



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 26, 2019

Buffalo faces Ottawa on 3-game slide

Associated Press

March 26, 2019

Buffalo Sabres (31-35-9, sixth in the Atlantic Division) vs. Ottawa Senators (26-43-6, eighth in the Atlantic Division)

Ottawa, Ontario; Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. EDT

BOTTOM LINE: Buffalo aims to break its three-game slide with a victory against Ottawa.

The Senators have gone 8-13-2 against division opponents. Ottawa has given up 42 power-play goals, killing 79.1 percent of opponent chances.

The Sabres are 17-22-7 in Eastern Conference play. Buffalo has given up 38 power-play goals, killing 80.7 percent of opponent chances. In their last meeting on Nov. 3, Buffalo won 9-2. Jeff Skinner recorded a team-high 3 points for the Sabres in the victory.

TOP PERFORMERS: Thomas Chabot leads the Senators with 37 assists and has collected 50 points this season. Brady Tkachuk has five goals and two assists over the last 10 games for Ottawa.

LAST 10 GAMES: Sabres: 1-8-1, averaging 1.9 goals, 3.1 assists, 3.3 penalties and 6.9 penalty minutes while giving up 3.5 goals per game with a .897 save percentage.

Senators: 4-5-1, averaging three goals, 5.6 assists, 3.1 penalties and 6.2 penalty minutes while giving up 3.1 goals per game with a .910 save percentage.

Senators Injuries: Zack Smith: day to day (undisclosed).

Sabres Injuries: Zach Bogosian: day to day (undisclosed), Jake McCabe: out (upper body).

Schneider makes 45 saves in leading Devils over Sabres 3-1

By Tom Canavan

Associated Press

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Instead of getting down after giving up an embarrassing, early bad-hop goal from center ice, New Jersey Devils goaltender Cory Schneider responded with what might have been his best game of the season.

Schneider made 45 saves in stonewalling the Buffalo Sabres and got the benefit of having a game-tying, third-period tally nullified for goaltender interference in leading the Devils to a 3-1 victory on Monday night.

"I can't let one bad goal sink you for the rest of the game," Schneider said. "It was more about fighting my way back and keeping us in the game so that's what kind of motivated me."

Blake Coleman and Pavel Zacha scored power-play goals as New Jersey won its second straight and for the fourth time in 14 games (4-9-1). Miles Wood added an empty-net goal on a length-of-the-ice shot.

The biggest play in this game was the referee's decision with 13:36 to play to disallow what would have been Sam Reinhart's second goal of the game.

Reinhart seemingly tied the game, putting the rebound of a Jeff Skinner shot into an open net with Schneider on the ice.

The Devils didn't take long to challenge, contending Evan Rodrigues interfered with Schneider, although it seemed New Jersey defenseman Andy Greene was battling with the Buffalo center in the crease.

"I totally disagree with it, the call," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He's (Rodrigues) got his territory in front of the goaltender. We are telling our guys to go to the net. He does the right thing and the guy backs into him. They saw it differently, but I disagree with it."

Even though he was bumped, Schneider was surprised by the reversal.

"Never expect it to be overturned and it was, so it's a great reversal for us," he said.

Rodrigues seemed stumped.

"I was there for five or 10 seconds and I thought I was outside the crease," Rodrigues said. "Their guy comes and makes a little contact with me. I don't think I went purposely backward, but there was some contact there and they made the call."

Schneider was outstanding in the final 40 minutes, stopping all 36 Buffalo shots. He stopped Skinner on a breakaway two minutes after the goaltender interference call, and also had a great stop on Tage Thompson on a blast with 2:34 to go.

Zacha had broken a 1-all tie at 4:25 of the third period with a shot from the left circle past a screened Linus Ullmark, who had 18 saves.

Reinhart tied the score with a goal that stunned the crowd at 7:23. The Buffalo forward flipped the puck from center ice toward Schneider and it took a bad bounce past the embarrassed goaltender.

"I was trying to bounce it at the end of the shift trying to get off. I got a lucky bounce," Reinhart said.

"You never want to give up that goal, it's just brutal and you feel bad for your teammates," added Schneider, who earlier this season tended to let bad goals ruin his night.

This time, he ruined the Sabres' night.

"It's not a good feeling, no other way to put it," Rodrigues said. "We did things right. We didn't give them much. We got pucks on net. We pretty much did everything we wanted to except put the puck in the net. It seems that's the way it has been going these days."

The Devils scored on their first shot of the game when Coleman came out of the corner on a power play and beat Ullmark in close at 1:55.

NOTES: Less than 48 hours after sending F Joey Anderson to Binghamton (AHL), the Devils recalled him. He didn't play. ... Sabres recalled D Lawrence Pilut from Rochester (AHL) on Sunday. ... Sabres rookie C Casey Mittelstadt, the eighth pick in the draft, was a healthy scratch. ... The Devils were 0 for 13 on the power play in the last five games. ... Reinhart's 20 goals are five shy of his career best set last season.

UP NEXT

Sabres: At Ottawa on Tuesday night.

Devils: At Detroit on Friday night.

Sabres 'played the right way,' possible tying goal disallowed in loss to Devils

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. -- Evan Rodrigues and Sam Reinhart chose to be diplomatic in the aftermath of another gut-wrenching loss that continued the Buffalo Sabres' historic collapse.

Neither gave their opinion on a controversial call. Phil Housley didn't mince words, though.

The Sabres' coach was irritated that Reinhart's possible tying goal in the third period Monday night was nullified because officials determined through video review that Rodrigues interfered with New Jersey Devils goalie Cory Schneider.

Despite firing 46 shots on net, the Sabres allowed an empty-net goal with 1:25 remaining in regulation and lost to the Devils, 3-1, in Prudential Center. Housley's players performed with the sort of urgency they lacked during their short playoff push.

The Sabres created traffic in front of Schneider and had 28 more shot attempts. They also limited the Devils to just 21 shots on goal. Yet, Buffalo (31-35-9) lost for the 16th time in 19 games, and it has dropped 10 of its last 11.

"I just thought we played the right way for 60 minutes," Housley lamented. "We had opportunities. We had chances. We just didn't find the next goal. It's unfortunate they get that power play in the third there, and I didn't agree with the goalie interference call. We have to continue to play this way. We're going to get results if we continue to tighten it up."

Before the Sabres touched a puck in practice Sunday in Prudential Center, their coaches showed players clips of traffic in front of Carter Hutton compared to Montreal goalie Carey Price during a 7-4 loss Saturday night.

