



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres Notebook: Carter Hutton not discouraged by bad luck

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 15, 2019

CALGARY — Carter Hutton had every reason to deflect the blame to his Buffalo Sabres teammates. After all, they gave him little help in a 7-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers in Rogers Place on Monday night.

Their unforced errors led Hutton being pulled after the 33-year-old goalie allowed five goals on 12 shots. It has been a difficult five weeks for Hutton. He has lost eight of his last nine starts, and it's unclear if he'll be called on Wednesday night against the Calgary Flames in Scotiabank Saddledome.

Like the rest of the Sabres, luck hasn't been on Hutton's side. Four pucks have gone off his defensemen and into the net over his past two starts.

"It's tough," Hutton said. "It is what it is. I always hold myself accountable. It's easy to sit here and say, 'If this didn't happen, if that didn't happen.' My job is to make saves and right now I've just kind of been — for whatever reason it's just not going my way."

Hutton, who signed a three-year contract with the Sabres in the offseason, bailed out his teammates during their 10-game winning streak. He had a .936 save percentage during eight of those wins, including 36-save performances against Tampa Bay, Pittsburgh and San Jose.

Hutton has two wins in his last 12 starts, posting a .898 save percentage during that span. Though he has allowed a few soft goals during this stretch, his teammates haven't given him or Linus Ullmark much help, as illustrated Monday night in Edmonton.

They admittedly took their goaltending for granted during the winning streak. Suddenly, many of their mistakes are ending up in the back of the net and Monday's result could have been worse. Hutton stopped a pair of 2-on-1 odd-man rushes during the second period.

"I give Carter a lot of credit for battling through it, these situations," coach Phil Housley said. "You look at the game in Carolina, you look at this game. Can he do anything different? Especially in the second period, if he doesn't make some big saves it's 10-2. ... I know there's a lot of people that are down on him, but you think of the games that he's given us. He's going through a tough stretch and a lot of it's not just him, it's the guys around him."

Hutton isn't down on himself. Neither are his teammates. He is tied for seventh in goals against average (2.75) and fifth in save percentage (.912) among 17 NHL goalies with at least 30 games played this season.

Ullmark did not have much luck against the Oilers, either. He allowed two goals on 13 shots. Entering Tuesday's games, the Flames (30-13-4) ranked second in the NHL with 64 points and 173 goals, including at least 20 from four different players.

Housley cautioned that another mistake-filled game will lead to another blowout loss, no matter which goalie is in net. Hutton has maintained his composure through it all. He remains a leader on a young team and is hopeful that his luck will turn soon.

"There are certain things in net you can't control," he said. "When your goalie isn't playing his best it's hard to win hockey games and that's the truth of it. Sometimes it's a great position, and sometimes it's a lonely position when you're not playing well. I just have to keep battling and things are going to turn around for us."

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Sabres prospects Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen and Alexander Nylander were ranked 13th and 49th, respectively, among TSN's top 50 NHL-affiliated prospects for 2019.

Luukkonen, a 19-year-old goalie, was a second-round draft pick in 2017 and recently led Finland to a gold medal in the World Junior Championships. He has won 10 consecutive starts for the Sudbury Wolves of the Ontario Hockey League, ranking first among all OHL goaltenders with a 2.42 goals against average.

Nylander, a 20-year-old winger drafted eighth overall in 2016, has nine goals among 24 points in 35 games for the Rochester Americans this season. He was ranked 25th among TSN's top 50 prospects last season.

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Brent Rossi, the executive vice president of marketing and brand strategy for Pegula Sports and Entertainment, was named the Sabres' chief administrative officer on Tuesday. Rossi replaces Mike Gilbert, who resigned as the Sabres' senior vice president of administration and general manager of HarborCenter.

Rossi has been with the Sabres since 2012 and previously worked for the Philadelphia 76ers, WWE and the Harlem Globetrotters. He was named to Sports Business Journal's 40 under 40 list in April.

