP one there, maybe jump start the PP," Skinner said of a Buffalo unit that was 1 for 4 in the game and is 2 for 14 in the last six. "We can kind of build off that and keep working for the next one."

Skinner is heading into unrestricted free agency and contract talks are expected to open soon between Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill and Skinner's representatives from Newport Sports. With Skinner on a 55-goal pace, it's reasonable to think he's looking at a contract north of \$8 million per season on a long-term extension.

Skinner joined Washington's Alex Ovechkin (32) as the NHL's only 30-goal scorers to date. Skinner's pace would leave him with the most by a Sabre since Alexander Mogilny's 76-goal season in 1992-93.

"It's tough to foresee something like that. A lot of things have to go right," Skinner said. "You have to have an opportunity. Your team has to be playing well, your line has to be playing well. Fortunately for me I've been on the right end of some plays."

Skinner said he was aware of the "Skinner for Mayor" signs that were tweeted recently from the One Buffalo account run by Pegula Sports and Entertainment. The site created a [Jeffskinnerformayor.com](http://Jeffskinnerformayor.com) URL that directly linked to the NHL's fan voting site.

"That's another thing my family and friends picked up on and showed me," he said. "I'm not sure I'm qualified but it's pretty funny."

## **Sabres Notebook: Lightning surging through standings**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Buffalo Sabres had a late-night flight home. And who was in Buffalo waiting for them to play Saturday night in KeyBank Center?

The hottest team in the NHL. Maybe the hottest team in a decade or more. Maybe a team that could be the best in the regular season of all-time.

The Tampa Bay Lightning head into Saturday night's game with a 34-8-2 record and entered Friday with a remarkable 10-point lead over Calgary in the Presidents' Trophy standings. The Bolts are 17-1-1 in their last 19 games, a stretch that started with their 5-4 win over the Sabres on Nov. 29 in Amalie Arena.

That victory, of course, ended Buffalo's 10-game winning streak and moved the Lightning one point ahead of the Sabres in the standings. How much have things changed since then? Tampa Bay entered Friday 18 points ahead of Buffalo.

Tampa Bay is on pace for a 130-point season, which would be two shy of the NHL record of 132 set by the 1976-77 Montreal Canadiens. The Lightning are on pace for 63 wins, which would break the league mark of 62 set by Detroit during a 131-point season in 1995-96.

The Bolts lead the league in wins, points (70), regulation/OT wins (31), points percentage (.795), goals (180), goals per game (4.09), goal differential (plus-58), power-play percentage (30.0), home wins (19, on a 19-4 record), home points (38), home goals (101), home goal differential (plus-42) and home points percentage (.826). Whew.

The Tampa Bay power play is actually better on the road, connecting at 34.3 percent (Pittsburgh leads at 34.6 percent).

Individual numbers are equally astounding.

Winger Nikita Kucherov has roared into the NHL lead in both assists (51) and points (72). The Lightning went 13-0-1 in December and Kucherov averaged 2.15 points per game with nine goals and 30 points in the 14 games. Kucherov has eight goals and 19 points in 20 career games against Buffalo.

Center Brayden Point leads the team with 28 goals, four off the NHL lead, and entered Friday tied for sixth in scoring with 60 points. Steven Stamkos is having another big year with 23 goals and 49 points.

The Sabres have had some success against Tampa in recent games, going 3-2 in the last five and splitting two meetings this year. Buffalo's 2-1 home victory on Nov. 13 was win No. 3 in its big streak. Prior to those five games, the Sabres had been just 1-11-1 against Tampa Bay.

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To activate Jack Eichel off injured reserve Friday, the Sabres returned winger C.J. Smith to Rochester. Smith played four games and recorded one point, getting his first NHL goal in Tuesday's win over New Jersey.

Smith made his season debut on New Year's Eve against the New York Islanders, collecting three shots on goal. Coach Phil Housley said he liked Smith's game Jan. 3 against Florida but that the 24-year-old took a step back in last Saturday's 2-1 loss in Boston, like most of the team did.

"I liked his last game against Jersey. That's the way he's got to play moving forward," Housley said. "Just using his feet, creating. He has a knack of finding the open man in the offensive zone and just getting to the net."

Smith has 13 goals and 29 points in 33 games for the Amerks this season. He leads Rochester forwards in goals and points.

## **Skinner on All-Star vote: ' It just shows the passion and how much the fans love the Sabres'**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. — Jeff Skinner thanks you.

The Buffalo Sabres' winger has had a sensational season but he knows his second trip to the NHL All-Star Game is rooted in the desire of fans to see him in the game, as they made him the winner of the Atlantic Division slot in the league's "Last Men In" vote.

Speaking with The Buffalo News, WGR Radio and Sabres.com late Friday afternoon about 2 1/2 hours before faceoff in PNC Arena, a smiling Skinner said he understood what the second All-Star berth of his career means.

"Obviously getting in a little bit of a different way, it's pretty cool to share it with the fans and my teammates," Skinner said. "You're not going to have a good season unless your teammates are playing well. That's the cool part. ... My family was thinking about it more than me. It just shows the passion and how much the fans love the Sabres. It's a pretty cool feeling."

Skinner said he's quickly learned about Buffalo as a hockey market during his 4 1/2 months in the city.

"When you're a visiting team member, you get a snapshot," he said. "Once you get into a city, become part of a community and are walking around every day seeing how much they love sports there, how much they love the Sabres, how much they love the Bills, it's definitely something I didn't really grasp fully until I moved to Buffalo. It's pretty special to be part of that."

Skinner said it will be an added bonus to go to San Jose with teammate and linemate Jack Eichel. Last year, Eichel's 3-on-3 partners were close friend and Toronto star Auston Matthews, and Florida standout Alexander Barkov. What would Skinner say about replacing Barkov in that role?

"I'll see what the coach says," Skinner said of Tampa Bay's Jon Cooper. "Those two guys can have the puck. I'll just try to get open for them."

"He's playing like he did his rookie year in my opinion," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said two hours before faceoff. "He's going to the net, he's around the puck all the time. Obviously he's having a lot of success. Everything is going in for him. That's the kind of player he can be. Obviously we hope we don't see that tonight."

One other Buffalo nugget: Skinner is aware of the "Skinner for Mayor" signs that were tweeted recently from the One Buffalo account run by Pegula Sports and Entertainment. The site created a [Jeffskinnerformayor.com](http://Jeffskinnerformayor.com) URL that directly linked to the NHL's fan voting site.

"That's another thing my family and friends picked up on and showed me," he said. "I'm not sure I'm qualified but it's pretty funny."

## **Sabres at Hurricanes: Five Things to Know**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. – It's Jeff Skinner Homecoming Night at PNC Arena, also known as the Buffalo Sabres meeting the Carolina Hurricanes for the first time this season.

Most eyes, of course, will be on the return of Skinner to the place where he spent his first eight NHL seasons. The reaction is expected to be strong in his favor as Skinner was one of the Hurricanes' most popular players until his stunning trade to Buffalo on Aug. 2. And Skinner learned a few hours before faceoff that he will be joining Jack Eichel at the All-Star Game in San Jose.

But while Skinner may be the top story to Carolina fans, of bigger importance to the Sabres is the return of Jack Eichel after missing three games with an upper body injury. Eichel will be centering Skinner and Tage Thompson in the 7:30 p.m. game, which can be seen on MSG and heard on WGR Radio.