The difference was remarkable. Housley harped on getting to the net against the Devils (29-39-9), while improving puck management. After all, the Sabres' 5-on-5 play has deteriorated since their 10-game win streak in November because of turnovers.

His players responded with their first 40-plus shot performance since Feb. 1, and the fewest shots against since a 5-1 win over the Devils in KeyBank Center on Jan. 8. Ullmark made timely saves, particularly during the Devils' late second-period blitz.

A number of Sabres also played well. A late addition to the lineup with Zach Bogosian injured, Lawrence Pilut had three shots on goal and was remarkable with the puck. Rasmus Dahlin had five shots on goal, while Jeff Skinner had a team-high six and Jack Eichel had a strong third period.

Yet, Schneider stopped 45 shots, including all 22 he faced in the third period. It appeared he allowed the tying goal with 13:36 remaining in regulation when Reinhart buried a rebound from Skinner's shot into the back of the net. Devils coach John Hynes challenged for goalie interference, and after almost five minutes, officials ruled that Rodrigues hindered Schneider's ability to make a save.

Housley, on the other hand, thought Devils defenseman Travis Greene was at fault by skating backward into Rodrigues.

"I totally disagree with the call," Housley continued. "I think he's got his territory in front of the goaltender. We're telling our guys to go to the front of the net. He does the right thing. A guy backs into him. They saw it differently, but I disagreed with it."

Following the decision, Skinner nearly tied the score with a breakaway up the left side of the ice, only to have his shot stopped and his second chance went wide of the net. Schneider stopped one-timers from Alex Nylander and Tage Thompson, as well as a power-play backhand by Skinner, in the game's final moments.

In the end, the Sabres' only goal came at 7:23 into the first period, when Reinhart shot a puck from behind the red line at center ice and it took an awkward bounce to skip over Schneider's leg pad, tying the score 1-1. The Devils had lost 10 of their previous 12 games and were outscored 12-2 during a three-game stretch last week.

"It's not a good feeling," Rodrigues said. "There's no other way to put it. We did things right. We played the right way. We didn't give them much. We got pucks on net. We pretty much did everything we wanted to, except put the puck in the net and that seems like the way it's going these days."

Though the Devils had only 10 shots on goal over the final 40 minutes, they went 2-for-3 on the power play before Miles Wood added an empty-net goal. Meanwhile, the Sabres could not capitalize on their three power-play opportunities.

New Jersey took a 1-0 lead only 1:55 into the game, when Marco Scandella could not clear a loose puck, and it was collected in the right corner by Blake Coleman, who was able to skate to the front of the net and score because Scandella was out of position.

Following an impressive second period by the Sabres, New Jersey scored at 4:30 into the third period when Ullmark was unable to see Pavel Zacha's shot because of Wood's screen in front of the net.

"We let a guy walk right out of the corner, and we got the puck right on our stick," Housley said. "Those things happen fast after the fact, but that shot from the side – I think Linus was leaning the wrong way, instead of leaning on the other side."

The Sabres own the NHL's third-worst road record and are 12th in the Eastern Conference after they were officially eliminated from the playoffs with Saturday's loss in Montreal. Their next stop is Ottawa, where they will play the second night of a back-to-back Tuesday, and only seven games remain in another non-playoff season.

Now, all they can do is hope that an effort such as this can help them build toward the future.

"I think if we play like that and start getting more results it's not going to do anything from a standings standpoint, but internally, in the room, it's going to lead to next year," Reinhart explained. "That's where we're at and that's what our focus is on now for the next seven."

The Wraparound: New Jersey Devils 3, Buffalo Sabres 1

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. – The same mistakes that led to an epic collapse continue to haunt the Buffalo Sabres.

They struggle when playing away from KeyBank Center, fail to clear traffic from in front of their goalie and allow too many quality scoring chances.

Some bad luck also has followed them since their 10-game winning streak.

Sam Reinhart appeared to tie the score with 13:36 remaining in regulation, only to have his goal overturned because of goaltender interference, and the New Jersey Devils held on for a 3-1 win Monday night in Prudential Center.

The Sabres (31-35-9) have lost 16 of their last 19 games, including 10 of their last 11, and own the league's third-worst road record (11-22-5). They are 12th in the Eastern Conference and increasing their odds in the NHL draft lottery.

Their penalty kill allowed two power-play goals while they failed to score on the man advantage.

Pavel Zacha scored the go-ahead power-play goal with 15:30 remaining in regulation when Linus Ullmark was screened, and the Devils broke the scoreless tie with Blake Coleman's first-period goal. Miles Wood added an empty-net goal with 1:25 remaining in regulation. New Jersey (29-39-9) has the third-fewest points in the conference and had lost 10 of its previous 13 games.

Reinhart scored his 20th goal of the season in the first period, and it appeared he scored his second until it was nullified because replay review determined that Evan Rodrigues prevented Cory Schneider from attempting to make a save.

Ullmark made 18 saves while making his first start in four games, and the Sabres finished with 46 shots on goal.

Opening salvo: The Devils needed only 29 seconds into their first power play to take the lead. With Rasmus Dahlin in the penalty box for holding, Coleman collected a pass in the right corner and skated, untouched, toward the front of the net. Neither Marco Scandella nor Rasmus Ristolainen challenged him, and the shot beat Ullmark for a 1-0 lead 1:55 into the game.

Half-ice shot: Dahlin forced a turnover near center ice, and the puck went to Reinhart, whose shot from inches behind the red line took an awkward bounce over Schneider's leg pad and into the net to tie the score with 12:37 left in the first period.

Dahlin inches closer: With an assist on Reinhart's goal, Dahlin has 41 points in 75 games this season, trailing only Phil Housley (57 points in 1982-83) for the most by an NHL defenseman before his 19th birthday.

Bucking the trend: Entering Sunday's games, the Sabres ranked 29th in second-period goals against (93) and 30th in second-period goal differential (minus-29). Yet, they were outstanding in the second 20 minutes against the Devils.

Buffalo had more shots (14-5) and shot attempts (19-13), firing five shots on goal during a power play midway through the period. Jack Eichel and Alex Nylander nearly gave the Sabres the lead, only to have their attempts stopped by Schneider.

Meanwhile, Ullmark had a strong second period, including his stop on Travis Zajac with 13 minutes remaining to help keep the score tied entering intermission. Since the start of the 2015-16 season, the Devils are 92-2-14 when leading after 40 minutes.