Sabres work to correct mistakes ahead of matchup against Calgary

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 15, 2019

CALGARY – Before the Buffalo Sabres touched a puck Tuesday morning in Scotiabank Saddledome, they revisited what went wrong in a 7-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers one night earlier.

During an extensive pre-practice film session, coach Phil Housley pointed out the numerous breakdowns that led to arguably the team's worst loss of the season. The message was clear: The Sabres will be embarrassed again if they repeat those mistakes Wednesday night against the Calgary Flames.

Though only so much can be accomplished in a one-hour on-ice session, all involved expressed confidence afterward that they are aware how to fix all that's gone wrong over their past 21 games.

"I think it's more being honest with each other," Housley said of the film session. "Obviously we didn't like the way we played. To move forward sometimes you have to take a step back and look back at what's going on. A lot of it is the odd-man rushes, puck management and just having a greater respect when we don't have the puck that something bad can happen. Obviously we didn't have enough respect yesterday and it cost us."

The Sabres, now 23-17-6 with 52 points, have won only six of their last 21 games and have a negative-15 goal differential during that span. They have won only two of their last nine games and only one of their last 10 on the road.

Offense hasn't been the problem as of late. The Sabres received supplementary scoring from Conor Sheary and Evan Rodrigues on Monday. Additionally, their offense had 43 shots on goal and 72 shot attempts.

However, the Sabres were irresponsible with and without the puck. Rasmus Ristolainen's unforced turnover led to Connor McDavid's second-period breakaway goal, and less than five minutes later, Marco Scandella passed the puck right to Milan Lucic, who skated alone into the slot before beating Carter Hutton with a wrist shot to make it 5-2.

The Sabres have struggled in their defensive zone all season. They have not finished checks, which allows an opponent to maintain possession, and poor play by defensemen and forwards had led to too many odd-man rushes.

Goaltending bailed them out during the 10-game winning streak but has not been as consistent lately.

"That's just a terrible game by us," defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "That's not the game we want to play. It's not how we want to be as a group. As far as I'm concerned it's a pretty easy bounce back game for us [Tuesday] night. We have to play better. We have to compete harder. We have to do everything better. We have to worry about ourselves before we worry about the Calgary Flames."

Entering Tuesday's games, the Flames (30-13-4) ranked second in the NHL with 64 points and had scored the second-most goals (173), with a plus-42 goal differential. Calgary has four players with 20 or more goals, including Johnny Gaudreau, who has a team-high 27 goals with 42 assists and a plus-21 rating in 47 games. Conversely, Jeff Skinner is the only Sabres player with more than 20, though he entered Tuesday ranked second in the league with 30 goals.

Housley did not overhaul his lines, defensive pairings or personnel in preparation for the Flames. Lawrence Pilut skated alongside Rasmus Ristolainen in practice Tuesday after Pilut was a healthy scratch against Edmonton.

His replacement in the loss, Nathan Beaulieu, was partly responsible for the Oilers' third goal in one minute, 55 seconds during the first period. Despite his inconsistent play, Scandella remained among the top-six defensemen. He ranks second-to-last among Sabres defensemen with a negative-75 shot differential during 5-on-5 play.

"Obviously it's not a game that we like, but we can't do anything about it right now," Housley said. "We have to move forward. Learn from it because we're playing a dangerous team. If we do the same thing we're going to be in the same situation."

In response to the loss, Housley used practice to have the Sabres improve forechecking, backchecking, outlet passes on breakouts, cycling the puck in the offensive zone and physical play around the net. The Sabres have made it too easy for opponents in the defensive zone.

Entering Tuesday's games, the Sabres had allowed the sixth-most unblocked shot attempts close to the net during 5-on-5 play since winning their 10th consecutive game Nov. 27.

