



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Dylan Cozens gets his welcome to the NHL, Sabres win in Ralph Krueger's debut

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

September 16, 2019

UNIVERSITY PARK, PA. — When the emotional rollercoaster finally ended Monday night, Ralph Krueger stood in front of his players inside the Buffalo Sabres' dressing room and expressed a blend of excitement and relief.

"Said to the guys after the game, 'It was good to get that one down,'" Krueger told reporters, his voice hoarse following his first game as an NHL coach since April 27, 2013.

Krueger's return did not go exactly as planned. Despite having only three days to prepare, the Sabres made Krueger's vision a reality by using a fast-and-furious style of play to build a three-goal lead through two periods.

However, the Sabres relinquished the lead and needed Jack Eichel's overtime goal with eight seconds remaining to win Krueger's debut, 5-4, against the Pittsburgh Penguins at Penn State's Pegula Ice Arena. The game provided some semblance of how Krueger wants the Sabres to play in 2019-20 and will give his coaching staff some lessons to teach to players.

Krueger wasn't the only person in the Sabres' dressing room getting acclimated, either. Dylan Cozens, the 18-year-old center drafted seventh overall in June, made his exhibition debut against NHL competition. Though Cozens did not record a point, he also expressed confidence in his ability to learn from his introduction.

"Obviously it's very fast and guys are so strong and just getting used to the quickness of it," he said afterward. "The little time and space that you have, I think you have to adjust and I'm going to adjust quickly to it. But it was a lot of fun and we got the win, so that was exciting."

Cozens had only two shots on goal against a Penguins lineup filled with prospects, many of whom played against the Sabres' top draft pick at the Prospects Challenge in Buffalo earlier this month. He took advantage of an opportunity to showcase the skills that made him one of the top players in the most recent NHL draft.

Cozens tipped two pucks near the Penguins net on the power play, the first of which almost snuck past goalie Casey DeSmith. Cozens also broke his stick on a shot attempt that went wide of the net in the third period. But his most impressive work did not show up on a stat sheet. He was fearless driving to the net and used his speed to get behind defenders while showing chemistry with his linemates, Tage Thompson and Remi Elie.

Cozens did not show any sort of hesitation against the Penguins, despite he and his teammates having only three practices to learn Krueger's offensive and defensive systems.

"I think emotionally there are so many things for him to step into this space for the first time," Krueger said of Cozens. "He managed it really well. He was calm on the bench. He's an energetic kid trying to learn every shift. It was an exciting coaching opportunity for me to stand behind somebody with that much skill in their very first game at this level. He's got some exciting years ahead of him."

Cozens played on the Sabres' second power-play unit and was trusted to take offensive-zone faceoffs in important situations. He also helped them out-shoot the Penguins, 48-17.

Cozens didn't commit any egregious mistakes, and he showed poise with the puck, even when facing NHL players Bryan Rust, Zach Aston-Reese and Dominik Simon. Cozen was among the more impressive players during the Sabres' Prospects Challenge in LECOM Harborcenter earlier this month and scored during his first game in Buffalo but didn't have the same offensive impact against better competition Monday.

Cozens, who underwent surgery on his left thumb in July, played well enough at the Prospects Challenge to raise questions, at least externally, whether he could earn a roster spot in training camp. Now, there's reason to wonder if Monday will be Cozens' only game in a Sabres uniform in 2019-20. Krueger will soon have to trim his roster, and Cozens may not be able to delay his return to Lethbridge of the Western Hockey League.

"So far great," Thompson said of Cozens. "He has a lot of confidence. I think you see it with his play out there. He's really fast and dynamic with the puck. I don't think there are too many nerves with him right now."

Third-period meltdown: The Penguins scored three goals in less than eight minutes to tie the score with 11:14 left in regulation. Neither Krueger nor his players expressed concern following the game, but the coach acknowledged there will be many lessons to teach.

