



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 7, 2019

Burden of captaincy, Sabres' struggles not slowing Jack Eichel's play

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 6, 2019

While his Buffalo Sabres teammates filtered out of the visitors' dressing room in Toronto's Scotiabank Arena on Saturday night, Jack Eichel sat at his stall waiting for reporters to finish speaking with Jason Pominville.

Eichel, the 22-year-old captain, has made himself available to the media all season, no matter the result. Since a 10-game win streak ended, Eichel has fielded questions about the team's continued defensive lapses and a number of epic meltdowns. In addition, he has had to try to explain the Sabres' inability to win consecutive games since Dec. 13.

The responsibility of leading a young team or answering post-game questions during trying times can wear on the NHL's most experienced players, yet Eichel has continued to flourish on the ice.

"He's a special player, a special person," Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian, an alternate captain, said following practice Wednesday. "He's done a lot of really good things for this city and this organization. People tend to forget he's only 22. He's got a lot on his plate, a lot on his shoulders for a young guy. He's handled it well. I think at times it's been tough, but he brings his play every night – his effort, his attitude. He really wants to win."

Eichel has done his part in trying to revive the Sabres. His 25 goals are one off from setting a career high, and he already has achieved his best totals in assists (47) and points (72) with 16 regular-season games to play.

He joined Rick Martin and Thomas Vanek as the only players in franchise history to score at least 20 goals in each of their first four seasons. Eichel is the first Sabres player to record at least 45 assists since Tim Connolly in 2009-10.

Eichel's play hasn't slipped during this final attempt at a playoff push, either. He has seven goals among 10 points in his last eight games, a grueling stretch that included contests against Tampa Bay, Washington, Pittsburgh and Toronto.

"Jack's been good all year," Pominville said. "He's been awesome in the room. His attitude has been great. He's been leading the way on the ice. He's been leading the way off the ice. He's so young still. The upside is still tremendous. He's going to keep growing. He's going to keep getting better."

Eichel has multiple goals in two of his last four games and has points in eight of his last nine. His production has been steady aside from three goals in a 15-game stretch after missing three games because of an upper-body injury.

In addition to being fueled by desperation, Eichel attributed a subtle adjustment to helping his scoring touch during this recent surge. His 252 shots on goal ranked fifth in the NHL entering Wednesday's games. However, his 9.9 shooting percentage ranked 76th among 106 players who had at least 150 shots on goal.

So, Eichel now is aiming lower while quickening his release.

"I probably haven't been the most consistent scorer this year," he acknowledged. "I think I've probably passed up too many opportunities to shoot the puck at times. As of recent, it's been, for one, I've tried to shoot a lot more, and I think it's not always about how hard it is. I've been trying to just shoot lower and release the puck quicker, surprise goalies a little bit. I think it's been working. You can't score, obviously, if you miss the net, so just trying to fine-tune that, I guess."

Health is another factor in Eichel's continued rise. He missed 36 games because of injury over the previous two seasons, often stifling any sort of progress. Experience has taught him how to better prepare for the grueling NHL schedule.

Eichel, who is completing the first season of an eight-year, \$80 million contract, has not played in the Stanley Cup playoffs and endured a 25-win season last year. He has yet to experience a .500 season in Buffalo.

His teammates and coach Phil Housley say the losing has not changed Eichel's demeanor on or off the ice. He was a catalyst in the Sabres' win streak in November and has become a dynamic two-way player, a fact illustrated by Housley trusting him to be on the ice to kill penalties.

"Jack's done a terrific job," Housley said. "He leads by example every day, whether it's in practice or games. His energy, guys feed off it. There's a level of maturity right now in him, and he's doing a really good job of just managing that part. It's got to be difficult when you're not getting results, but you're trying your darndest to get the results. It's great for him, the way he's leading right now, especially with our group."

The Sabres did not have a captain last season, instead relying on a leadership group that included Eichel. He vowed to not change since his approach in previous seasons earned the trust of General Manager Jason Botterill and Housley.

There has been no shortage of adversity during his fourth season. Eichel spoke elegantly when Patrik Berglund left the team unexpectedly in December, expressed confidence in his teammates during another ugly stretch in January and has refused to blame inexperience for the slide.