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

1. The lineup: With Eichel back in the lineup, the Sabres will have to make a roster move to get him off injured reserve. C.J. Smith, who scored his first NHL goal Tuesday in New Jersey, is a healthy scratch tonight and could be headed back to Rochester.
2. In the net: The Sabres are going with Carter Hutton (14-12-3, 2.57/.918) while the Hurricanes are expected to use backup Curtis McElhinney (10-5-1, 2.25/.922) after starter Petr Mrazek played Thursday in Tampa Bay. Hutton is 3-1 vs. Carolina in his career with a 2.06 GAA and .927 save percentage. Meanwhile, McElhinney has struggled against Buffalo while with six previous NHL teams (2-3, 2.98/.911).
3. No. 1 vs. No. 2: This will be the first meeting of the first two picks in last June's draft. Top choice Rasmus Dahlin of the Sabres is tied for third in rookie scoring and leads all first-year defensemen with 21 points. Dahlin's 17 assists are three behind rookie leader Elias Pettersson of Vancouver. Carolina winger Andrei Svechnikov, who went second in the draft, is tied for second among rookies with 11 goals and is seventh in points with 19.
4. Hurricanes blowing strong: Carolina had a five-game winning streak snapped Thursday night at Tampa Bay, suffering a 3-1 loss as the Lightning struck for all of their goals in the final 12 minutes of regulation. The streak, which featured 21 goals in the five victories, came on the heels of a 4-9-2 slide that dropped the Canes from playoff contention. Carolina starts the night seven points behind Buffalo, which holds the East's final wild-card slot. Center Sebastian Aho leads the Hurricanes with 16 goals and 45 points.
5. Around the boards: The Sabres are 0-4-2 in their last six games against Carolina, with the last victory a 3-2 win at PNC Arena on March 22, 2016. The six-game run is the longest current one for the Canes against any opponent ... The Sabres host Tampa Bay Saturday night in KeyBank Center. Buffalo is 4-3-1 in the first game of back-to-back sets and 5-1-2 in the second game. The Sabres have swept three of their previous eight back-to-backs. ... The Buffalo penalty killers are up to fourth in the NHL at 84.1 percent. Carolina's power play is just 22nd at 16.9 percent. ... Carolina captain Justin Williams, a Stanley Cup winner here in 2006 who scored the empty-net goal to clinch Game 7 of the East final against the Sabres, tallied his 300th career goal Thursday night. ... Carolina is wearing its new black alternate jerseys tonight and owns a 5-0-2 record in them this season.

## **Sabres' Skinner wins Last Men In vote, will head to NHL All-Star Game**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, N.C. – It's a big homecoming tonight for Buffalo Sabres winger Jeff Skinner and he will play against the Carolina Hurricanes for the first time on the heels of becoming an All-Star.

Skinner has won the Atlantic Division's Last Men In vote, the NHL announced at noon, and will join Jack Eichel in the All-Star Game Jan. 26 in San Jose. Also chosen were Pittsburgh's Kris Letang (Metropolitan Division), Colorado's Gabriel Landeskog (Central) and Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl (Pacific). The league has not released voting results but said more than 11.5 million votes were cast in the weeklong balloting.

The Sabres will thus have multiple representatives at the All-Star Game for the first time since Daniel Briere, Ryan Miller and Brian Campbell suited up for the Eastern Conference in Dallas in 2007. Lindy Ruff was the East's coach in that game. It will be Skinner's second appearance in the game. His first was in 2011, when it was hosted by the Hurricanes.

Before the voting results were announced, Skinner took part in the Sabres' morning skate in PNC Arena and then met a large group of Carolina reporters welcoming him back for the first time since the Aug. 2 trade to Buffalo.

Skinner was speaking at a backdrop in a hallway near the Buffalo dressing room and the tunnel where the Sabres leave the ice. Several of his Sabres teammates had a good chuckle as they walked by the gathering, with Zach Bogosian breaking up the group by uttering a high-pitched "Welcome home, Jeffrey" as he walked by.

"It's a little different, exciting but it's a big game for us too," Skinner said of returning to the building where he played his first eight NHL seasons. "There's a lot of stuff that goes through your head when you look back on my whole time here. I have nothing but great memories here and good friendships.

"I'm excited to see a lot of guys. The fans treated me exceptionally well and I had a great time playing here. A lot of positive feelings but it will be a little weird, a little different on the visitors side."

Skinner is heading into unrestricted free agency and contract talks are expected to open soon between Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill and Skinner's representatives from Newport Sports. With Skinner on a 55-goal pace, it's reasonable to think he's looking at a contract north of \$8 million per season on a long-term extension.

Skinner has 29 goals, tied for second in the NHL with Toronto's John Tavares and three behind Washington's Alex Ovechkin. His 55-goal pace would leave him with the most by a Sabre since Alexander Mogilny's 76-goal season in 1992-93.

"It's tough to foresee something that. A lot of things have to go right," Skinner said. "You have to have an opportunity. Your team has to be playing well, your line has to be playing well. Fortunately for me I've been on the right end of some plays."

Jeff Skinner using lessons from family, figure skating to succeed with Sabres

Skinner said he's texted with some of his ex-teammates. The Sabres were in town last night but no meeting was possible because the Hurricanes were playing in Tampa, where they suffered a 3-1 loss.

"There's been some texts back and forth, originally to see if they were around," Skinner said. "After that, I guess I'll see them tonight. I'll see them in the corners."

## **The Sabres' Skinner scored in his return to Carolina, but the team lost**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 11, 2019

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) - Things started pretty well for Jeff Skinner in his return to Carolina. Right off the bat he sent a nice pass to a wide open and breaking Jack Eichel, but Eichel couldn't catch the pass or he would've been in alone.

When Skinner was in Carolina, he was severely criticized for his defensive play, but he hustled back as hard as he could to help break up a 3-on-1.

He was quick on the forcheck which produced a turnover. Tage Thompson got a good opportunity out of it on the wrap-around, but Curtis McElhinney made the save.

Trailing 1-0, Buffalo got a power play at 19:31 and just eight seconds later, Rasmus Dahlin put a puck to the crease and Skinner used a baseball move to bunt home his 30th goal to the delight of the fans that cheered for him for many games in Raleigh.

Skinner became the sixth fastest Sabre to reach 30 goals in a season. Pat LaFontaine is on the list twice. Joining him are Alex Mogilny, Rick Martin and Gil Perreault.

In the second period Skinner wasn't as involved as Carolina got three goals. Of the four goals that went in on Carter Hutton, three went in off Sabre defensemen. After the game all the players we spoke with thought they were too loose defensively.

Things really didn't go too well for Thompson playing with Eichel and Skinner. He looked very nervous and it just seemed like the idea was a little too much for him at this point in his career.

After 40 minutes Skinner played 13:55 with two shots. He was minus-2, but he couldn't be blamed on either goal.

In the third period Sam Reinhart was back on the line with Eichel and Skinner.

With the goaltender pulled Skinner chipped another one off McElhinney's shoulder and Buffalo lost by a goal.

Skinner played 21:47 and was minus-2 on the game. He also had four shots.