Lineup: Defensemen Zach Bogosian (lower body) and Matt Hunwick (upper body) were unavailable because of injury, drawing Lawrence Pilut into the lineup. Additionally, Casey Mittelstadt was a healthy scratch and was replaced by Tage Thompson. Scott Wilson also was a healthy scratch.

Next: The Sabres travel to Ottawa, where they will play the Senators (26-43-6) at 7 p.m. Tuesday night.

Sabres Notebook: Casey Mittelstadt a healthy scratch for first time this season

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. -- With only eight games remaining in another non-playoff season for the Buffalo Sabres, coach Phil Housley chose to sit rookie center Casey Mittelstadt against the New Jersey Devils in Prudential Center on Monday night.

Mittelstadt, a 20-year-old drafted eighth overall in 2017, has 11 goals with 12 assists in 70 games -- 30 more than he played last season between the University of Minnesota and Sabres.

Housley cited workload as a reason why Mittelstadt was a healthy scratch for the first time this season, but acknowledged defensive struggles factored into the decision.

"It's a matter of he's played a lot of hockey," Housley said. "He's never gone through a grind like this. For the most part, he's doing an excellent job trying to learn from our coaching staff, doing the right thing. We really recognize that. At the same time, I think it's taken its toll. It's not bad to just take a step back and regroup, and focus on the rest of the season."

With Mittelstadt out, Tage Thompson drew back into the lineup. Additionally, defenseman Lawrence Pilut played with Zach Bogosian (lower body) and Matt Hunwick (upper body) out because of injury.

Mittelstadt played 11 minutes, 14 seconds in the Sabres' 7-4 loss in Montreal on Saturday night, and assisted on Sam Reinhart's first-period goal. While Mittelstadt has shown some progress offensively, he continues to struggle with defensive coverage.

He has three goals with one assist and a minus-10 rating in his last 16 games and has missed only four games because of injury or illness this season.

Entering Monday night, Thompson had not scored a goal in 21 straight games and was a healthy scratch Saturday against Montreal. The 21-year-old had seven goals with five assists and a minus-21 rating in 63 games.

While Evan Rodrigues centered the Sabres' second line against the Devils, Vladimir Sobotka was in the middle of the third forward group. Sobotka had two goals over his previous 54 games entering Monday.

With the Sabres playing the second night of a back-to-back Tuesday in Ottawa, Housley would not commit to having Mittelstadt rejoin the lineup against the Senators.

"We'll evaluate tonight and see how our team plays," Housley said Monday afternoon. "Those things will be on a day-to-day basis."

Amerks recall two from Cincinnati

Rochester recalled defenseman Kurt Gosselin and forward Judd Peterson from Cincinnati on Monday.

Gosselin had five goals with two assists in seven games with the Cyclones after he joined them on an amateur tryout earlier this month. The 24-year-old signed an entry-level contract with the Amerks after completing his senior season at the University of Alabama-Huntsville. Rochester was in need of another defenseman after Pilut was recalled by the Sabres on Monday.

Peterson, a seventh-round draft pick of the Sabres in 2012, had 11 goals with 17 assists in 48 games for the Cyclones this season. He was previously recalled by the Amerks in January and scored his first career AHL goal.

ECHL adopts video review

The ECHL announced Monday the league will use video replay for goal reviews next season. For the first time in league history, referees will be able to review video streams from overhead cameras located above each goal and can make decisive rulings directly from the ice using a tablet device.

At the referee's discretion, the following circumstances are eligible for instant replay and subsequent ruling: puck crossing the goal line; entering the net using a distinct kicking motion; directed, batted or thrown into the net by an attacking player; entering the net before the goal frame is dislodged from the moorings; and crossing the goal line prior to time expiring.

Bryson, Providence advance

Sabres prospect Jacob Bryson, a 21-year-old junior defenseman, and Providence College will face third-seeded Minnesota State-Mankato in the first round of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday in Providence, R.I.

The winner will face either Cornell or Northeastern. Bryson, a fourth-round draft pick by the Sabres in 2017, has four goals and 21 assists in 39 games this season.

Luukkonen, Sudbury up 3-0

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, a 20-year-old Sabres goalie prospect, has posted a .939 save percentage in three games to help Sudbury take a 3-0 lead over Mississauga in the first round of the Ontario Hockey League playoffs.

Sudbury will try to advance when the two teams play Wednesday night. Luukkonen, a second-round draft pick of the Sabres in 2017, had 38 wins and a .920 save percentage with six shutouts in 53 regular-season games for Sudbury. He also led Finland to a gold medal at the World Junior Championships.

Travis Yost's Sabre Metrics: Is Lawrence Pilut part of the solution?

By Travis Yost
The Buffalo News
March 25, 2019

Why can't we see more of Lawrence Pilut?

The short answer is that Pilut, at least right now, is pliable. The 23-year-old is on a two-way contract in his first professional season, and has spent most of it bouncing back and forth between Buffalo and Rochester.

I think it's reasonably fair to say that Pilut has been victimized by a numbers game – the Sabres have nine defenders signed to professional contracts, and only two (Pilot and superstar Rasmus Dahlin) are on their entry-level contracts.

But there are two issues with Pilut's usage this year:

One, he's largely outperformed the majority of Sabres defenders on the roster, which means Buffalo has either accepted that his waiver exemption is more valuable than his play, or they don't think he's NHL ready just yet. (More on this in a minute.)

Two, the Sabres have this same contracts issue on the blue line come 2019-20. When they take care of restricted free agent Jake McCabe, they will have the same nine defenders at their disposal, and the same two defenders – effectively one when you eliminate Dahlin's candidacy – with waiver exemptions.

I want to focus on the first point a bit more here, especially since the Sabres recalled Pilut on Sunday because of injuries on the blue line. When he has been an NHL regular – largely during January and February – he's been used as more of a depth defender, insulated by Rasmus Ristolainen, Zach Bogosian, Dahlin and McCabe:

If you are following the trends of Brandon Montour's usage since his acquisition at the trade deadline, you effectively have one more body pushing Pilut down the lineup. So even when given the chance to compete at the NHL level, Pilut's really been given a limited role – one that sees him easing into things in the third pairing.

The interesting piece here is that there really isn't a lot of evidence that Pilut has been outplayed by many (any?) of the names that are insulating him, so to speak.

The beauty of the NHL and how coaching staffs handle deployment is that usage tends to be collinear with results. The more a player plays, the more likely he is a favorable driver of performance. Conversely, the more a player drives performance, the more likely he is going to be promoted. That's a truism as old as the sport, and it's true for forwards, defenders and goaltenders alike.