"When you looked at the opportunities we had versus what they had in the first 40 minutes, we were extremely pleased with the work ethic," Krueger said. "There's a lot of information that went into their heads here the last four days and there's no way they're going to execute that perfectly, but we saw semblances of what we want to see and we still have time until it really matters. That's the good thing. ... We lost the way [we want to play], especially with the puck. We got complicated and let them back into the game."

Early mistakes: Rasmus Dahlin showed some rust with the puck and two of his turnovers resulted in Penguins goals. First, his breakout pass was intercepted by Penguins winger Nathan Legare and resulted in Andrew Agozzino scoring the first goal 4:34 into the game. Dahlin also committed a turnover on Adam Johnson's third-period goal, which cut the Sabres' lead to one with 13:36 remaining.

Serious speed: John Gilmour is making a strong first impression with the Sabres. Gilmour, a 26-year-old defenseman who signed a one-way contract with Buffalo on July 1, scored the team's first goal of the preseason at 5:44 into the first period.

Gilmour collected a pass from Jimmy Vesey, used his elite speed to create separation from a Penguins defender and fired a shot over DeSmith's glove to tie the score, 1-1. Gilmour scored 20 goals among 54 points last season for Hartford of the American Hockey League.

Tape-to-tape: Though Dahlin struggled in his own end, he also made a few dynamic plays. The 19-year-old held the puck near the red line, waited for Conor Sheary to skate toward the opposing blue line and unleashed a perfect pass to spring the winger for a breakaway.

Sheary, who won two Stanley Cups with the Penguins, scored with a wrist shot over DeSmith's glove at 18:47 for a 2-1 lead.

Immediate impact: Henri Jokiharju also is making a strong case to stick with the Sabres. Jokiharju, a 20-year-old defenseman acquired from Chicago for Alexander Nylander, scored with a shot from the left circle at 11:40 into the second period. Perhaps Jokiharju's most impressive play came moments earlier when he stripped a Penguins of the puck to create a 2-on-1 rush for Sheary and Evan Rodrigues.

Standing tall: Thompson was among the Sabres' best players Monday night. The 21-year-old winger stick-handled around defenders in the neutral zone to help his line enter the offensive zone and scored the type of goal that shows how effective he can be when using his 6-foot-5 frame around the net.

Thompson screened goalie Tristan Jarry on a second-period power play and used his reach to backhand a rebound off Dahlin's shot into the back of the net for a 4-1 lead at 15:58.

"Anywhere on the power play is awesome, so I can't complain," Thompson, who skated on the Sabres' top power play, said of being in front of the net. "I feel comfortable there. I've played it in the past. Feel comfortable down low, behind the goal line and in front of the net. Popping in and out. It's a good spot for me."

Quiet night: Carter Hutton started in goal for the Sabres and stopped two of three shots before he was replaced by Jonas Johansson with 10:38 remaining in the second period. DeSmith, who was replaced by Jarry, stopped 23 of 25 shots.

Veterans sit: Neither defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen nor winger Marcus Johansson will play in the Sabres' first two preseason games, Krueger told reporters Monday. Defenseman Brandon Hickey, who likely will spend this season in Rochester, was a healthy scratch against the Penguins.

Next: The other half of the Sabres' roster — including Sam Reinhart, Casey Mittelstadt, Brandon Montour and Linus Ullmark — will travel to Columbus to face the Blue Jackets on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

With two-year deal, Jean-Sebastien Dea gives Sabres a new option at forward

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

September 16, 2019

It might not happen out of training camp, but Jean-Sebastien Dea is a good bet to play with the Sabres this season. And when he's not in Buffalo, the 25-year old figures to be one of the main cogs at center for the Rochester Amerks.

If the Sabres want an upgrade of speed and skill to their bottom six forwards, Dea could be an answer. Particularly if he makes an impact in exhibition games.

"My role in the NHL won't be a goal scorer and I know that," the 5-foot-11 Dea said after practice Monday in KeyBank Center. "Even if I don't play on the first two lines, I can still bring a lot of speed and bring offense and play with energy."

"Those games will be very important for guys like me. I'm excited to play in them. Practices are good to see that you're in shape, but now it's game on and I'm excited for the challenge."