As expected the Hurricanes ran a very nice tribute video. Skinner had a big smile as he watched the whole thing and then waived to the adoring crowd. Skinner said he very much enjoyed the reception he got, but he obviously wished they would've won.

It doesn't get any easier as Buffalo is home against Tampa Bay on Saturday. The Lightning are 17-1-1 in their last 19 games.

## Hurricanes get the bounces in a 4-3 win over Sabres

WGR 550

January 11, 2019

An evening of bizarre goals and odd bounces ended up in favor of the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday in a 4-3 win over the Sabres. Three Carolina goals went off Buffalo defenseman, including both of Sebastian Aho's two goals on the evening. Aho's first goal deflected off Rasmus Dahlin's skate and between Carter Hutton's pads. Jake McCabe got a piece of Aho's second goal, a wraparound attempt, that went off McCabe's stick.

The oddities started early courtesy of Carolina forward Micheal Ferland's shot from a bad angle. As Carter Hutton went to snare the puck with his glove, it deflected and bounced off the back of the net, behind Hutton and over the goalline. Jeff Skinner, playing in his first game back in Carolina since being dealt to Buffalo over the summer, found the net with his 30th goal of the season. With Saku Mäenalanen in the box for tripping, Skinner tipped home a Rasmus Dahlin rebound at 19:39 of the opening period, tying the game 1-1 heading to the first intermission. Skinner, who was named to the NHL All-Star team earlier in the day as the Atlantic Division's Last Man In, became the 6th fastest Sabre in franchise history to reach the 30-goal mark (44 games).

Both teams traded goals in the first half of the 2nd, starting with Carolina's Justin Williams. His 301st career goal beat Hutton up high over the right shoulder for the 2-1 Hurricanes lead. Only 30 seconds later, Jason Pominville tied it with a big wrist shot off a pass from Evan Rodrigues. The goal marked Pominville's first since November 17 and his first point since November 21. The tie was short-lived thanks to Aho, who beat Hutton 42 seconds after Pominville's goal for the 3-2 lead. Aho's 2nd of the evening came later in the period, a wraparound chance that went off McCabe's stick and between Hutton's pads, making it 4-2 in favor of the Hurricanes.

Kyle Okposo cut the lead to one at 16:48 of the 3rd, but Buffalo could not find the net again. Curtis McElhinney made 30 saves in the win while Hutton finished with 26 stops for the Sabres.

### GAME SUMMARY

#### Goal Summary:

#### First Period:

BUF: 19:39 - Jeff Skinner PPG (30) (Rasmus Dahlin, Sam Reinhart)

CAR: 10:25 - Micheal Ferland (13) (Teuvo Teravainen, Jaccob Slavin)

#### Second Period:

BUF: 5:00 - Jason Pominville (10) (Evan Rodrigues)

CAR: 4:30 - Justin Williams (12) (Trevor van Riemsdyk); 5:42 - Sebastian Aho (17) (Micheal Ferland); 12:27 - Sebastian Aho (18) (Micheal Ferland, Teuvo Teravainen)

#### Third Period:

BUF: 16:48 - Kyle Okposo (7) (Marco Scandella, Johan Larsson)

CAR: NONE

#### Penalty Summary:

#### First Period:

BUF: 12:09 - Rasmus Ristolainen (Delay of game - 2 min.)

CAR: 19:31 - Saku Mäenalanen (Tripping - 2 min.)

#### Second Period:

BUF: 16:41 - Johan Larsson (Roughing - 2 min.); 19:25 - Kyle Okposo (Holding - 2 min.)

CAR: 1:51 - Andrei Svechnikov (Hooking - 2 min.); 16:41 - Justin Faulk (Roughing - 4 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: NONE

CAR: 7:34 - Jordan Martinook (Tripping - 2 min.)

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 33 (12, 8, 13)

CAR: 30 (9, 11, 10)

Goalies:

BUF: Carter Hutton - 26 saves

CAR: Curtis McElhinney - 30 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 1 of 4

CAR: 0 of 2

Three Stars:

1. Micheal Ferland - CAR

2. Sebastian Aho - CAR

3. Teuvo Teravainen

## **The Sabres have their first game this season against Carolina**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 11, 2019

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) - Jeff Skinner will celebrate his selection for the All-Star Game by welcoming another All-Star back to the lineup. Jack Eichel missed three games and the Sabres won two of the three games. To make room for Eichel, C.J. Smith was sent back to Rochester.

Skinner makes his first visit back to Carolina since being traded to the Sabres for Cliff Pu and three draft picks.

Skinner has 29 goals in his first 43 games in Buffalo, while Pu is just beginning his pro career. The 20-year-old is playing in the AHL with Charlotte and has one goal and three assists for four points in 32 games.

The Sabres are 2-7-1 in their last 10 games in Raleigh. Carter Hutton is back in net after stopping 21 of 22 pucks in a 5-1 win over New Jersey.

Tage Thompson is going to get an opportunity to play right wing with Eichel and Skinner. Thompson has five goals and four assists for nine points in 36 games, but he seems to be improving almost every night since the holidays started.

Buffalo holds down fourth place in the Atlantic Division and is tied with the Islanders for the two Eastern Conference Wild Card spots. The Sabres lead Montreal by one point, they trail Columbus by one point, Boston and Pittsburgh by two points and Toronto and Washington by six points.

In the overall standings, the Sabres are 13th with a points percentage of .605.

Buffalo is 19th in the NHL in goal scoring, averaging 2.84 goals per-game. On the other side, Carolina is 28th with 2.60 goals per-game.

The Hurricanes had their five-game winning streak broken Thursday in Tampa. In those five games, Carolina did score 21 goals.

Former Red Wings and Flyers goalie Petr Mrazek has not put up good numbers in goal, but the Canes claimed Curtis McElhinney off waivers from the Leafs and all he's done is go 10-5-1 with a 2.25 goals-against and .922 saves percentage.

Carolina's leading scorer, by far, is Sebastian Aho, who has 16 goals and 29 assists for 45 points in 43 games.

Captain Justin Williams and defenseman Dougie Hamilton have points in five consecutive games.

Jordan Staal has missed nine games with an upper-body injury.

The Hurricanes have won six straight games against the Sabres.

Join Schopp and the Bulldog for the pre-game starting at 6:30 when they'll be joined by Phil Housley, Jeff Skinner and Jack Eichel.

## Reinhart's advanced stats show he's not just a product of Eichel

By Joe Dibiase

WGR 550

January 11, 2019

When Jack Eichel returned to practice this week, my initial thought was to write something for our website outlining how Sam Reinhart's production drops when playing without Eichel. It sounds like something that would be true, it seems like something that would be true, considering the two players' skill level and style.

Eichel is a puck possession player who has elite finishing and playmaking ability. Reinhart is a clever player, who does most of his work around the net. A good playmaker yes, but not a guy that you want carrying the puck into the offensive zone. When looking at many metrics for Reinhart playing with and without Jack Eichel, I was surprised to say the least.

Reinhart has played just under half of his NHL career, about 1,500 minutes, with Eichel. The forward he's played the most with. Evander Kane is second at 912 minutes played with No. 23.