But we still have humans making decisions, and there are an awful lot of reasons why a coaching staff might or might not prefer a certain player. (Some of those reasons are surely more meaningful and valuable than others.)

If you are a coaching staff in the midst of a postmortem for an underperforming team, one of the more compelling arguments you can make is that you were not afforded with enough talent to meet an overarching end goal – be it a postseason berth, a deep playoff run or the Stanley Cup.

Think about what you would consider perfect or fully optimized roster deployment: The player driving the most favorable results gets the most ice time, the player driving the second-most favorable results gets the second-most ice time, and so on.

That's never been true on the Buffalo blue line, which is part of the problem. The team's most utilized defender has historically been a drag on performance, which is something you rarely see on other competitive NHL teams.

But you also have inefficiencies further down the lineup, like the case with Pilut.

If we look at regular Buffalo defenders by both on-ice goal differential and expected on-ice goal differential (goaltender neutral, factoring in both shot volume and the quality of those shots while on the ice), you can see that the Sabres consistently get better results with Pilut on the ice.

Again, some of these are more sheltered minutes in nature, but plenty of other Sabres defenders have seen similarly sheltered usage and with less overall success:

Blind to goaltending performance, you can see only two Sabres skaters are expected to break even in terms of on-ice goal differential. That's the two waiver exempt players on entry-level contracts in Dahlin and Pilut.

The only differentiator between the two, in fact, is that Sabres goaltenders have simply stopped more shots behind Dahlin than Pilut. (Pilot's on-ice save percentage is almost two percentage points worse than Dahlin's this season.)

Even bringing in goaltending performance, you can see that plenty of Sabres skaters – including McCabe, Ristolainen, and Scandella – have seen much worse on-ice goal differentials this season. And all three see more opportunity than Pilut.

What do we conclude? Pilot, even in 25 games, has been a positive influence on the Sabres' performance – arguably more so on a per-minute basis than any Sabres defender not named Dahlin.

The lone counterargument? Pilot realized most of these successful minutes because he's further down the lineup and playing against weaker competition. That's why it's critical the Sabres stress test Pilot at some point in the not-so-distant future.

If he is part of the solution inside of Buffalo's top four, the Sabres really need to see what he can do with an increase in workload, an increase in teammate quality and an increase in competition quality.

The good news is the Sabres have eight completely meaningless regular-season games left to test Pilot's candidacy. They should use those games to get a better understanding of what they do and don't have as they head into a critical offseason.

Sabres at Devils: Five Things to Know

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. – The Buffalo Sabres have returned to the scene of one of their most disappointing losses of the season. They were still competing for a playoff spot back on Feb. 17, when they lost to the lowly New Jersey Devils, 4-1, in Prudential Center.

That was the second loss in what turned into an epic collapse. The Sabres (31-34-9) have lost 15 of their last 18 games, including eight of their last 10, and will try for their first road win since January when they play the Devils (28-39-9) tonight in Prudential Center. Opening faceoff is at 7:08 p.m.

Instead of competing for a playoff spot, the Sabres will try to avoid improving their odds at the NHL Draft Lottery.

"We've got to win some games," Kyle Okposo lamented following practice Sunday. "There's always something you can play for. The thing you play for the whole season is to get to the playoffs. That's not there, but there's always something to play for. You're in the National Hockey League. If you think there's nothing to play for you shouldn't be in the league. You play for pride, your teammates, you play for yourself, your family."

Sabres hope to finish strong before another long offseason of reflection

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

1. Ugly trends: The Sabres are just 11-21-5 when playing away from KeyBank Center and have lost 11 straight, going 0-9-2 since their 5-4 win in Columbus on Jan. 29. Only two NHL teams have performed worse on the road: Ottawa and New Jersey.

They have also allowed 93 second-period goals this season, which ranks 29th in the league, and their minus-29 differential in the period ranks 30th. They have not won back-to-back games since Dec. 13, and one goal against tends to snowball.

Their poor puck management is at the root of both trends. The Sabres commit too many turnovers in their own zone and aren't difficult enough to play against.

"We watched some clips today of guys in front of me and battling in front of the net," Carter Hutton said. "You look at their goalie and we kind of let guys off the hook. That's something we have to be harder with."

2. Pilut lands: Defenseman Lawrence Pilut, recalled from Rochester Sunday afternoon, will be in the lineup tonight against the Devils. Zach Bogosian (lower body) and Matt Hunwick (upper body) remain day-to-day.

While Hunwick has sat the past three games, Bogosian played Saturday night in Montreal and was expected to be available against the Devils.

Linus Ullmark (14-12-4, 3.13, .906) will start for the Sabres, while Cory Schneider (5-12-3, 3.18, .898) is expected to be in goal for the Devils.

3. Mittelstadt sitting?: Sabres rookie center Casey Mittelstadt will be a healthy scratch for the first time this season after he filled in as a defenseman during Sunday's practice.

Mittelstadt, 20, has 11 goals with 12 assists and a minus-15 rating in 70 games this season.

"I think Casey's given us some really good games and sometimes in a player's development it's not a bad thing to take a step back," Housley said Sunday. "You look at our games, we're giving up way too much right now, and it's not what you make. It's what you leave on the table. Right now we're leaving way too much. In Casey's defense, it might be a good thing to just take a deep breath. He's played a lot of hockey up to this point, so we'll make that decision tomorrow."

4. Sabres vs. Devils: This is the third and final game of the season between the two teams, and they split the first two games. On Feb. 17, Schneider stopped 34 out of 35 shots faced. The Sabres won the first game, 5-1, with goals from Jeff Skinner, C.J. Smith, Mittelstadt, Jake McCabe and Pilut in KeyBank Center. Hutton started both games against New Jersey.

The Sabres are 3-6-1 in their last 10 games against the Devils but hold a 76-54-26 series lead. A victory tonight would give Buffalo its first season-series win over New Jersey since 2013-14.