The Sabres (30-28-8) are in danger of becoming only the second team in NHL history to not make the playoffs in the same season in which they won 10 games in a row. If that is weighing on Eichel, he is not showing it. His is focused on doing his part to ensure they aren't on the wrong side of history.

"Obviously, I think every year you try to take the next step and last year I thought there were a lot of good things, but it's tough when you miss 17 games with injury," Eichel said. "This year, it was important for me to try to stay healthy as much as I could and be in the lineup as much as I could. It's a long year. It's a physical game. It takes a toll on you. I try to be as consistent every night as I can."

Sabres Notebook: Phil Housley seeks 'simple' game to end road woes
By Lance Lysowski
The Buffalo News
March 6, 2019

If the Buffalo Sabres are to make an unprecedented run to snap their eight-year playoff drought, they will have to figure out how to win away from KeyBank Center.

Eight of their final 16 games are on the road, beginning with a two-game trip to Chicago and Denver. The Sabres (30-28-8) will face the Blackhawks (27-30-9) Thursday night in the United Center, followed by a Saturday afternoon game against the Colorado Avalanche.

Neither opponent is occupying a playoff spot. However, the Sabres have gone 3-14-3 in their last 20 games away from Buffalo, including seven consecutive losses. They haven't won a road game since Jan. 29 in Columbus.

"It goes back to simplifying our game and playing a simple road game," Housley said following the Sabres' practice Wednesday in KeyBank Center. "Sometimes that's just relieving pressure out of our defensive zone and getting pucks out. Managing pucks through the neutral zone and getting pucks in, trying to establish our forecheck and I think the simplification of our game. Again, we talked when we don't have the puck, just having our guard up."

Entering Wednesday's games, the Sabres' power play at home ranked 10th in the NHL, compared to 26th on the road. They have posted a minus-26 goal differential over their last 20 road games, allowing four or more goals 12 times.

The Sabres had a pair of epic meltdowns in Toronto last week, allowing three goals in a span of two minutes, four seconds during a 5-3 loss Monday and surrendering four unanswered goals in a 5-2 defeat Saturday.

Buffalo's 26 points on the road were the third-fewest in the NHL entering Wednesday, while its 19 home wins were tied with Montreal and Washington for the fifth-most in the Eastern Conference.

Defensive struggles and problems with puck management have been magnified when the opponent has a number of advantages, including the last line change and crowd noise.

"I think it's just one of those things that varies," defenseman Zach Bogosian said of the Sabres' deteriorating road performance. "We've played some good road games and some not-so-good ones. I don't know if I can really pinpoint one thing. Knowing that maybe the other team has last change at home, making sure puck management and getting pucks deep. Teams thrive on turnovers, especially at home when their crowd gets into it. Puck management would probably be the number one thing."

While neither Housley nor his players could identify one specific thread, they agreed the lack of attention to detail has been the Sabres' downfall, whether it's taking a bad penalty in the first period or a missed defensive coverage.

The Blackhawks entered Wednesday nine points back of the second wild-card playoff spot, but Patrick Kane is in the Hart Trophy conversation. Chicago defeated the Sabres, 7-3, in Buffalo last month.

Additionally, the Avalanche (29-26-12) beat the Sabres, 6-1, in October and are two points behind Minnesota for eighth in the Western Conference. Rather than discussing their road struggles, the Sabres are focused on cleaning up the myriad of errors that have caused them to tumble down the standings.

"We've been good at times," Jason Pominville said. "At times, again, we get away from what leads to us being a good team. I don't know. I wouldn't even be able to tell you what our away record is right now. It's not something that we tend to say, 'Oh, we're going on the road, we haven't been good on the road.' We just go out there, try to play and bring the best version of ourselves. Do that to help the team in any circumstance."

•••

Bogosian and forward Vladimir Sobotka returned to practice Wednesday and could be available to play Thursday night in Chicago.

Bogosian was a late scratch Monday against Edmonton because of a lower-body injury, while Sobotka has missed the past three games with a lower-body injury. Their returns likely will draw Johan Larsson and Casey Nelson out of the Sabres' lineup.

"We'll see how they respond from practice," Housley said Wednesday. "Both of them looked very good out there, but we'll make that decision tomorrow."

•••

Rochester winger Remi Elie was suspended one game by the AHL for an illegal check to the head during the Amerks' 4-1 loss to Syracuse on Sunday.