Each advanced stat at five-on-five (according to NaturalStatTrick.com) for Reinhart is about the same away from and with Jack Eichel. Only a 1% drop in Corsi, an essentially identical Fenwick percentage, just a 0.5% drop in shots for, less than a two-percent decrease in scoring chances for, and less than a 1% drop in high danger scoring chances for.

For those that aren't super familiar with what some of these stats are:

Corsi = Any shot attempt (goals, shots on goal, misses, & blocks)

Fenwick = Unblocked shot attempts (goals, shots on goal, & misses)

Shots for = % of total shots while that player is on the ice

I expected big drop offs in these numbers away from Eichel, but there wasn't. Except for one stat. Goals for percentage. Amount of goals the Sabres score while on the ice, as opposed to the other team. With Jack Eichel, that number is 53-percent. Without, 43-percent. Many things could explain this, but the most likely explanation is that Eichel scores on a much higher rate of his scoring chances, than other linemates Reinhart has played with.

If you flip the stats, there's a decline in Eichel's numbers away from his roommate. Not a huge difference, but it's there. You can definitively say, looking at the numbers, that both players are better with each other.

This year, Reinhart is on pace to smash his career-high 50-points. He's currently on pace for 76. While the advanced stuff looks about the same with and without Eichel, the points do not. About 56% of Reinhart's five-on-five ice time has been spent with Jack this season. Even strength, he's contributed 21 points with Eichel, and six points without. The rest have come on the power play.

I don't think it's fair to blame Reinhart for just six even strength points in 45% of his ice time. Those shifts are spent with limited offensive players like Vladimir Sobotka, Johan Larsson, Evan Rodrigues, etc. It seems, to me, that it's a great sign that Reinhart is still creating chances, regardless of who his center is. Just last game, he set up two glorious scoring chances that Rodrigues and Conor Sheary failed to score on. If that's Eichel receiving those passes, they very well could've been goals.

One last thing to look at when going in depth on Reinhart is where he scores his goals. All Sabres fans have come to realize that he's going to make his money around the net. Without blazing speed or a dangerous shot, he's found what he has to do to be productive.

This is a heat map via icydata.hockey showing all of Reinhart's career goals:

Just for comparison, here's Eichel's:

It's easy to see that Eichel can score from anywhere, while Reinhart is limited when it comes to his shot.

One final conclusion on Reinhart is he's not a flashy player that does a lot of things fans don't notice that makes him a great player. Taking a look at all his numbers, coupled with the fact that he's only 23-years-old and on a team friendly contract, I'm much more optimistic than I was that Reinhart is a core player of this team's future.

That does not mean that he has no limitations to his game. Without a player on his line that possesses an elite finishing ability, Reinhart will struggle to put up points. If you give him one elite finisher, like Eichel, he'll put up some pretty good numbers. If you give him two elite finishers, like Eichel and Skinner, it looks like he could be a point per-game player in the NHL.

## **Sabres' Skinner is voted into the NHL All-Star Game**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 11, 2019

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) - The fans have voted Jeff Skinner into his second All-Star Game. For the first time ever, the league held the NHL's "Last Men In" vote and Skinner beat out Morgan Rielly, Brayden Point, Shea Weber, Patrice Bergeron, Aleksander Barkov, Dylan Larkin and Mark Stone for the last place on the Atlantic Division Team. The Sabres put out a video with Skinner thanking the fans, "Thank you for all your efforts voting me into the All-Star game. It means a lot to me and I'm looking forward to going out to San Jose to represent you guys."

We got a chance to meet with Skinner a few hours before Friday's game. He said getting to play in his second All-Star game is pretty cool, "This one I got in a different way. It's pretty cool to share it with the fans and with my teammates because you're not going to have a good season unless your teammates are playing well."

"I think it shows the passion and how much the fans love the Sabres and it's a pretty cool feeling."

The fans of Buffalo have put up signs that have Jeff Skinner for Mayor. Skinner laughed and said, "It's another thing my family and friends picked up on and I'm not sure I'm qualified, but it's pretty funny."

Others winning the vote were Kris Letang (Metropolitan Division), Leon Draisaitl (Pacific Division) and Gabriel Landeskog (Central Division).

Skinner earned his way into the vote by scoring 29 goals in 43 games, which would work out to a season total of 55 goals.

Skinner has reached the 30-goal mark three times in his career, having seasons of 37, 33 and 31 goals.

The NHL said that more than 11.5-million votes were cast. Skinner joins Jack Eichel on the Atlantic Division team. Skinner said he's glad he gets to experience this with Eichel, "It's fun, I think as a teammate it's fun to go together, it's a special part of that."

Sabres equipment manager Dave Williams and assistant equipment manager George Babcock have also been chosen to work the game.

## **Sabres sniper Jeff Skinner elected to NHL All-Star Game**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
January 11, 2019

Buffalo Sabres winger Jeff Skinner will be representing the Atlantic Division in the NHL All-Star game.

Skinner, the NHL's second-leading goal scorer with 29, earned a spot today as part of the "Last Men In" online voting the NHL has been conducting for the last week.

More than 11.5 million votes were cast, including more than 2 million Thursday, the final day of voting, according to the league.

Colorado Avalanche winger Gabriel Landeskog (Central Division), Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Kris Letang (Metropolitan) and Edmonton Oilers center Leon Draisaitl were also voted into game Jan. 26 in San Jose.

Skinner, who plays his old team, the Hurricanes, for the time tonight in Carolina, was an all-star as a rookie in 2010-11.

Sabres captain Jack Eichel, Skinner's center, was chosen for his second NHL All-Star Game last week.

## **Jeff Skinner elected to NHL All-Star Game as one of "Last Men In"**

By Anthony Reyes

WKBW

January 11, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Buffalo Sabres forward Jeff Skinner has been selected to the NHL All-Star Game as one of the four "Last Men In."

Skinner joins forward Gabriel Landeskog from Colorado, defenseman Kris Letang from Pittsburgh and forward Leon Draisaitl from Edmonton.

Skinner is now heading to this second All-Star game, his first as a Sabre and his first since his Calder-winning season in 2010-11.

The Sabres forward is tied for second in the NHL with 29 goals.

He will join his teammate Jack Eichel as the other Sabres representative.

Eichel, who has been out since exiting a game on New year's Eve has been cleared to return and will play tonight against Carolina according to Coach Phil Houseley.

## **Weird Bounces Plague Sabres, Fall To Carolina 4-3**

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

January 11, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - It was a night of comebacks for the Buffalo Sabres as they faced Carolina on the road. Jack Eichel made his return to the lineup after missing three games due to an upper body injury. Jeff Skinner returned to his former arena, to face his former team. However, the Sabres wouldn't be able to come back as they fell 4-3 to the Hurricanes.

Skinner opened the scoring for the Sabres on the power play with less than a minute to play in the first period. He was greeted with cheers from both sides on his game-tying goal.

The second period featured weird bounces, and three goals in 72 seconds. Justin Williams would put Carolina back in front 4:30 into the period. Just 30 seconds later, Jason Pominville would finish home a one-timer from Evan Rodrigues to tie the game at two. The tie would be short lived as Sebastian Aho would be credited with a goal that went off Rasmus Dahlin's skate.

Aho would sneak the puck five-hole on Carter Hutton to give Carolina the two goal lead midway through the second period.