5. By the Numbers: Alex Nylander and Rasmus Dahlin each enter tonight's game on three-game points streaks. ... This is the Sabres' 15th of 16 sets of back-to-backs this season. They are 7-6-1 in the first game of those. ... With his goal on Saturday at Montreal, Jack Eichel has now scored against each of Buffalo's 30 opponents. Eichel became the second-youngest player (22 years, 146 days) ever to score against 30 different NHL teams, trailing only Florida's Aleksander Barkov, who did so at 22 years, 139 days with his goal against the Vegas Golden Knights on Jan. 19, 2018. ... The Devils are 34-12-18 in one-goal games and, 50-2-4, when leading after two periods. Since the start of 2015-16 season, the Devils are 94-2-14 when leading after 40 minutes of play

The Sabres dominate the Devils, but still can't win

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 25, 2019

Newark, NJ (WGR 550) - In the first period on Monday both teams scored goals that the goalies would want back. Linus Ullmark let Blake Coleman put one through him as he came out unchallenged from the corner and the Sam Reinhart bounced one past Cory Schneider from the red line. That helped Reinhart hit the 20 goal mark.

The second period has been a disaster all season for the Sabres, but Monday was different. New Jersey only generated five shots towards Ullmark while Buffalo played mostly in the offensive zone and got 14 at Schneider, but despite having much of the offensive zone time, they didn't score.

Alex Nylander had a good chance off a Jeff Skinner power play shot, but couldn't scoop it in.

To illustrate how much better the defense was, to start the third period Lawrence Pilut was in his own end under duress. He quickly got a puck up the wall to Skinner who also wasted no time getting the puck out off the glass and into the New Jersey zone to live to fight another day.

I like that Phil Housley gave Pilut a chance to kill some penalties in this game and his Swedish defenseman didn't disappoint him. New Jersey did score two power play goals, but Pilut wasn't on the ice for either one of them. Overall Pilut played 20:42 and had three shots on net.

The Sabres stayed with the game after falling behind in the third period and appeared to have tied the game when Reinhart converted a Skinner shot. The play was overturned because Evan Rodrigues knocked Schneider over.

Later in the period Skinner got a partial breakaway and Schneider stopped him twice.

In the end the Sabres got 46 shots on Schneider with their only goal coming from the red line. They got a two goals that were disallowed. Rodrigues and Phil Housley both disagreed with the goaltender interference. With just under two seconds left Conor Sheary's goal was disallowed because of a high stick.

Skinner ended with six shots on goal, but couldn't break through. Rasmus Dahlin and Reinhart had five each.

Sabres road woes continue, fall to Devils 3-1

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

March 25, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres' road losing streak hit a dirty dozen tonight, as they were defeated by the New Jersey Devils, 3-1 inside the Prudential Center.

Things got going early for the home side, as they capitalized on an early man advantage. Rasmus Dahlin sat less than a minute-and-a-half in for a holding minor, and New Jersey's powerplay unit went to work against Buffalo's penalty kill. Forward Blake Coleman netted his 22nd goal of the season just 29 seconds into the powerplay, and the Devils nabbed the 1-0 edge.

With 7:23 gone in the opening stanza, Sam Reinhart potted what may have been the most unexpected goal of his NHL career and things at a goal apiece in Prudential Center. Reinhart found a loose puck in the neutral zone and seemingly attempted to do nothing else but clear the puck into the New Jersey zone for a line change. Fortunate for him, the puck took a whacky bounce on netminder Cory Schneider, and it eluded him into the back of the net. It was Reinhart's 20th goal of the season; the third time he has reached the 20-goal milestone in his career. Aside from a Vladimir Sobotka slashing minor late in the first period, that would be the last notable play from Newark between a pair of bottom-feeding franchises.

The second period lived up to the "eliminated team" billing. The middle 20 minutes was filled with missed passes, low-danger scoring chances and icings galore. The only real change on the stat sheet came when the Devils' Travis Zajac took a tripping penalty not 20-seconds past the halfway mark of the contest. 40 minutes had come and gone, but Buffalo and New Jersey were tied as they were at the end of the first period. The third period soon loomed in a game where no one seemed to want to seize the lead.

The Devils changed the tide early in the third, as they grabbed their second lead of the game. With Sobotka in the box serving his second minor of the night, New Jersey cashed in on the man advantage for the second time in three opportunities. Pavel Zacha got a puck past Buffalo's Linus Ullmark with just 18-seconds left on the powerplay, and the Sabres were again looking up at the Devils, 2-1. Give them credit, though, Buffalo answered back after the goal-against with a strong push. They got a puck past Schneider just two minutes later, but it was determined that there was goaltender's interference on the play from Evan Rodrigues in the crease. The challenge by New Jersey took away what would have been Reinhart's second goal of the evening, as he was on the spot to lay-up a rebound off a shot from Jeff Skinner. Nonetheless after a review, the goal was taken away and the score stayed 2-1 Devils.

With just over six-and-a-half minutes left in regulation, Buffalo got their second powerplay chance of the night when New Jersey's Connor Carrick was sent to the box for holding. The blue and gold were able to extend a couple of possessions by negating the Devils' clearing attempts, but they again were held scoreless on the man advantage after their best special teams chance was blocked. Rodrigues' pass to the slot to Conor Sheary made it through to the winger, but was stuffed by the New Jersey defense before it could ever reach Schneider in net.

The Devils iced things for good with an empty-net goal from Miles Wood with just 1:25 on the clock to make it 3-1; seconds after Ullmark had vacated the crease. With the loss, the Sabres' road losing streak reached 12-games long. The drought spans all the way back to January 29th as the blue and gold's late-season woes continue.

GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 7:23 - Sam Reinhart (20) (Rasmus Dahlin)

NJD: 1:55 - Blake Coleman (22) PPG (Nico Hischier, Travis Zajac)

Second Period:

BUF: NONE
NJD: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: NONE
NJD: 4:30 - Pavel Zacha (12) PPG (Will Butcher, Kenny Agostino); 18:35 - Miles Wood (9) ENG (Andy Greene, Pavel Zacha)

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 1:26 - Rasmus Dahlin (Holding - 2 min.); 16:22 - Vladimir Sobotka (Slashing - 2 min.)
NJD: NONE

Second Period:

BUF: NONE
NJD: 10:20 - Travis Zajac (Tripping - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: 2:48 - Vladimir Sobotka (Hooking - 2 min.)
NJD: 13:23 - Connor Carrick (Holding - 2 min.); 19:35 - Kenny Agostino (Hooking - 2 min.)