Elie, who has five goals among eight points in 10 games since joining the Amerks, will sit Friday night against Bridgeport.

With the college season winding down, teams will be looking at college free agents

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 7, 2019

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The Sabres have really dipped into the college free agent market. We can go as far back as Brian Flynn, Tim Schaller, Chad Ruhwedel, Casey Nelson and C.J. Smith as college free agents the Sabres have signed.

Evan Rodrigues has made a pretty good career for himself after signing from Boston University. He understands that college free agency is getting very popular with NHL general managers, "It's a lot easier to scout a guy when he's 21 versus when he's 17 or 18, and some kids don't develop until they're older and at the same time, I think the college game is really fast and that's where the NHL is heading towards the speed and skill game."

Rodrigues was never drafted in the NHL and he thinks he may know a little as to why, "I was a smaller kid growing up and I still am a little bit so I don't really know."

"I always thought I could get drafted and go in the later rounds, but at the same time, I was playing junior hockey at the time and my only focus really was getting a D-I scholarship and when that happened, I was through the roof with excitement."

Just because teams ignored him in the Entry Draft, it didn't detour Rodrigues. He said, "I just took it one day at a time and I knew that not going undrafted wasn't the end of the road and I still had a lot of life ahead of me."

There was a point where it clicked for Rodrigues where he knew he had a chance to play in the NHL, "After my sophomore year, I got invited to a couple of development camps and thought there was a chance that I could make it."

"In my senior year, we started winning games and I knew if I had a good year that there'd be a chance."

Phil Housley never played in college as he jumped right from high school hockey to the NHL. Things are much different now, "It does help them, college hockey is a fast skating game there are a lot of details in those divisions as well, so I think it does help them just to the American League or the NHL game."

It also helps that many of these players are signing pro contracts after three or four years of college hockey. Housley said, "Yes, you get a lot of quality practice time and you're mainly playing on the weekends."

Nelson chose to sign with Buffalo in March of 2016 out of Minnesota State. He came out after his junior season, but he said talks had been going on for a year, "It started in the middle of my sophomore year and it was a great experience and one I'll never forget."

"It was a long process and you try not to let it creep into your game."

Nelson was 23 when he inked his deal with Buffalo. He said that's one of the reasons NHL teams are trying to sign more college free agents, "You're going to get older guys. I was a 21-year-old freshman, so you're going to get guys with some hard-nosed experience."

It's interesting how many of these guys were never drafted. Nelson said he knows exactly why he wasn't drafted, "I was a very late bloomer. I graduated high school I was like 5' 9" and I didn't weigh anything, so I was barely looking to see if I'd play Division-I college, so the NHL wasn't really a thought then."

Housley said Vladimir Sobotka and Zach Bogosian looked good in Tuesday's practice, but he wanted to wait to see about playing in Chicago. Sobotka said he's been cleared to play.

Tuesday's Lines:

Skinner - Eichel - Reinhart

Sheary - Rodrigues - Okposo

Wilson - Mittelstadt - Pominville

Girgensons - Larsson (Sobotka) - Thompson

Scandella - Ristolainen

Dahlin - Nelson

Hunwick - Montour (Bogosian)

How Brandon Montour is already making a difference for the Sabres through his first four games

By Joe Yerdon
The Athletic
March 6, 2019

Since Brandon Montour was acquired from the Ducks a week and a half ago, he's been in more games than he has full practices with the team. Such is life when you're moved ahead of the trade deadline. But what we've seen out of Montour early on shows us why Sabres GM Jason Botterill was so excited to add him to the roster.

Through his first four games, Montour has a goal and an assist (each came in a 4-3 overtime win against Pittsburgh) and he's been on the third defense pairing. In those games he's matched up two times each with Matt Hunwick and Marco Scandella. Although we can imagine Montour's future will see him in the top four, for now, he's been behind Rasmus Ristolainen and Zach Bogosian on the right side. Although it's early in his Sabres career, his defense partners are excited by what he's already shown he can do.

"He's a great skater; he's always trying to press the attack," Scandella said. "He moves the puck really well and jumps in the hole. He's got great communication out there so he's a pretty easy guy to play with. He likes to get the puck out using his feet."

Hunwick has similar praise.