Buffalo would try to pull the comeback, when Kyle Okposo would pull the Sabres within one with just under four minutes to play. However the Sabres wouldn't be able to find the equalizer, and would fall 4-3.

The Sabres return home to KeyBank Center Saturday for a matchup with the league-leading Tampa Bay Lightning.

## **Skinner voted on to All-Star team**

By Mike Courtney

WIVB

January 11, 2019

SAN JOSE (WIVB) - Buffalo Sabres forward Jeff Skinner will be joining his linemate Jack Eichel at this year's NHL All-Star game.

Skinner is tied for second in goals in the NHL with John Tavares of the Toronto Maple Leafs with 29 goals. Alex Ovechkin of the Washington Capitals leads in goals with 32.

The Sabres traded with the Carolina Hurricanes for Skinner before this season. The Sabres traded forward Cliff Pu, a second round draft pick this year and a third and sixth round pick in 2020.

Skinner is second in scoring on the Sabres with 42 points, behind Captain Jack Eichel's 49 points.

This will be Skinner's second trip to the All-Star game, he player in the 2011 game while a rookie with the Hurricanes.

This year's all-star game is Saturday, January 26th at 8pm in San Jose.

## **Sabres' Jack Eichel to play against Hurricanes**

By Evan Anstey

WIVB

January 11, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - Jack Eichel will be back on the ice Friday night against the Carolina Hurricanes.

Eichel missed the last three Buffalo Sabres games following an injury.

The Sabres will play the Hurricanes at 7:30 p.m.

## **Buffalo Sabres' Jeff Skinner voted in by fans to 2019 NHL All-Star game**

WGRZ

January 11, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres' forward Jeff Skinner is headed to the NHL All-Star game.

Skinner, along with the Avalanche's Gabriel Landeskog, the Penguins Kris Letang, and Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl, were voted into the the final four roster spots on the 2019 Honda All-Star Weekend.

More than 11 million votes were cast by hockey fans over the past week.

Skinner is the Sabres' top goal scorer so far this season with 29 goals.

## **Buffalo Sabres' Jeff Skinner is going to the AllStar Game**

By Brett Alan

WYRK

January 11, 2019

Tonight is going to be emotional for Buffalo Sabre Jeff Skinner. Not only will it be his first meeting with his old team, but now, he's doing it as one of the latest to be added to the Allstar game.

When the original announcement came out about this year's lineup for the 2019 Allstar Game, many Sabres fans were scratching their heads. As happy as we were to see that our captain Jack Eichel was included on the roster, many of us were saying, "Where the heck is Skinner? How in the world did he get overlooked?"

The NHL did offer a #LastManIn competition though where fans could root for their favorite players to make it in after all.

According to WKBW, Skinner will be joining forward Gabriel Landeskog from Colorado, defenseman Kris Letang from Pittsburgh and forward Leon Draisaitl from Edmonton at the game in San Jose on January 26th. Skinner is tied for second in the NHL with 29 goals. This will be his second Allstar game appearance.

## **Traded by the Canes, Jeff Skinner is enjoying life with the resurgent Sabres**

By Chip Alexander

Raleigh News & Observer

January 11, 2019

Jeff Skinner never won a Stanley Cup with the Carolina Hurricanes. He never won the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoffs MVP.

In eight seasons with the Canes, Skinner never experienced a playoff game. Not one.

But what Skinner won was a lot of hearts. He won the affection of so many Canes fans, who marveled at his knack for scoring goals and offensive flair but enjoyed his exuberance and youthful demeanor, were warmed by the ever-present Skinner smile.

Many Canes fans were left seething when Skinner was traded in August to the Buffalo Sabres for offensive prospect Cliff Pu and some draft picks. They didn't want to hear about his contract status, about how he would become an unrestricted free agent after this season, of how the Canes were not interested in signing him to a new deal that might cost \$8 million to \$9 million a year.

That Skinner now has scored 30 goals after Friday's game against the Hurricanes, that he has helped keep the resurgent Sabres contend for in a playoff position in the Eastern Conference, only has added to some of the fans' ill will. On Friday, Skinner was added to the Atlantic Division team for the NHL All-Star Game, winning the fans vote in the NHL's "Last Men In" balloting to complete the rosters.

Skinner, 26, was an All-Star as a rookie in 2011 when the game was hosted by the Canes and played at PNC Arena. He was a member of Team Staal headed by Eric Staal, then the Canes captain. Canes goalie Cam Ward also was chosen by Staal in the player fantasy draft that special weekend, when Skinner received rock-star treatment.

Great memories

In the eight years since that January All-Star Game, Staal and Ward have left the Canes and then made returns to PNC Arena that were a mix of excitement, anticipation and emotion.

Ward, now in his first year with the Chicago Blackhawks, was back at PNC Arena on Nov. 12, starting and taking the loss in a 3-2 overtime win by the Canes. On Friday, it was Skinner's turn to take the ice against the team that made him a first-round draft pick in 2010, that had him in their lineup at age 18 the next season, when he received the Calder Trophy as NHL rookie of the year.

"It's a little different, a little exciting," Skinner said after the Sabres' morning skate. "There's obviously a lot of stuff goes through your head. Me, personally, looking back on my whole time here I have nothing but great memories here and good friendships.

"The fans treated me exceptionally well. I had a great time playing here. There were a lot of positive things. It will be a little weird, a little different, being on the visiting side but nothing but good memories and good feelings."

It wasn't a good finish for Skinner or the Sabres. While he had a power-play goal for his 30th, Buffalo lost 4-3 and Skinner had a minus-2 night as his line, centered by Jack Eichel, was outplayed by the Sebastian Aho line.

Skinner wasn't able to meet up with any former teammates with the Canes having a road game Thursday against Tampa Bay. He said he had dinner instead -- and picked up the tab -- for some of his new teammates at Nina's Ristorante in Raleigh.

A fresh start

Skinner's relationship with the Canes might be a bit strained. Despite scoring 30 or more goals in three seasons -- with a career-high 37 in 2016-17 -- Skinner was deemed expendable by new team owner Tom Dundon and

management. While Skinner has much respect for Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, it was Brind'Amour who uncharacteristically fired some parting shots at Skinner a month after his departure.

Asked about the message from Skinner's trade, Brind'Amour said, "It sends a message of what kind of Hurricane we're looking for, what kind of player we want. ... You've got to produce. You've got to do the things we're asking you to do, otherwise you're not safe. So it was the right move."

Skinner has taken more of the high road in discussing the trade, saying again Friday, "Both sides needed a fresh start and it was kind of clear that was the way it was going."

Brind'Amour did praise Skinner before Friday's game, saying, "He's playing like he did his rookie year. He's going to the net, he's around the puck all the time. Obviously he's having a lot of success. Everything is going in for him. That's the kind of player he can be."

With the Canes, especially under former coach Bill Peters, Skinner was used at left wing on the third line with, say, Derek Ryan or Victor Rask at center. With the Sabres, he has been on the top line, often with Jack Eichel, one of best centers in the league and the Sabres captain.

"He's such a good guy and has a great attitude and comes to the rink and enjoys his time every day," Eichel said Friday. "He's scored a lot of big goals for us and that doesn't hurt. He's so strong around the net, has great hands and he's so good on his edges that he's able to maneuver around and get through traffic pretty well."