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 46 (10, 14, 22)
NJD: 20 (11, 5, 4)

Goalies:

BUF: Linus Ullmark - 18 saves
NJD: Cory Schneider - 45 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 0 for 3 (0%)
NJD: 2 for 3 (67%)

Three Stars:

1. Cory Schneider - NJD
2. Pavel Zacha - NJD
3. Blake Coleman - NJD

What's Next:

This crazy week of five games in seven nights rolls on tomorrow evening, when the blue and gold head to Ottawa to take on the Senators. Puck drop from Canadian Tire Centre is set for just after 7:30pm, as the Sabres try to avoid the baker's dozen of consecutive road losses. The Paul William Beltz Pre-Game Show kicks off at 6:30pm as Mike Schopp and the Bulldog get you ready for another gamenight here in 2018-19, and it's all here on the home of the Buffalo Sabres - WGR Sports Radio 550.

Is a Ristolainen for Nugent-Hopkins trade a good idea?

By Joe Dibiase

WGR 550

March 25, 2019

At the end of last season, Ryan O'Reilly was the name people started latching onto with trade discussions. He ultimately was traded, and, yet again, the Buffalo Sabres find themselves struggling not to finish in the bottom-five of the National Hockey League standings.

It seems as though the most interesting trade candidate on the Sabres this offseason is defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen. Not good enough to be apart of a list of untouchables, while also being good enough to have value to other teams.

A similar situation is going on with the Edmonton Oilers right now and with center Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. The former first overall pick in the 2011 NHL Draft is the subject of plenty of articles and trade conversations on social media.

Jim Matheson from the Edmonton Journal mentioned Ristolainen while tweeting about Nugent-Hopkins in a response to an article written by fellow Edmonton Journal writer David Staples.

It might be interesting that Matheson says a Ristolainen for Nugent-Hopkins scenario is "out there". Does it mean that it's "out there" in terms of being talked about by teams around the league, or is it just circulating around social media and fan chatter?

Matheson suggests that trading Ristolainen for Nugent-Hopkins may be a fit for the Oilers, but would it be for Buffalo?

The Stats:

Nugent-Hopkins is not the generational talent that many first overall picks are touted to be now-a-days in the NHL. He was the first pick in a 2011 draft that featured a lot of very good player at the top, but no elite players.

The 25-year-old has been, roughly, a 50-point player for his career. In seasons where he played at least 60 games, Nugent-Hopkins has put up point totals of 52, 56, 56, 43, 48, 61.

This season is the first time he's cracked 60 points in a season, with 61 in 75 games. Nugent-Hopkins is not a No. 1 center in the NHL, but the Sabres don't need a No. 1 center with Jack Eichel in the fold. They need a No. 2 center behind him.

His role:

A career-high in points has come for Nugent-Hopkins this year playing all over the lineup. He still plays lots of center, but the line he's played most on this season is centered by Connor McDavid, which is a great stat booster for anyone.

His versatility would allow him to either play second line center until Casey Mittelstadt can, hopefully, take over that role, or slide to the wing in a top-six spot, or be the best third line center the Sabres have had in a very long time. There'd be plenty of options.

One thing the Sabres need on their power play is a skilled player to play the opposite flank that Eichel does. Rasmus Dahlin has played that spot the most this season, but it would be in the Sabres' best interest to have him at the point going forward. Nugent-Hopkins could fill the other flank spot as a left shot.

The contract:

The Oilers have Nugent-Hopkins locked up for two more years at a \$6 million cap hit before he becomes an unrestricted free agent at the age of 28. The Sabres might have to give him a longer deal than you'd want to give a 28-year-old in 2021, but that's not a big enough issue to not do a trade.

The trade:

The potential deal being talked about is Ristolainen for Nugent-Hopkins. That's trading a solid second-pair defenseman for a solid second line center. Fine. Fair.

With Dahlin coming into the fold, Ristolainen could finally slide back to a role he always should have been playing. Lesser minutes, lesser matchups, second power play unit. I'd prefer to hang onto Ristolainen to see what he would look like in that spot, but if the value is there, he's certainly not untouchable.

Nugent-Hopkins would be sufficient. He fills a big need that the Sabres have right now in secondary scoring. Not including Eichel, the Sabres' biggest hole this season was not having any sort of offense from their centers. Evan Rodrigues, Mittelstadt, Johan Larsson, and Vladimir Sobotka have combined for just 31 goals this season, only six more than Nugent-Hopkins has on the year.

At the end of the day, fans would probably love this move. I'd want them to do it, but it's not some slam dunk. You're acquiring a 50-point forward in exchange for a 40-point defenseman.

Two non-playoff teams meet in New Jersey

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 25, 2019

Newark, NJ (WGR 550) - The Sabres are playing a New Jersey team that just isn't deep enough to sustain the injuries they've gotten this year.

Their top player Taylor Hall has missed 43 games, Nico Hischier has missed 13, Kyle Palmieri was out for five, Cory Schneider missed a huge portion at 22 games, Jesper Bratt missed 25 games, Blake Coleman and Will Butcher were out for four, Miles Wood missed 19 games, and Sami Vatanen was out for 26 games,

Wood, Mirco Mueller, Vatanen and Hischier all returned in New Jersey's last game.

Schneider hadn't won a game for the Devils since last year, but on Feb. 15, he won in relief against Minnesota, and then beat the Sabres and Ottawa for a three-game winning streak. Schneider is 5-5-1 since he broke his skid. Recently, he's only won one of six games.

Mackenzie Blackwell was in goal in the Devils' last game, making 23 saves on 24 shots in a shootout win over Arizona.

Before that game, New Jersey had lost three straight and 10 out of 12.

The Devils have only scored three goals in four games with the fourth goal being the shootout winner. Former Sabre Drew Stafford has scored two of those three goals, giving him four on the season.

This is the Sabres' first game since being officially knocked out of the playoffs. The blue and gold have had a lot of subpar efforts lately, winning just 1-of-10 games and 3-of-18. Jack Eichel talked after the Montreal game of having pride in themselves and their city to play well. Marco Scandella said, "We're out of the playoffs right now, but we still have a lot to play for, we have pride in this locker room, we have the pride of Buffalo, so we can't just show up for every game the rest of the way, we've got to play our game, we've got to show up and play our game."

The Sabres have given up a goal less than two minutes after they've scored one over 25 times this season. It's a mystery to me how this team can never keep momentum. Scandella said, "It just seems collectively we gain momentum and then we just make a mistake and give it right back. We have to learn that once we get the momentum, it's not about scoring the next goal, it's about keeping it and having that good feeling, making the right play and setting up the next lines."

The Sabres didn't have a morning skate, so we don't know the lineup. With back-to-back games, I would anticipate both Carter Hutton and Linus Ullmark playing in the two.