"We're obviously not as bad as it's been right now, and we're probably not as good as winning 10 in a row," Hutton said. "It's one of those things just finding that consistency in our game and it's something we're struggling with, but rightfully so. We have a lot of 18-, 19-year-olds in our lineup that sometimes they show their age and sometimes our veterans guys haven't been as consistent as we need to be."

The veterans were the problem against Edmonton. Rasmus Dahlin had a team-high six shots on goal with 12 attempts in what Housley called the rookie's "best game up to date." Additionally, Casey Mittelstadt scored his seventh goal of the year, and Tage Thompson was robbed on a breakaway.

Hutton and Skinner said they have noticed a lack of confidence recently when the Sabres trail in games. That wasn't the case during the winning streak.

"We have to just stick together in here," Hutton said. "No one is coming to save us. We've got to battle through it. It's going to be hard and we have to get back to that attitude that when we were down it didn't matter."

Sabres name Brent Rossi as chief administrative officer

The Buffalo News

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In the wake of longtime executive Mike Gilbert's departure last week, the Sabres have named Brent Rossi as chief administrative officer.

Rossi will now oversee daily administrative duties for the Sabres along with continuing to oversee day-to-day and long-term marketing for all Pegula Sports and Entertainment entities in his current role as executive vice president of marketing and brand strategy for PSE.

Rossi has been with the Sabres since 2012 and has previously worked for the Philadelphia 76ers, WWE and the Harlem Globetrotters. He was named to Sports Business Journal's 40 under 40 list in April.

Gilbert resigned as Sabres' senior vice president of administration and general manager of HarborCenter. He had been with the Sabres organization in a variety of roles for 21 years.

Sabres' Housley took the team through a not-so-fun video session

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 15, 2019

Calgary, AB (WGR 550) - On Tuesday, Phil Housley had a long, intense video session following their worst loss of the season in Edmonton. The session was followed by a 35-minute on-ice practice. Housley said, "I think it's more just being honest with each other. Obviously we didn't like the way we played and to move forward, sometimes you have to take a step back and look at what's going on and a lot of it is the odd man rushes and the puck management and just having a greater respect when we don't have the puck that something bad could happen and we didn't have enough respect yesterday and it cost us."

The Sabres' defensive game has been slipping for the better part of a month now. Jason Pominville said you could see Monday in Edmonton coming, "I feel like it's been a trend lately where we've been giving up too many odd man rushes, too many prime scoring opportunities and the chances that we gave up were just way too good, we're putting our goalies in a tough spot, we're not respecting the game defensively and it's cost us."

Pominville said the video session was uncomfortable, but had to happen, "Video like that is never fun, but I think it's good to go through that and it helps us move forward and really see the stuff that we haven't been doing well lately."

One disturbing trend the Sabres have had for more than a few years is giving up a goal right after scoring one. So far this season, the Sabres have been scored on 17 times within two minutes after scoring. Housley said, "It's really just realizing the situation. I go back to the game against Tampa, we get an all important goal to take a lead and that next shift is so important and this time of the year, the detail part of our game has to get better realizing the scoreboard, knowing the situation when you step out on the ice, these things are important."

"Sometimes we take it for granted, maybe its mismanagement, maybe it's just making the smart play or it might be just swallowing your pride and keeping the puck moving forward. It's just not forcing things that aren't there so we can stay with our momentum."

Pominville has played over 1,000 games in the National Hockey League, so he's seen it all. He said, "I think it comes down to attention to detail. You just scored a goal, you get momentum, you get life and the next shift is get it deep, try to work it down low, try to keep that momentum going on our side and if you look back and find out that we are not responding in the right way, it's probably because our attention to details aren't where it needs to be."

Zach Bogosian knows how bad things were in Edmonton, and he said they will rebound on Wednesday, "It's pretty easy, that was just a terrible game by us. That's not the game we want to play, that's not how we want to be as a group and as far as I'm concerned, it's a pretty easy bounce back game for us tomorrow night."