#### Game winners

Skinner has seven game-winning goals and 23 even-strength goals among his 30. He continues to add negotiating leverage for the preliminary contract talks he said would begin with the Sabres at the end of January. Being picked for the All-Star Game also should help.

"It's pretty cool," Skinner said of the Last Men In selection. "Obviously getting in a little bit of a different way. It's pretty cool to share it with the fans and my teammates. You're not going to have a good season unless your teammates are playing well. That's the cool part."

One rap on Skinner, at least with the Canes, was his defensive play. Considered a liability and someone unwilling to do the gritty work in the defensive zone, he had a minus-27 plus/minus rating last season that was a career worst.

But he's now plus-13 with the Sabres through 44 games, the best on the team. Second in the league in takeaways last season, trailing only Edmonton's Connor McDavid, Skinner has continued to pilfer the puck with the Sabres.

"The way he comes back in the zone, the way he's stripping pucks from behind, he has an uncanny way of just sneaking up on people," Sabres coach Phil Housley said Friday.

Sabres assistant coach Steve Smith was on Peters' former staff at Carolina, handling the defense but observing Skinner. He, too, has witnessed a transformation.

"The change of scenery has been a positive thing for him," Smith said. "He's been a real leader around our locker room. He's a hard-working guy and always has been a hard-working guy and a good pro."

"I think he probably feels more appreciated now than ever, which has really helped his psyche. And then his confidence level has been high and that's translated into his goal-scoring."

## **Jeff Skinner returns to goal-starved Carolina, rubs it in just a bit**

By Justin Cuthbert

Yahoo! Sports

January 11, 2019

Averaging more goals on a per-game basis than only the Kings, Ducks and Coyotes, the Carolina Hurricanes are on a path toward a decade's worth of postseason misses primarily due to the simple fact that they just don't score enough goals.

So it must be especially painful for die-hard fans of the franchise keeping tabs on Jeff Skinner to watch the former 'Cane score goals at the very height of the profession this season with the Buffalo Sabres.

And mildly excruciating to see Skinner — today voted into the All-Star Game, no less — hit something of a benchmark for top-end NHL goal scorers in his first visit back to goal-starved Carolina on Friday with his 30th goal:

Only Alex Ovechkin reached the standard quicker this season.

Entering the contest, Sebastian Aho was the only Hurricane on pace to cross the 30-goal threshold with his 16 goals, but only narrowly. (He did score Nos. 17 and 18 versus the Sabres to increase his odds in joining Skinner in the 30-goal club.)

It was prospect Cliff Pu and three draft picks that the Hurricanes (in the absence of top-end forward talent now vowing to not ever take a defenseman in the first round) received in return for Skinner, by the way.

## **Pondering Jeff Skinner trade as Sabres visit Hurricanes**

By James O'Brien

Pro Hockey Talk

January 11, 2019

Back in May, I surmised that the Carolina Hurricanes would likely be haunted by a Jeff Skinner trade, and that was before I shared Hockey Twitter's general reaction of "that's it?" when he was sent to the Buffalo Sabres.

As bad as that trade looked in August, it only seems to get worse as the 2018-19 NHL season goes along, and so the Hurricanes brass has to take it on the chin Friday, as people inevitably revisit the trade being that Skinner's making his first visit to Carolina as a member of an opposing team.

Let's dig a little deeper. For the most part, this will only pour more salt in the wounds of Hurricanes GM Don Waddell and his staff, yet there are a few things that will provide at least a little comfort.

Red-hot Skinner, and a cautionary tale

Puck luck stood as one of the main reasons why I was concerned about Carolina trading Skinner.

In 2017-18, Skinner scored 24 goals, down from 37 the previous season. While this point will cue a wah-wah from Dallas Stars CEO Jim Lites, the 24 goals really weren't so bad when you consider his 8.7 shooting percentage, down from his current career average of 11.4 percent.

This season, Skinner already has a ludicrous 29 goals, and he's showing dazzling swagger with a 21.5 SH% (his previous career-high was 14.4 percent from his Calder-winning 2010-11 season). Goals like these have to sting the scoring-starved Hurricanes:

The Hurricanes remain as frustrating as ever when it comes to failing to finish chances. In fact, the frustration is only greater, as Skinner and fellow traded winger Elias Lindholm are enjoying the best runs of their careers on playoff-caliber teams, while Carolina looks like it will once again see the postseason as agonizingly just-out-of-reach.

The free agent factor

The dangerous thing for the Sabres is that Skinner, a pending unrestricted free agent, is virtually certain to cool off, but has socked away such a great season that his price is dramatically inflated. Skinner's a fantastic player, so that's not the end of the world, but it's a factor that more far-sighted fans should consider.

Unfortunately for the Hurricanes, there's only so much solace one can take from a move eventually looking a bit less painful.

Interestingly, there's the slight chance – albeit slim – that the Sabres might decide to trade Skinner if they don't think it's better to keep him, thus reaping more indirect rewards from this trade. Yow.

Even if it's just for one year, Buffalo desperately needed to make real progress in 2018-19, and Skinner's been enormously important in the Sabres doing just that.

Diminishing returns

To review, Carolina received:

Prospect Cliff Pu, and the stinky puns that come with his name.

Buffalo's 2019 second-round pick.

Buffalo's 2020 third-round pick and six-rounder.

That seemed like a pupu platter weak return from the moment it happened, and unfortunately, it's only stinking worse today.

Unfortunately, Pu's had an awful first year with the AHL's Charlotte Checkers. He has just one assist since Nov. 25, and only one goal and three assists for four points in 32 games.

Cruel stat: Pu's .13 points-per-game are barely better than that of goalie Scott Darling (.11), who managed an assist in nine contests.

That second-rounder was a somewhat reasonable gamble that the Sabres would struggle again in 2018-19. Instead, they currently hold the second wild-card spot in the East. While Buffalo could fall short of a 2019 Stanley Cup playoff berth, they're unlikely to fall enough for that to be anything better than a mid-second-rounder.

The third and sixth-rounders in 2020 carry dubious benefits, even if the Sabres struggle in 2019-20. Maybe the numbers will change in the next decade, but a few years ago, TSN's Travis Yost noted that only about one-third of third-rounders became NHL players from 2000-09, and that number decreases as you go along. And the odds of finding a Skinner-level gem is even less likely.

Of course, draft picks can be helpful in making trades.

Think of it from a PR perspective, in particular.

Sports fans can be drawn in to the siren call of potential, and few things do the imagination wonders quite like throwing some draft picks into a trade, to soften the shock of losing a more proven commodity.

Maybe the Hurricanes could turn those Sabres picks into, say, a goalie for the future? Perhaps they could use them in a package to carve out some goals?

If nothing else, they give the Hurricanes options. Skinner's goals are a lot more exciting, but still.

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Again, it's crucial to consider context.

The Hurricanes likely believed that Skinner would leave in free agency (either by his choice, theirs, or both), so they didn't want to lose him for nothing. It's possible that both sides wanted to get a split over with after years of missing the playoffs and the tensions that tend to arise from falling short.

Still, Carolina and other teams can learn from this. Maybe you can't trade a player on supremely hot streaks, but there may be better option than selling low when they're ice-cold. There's an alternate scenario where the Hurricanes bide their time by waiting to trade Skinner, likely driving up his value while enjoying the goals he could provide.