"I knew he was a good player but I didn't see him a lot being in the Western Conference," he said. "Just kind of his all-around game, it seems like he can do it all. He's obviously a very aggressive player and a fun guy to play with, fun guy to watch."

Montour's skating ability and speed are always talked about when it comes to what he brings to the back line. After all, with the NHL's change over the past few years where the better teams are getting more of a push offensively from defensemen, players with abilities like his are going to be valued more.

"Skating has been a strength of mine but I like to skate and it seems like I have a lot of energy out there," Montour said. "Sometimes I'm more tired than others but I think it's just growing up with lacrosse and hockey. I grew up playing both sports and I think that translated to conditioning a lot."

During his first two-plus seasons in Anaheim, Montour played for former Norris Trophy winner Randy Carlyle but was also coached defensively by Trent Yawney. Now with the Edmonton Oilers as an assistant, Yawney helped bring Montour into the NHL and worked to make him better-rounded in his game.

"He's really improved over the time," Yawney said. "He's quick and when he plays with it he can use his quickness as a means of defending – it's very effective. He's got that little bit of bantam rooster in him, that's a good thing, but when he gets against the bigger guys sometimes that can be a bit of a disadvantage."

Montour gives a lot of credit to Yawney for helping him acclimate to the NHL, as the defenseman really hit his stride in his rookie season during the Ducks' playoff run to the 2017 Western Conference Final. Figuring out the balance between playing offense and defense was something they worked on in Anaheim.

"We would always talk about joining the rush from the front of the net and not always think about leading the rush. He's so quick out of the defensive zone that he can be that fourth guy and is very good at it," Yawney said. "He basically limited those times where he was trying to do it by himself and I gave him the penalty kill. I felt that he needed that, that he could do it and what was funny was at the end of the year when I looked through all of the clips, all of the positive ones were around the net and stuff involved him. So he really took to that and he had a really good year offensively and that was a really good byproduct of how he played in his own zone because he was able to disrupt pucks and jump into the play and provide offense in that next layer as the fourth man and he was very good at it."

How that's factored into Montour's usage with the Sabres has been easy to see so far. Even though Buffalo has won only one of the four games he's played in, it's allowed Housley to deploy him away from his defense partners

late in games in which they're trailing to help spur the attack in search of a goal. We saw that work out ideally against Pittsburgh.

Montour's CorsiFor rates with and without his defense partners, however, have been a good enough reason to think he'll be just fine when it's time for him to get into the top-four. (Numbers from NaturalStatTrick.com and measure 5-on-5 play)

	Time on Ice	CorsiFor% With	CorsiFor% Without
Hunwick	20:33	40.6	66.7
Scandella	18:52	32.5	66.1

With the Sabres, Montour has been at 52.3 percent CorsiFor which (**small sample size warning**) is better than he's been in his career with Anaheim. Montour has already landed as the power play quarterback with the second unit in Buffalo and even has had some tastes of life on the penalty kill. If the Sabres are going to employ an attack like that of Nashville, they're going to need more of this out of Montour and others and to do it responsibly.

"I think with guys like that you try to complement them as best you can; be a good outlet, be available, be stable, and then in the D-zone it's just about talking because there are times he'll be up on the rush and be coming back communicating those things," Hunwick said of Montour. "He gets back so fast it's not like he's out of the play."

Players say Phil Housley has changed Sabres for better

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 6, 2019

BUFFALO – Barely two years ago, Phil Housley was the NHL's hottest assistant before the Sabres hired him as the 18th head coach in franchise history following the Nashville Predators' run to the Stanley Cup final.

The move was almost universally lauded. Housley, a Hall of Fame defenseman and one of the greatest Sabres ever, was returning to a team and city close to his heart.

Housley's defense corps in Nashville showcased the fast, aggressive style needed to succeed in the modern NHL.

It seemed like a terrific fit.

Fast forward to today, and Housley has won only 37 percent of his games (55-73-20) with the Sabres.

After finishing dead last a season ago, the Sabres rattled off 10 straight victories in November and ranked first overall late in the month before skidding off the rails.

Since their streak ended, the Sabres are 13-22-6 and have earned only 32 points, the NHL's third-lowest total since Nov. 29.