In their last two games, Cater Hutton is 0-2-0 with a 6.53 goals-against and .786 save percentage. Linus Ullmark is 0-1-0 with a 4.46 goals-against and .837 save percentage.

In those two games, four of the goals scored against Hutton went in off his own defensemen. Phil Housley said, "I give Carter a lot of credit for battling through these situations. Right now, the puck's not on his side. Things aren't going his way so we took a look at that and we'll make a decision tomorrow."

"I know there are a lot of people down on him, but you think of the games that he's given us, he's going through a tough stretch and a lot of it isn't just him, it's the people around him."

Numbers game: Why the Sabres wear those digits on their jerseys

By John Vogl

The Athletic

January 16, 2019

After looking at Sabres jerseys in the stands for four years, Jake McCabe knew his No. 29 was still synonymous with Jason Pominville. So the defenseman promptly gave up the number last season when Buffalo reacquired Pominville. The winger proudly put on the only uniform number he's ever worn in the NHL.

So why did Pominville first pick No. 29 back in 2003?

He didn't.

The equipment manager combo of David Williams and Rip Simonick doled out the digits when Pominville was called up from the American Hockey League. Pominville was wearing No. 15 in Rochester, and Williams pulled out his AHL-to-NHL trick.

"I would double guys' numbers because they're twice as good now," Williams said with a smile.

He couldn't fully double Pominville's 15 because goaltender Ryan Miller had the rights to 30, but Pominville and No. 29 quickly became one of the franchise's iconic combinations.

"After my first year, they were like, 'Do you want to change numbers?'" Pominville said. "I was like, 'No, I kind of like it,' so I stuck with it, and it's been 29 ever since.

"I'm not going to change now."

Here are the back stories for the Sabres, who were asked simply: "Why do you wear your number?"

No. 4 Zach Bogosian

"I've worn it since I was like 6. I just liked the way it looked, I guess, and I just started wearing it. That was it."

No. 6 Marco Scandella

"No reason. I just thought 6 looked good."

Former No. 6 Phil Housley

"Because it was given to me. I wore 6 in high school, but I had to wear it when I first made the team as a freshman. They gave me No. 6, and it just sort of stuck with me. I've been lucky to wear it most of my career."

No. 9 Jack Eichel

"I used it when I was younger as a kid. It just seemed like so many good hockey players, hockey legends wore it – Rocket Richard and all these guys that paved the way in the NHL. It just seemed like a good number. My dad really liked it, so he pushed it on me as well.

"At the beginning of the year, it was cool to pull it on again. Now I feel like it's my number again. When I'm signing 15 jerseys, I have to think about it and make sure I put the 1-5 instead of the 9."

No. 17 Vladimir Sobotka

He was assigned the number when he started with Boston and kept it.

No. 19 Jake McCabe

"It's just one of those numbers I've liked since I was a squirt. I just kind of stuck with it. I actually liked 12, but usually it was my brother's number, and then one of the older kids on the team kept getting it. I was alternating, so I just stuck with 19 instead."

No. 21 Kyle Okposo

"I had the choice of 12 and 21 with the Islanders, and I chose 21. Peter Forsberg was my favorite player growing up."

No. 22 Johan Larsson

"My dad wore it. I usually have 12, but when I got here (Kevin Porter) had it, so 22 is for my dad. It's nice to honor him and a nice number, I think."

No. 23 Sam Reinhart

"Dad wore it."

No. 24 Lawrence Pilut

"There's no real meaning behind it. I got it in training camp, and I just kind of stuck with it. I've had a bunch of different numbers growing up. I had 27 when I was younger, then I had 20 with my pro-league team in Sweden, so it's been a couple different numbers."

No. 26 Rasmus Dahlin

"When I came to Frölunda I just got it, and then I kept wearing it. They just gave it to me, and I still wear it. I've played some good hockey with it, so I stick with it."