(Even if he might not be anywhere near as red-hot as he is now, prospering in a dynamic duo with Jack Eichel.)

This saga isn't over for the Sabres, either, as they must make the right moves regarding his future.

There's no denying that it looks like an enormous win for Buffalo right now, though, and that's something the Hurricanes must contend with on Friday night.

## **Skinner scores 30th but Sabres' late rally falls short against Hurricanes**

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA - Some nights, the bounces just don't go your way.

The Buffalo Sabres fell to the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 on Friday at PNC Arena with three of the four goals against going in off Sabres defensemen.

Buffalo made a late push in the third period, and got within one - on a goal that went off a Hurricanes player, oddly enough - but were unable to get the tying goal past Curtis McElhinney.

The result spoiled Jeff Skinner's return to Carolina. The Sabres forward, who acquired by Buffalo in an offseason trade with the Hurricanes, scored his 30th goal of the season.

It's the fourth time in his career that the newly named All-Star has hit the 30-goal mark. He is the first Sabres player to score 30 goals in a season since Jason Pominville did so in 2011-12.

Skinner's 44 games to reach the 30-goal mark tie Rick Martin (in 1971-72) as the sixth-fastest Sabre to score 30, behind Alexander Mogilny (30 GP in 1992-93), Pat LaFontaine (31 in 1991-92 and 42 in 1992-93), Gilbert Perreault (40 in 1977-78) and Rick Martin (41 in 1973-74), according to the NHL Public Relations Department.

He's the second player to score 30 goals this season. Washington captain Alex Ovechkin leads the league with 32.

It was announced earlier in the day that Skinner had won the "Last Men In" fan vote for the Atlantic Division. He'll be heading to San Jose at the end of the month with captain Jack Eichel for All-Star Weekend.

Pominville and Kyle Okposo also scored against the Hurricanes. Carter Hutton made 26 saves. Okposo's goal came with 3:12 left in regulation, giving Buffalo a realistic shot at tying the game.

Not earning two points, however, put a damper on any good news.

"Those are tough bounces, but those bounces go both ways, I think, when you look at a hockey game when you look at over the course of the season. You just have to do a good job of working for your own bounces and eliminating as many opportunities as you can," Skinner said.

"We may have given a few too many rushes than we should've and Hutts made some big saves on those. They scored on some of those unlucky bounces. We didn't generate enough - pressure and the offensive zone time to get one of those bounces ourselves."

"I really like our attitude in the third, but it's just a little too late," coach Phil Housley said. "That's why it's important that throughout the 60 minutes, we've got to realize that every shift and every play matters."

More offensive chances, the players believe, could come with stronger defensive play.

"We've got to clean up a little bit defensively to win more games consistently," Pominville said. "It was nice to see our fight back there. We fought back and found a way to give ourselves a chance. We came up short, but we've got to bounce back tomorrow. Obviously playing a good team, we've a got to make sure we're a little bit better defensively."

The Sabres have lost four in a row on the road and are 1-6-2 in their last nine away from KeyBank Center.

"I think we're giving up a lot and we're getting beat by teams that are just playing a simple game," Eichel said. "When we were having success earlier in the year, I know we were getting breaks and our goalies were playing well, but I thought we were just giving up less."

"Maybe it's defending, maybe it's decisions. I think it could be a combination of the two, but if we get back to just keeping it simple, trying to get pucks below their goal line, getting pucks to the net, I think it's a recipe for success.

"Just try to do that tomorrow night. Obviously, you want to limit the amount of times you let them get odd-man rushes against and the more time we play in their zone, I think the better. We'll respond tomorrow night."

Not much puck luck

All of the bounces went Carolina's way on the opening goal of the game with 9:35 left in the first period. A high, seemingly harmless wrist shot from the right faceoff circle by Micheal Ferland hit Hutton, bounced off the top of the net, back out in front and then over the goal line off the stick of Marco Scandella, who crashed the crease in an effort to defend the goal.

The Sabres and Hurricanes traded chances and goals early in the second period with the score tied 1-1. Justin Williams ripped one top shelf to put Carolina up 2-1 at the 4:30 mark. Jason Pominville then answered 30 seconds later to tie the game. And then just 42 seconds later, Sebastian Aho banked one off Rasmus Dahlin's skate and past Hutton to give the Hurricanes the lead once again.

Pominville tied Mogilny for 11th in franchise history with what was his 211th goal as a member of the Sabres.

The Hurricanes extended their lead with 7:33 left in the second on Aho's second of the night. After a scrambly sequence in front of the net, he threw one in front that deflected off Jake McCabe and past Hutton to put Carolina ahead 4-2.

"It was difficult, but I'm a big believer of 'you create your own breaks,'" Housley said. "And I give them credit because they were throwing everything to the net and that's what happens, just having that shot mentality."

A quick strike

Buffalo responded to make it 1-1 with crisp execution on a power play that lasted only 7.9 seconds in the dying moments of the first period.

Eichel, who returned to the lineup after missing the past three games with an upper-body injury, made his presence felt immediately on the man advantage. On Buffalo's first chance of the night, every player on the top unit - Eichel, Skinner, Dahlin, Rasmus Ristolainen and Sam Reinhart - touched the puck in a quick sequence that led to the goal.

Skinner won the draw on the left dot to Eichel on the left wing, who swung it back to Ristolainen at the point. As Eichel curled back up toward the blue line, Ristolainen dished it back to him and then Eichel, leaning into what could have been a shot or a cross-ice pass, sent a hard pass south to Reinhart behind the goal line.

Reinhart then wired one to Dahlin across the crease, where he was waiting by the right post. Dahlin fired a shot on goal and the puck went off the back of a lunging McElhinney. Skinner, standing at the top of the crease, reached out and batted the puck into the empty net with 20.7 seconds remaining in the period.

The Sabres power play finished 1-for-4.

"I had a slow start. I don't know how many days I've been off of playing games, but it took a little bit for me to get into it," Eichel said. "Not as crisp as I probably want. I thought as the game went on, it got a little better. Just the battle level, that sort of thing, the compete, making plays, holding onto pucks.

"I don't think it was where it was before I got hurt, but with that being said, I think it came along a little bit towards the second half of the game. Just try to build off that for tomorrow."

Coming up

The Sabres are back in action Saturday night when they'll host the league-leading Tampa Bay Lightning at KeyBank Center. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tickets are on sale now.

## **Skinner on winning All-Star vote: 'Shows how much fans love the Sabres'**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA - The last time Jeff Skinner played in the NHL All-Star Game, he was an 18-year-old rookie with the Carolina Hurricanes, halfway through his first pro season. He became the youngest player ever to be named to an All-Star team in any of North America's four major sports.

That was in 2011 and he remembers being in the dressing room of what is now PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C., surrounded by future Hall of Famers and the other great players of the time.

"I was pretty nervous to be honest," he said. "It's not too long into your career, the first half of the season, and just to be around and be in the locker room with all the guys you grew up watching was pretty nervous - a pretty nervous experience.

"But I think having it here at the time and being part of the home team made it more exciting, more special. We got a big turnout for it and that made it a little more special."

Eight seasons later, Skinner, now 26, is headed to his second All-Star Weekend as a member of the Buffalo Sabres.