Casey Mittelstadt practiced on defense Sunday, which usually means that player is sitting. Scott Wilson also wasn't taking a regular shift. Lawrence Pilut didn't get to New Jersey in time for practice, so it's not known if he'll play.

Join Schopp and the Bulldog for the pre-game starting at 6:00 when they'll be joined by Phil Housley, Marco Scandella and Lawrence Pilut.

5 Observations: Devils top Sabres 3-1

By Matt Bove

WKBW

March 25, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — In a game where the Buffalo Sabres had 25 more shots than their opponent they still lost, falling to the New Jersey Devils 3-1. Buffalo finished with 46 shots but their lone goal came on a fluky dump in from Sam Reinhart, who threw a puck at the net from center ice. With the loss, the Sabres fall to 31-35-9.

5 Observations from Monday's loss:

No puck luck

Right now the Sabres just can't buy a goal. Jeff Skinner is the first player that comes to mind, who once again had several great chances but couldn't solve Cory Schneider. Skinner now has only one goal in the Sabres last 17 games. Reinhart, who scored the Sabres lone goal, had what would've been his second of the night taken away because of goaltender interference.

"We did everything we wanted to do but put the puck in the net, " Evan Rodrigues told reporters in New Jersey after the game. "That seems like it's the way it's going these days."

MittelSAT

I'm not clever enough to think of that but to whoever said it first on social media, kudos to you. Jokes aside, I don't understand the decision to sit Mittelstadt at this point in the season. The rookie center has struggled as of late but so has the rest of the team. For a player still learning the game, sitting him with only a few games left just doesn't make sense to me. Whether or not his development was rushed is a conversation for another day but with only seven games left in the season, I think he needs to return to the lineup.

What can we learn during these last seven games?

It would be nice to see the Sabres win a few games after their disastrous last few months. Yes, I realize how elementary that sounds but if you've watched the team lately a "few" games seems like a lot to ask.

This has probably become the most overused stat and tidbit during the second half the season but it's worth reminding you that the Sabres haven't won back-to-back games since Dec. 11 and Dec. 13. Perhaps that streak ends sometime in the next two weeks.

They didn't even score

Not to get carried away....but let's get carried away. In the second period, the Sabres went on the power play and looked great. They didn't even score but it was one of the best man advantages attempts that I can remember in the last few weeks.

The first power play unit featured:

- Eichel
- Skinner
- Reinhart
- Nylander
- Dahlin

As a unit, the combination seemed to work well together and applied some really solid pressure. Two unsuccessful attempts are far too small of a sample size but if the Sabres went with this unit for the remainder of the season I'd certainly be on board.

Taking Flight

From the moment he was called up from Rochester it was obvious that Lawrence Pilut is extremely talented. What cost him a roster spot was the costly mistakes he made that led to goals against. In his first game back with the Sabres after he was sent to Rochester, Pilut reminded us that he should be a regular in the lineup next season. If he can limit the mistakes, which I'm confident he can, there is no reason why he shouldn't play a big role on this team next season. When he's on the ice his presence is felt and he makes his teammates better.

Sabres drop 12th straight road game, lose 3-1 to the Devils

By Nick Filipowski

WIVB

March 25, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - It's been nearly two months since the Sabres last won a road game.

Monday night, they suffered their 12th straight loss away from KeyBank Center, falling 3-1 to the New Jersey Devils, despite peppering Cory Schneider with 46 shots on goal.

"I thought we played the right way. It doesn't make it any less frustrating, that's for sure," said Sam Reinhart after the game. "Now we need to respond tomorrow with the same effort."

Buffalo joins the 2011-2012 team in having lost 12 straight road games, a mark that ranks 10th longest in NHL history.

Trailing 1-0 after the Devils scored less than two minutes into the game, the Blue & Gold got some puck luck, as Reinhart's dump in from center ice bounced under the arm of the netminder and in to tie things up at one.

Reinhart looked to have secured his second tally of the game in the third period, this time sending his 21st goal of the season past Schneider on a rebound. However, New Jersey challenged the goal and the referees determined that Evan Rodrigues interfered with Schneider's ability to play the angle and the goal was taken off the board.

"I was there for five to 10 seconds. Their guy comes and makes a little bit of contact with me. I don't think I purposely went backward into him but there was some contact there and they made the call," said Rodrigues. "It's not a good feeling. No other way to put it. We played the right way. We didn't give them much. We did everything we wanted except put the puck in the net and that seems like the way it's going these days."

The Sabres will look to snap their 12-game road losing streak Tuesday when they travel to Ottawa.

46 shots and only one goal in another Sabres loss

By Dale Mussen

WYRK

March 25, 2019

The level of frustration for the Buffalo Sabres has reached new levels of comprehension this season. They can't even win games when they're better team. The Sabres put 46 shots on New Jersey Devils goaltender Corey Schneider, but were able to manage just one goal in a 3-1 loss on Monday night.

Of all the shots the Sabres had the one they scored on was a fluke from center ice. Sam Reinhart just dumped the puck toward the Devils goal, it made a funny bounce and Schneider misplayed it. That was the only one he gave up.

The Sabres had breakaways, two on ones, great looks from the slot, but they were denied each time. Oh, there was that one goal that didn't count. Again it was Reinhart who stuffed a rebound past Schneider but the Devils contested it charging the goaltender was interfered with and the referees agreed. So instead of a 2-2 game midway thru the third period, the Devils held on to the lead and didn't give it up.

It's Buffalo's 12th straight loss on the road. They haven't won a game on the road since January 29th. That's nearly two months.

Regardless of how many shots they get or how they get 'em this team has no finish. They talk a good game but they can't execute it. Mercifully they have only seven games left before they can be put out of their misery.

They play at Ottawa on Tuesday night.

Overtured goal costs Sabres in loss to Devils

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. - Evan Rodrigues fought for positioning in front of the net with defenseman Andy Greene while Jeff Skinner shot from above the left faceoff circle, creating a rebound that bounced toward Sam Reinhart as he stared down an open cage.

Reinhart collected the puck and buried it behind New Jersey Devils goalie Cory Schneider. It would have been his second goal of the night and tied the game at two goals apiece with 6:24 remaining in the contest, if not for a challenge for goalie interference.

Instead, the call on the ice was overturned and the play went down as a crucial moment in a 3-1 Sabres loss at Prudential Center on Monday.

"I totally disagree with the call," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "I think [Rodrigues has] got his territory in front of the goaltender. We're telling our guys to go to the front of the net. He does the right thing, backs into him. They saw it differently, but I disagree with it."