No. 28 Zemgus Girgensons

"I was given it. I played 23 in juniors. I think 28 was (Paul) Gaustad's number, so I came in and they just gave it to me."

No. 35 Linus Ullmark

"Well, I wore 30 back home in juniors. That was my number I got assigned, then I kept it. I got over here, and Ryan Miller was wearing 30 so I had to wear some other number. They gave me 35, but that didn't really bother me at all. I like 35. That was my first number ever, so that actually worked out better than I expected."

"I always liked 35. It was just that I didn't wear it back home because I was assigned 30. I wore 30 in Rochester, but that was because no one was using it when I got there."

No. 37 Casey Mittelstadt

"Last year, there was a lot of numbers taken, and all the ones I'd ever worn were taken. They gave me my options, and I asked my buddies. I don't know, I just picked 37 and thought it looked nice. That was pretty much it, and now I really like it, so it's turned out pretty well."

"I used 11, 20 and 22, and 21 in college but I didn't really 21. Eleven would have been my first one, but obviously that's retired (for Gilbert Perreault)."

No. 40 Carter Hutton

"Oh, I have no idea. No idea. I've never cared about numbers. I was 1 growing up and then I was 30 in college, so I was 30 for a long time. Then I went to St. Louis and they had a kid that had 30, so they gave me 40 and I just stuck with it. I don't really get caught up with that stuff."

No. 43 Conor Sheary

"When I came out of college to Wilkes-Barre, they were just handing out numbers. It's the one I got, so I kept it. I wore No. 12 growing up, but that one was taken in college and the pro level, so I just kind of stuck with what was given to me. It's worked out, I guess."

No. 48 Matt Hunwick

"I chose it this year because it was the number I wore my first year in Boston. I've worn 48 and 22 a lot, and 22 was taken so I went with 48. Nothing too significant. That's what I was assigned when I went to the Bruins, and I've worn it a few times since."

No. 53 Jeff Skinner

"I was 23 growing up my whole life, and when I went to juniors, an older guy was wearing it. And 53 kind of looks like 23, so ...

"I was 23 ever since I was little. My mom gave me that number, actually, for Eddie Shack. She said when I was in house league I was always waving to her in the crowd, so she gave me 23. I just kind of flipped it in junior to 53, and after my first year I just kept it."

No. 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

"When I played my first game in the Finnish league, that was the number available that was given to me. I wanted to keep it after that. Why not? It's a good number. I don't really have any connection to it, but when you have it all your career, you want to keep it."

No. 71 Evan Rodrigues

"My number was 17 all growing up, and then when I signed here, my first camp it was 71 and I figured it was just 17 backward. It worked for me. Obviously, I scored my first goal in it and made it to the NHL wearing that number, so now I'm kind of 'whatever' because 17 and 71 both work for me."

No. 72 Tage Thompson

"My number in college was 29, and that was always my number. It's the number I wanted, and obviously Pommer's got it, so I was going to flip it and go backward with 92. But (Alex Nylander) has got that one, so I figured I've always liked the number 7 and did 72 instead. Also, my brother wears 27, so it's kind of cool that we're backward. No true meaning to it, but I like the look of it."

No. 81 Remi Elie

"In juniors I always liked No. 81 and always wore No. 81. I had the chance to pick it here, so that's why I picked it. I picked it in junior, too, when I was in London and Erie, then when I played in Belleville there was no high numbers, so I was 12. Whenever I have the chance to wear 81, that's my first number."

No. 82 Nathan Beaulieu

"I'm a 28 guy. I wore 28 since I turned junior. I've always loved the No. 8, and there was a captain the year before I came in so I thought it was a bit much coming in and being a 15-year-old taking that number. So I put a 2 in front of it, and my trainer said, 'If you turn a 2 up to the side it's an N, and an N and an 8 is Nate.' So it's pretty cool, and I've had that forever.

"When I came, Z obviously had 28, so I just flipped to 82."