He has 29 goals (tied for second in the NHL), seven game winners (tied for first) and three overtime markers (tied for second) through 43 games. Those credentials earned him a spot on the first-ever "Last Men In" ballot for the Atlantic Division. Sabres fans carried him the rest of the way.

Skinner won the fan vote and was named to the All-Star roster Friday afternoon.

He admits his family probably paid more attention to the voting process than he did, but he's thankful for all the support he received. He beat out Toronto's Morgan Rielly, Tampa Bay's Brayden Point, Boston's Patrick Bergeron, Florida's Aleksander Barkov, Ottawa's Mark Stone, Montreal's Shea Weber and Detroit's Dylan Larkin.

Skinner is in his first season with the Sabres and has experienced firsthand yet another example of how rabid the fanbase can be.

"It just shows the passion and how much the fans love the Sabres," he said.

"...I think when you're a visiting team member, you get a little snapshot. Once you get into a city, you're sort of a part of the community. Walking around every day and seeing how much they love the sports there and the Sabres and how much they love the Bills.

"It's definitely something I sort of didn't grasp fully until I moved to Buffalo. It's pretty special to be a part of that. As a player, it's cool."

Sabres captain Jack Eichel was named to the Atlantic Division roster back on Jan. 2. Eichel leads the team with 49 points (15+34) in 40 games.

"As a teammate, it's fun to go together," Skinner said. "All of your teammates play a part in the selection. You're not going to have a good season, you're not going to have good production without the team playing well, without your teammates making you look good out there. Being able to go with Jack is an added special part of that."

In addition to Eichel and Skinner, equipment manager Dave Williams and assistant equipment manager George Babcock will also represent the Sabres in San Jose.

The rest of the Atlantic Division All-Star team includes Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos (TBL), Auston Matthews and John Tavares (TOR), David Pastrnak (BOS), Thomas Chabot (OTT), Keith Yandle (FLA), Carey Price

(MTL) and Jimmy Howard (MTL). Price will not attend the festivities in San Jose due to a "nagging injury;" a replacement has yet to be named.

The NHL All-Star Skills Competition is set for Fri., Jan. 25 from SAP Center and the 2019 Honda NHL All-Star Game will be played on Sat., Jan. 26.

## **All-Star Skinner ready to face former club for 1st time tonight**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 11, 2019

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA - Before it was announced that he had been voted into the 2019 NHL All-Star Game, Jeff Skinner fielded questions from a large scrum of reporters at PNC Arena about his time with the Carolina Hurricanes, his remarkable first season with the Buffalo Sabres and playing his former club for the first time.

Tonight marks a homecoming of sorts for Skinner, who spent 579 games over eight seasons with the Hurricanes before being traded to Buffalo in August. He ranks fifth in Hurricanes/Whalers history in goals (204), seventh in points (379) and ninth in games played. He won the Calder Trophy as the league's Rookie of the Year in 2011.

He said he cherishes the relationships he developed with the fans, his teammates and the Hurricanes staff.

"Personally, looking back at my whole time here, I've got nothing but great memories, good friendships," he said. "I'm excited to see a lot of the guys and obviously the fans, they treated me exceptionally well. I had a great time playing here. A lot of positive feelings. It'll be a little weird, a little different being on the visitors' side, but nothing but good memories, good feelings for me."

Now with Buffalo, Skinner is having what could turn out to be a career year. He is tied with Toronto's John Tavares for second in the NHL with 29 goals this season, three behind Alex Ovechkin's league-leading 32. He's on pace to score the third-most goals in Sabres history, trailing only Alexander Mogilny in 1992-93 (76) and Danny Gare in 1979-80 (56).

Skinner's production and success come as no surprise to those who lined up against him when he was with Carolina.

"I remember playing against him, even his rookie year, he was effective," alternate captain Zach Bogosian said. "He's done really well for us. I think he's stepped into a situation where he's relied on in the offensive role and he's going to relish that. Guys like him, he wants to score goals - I mean everyone does - but he's a pure goal scorer and it's great to see him on our side."

For Sabres coach Phil Housley, he's been impressed with Skinner's details without the puck - especially his efforts to regain possession.

"The way he comes back into the zone - when he's stripping picks from behind - he's got an uncanny way of just sneaking up on people," Housley said. "But that starts with a good reload and attention to detail coming back into our own end."

"From that point, he's been just terrific around the net. He's got a really good set of hands, he can get it up high in the net when the goalie's down. That's the thing I've seen that's worked really well for him this year."

After winning the "Last Men In" fan vote, Skinner will join captain Jack Eichel at All-Star Weekend in San Jose on Jan. 25 and 26. Eichel, meanwhile, is set to return to the lineup tonight after missing the past three games with an upper-body injury.

"He opens up space and time for everyone. He's so skilled with the puck," Skinner said. "Obviously, he's got high-end speed and team have to respect that and be aware of that. He's a huge piece and I think he'll give the team a big lift coming back. Hopefully he has a good game like he usually does."

They'll be joined by Tage Thompson on the top line. Carter Hutton will start in goal.

Faceoff between the Sabres and Hurricanes is set for 7:30 p.m. on MSG and WGR 550. The GMC Game Night pregame show on MSG starts at 7.

Buffalo will head home after the game to host the Tampa Bay Lightning at 7 p.m. at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

#### Projected Lineup

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

24 Lawrence Pilut - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 4 Zach Bogosian  
6 Marco Scandella - 19 Jake McCabe

40 Carter Hutton  
35 Linus Ullmark

Housley said that general manager Jason Botterill is handling the roster move the Sabres will have to make in order to activate Eichel from injured reserve. Forwards C.J. Smith and Remi Elie and defensemen Nathan Beaulieu and Matt Hunwick are not expected to play tonight.

## **Skinner voted 'Last Man In,' joins Eichel as Atlantic Division All-Star**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

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Jeff Skinner is going to San Jose.

The Sabres winger has been voted as the 'Last Man In' on the Atlantic Division All-Star team, the league announced Friday afternoon. The new initiative from the NHL gave fans the chance to vote up to 10 times per day to select the final player on each division's roster for All-Star Weekend, which will be held Jan. 25 and 26 at SAP Center.

Skinner is tied with Toronto's John Tavares for second in the NHL with 29 goals this season. He's on pace to score the third-most goals in Sabres history, trailing only Alexander Mogilny in 1992-93 (76) and Danny Gare in 1979-80 (56).

Sabres fans rallied throughout the week behind a social media push to send Skinner to San Jose. The forward said Thursday that he was grateful for the support.

"It's been cool," he said. "For me, coming to Buffalo, it's been a new experience - a new fanbase, new teammates, a new organization. Everyone's made me feel real comfortable from the beginning and it's continued. It's a good feeling."

Skinner joins Jack Eichel as the second Sabres' representative on the Atlantic Division roster, marking the first time Buffalo has had multiple All-Stars in a single season since Danny Briere, Brian Campbell and Ryan Miller all started for the Eastern Conference in 2007.

It's Skinner's second career All-Star selection, the first having come during his Calder Trophy-winning rookie campaign as a member of the Carolina Hurricanes in 2010-11.

He'll make his return to Carolina when the Sabres visit the Hurricanes at PNC Arena on Friday night. Coverage on MSG-B begins at 7 p.m.