Dea is expected to get his first chance in the Buffalo lineup Tuesday night when the Sabres travel to meet the Columbus Blue Jackets in Nationwide Arena. Dea, who also can play right wing, has been on a line with Scott Wilson and Arttu Ruotsalainen in camp. Dea has spent most of the last six years in the Pittsburgh organization and it was Sabres GM Jason Botterill who signed Dea as a free agent out of juniors for the Penguins in 2013.

Botterill and Dea agreed to a two-year, \$1.4-million deal this summer. Of note, it's a one-way deal so he makes \$700,000 whether he's in Buffalo or Rochester. Poor play or injuries here likely would make Dea one of the first recall candidates if he starts the season with the Amerks.

"It's great to be back with 'Botts' again and when they called me this summer, I was very excited," Dea said. "My goal was to get a one-way deal because I felt I had shown I was able to play in the NHL as well, so that was a major objective for the summer. When Buffalo called me and offered me two years, I was really excited and I couldn't pass on that deal."

Dea was a two-time 40-goal scorer for Rouyn-Noranda of the Quebec League but went undrafted before Pittsburgh signed him. Dea has averaged 18.3 goals and 41 points per season last four years in the AHL, with a high of 20 goals at Wilkes-Barre/Scranton in 2015-16. He scored 17 last year between the Pens' affiliate and Florida's Springfield team.

"I've kept a good attitude. I'm fortunate and grateful to be able to play hockey, happy to be at the rink every day," he said. "I know it's a business and it's never easy. Some guys have an easier time with that, my situation might be a little harder. But I work hard and I trust myself and think I can make it."

One thing that keeps Dea pushing forward is the fact he's always had teams wanting him. He's already been sent to the minors five different times in his career, waived three times and traded once. But he's been claimed off waivers twice and now has signed his first free agent contract with the Sabres.

"I always have the feeling somebody is going to want me and keep giving me my chance," he said. "That's why I keep working hard, be a good teammate and I think good things will happen."

Dea has five goals in 29 career NHL games, 20 of which came last year with New Jersey after getting claimed off waivers from Pittsburgh.

"It was my first time being in the NHL for a regular period, a couple months," he said. "I kept telling the media how grateful I was to be there and that was true. It's how I feel today. To be able to perform in the NHL is something a lot of kids dream of and I don't take it for granted. It gave me confidence I can play in the NHL."

No. 1 pick Dylan Cozens to get a look as Sabres open preseason

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

September 16, 2019

A lot of big names will be in the Buffalo Sabres' lineup when they open the preseason against Pittsburgh tonight at 7 at Pegula Ice Arena on the campus of Penn State. Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner and Rasmus Dahlin are all scheduled to play in Ralph Krueger's first exhibition game as Buffalo coach.

Another interesting debut will be that of No. 1 draft pick Dylan Cozens, who will be on a line centering wingers Remi Elie and Tage Thompson.

"I've been here at main camp around the guys and I've become comfortable here just on the ice with these guys," Cozens said after today's morning skate in KeyBank Center before the team made the quick flight to State College, Pa. "Obviously it's exciting being in a preseason game with other top guys, stars in the NHL and people I looked up to growing up, so it's going to be exciting.

"I can't be going out there trying to dangle everyone and turning pucks over. I've got to simplify it, especially at this level."

Krueger agreed.

"What we're looking for is simplicity," said the coach, who added that Cozens should get power play time as well tonight. "I thought in the rookie camp at times, he was trying to be a difference-maker every time on the ice. He doesn't have that pressure here. We'd like to see him execute within the principles, keep it nice and simple and just have fun."

Cozens is a long shot to make the Sabres' roster and there's a chance this could be his only chance to play with the big club in the preseason. He knows that General Manager Jason Botterill has already publicly frowned on an 18-year-old, non-Dahlin division, sticking in the NHL.

"I'm just trying to work as hard as I can every day and learn as much as I can," Cozens said. "My goal is to stick here for as long as I can, but if not I'm going to be happy to go back to Lethbridge and have another year of development. My goal is to make an impression and make it a hard decision for them to make."