5 Observations: Oilers topple Sabres 7-2

By Matt Bove

WKBW

January 14, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — In one word, Monday's effort from the Buffalo Sabres was embarrassing. After jumping out to an early 1-0 lead the Sabres fell to the Edmonton Oilers 7-2, dropping their third straight game.

Five observations from Monday's loss:

Hello Darkness My Old Friend

If you looked at just the scoring chances and shots on goal you probably wouldn't think this game would've played out the way it did. But costly mistakes and turnovers ultimately cost the Sabres two points against the Oilers and put them even farther behind the teams currently sitting in a playoff spot. The Sabres have had some stinkers this season and Monday against the average Oilers should be pretty high on that list, if not at the top.

Costly mistakes

Over the years Marco Scandella has proven to be a reliable and versatile defender. But in the first three months of the season, the Sabres defenseman has committed several costly mistakes and it might finally be time to keep him out of the lineup.

On Monday Scandella's most egregious mistake came in the second period when he sent a perfect pass to Oilers forward Milan Lucic. I'd imagine Scandella whiffed on his attempted pass across the ice. But to be quite frank, I have no idea what Scandella was thinking. Lucic made no mistake from in close and an already ugly game became that much worse.

If this was Scandella's first big mistake I'd understand if the veteran was given a pass. But it's not and it's time that he's scratched. Pilut paid the price after he had a terrible period against the Lightning on Saturday. Scandella should be given the same punishment after a rough outing against the Oilers.

Not to be outdone

To criticize just Scandella wouldn't be fair, especially on a night when the Sabres allowed seven goals. His partner Nathan Beaulieu didn't give him much help and minute monster Rasmus Ristolainen made just as costly of a mistake as Scandella. Like the mistake from his fellow defender, it cost the Sabres a goal.

On the first shift of the second period, Ristolainen whiffed on a shot at the point and gave Connor McDavid, the best player in the world, a clear cut breakaway. I bet what happened next wasn't a surprise.

Unlike Scandella, Ristolainen shouldn't [and won't] be sat for his bugaboos on Monday evening. More often than, he's been one of the Sabres best defenders.

No help from his friends

Could Carter Hutton have bailed the Sabres out of some of the sticky situations early in the game? Absolutely.

Did he? Not exactly.

But even after allowing five goals, I'm not ready to put the blame squarely on him. Too often fans blame the goaltenders when the Sabres lose. Neither Hutton or Ullmark was great against the Oilers but the Sabres had a laundry list of issues.

Bitter Bove

If you've read these posts before you probably know I'm a glass-half-full kind of guy. On Monday there weren't many [or really any] reasons to be optimistic as the Sabres continue to crumble. After a goal from Evan Rodrigues, the Sabres managed to narrow the margin to one goal after 20 minutes. But like they did after Conor Sheary's goal in the first period, the Sabres once again collapsed, allowing two more goals in the first five minutes of the second period. All of a sudden a 3-2 deficit became an insurmountable 5-2 deficit. In the third period, nothing changed. The Sabres once again allowed two more goals in the first minutes and just like it was 7-2. That can't happen.

Is it time to panic? Not yet. But get back to me on Friday after the next two games on the road trip.

Sabres get back to work, expect 'emotional response' in Calgary

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 15, 2019

CALGARY - Coming into the season, the Sabres used honest conversation as a means toward rebounding from a last-place finish. They diagnosed what needed to change, opened the floor for players to speak and focused on learning to ride the waves of an 82-game season.

They had that experience to lean on when they came to work at Scotiabank Saddledome on Wednesday, where they broke down what went wrong in a 7-2 loss in Edmonton the night prior.

"I think it's just more of being honest with each other," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "Obviously, we didn't like the way we played. To move forward, sometimes you've got to take a step back and look at what's going on.

"A lot of it is just the odd-man rushes and puck management, just having a greater respect that when we don't have the puck, something bad could happen. Obviously, we didn't have enough respect yesterday, and it cost us."