They've lost six straight road games (0-5-1) are 3-13-3 in their last 20 outings away from KeyBank Center entering tonight's road game against the Chicago Blackhawks.

The growing frustrations over the Sabres' likely eighth straight playoff DNQ – they have just a 0.6 percent chance of making it, according to sportsclubstats.com – have led to cries for Housley to be replaced.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said last month Housley's job is safe. It probably should be, too.

After burning through four coaches in a little more than four years, the Sabres need to commit to someone. While they possess some terrific talent and have showcased improvements at times, the roster simply isn't good enough.

That falls on Botterill, not Housley.

Botterill traded center Ryan O'Reilly to the St. Louis Blues for forwards Patrik Berglund, Vladimir Sobotka, Tage Thompson and a first-round pick on July 1.

The deal has paid virtually zero dividends.

Berglund quit the Sabres in December. Sobotka has scored once since Nov. 8. Because of the lack of depth, Housley has to overuse the Czech. Thompson has scored once in his last 20 games and is skating on the fourth line. More development time in the AHL probably would've benefited him.

Meanwhile, O'Reilly, one of the league's most versatile centers, has compiled 25 goals and 63 points in his first 65 games with the Blues. He was just selected for his second NHL All-Star Game and could be a favorite to win the Selke Trophy as the league's best defensive forward.

Imagine if Housley could still utilize O'Reilly's talents 20 minutes a night.

Following Monday's 4-3 loss to the Edmonton Oilers, the Sabres' eighth setback in 10 games, winger Jason Pominville said the players need to accept blame for the team's struggles, something he repeated Wednesday.

"It's not anyone else," Pominville said. "We're the ones that go out there and play. We can't search for excuses. We just got to be better."

Housley's a hockey lifer who played 21 NHL seasons and paid plenty of dues before earning the Buffalo job. He didn't suddenly forget how to coach.

Clearly, Housley's message has gotten through at times. Their torrid start was the team's high-water mark of the last eight years.

"His first year was trying to get a feel for what was here and the personnel," Pominville said. "This year, I think he was able to come in and from the get-go get the type of team that we wanted to be, the culture that we needed to change, the things that we needed to do different.

"Although our record hasn't shown it, I think we've done a lot of good things off the ice, our culture's changing, he's helped us in a lot of situations on the ice."

His players peg Housley as a hybrid-type coach, meaning he stresses Xs and Os yet still keeps clear lines of communication.

"He's a little bit of both," Pominville said. "He's not a guy that's always negative. I think he's a guy that's pretty upbeat, pretty positive. If he has something for you, he'll come right to you and talk to you about it, respectful in that sense to everyone.

"As far as Xs and Os, he's definitely prepared and has a plan. He gives us all the info that we need, that's for sure. Him and his staff have done a good job."

Sabres winger Kyle Okposo said Housley is "approachable" and "direct."

"A really big approach as a coach is (you) got to be direct and believe in yourself, your authority," Housley said. "You got make sure the players know exactly where they stand."

So what has changed in Housley's nearly two seasons leading the Sabres?

"He really stresses the details of the game, especially on the defensive side of the puck," Okposo said. "As a young team, I really think that you need that. I think we're learning in that aspect how to play better defensively.

"If you were to say one thing (that has changed) ... it would be the defensive side of the game."

Housley has also fostered a better team atmosphere and more appreciation for being a Sabre and a member of the community.

The Sabres huddle at the end of every practice. Pictures commemorating team gatherings and accomplishments hang on the wall as you enter the dressing room. Inside, photos of significant Sabres from the team's history hang above the lockers. There's also a giant buffalo head.

"He really cares about Buffalo and the organization," Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "Obviously, with his past being here and playing here. I just think he tries to pass along his passion of being a Sabre to his guys here in the room."

Sabres have been awful on road for three months

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 6, 2019

BUFFALO – Since their 10-game winning streak ended Nov. 29 in Tampa Bay, the Sabres have been downright awful on the road, compiling the NHL's worst record, a wretched 3-14-3 mark.

Road games, of course, can be tougher. For example, the visitor has the last change. The environment can be unsettling.

Still, every other team has won at least six road contests over that stretch and earned at least 13 points.

Earlier this season, the Sabres performed superbly on the road, starting 8-6-1. During their 10-game run, they won three road games in four days.

What has happened?