Krueger knows he'll have lots of hard decisions to make in the next couple of weeks regarding his roster.

"We really have multiple names, multiple spots, so it's going to be fun now," Krueger said. "The games will definitely influence us moving forward."

Albeit in preseason, this will be the first time Krueger has been behind an NHL bench in nearly 6½ years, since he was fired by the Edmonton Oilers in 2013.

"I haven't been a head coach in a while and I've run it through my head multiple times in the last years," he said. "So I'm looking forward to using these six games also to getting our bench operating the way we need to operate."

The game is on WGR Radio 550 and will be streamed at Sabres.com for those in the Sabres' main MSG Network viewing area, as per NHL rules. So it will probably be tough for any of Cozens' friends and family back home in Whitehorse of the Yukon territory to see his debut, without the help of some sort of pirated stream.

"I'm sure some people will try to. I haven't talked to anyone back there," he said. "My family will try to watch it. I don't know how they're going to be able to but I'm sure they'll figure it out."

Sabres' Thompson has shown early improvement

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 17, 2019

Happy Valley, PA (WGR 550) - The biggest thing I've taken away from both the Prospects Challenge and the Sabres' first preseason game on Monday is Jason Botterill is getting players that will go to the net.

The Sabres blew a 4-1 third period lead only to win in overtime. I thought the Sabres' best player, by far, was Tage Thompson. He was around the net all night long, and was using the size and strength he put on over the summer.

On his first shift, Thompson put on a nifty move and almost scored. After watching this team play on the perimeter for years, it's so refreshing to see Thompson, Dylan Cozens and others playing around the crease and screening goalies.

John Gilmour isn't a big defenseman, but boy can he skate. Conor Sheary broke the puck out to Jimmy Vesey, and Gilmour not only read the play, but he sprinted past the Pittsburgh defense and ripped a goal right under the cross bar. He's here for depth, and I don't think he'll hurt the team at all if he needs to be called up due to injuries.

Henri Jokiharju scored in his first game as a Sabre after there was really fast and crisp puck movement. The whole play was started on a 2-on-1 that failed, but nobody stopped. They kept moving the puck and got a goal. I know, it all sounds so simple, but this team couldn't execute simple fundamentals.

Jokiharju was solid throughout. He got a chance to kill penalties and did a good job.

Now I do have to point out that Pittsburgh had maybe five NHL players in its lineup, but after two periods, the Sabres had 37 shots to the Penguins' nine.

Buffalo stopped working in the third period as it appeared they thought the game was won. Carter Hutton left the net playing just under 30 minutes. He only saw three shots. Jonas Johansson relieved him and didn't look good at all. If he was going to be a prospect, I would've thought we would've seen more progress by now. He'll be back in Cincinnati this season, and I don't see him getting much more than that.

Rasmus Dahlin had some great breakout passes, but just like he did in the last few months of last season, he made two horrendous turnovers that wound up in the net.

Cozens had some good chances in the first two periods. Why? Because he was around the net screening the goalie and tipping pucks. He also used his speed to his advantage.

Krueger is trying Jeff Skinner with Evan Rodrigues and, in my mind, it's not working. They don't seem to have much chemistry at all in practice or in this game.

It was good to see a team that was skating and going to the net, but I don't know how much we can take from it since Pittsburgh had very few of their players.

It'll be a whole different team in Columbus on Tuesday. Only one or two players will play both games, but I think the first dose of Sabres hockey this season was encouraging.

Eichel plays hero in 5-4 preseason win over Penguins

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

September 16, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres kicked off their preseason schedule on Monday night with a 5-4 overtime win over the Pittsburgh Penguins in Happy Valley at Penn State University.

Buffalo took shots early and often, and were able to come away with the victory despite conceding a three-goal lead in the third period. Sabres captain Jack Eichel ended things with eight-seconds to go in the overtime period.

The Penguins got on the board first as Andrew Agozzino snuck a puck past Sabres starting netminder Carter Hutton less than five minutes into the first period.