One area of growth that players have stressed throughout this season is the ability to stay even-keeled through the peaks and valleys of a season. They practiced it during their 10-game winning streak in November, and they're seeing the inverse of that now.

Yet, as alternate captain Zach Bogosian explained after practice, there's a difference between hanging your head and channeling emotion the right way after a lopsided loss. The defenseman said he expects an emotional response when the Sabres visit the Calgary Flames on Thursday.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's a pretty easy bounce-back game for us tomorrow night," he said. "We've got to play better. We've got to compete harder, we've got to do everything better. I think we've got to worry about ourselves before we worry about the Calgary Flames."

Checking detail was the area of emphasis during an up-tempo practice on Wednesday. The Sabres paid for a slew of turnovers against the Oilers, but their uncharacteristic lack of coverage in those situations had as much to do with the season-high seven goals they allowed.

"I think it's a five-man group," Bogosian said. "I wouldn't just throw it all on the defense. I think as a five-man checking unit, I think we needed to do a better job. We have to do a better job of reading pinches, forwards have to do a better job of reloading back and helping us. I think as a group, as a team, we need to play better. That's what it comes down to."

Playing better might also mean a restoration of confidence. The Sabres seemed undeterred by deficits early in the season, regardless of the size. Carter Hutton said it's up to him and the fellow veterans who comprise the team's leadership group to get them back to that point.

"We've got to just stick together in here," Hutton said. "Nobody's coming to save us. We've got to battle through it. It's going to be hard, but we've got to get back to that attitude that when we were down, it didn't matter. We've just got to keep competing.

"I think right now we're lacking a little bit of confidence, when we get down a goal or two you can see it kind of deflates us where before we had that workman mentality. No matter what was happening, we just kept coming. We have some younger guys, but at the same time I think it starts with our leaders. Our leaders have got to lead these guys."

Dahlin's best game?

For all that went wrong in Edmonton, one bright spot for the Sabres was the confident, dynamic play of defenseman Rasmus Dahlin. Housley and Bogosian agreed that it was the rookie's best NHL game to date.

"Last night was the best game that I've seen him play," Bogosian said. "A lot of people will probably argue that because we didn't win, but last night was the best game I've ever seen Ras play. Super confident, playing well and it's great to see.

"He's so confident with the puck. He has such a way of making plays out of nothing, and it's impressive to see, especially as an 18 year old."

Dahlin finished the night with an assist and six shots on 12 attempts, but even that impressive line doesn't tell the full story. He put his creativity on full display with his between-the-legs pass that set up Casey Mittelstadt's goal a minute into the contest:

He packaged his vision, confidence and skill into end-to-end passes, whether he was hitting Tage Thompson in mid-air with a pass from behind his own goal line ...

... or finding a seam to hit Conor Sheary in stride:

When he wasn't pinching down the boards to create shot opportunities for himself, he was finding passing lanes to create grade-A chances for others:

"I think he's just on another level," Bogosian said. "He sees the game differently. There's certain guys when you look around the room, not everyone looks and thinks the game like Jack. Not everyone looks and thinks the game like Rasmus.

"There's certain guys that have that special gift. There's plenty of guys in this room that are great players, really good team guys, but it's obvious every night that there's something different about Ras. It's easy to point out. He's a super special player. He does things out there that not a lot of people would either see or try. He can do both."

Tuesday's practice

Lawrence Pilut was back on a defense pair with Rasmus Ristolainen after sitting out the game in Edmonton as a healthy scratch, while Nathan Beaulieu skated on a fourth pair with Matt Hunwick.

The lineup otherwise remained the same:

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

26 Rasmus Dahlin - 4 Zach Bogosian
24 Lawrence Pilut - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Marco Scandella - 19 Jake McCabe
48 Matt Hunwick - 82 Nathan Beaulieu

40 Carter Hutton
35 Linus Ullmark