In their last 20 road outings, the Sabres have scored only 45 goals and allowed a whopping 70.

"It's just going back to simplifying our game and playing a simple road game," said coach Phil Housley, whose Sabres start a two-game road trip Thursday in Chicago. "Sometimes it's just relieving pressure out of defensive zone and getting pucks out, managing pucks through the neutral zone and getting pucks in and let our forecheck try to establish a forecheck. I think the simplification in our game.

"And again, we talked about when we don't have the puck, just having our guard up."

Winger Jason Pominville said he doesn't know the Sabres' road record.

"It's not something that we tend to say, 'Oh, we're going on the road. We haven't been good on the road,'" Pominville said. "We just go out there and try to play and try to bring our best version of ourselves."

The Sabres have lost six straight road games (0-5-1). They last won 5-4 on Jan. 29 in Columbus.

The Sabres are 0-6-2 in their last eight games in Chicago and haven't won there since Jan. 10, 2007.

In other news, Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian, who missed Monday's 4-3 loss to Edmonton with a lower-body injury, practiced this morning in his regular spot beside rookie Rasmus Dahlin.

Meanwhile, center Vladimir Sobotka, out the last three games with an upper-body injury, practiced inside KeyBank Center between Zemgus Girgensons and Tage Thompson.

"We'll see how they respond today to practice," Housley said. "Both of them looked very good out there. We'll make that decision tomorrow."

If they can return against the Blackhawks, center Johan Larsson and defenseman Casey Nelson will likely be scratched.

Eichel near milestone as Sabres visit Blackhawks

ABC 7 Chicago

March 6, 2019

Jack Eichel will try to set a career high in goals scored when his Buffalo Sabres visit the Chicago Blackhawks on Thursday night.

The 22-year-old Massachusetts native, who was the No. 2 overall pick in the 2015 NHL draft, already has matched his career high with 25 goals in 63 games. He has six goals in his past five games and is coming off a two-goal performance against the Edmonton Oilers.

Eichel offered a simple reason for his recent success. He is throwing the puck at the net without trying to be too perfect.

"I probably haven't been the most consistent scorer this year," Eichel said to the Buffalo News. "I think I've probably passed up too many opportunities to shoot the puck at times. As of recent it's been, for one, I've tried to shoot a lot more, and I think it's not always about how hard it is. I've been trying to just shoot lower and release the puck quicker, surprise goalies a little bit.

"I think it's been working. You can't score, obviously, if you miss the net. So (I'm) just trying to fine-tune that, I guess."

Buffalo (30-28-8, 68 points) has dropped back-to-back contests and is a longshot to claim a spot in the Eastern Conference playoffs. The team is 2-7-1 since Feb. 15 and has given up four-plus goals in each of its regulation losses during that span.

The playoff outlook also has turned bleak for Chicago (27-30-9, 63 points), which, like Buffalo, has lost two games in a row. Defense has also been shaky for the Blackhawks, who have allowed four-plus goals in seven of their last eight games and eight of their last 10.

Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane, who grew up in Buffalo and attended Sabres games as a child, leads Chicago and ranks second in the NHL with 94 points (40 goals, 54 assists) in 65 games. He has played his hometown team 16 times in his career, tallying 10 goals and 11 assists.

Eichel leads Buffalo with 72 points (25 goals, 47 assists) in 63 games this season. Two teammates are next with 58 points -- Jeff Skinner (36 goals, 22 assists) and Sam Reinhart (18 goals, 40 assists).

The showdown against the Sabres offers another growth opportunity for Blackhawks defenseman Erik Gustafsson, a 26-year-old Swede who has enjoyed a breakout season. He already has tripled his career high with 48 points (13 goals, 35 assists) in 63 games.

"It has been a breakout year and he's shown that he can do special things at our level," Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton said in comments published by the Chicago Tribune. "He's been great for the power play, and whenever he's on the ice, he makes plays not many guys in the league make. That's been a huge development for him.

"Doesn't mean we're not going to ask him to do more away from the puck and defensively, because ultimately we don't want him to limit himself as far as (the) player he can be. We want him to be dominant at both ends. Skill-wise, skating (and) size, he can do it. It's just a matter of committing to it."

Chicago is 14-13-6 at home this season. Buffalo is 11-18-4 on the road.