Buffalo responded very well, though, and answered back with the game-tying goal just over a minute later. Defenseman John Gilmour potted his first goal of the preseason to make it 1-1 as he jumped up in the rush and used his speed to blow by the Pittsburgh defense. The Sabres continued to go to work all period long, firing shot after shot at Penguins goalie Casey DeSmith.

One of their final shots of the period gave the blue and gold their first lead of the night, as former Penguins forward Conor Sheary found himself alone on goal and tallied a goal just ahead of the final minute of the opening period.

Buffalo eventually broke for the first intermission leading 2-1, and out-shooting the Penguins 18-2 through the opening 20 minutes.

The first half of the second period saw no changes on the scoreboard.

Hutton saw just one more shot against him before head coaches Ralph Krueger and Mike Sullivan opted to make goalie changes for sake of preseason work. Jonas Johansson entered for the Sabres, while Tristan Jarry skated onto the ice for the Penguins. Johansson was immediately tested and made a flurry of saves just moments after he entered the game, and did not waiver as he kept pucks out of his net.

Buffalo added to their lead at the 11:40 mark, just a little over a minute after Jarry entered the net for the visitors. Newly-acquired defenseman Henri Jokiharju scored to make it a 3-1 score just inside the top of the faceoff circle to the right of Jarry. Then, with just under four minutes to play in the second, Tage Thompson gave the Sabres a 4-1 lead with a power play goal off a rebound in front of the Pittsburgh net.

Despite being out-shot 37-9 through two periods, and eventually 45-13 in regulation, Pittsburgh did not roll over in the third as they rallied for three unanswered goals on four third-period shots to force overtime. Sam Lafferty, Adam Johnson and Ryan Haggerty all scored goals against Johansson in succession in the final period of regulation as the Sabres suddenly had no answer to the Penguins' push.

The teams traded chances in overtime, but the game-winning goal eventually came from Eichel on a breakaway after Sheary made a nice play to knock down a puck at the Buffalo blue line and spring Eichel for the goal.

GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 5:44 - John Gilmour (1) (Jimmy Vesey, Jack Eichel); 18:47 - Conor Sheary (1) (Rasmus Dahlin)
PIT: 4:34 - Andrew Agozzino (1) (Nathan Legare)

Second Period:

BUF: 11:40 - Henri Jokiharju (1) (Conor Sheary, John Gilmour); 15:58 - Tage Thompson (1) PPG (Rasmus Dahlin, Jeff Skinner)
PIT: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: NONE
PIT: 0:51 - Sam Lafferty (1) (John Marino); 6:24 - Adam Johnson (1) (Unassisted); 8:46 - Ryan Haggerty (1) (Jack Johnson, Dominik Simon)

Overtime:

BUF: 4:52 - Jack Eichel (1) (Conor Sheary)
PIT: NONE

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: NONE
PIT: 11:45 - Jack Johnson (Holding - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: 1:58 - Andrew Oglevie (Interference - 2 min.); 7:29 - Colin Miller (Holding - 2 min.); 10:37 - Rasmus Dahlin (Tripping - 2 min.)
PIT: 10:20 - Chad Ruhwedel (Hooking - 2 min.); 15:06 - Samuel Poulin (Hooking - 2 min.); 16:53 - Juuso Riiikola (Illegal check to the head - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: NONE
PIT: NONE

Overtime:

BUF: NONE
PIT: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 47 (18, 19, 8, 2)
PIT: 18 (2, 7, 4, 5)

Goalies:

BUF: Carter Hutton - 2 saves; Jonas Johansson - 12 saves
PIT: Casey DeSmith - 23 saves; Tristan Jarry - 19 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 1 for 4 (25%)
PIT: 0 for 3 (0%)

What's next:

The Sabres get right back on the ice on Tuesday night for their second preseason game against the Columbus Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena. Faceoff is set for 7 p.m with pre-game coverage starting at 6:45 p.m. on WGR with Brian Koziol and Paul Hamilton.

Sabres' Cozens is looking forward to his first NHL action

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 16, 2019

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Dylan Cozens will play his first NHL game as the Sabres open the preseason at Penn State against the Penguins.