The overturned goal was a microcosm of what was a frustrating contest for the Sabres, one in which they seemed to do everything right except outscore their opponent. They outshot the Devils, 46-21, but their lone goal came on a shot by Reinhart from center ice in the first period.

The Sabres made it a point to get to the front of the net and make life difficult for Schneider, particularly on the shift that led to Reinhart's would-be goal. Schneider stopped two Rasmus Ristolainen shots through heavy traffic before Reinhart was finally able to grab ahold of Skinner's rebound.

"I thought we were there quite a bit today," Rodrigues said. "I thought we put a focus on it, I thought we did a pretty good job of it. We just needed another bounce, that's all."

Officials ruled that Rodrigues made enough contact with Schneider to impede the goaltender from stopping Reinhart's shot. Rodrigues said he hadn't seen a detailed replay when he spoke to the media afterward, but felt that Greene might have made enough contact to force him into Schneider as they jostled for positioning.

"I was there for five, 10 seconds and I thought I was outside the crease," he said. "Their guy kind of comes, makes a little bit of contact with me. I don't think I purposefully went backwards into it, but there was some contact there. They made the call."

New Jersey led 2-1 at that point thanks to power-play goals from Blake Coleman and Pavel Zacha. Coleman opened the scoring 1:55 into the contest, cutting toward the net and beating Linus Ullmark from in tight.

The Sabres tied the game on Reinhart's goal later in the first period, then dominated the second to the tune of a 14-5 shot advantage. Yet it was the Devils who broke the 1-1 tie when Zacha took a shot from the outer edge of the left faceoff circle that went in off the post with 15:30 remaining.

New Jersey capped the scoring with an empty-net goal from Miles Wood with 1:25 left to play. Ullmark complemented the play in front of him after a 19-save performance, saying he saw strides from Buffalo's last two losses to Toronto and Montreal.

"I mean, we outshot them, out-chanced them, did a great job in our D-zone," Ullmark said. "They didn't get a lot of grade-A scoring chances, no rushes against. This is just how we're supposed to play, keep it tight and then capitalize on our chances."

While the Sabres are eliminated from playoff contention, frustration was evident in the dressing room afterward. Players remain focused on re-establishing a level of play they can take pride in entering the offseason.

This was the sort of effort they had in mind, apart from the outcome.

"If we play like that and start getting more results, it's not going to do anything from a standings standpoint," Reinhart said. "Internally in the room, it's going to lead to next year. That's where we're at, and that's where our focus is at for the next seven [games]."

From distance

Reinhart was at the end of his shift when Rasmus Dahlin forced a turnover in the neutral zone in the first period, and thus tried to bounce a puck toward Schneider before he made his way to the bench. He shot from the edge of the Devils logo at center ice and watched as the puck took an odd-bounce past Schneider.

"I'm trying to throw the bouncer at the end of the shift, trying to get it off," he said. "I got a lucky bounce."

The goal was Reinhart's 20th of the campaign, the third time he's reached the mark in four seasons. Eighteen of those goals have come at even strength, a career high.

Pilut's return

Lawrence Pilut stepped back into the lineup in place of Zach Bogosian, who is day-to-day with a lower-body injury. The rookie defenseman skated 20:42 and tallied three shots on the top pair with Ristolainen.

"I thought he played terrific," Housley said. "Really good poise with the puck, good first pass out of the zone, joining the rush, trying to do what he can to make a difference."

Streaking

Dahlin earned the lone assist on Reinhart's goal, extending his point streak to four games (0+4). His 41 points are tied for 21st among NHL defensemen and tied for second among rookies.

Up next

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

Pilut, Thompson to join lineup in New Jersey

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 25, 2019

NEWARK, N.J. - Tage Thompson and Lawrence Pilut will join the lineup when the Sabres visit the New Jersey Devils tonight at Prudential Center.

Thompson will step in at forward for Casey Mittelstadt, who will be a healthy scratch. Pilut will play for Zach Bogosian, who is day-to-day with a lower-body injury.

Sabres coach Phil Housley said that sitting for a game could benefit Mittelstadt, who has played in 70 contests as a rookie this season. He only played 47 games last season between his freshman campaign at the University of Minnesota, World Juniors and a brief stint with the Sabres.

"He's played a lot of hockey and he's never gone through a grind like this," Housley said. "For the most part, he's done an excellent job trying to learn from our coaching staff and doing the right thing. We really recognize that. At the same time, I think it's taken its toll.

"It's not bad just to take a step back and just regroup and focus for the rest of the season."

Thompson sat as a healthy scratch in Montreal on Saturday. Pilut was recalled Sunday to add depth on defense with Bogosian and Matt Hunwick both nursing injuries. He's tallied six points (1+5) in 25 games with Buffalo this season.

Read more on Pilut in our practice report from Sunday.

The Sabres will turn to Linus Ullmark in net, marking his first start since March 16. He'll be opposed by Cory Schneider for the Devils.

Coverage on MSG-B begins at 6:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night pregame show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.

Scouting the Devils

The Sabres and Devils have split their season series thus far, with the home team winning each of the previous two matchups. Buffalo won, 5-1, on Jan. 8 fueled by a five-goal second period that included Pilut's first NHL goal.

More recently, the Devils claimed a 4-1 victory on Feb. 17 despite being outshot by the Sabres, 35-24.

New Jersey boasts the fourth-ranked penalty kill in the NHL at 84.4 percent, with defenseman Andy Greene leading the league in average shorthanded ice time (4:13). The Devils have gone four games without allowing a power-play goal, during which their penalty kill has gone 10-for-10.

The Sabres have tallied goals on the power play in each of their last two contests, but Housley said he'd still like to see improvement on their zone entries.

"There are times when we get disorganized coming up the ice, especially on our breakouts," he said. "If we don't get the entry, we have to take the extra five to 10 seconds to get back and get organized. It just seems that once we get disrupted like that, we're trying to push things that aren't there."

Projected lineup

43 Conor Sheary - 9 Jack Eichel - 92 Alexander Nylander
53 Jeff Skinner - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 23 Sam Reinhart
72 Tage Thompson - 17 Vladimir Sobotka - 29 Jason Pominville
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 21 Kyle Okposo

Defense: 6 Marco Scandella, 8 Casey Nelson, 24 Lawrence Pilut, 26 Rasmus Dahlin, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 62 Brandon Montour

35 Linus Ullmark
40 Carter Hutton