We all know it's an exhibition game, but I thought Cozens might be nervous, "No I don't think so. I've been here in main camp just being around the guys and I've become comfortable here, but it is so exciting just being out there with other top guys and people I looked up to growing up, so it's going to be exciting."

Even though he's only 18, Cozens still thinks he has a chance to make the team this year. He's shown very well in the Prospects Challenge and at training camp, but he has to be careful not to try to do too much to impress, "I can't be going out there trying to dangle everyone and turning pucks over. I've got to simplify especially at this level at the start of the season."

The thing that could hurt Cozens trying to make it this year is at 18, he still is going to get bigger and stronger. He has noticed that in camp, "I've learned the strength and speed these guys have and I know I'm still young and it's going to come with time and I know I need to get stronger and faster and quicker in everything I do."

Ralph Krueger will be doing a lot of evaluating during the preseason. As far as Cozens first game the head coach said, "This is a lot different than the rookie games. If you look at Dylan's opportunity to be in this group, he will get a little power play time and we'll give him an opportunity to play his game and show his tools and what we're looking for is simplicity. I thought in the rookie camp sometimes he was trying to be a difference maker every time on the ice and he doesn't have that pressure here, so keep it nice and simple and have fun."

This preseason just isn't for the players. Krueger hasn't been behind a NHL bench in a while and he hasn't coached with most of his staff, so these six games will help work the kinks out, "Let's be honest, I haven't been a head coach for a while and I'm looking forward to using these six games to get our bench operating in the way we need to operate, how much teaching are we going to do where? I'm bigger on creating flow and energy in a game than I am on over teaching there.

"We know some of the rule changes too dealing with the coaching challenges now, there's a whole new risk involved and also the use of technology on the bench and that's changed since I was on a NHL bench."

The group Rasmus Ristolainen has been skating with is the group going to Happy Valley. They're all playing except for Ristolainen, but Krueger said he and Marcus Johansson won't play in the first two games, but will play later in preseason.

Carter Hutton gets the call in net, but Jonas Johansson will likely play too.

Monday's Lineup:

Sheary - Eichel - Vesey

Skinner - Rodrigues - Lazar

Girgensons - Larsson - Oglevie

Elie - Cozens - Thompson

Dahlin - Jokiharju

Scandella - Miller

Gilmour - Nelson

Hickey

Hutton

J. Johansson

Our coverage gets underway at 6:45 with the pre-game, then Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray have all the play-by-play action.

Six observations from the Sabres' first preseason game under Ralph Krueger

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

September 16, 2019

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — The Sabres brought a heavily-loaded NHL roster to Pegula Ice Arena on the campus of Penn State University and dealt with a Penguins team that had more guys destined for Wilkes-Barre/Scranton than Pittsburgh. It was Ralph Krueger's first game behind an NHL bench since 2013 – one that was filled with plenty of expected ups and downs – and one of four the team will play this week.

So just how did the Sabres look in their debut under Krueger? Here are six observations (with a bonus) from one of the nicest college hockey rinks in the country.

1. Krueger is getting back in the saddle again

The last time Krueger coached NHL players was in the World Cup of Hockey in 2016. The last time he coached a NHL team was 2013 in Edmonton. Krueger was joined on the bench by assistants Don Granato and Steve Smith, while Mike Bales and video coach Myles Fee watched from up high.

"I'm looking forward to using these six (preseason) games to get our bench operating in the way we need to operate, get to feel the personality of the guys, how much teaching are we going to do where," Krueger said Monday before the game. "I'm bigger on creating flow and energy during a game than I am on over-teaching there."

Getting back behind the bench on Monday night allowed Krueger to get a full reminder of how the ups and downs of a game can go. After Buffalo got out to a 4-1 lead, Krueger watched that three-goal lead disappear in the third thanks to miscues and turnovers.

"There's no question that you're getting used to the rhythm," Krueger said. "Going through power plays, penalty killing. We're taking people from different lines and keeping everybody in the game. It was a lot of fun to be back there, mixing up the cards and trying to find a way to win in the end. Forcing players like Jack (Eichel) maybe a touch, but in the end everybody here was playing to win this game, which was a good sign."

Krueger showed a touch with his lineup tweaks. After the Penguins tied it 4-4 at 8:46 of the third, he switched up two of his defense pairs. Rasmus Dahlin played most of the game with Henri Jokiharju and John Gilmour was with Casey Nelson, but he switched to putting Dahlin with Nelson and Gilmour with Jokiharju. After that change, the Sabres went from playing back on their heels to going back to pushing forward and generating shots. It was a simple switch, but it worked to return the game to normal.

2. Krueger hockey brings the pressure

Seeing the Sabres do things in practice against each other is one thing, but doing it against a live opponent showed more clearly how they're going to play and what leads to success: Pressuring the puck.

Buffalo exhibited their newly installed intense forecheck, which had the Penguins looking for any kind of relief through two periods. Heading into the third, the Sabres had outshot Pittsburgh 37-9. Pittsburgh struggled to shake free of oncoming forwards deep in their own zone and it led to turnovers, icings, and blown passes into the neutral zone. We analyzed this during the Prospects Challenge, but the Sabres' NHL pros exhibited that they can also have success playing this way.

This will be interesting to watch throughout the remainder of camp when the preseason opponents progressively have more NHL talent-laden lineups to face off against.

3. Dylan Cozens debuts

It's a little weird to have the 2019 first-round pick not be the No. 1 item to discuss out of this game, but here we are. Cozens was teamed up with Remi Elie and Tage Thompson on the third line (as John Vogl discussed recently) and this group worked well together against Pittsburgh.

What stood out here is how Cozens was able to use his speed and size to drive the net. At one point in the first period, Cozens attempted to stickhandle past Penguins defenders into the heart of the slot from the blue line and was swarmed before turning it over briefly. Lesson learned. He used his feet and stick-handling on a subsequent play to drive to the outside of a defender to force him one-on-one and got behind him to go to the paint.

"I want to play with confidence; I don't want to play scared," Cozens said. "I don't want to play like I'm worried to make mistakes because then I'll make mistakes. I just went out there, played with confidence. It's the same game I've played my whole life so it's not that much different – so I just stuck to what I know."

Cozens wants to make the NHL right away and he's learned some lessons already. Applying that against stiffer competition will show where he's at in the race to make the opening night roster.

4. Up-and-down game for Rasmus Dahlin

Guys won't always be roaring to go for the first game of the preseason. That's excusable, but Dahlin was on ice for all four Penguins goals. No one is going to remember it, but it was still weird to see.

Dahlin's turnover to Penguins forward Adam Johnson led to a breakaway goal that made it 3-1. Krueger's third period defensive switch was as much a reward to Gilmour, who had a solid game and a nice goal in the first period, as it was a lesson for Dahlin. It wasn't all bad news because Dahlin can thread a needle like this:

Krueger said Monday morning he wanted to see Dahlin and Jokiharju together to see how they'd function in the defensive zone and how that would translate into offensive chances. Although Jokiharju had a goal in the second period during a 4-on-4 situation, if we're going to see more of that pair together, crisper play in their own end will be needed.

5. A bigger, stronger Tage Thompson

We all know Tage Thompson is a big guy. According to the latest stats supplied by the team, he's now 6-foot-7 and 215 pounds, up from 6-6 and 205 last season. When he finished last season in the AHL with Rochester, something he did with a lot of success was dig in around the net and score goals down low. He did exactly that on the power play against the Penguins.

"I love it – anywhere on the power play is awesome – so I can't complain," Thompson said. "I feel comfortable there. I've played it in the past. Feel comfortable down low, behind the goal line and in front of the net, popping in and out. It's a good spot for me."

Thompson was on a power play unit with Eichel, Jeff Skinner, Jimmy Vesey and Dahlin. The power play formation was similar to what we've seen the last few years with a 1-3-1 type of setup in the zone. Last season, Thompson was mostly on the flanks looking to unleash the big shot. This time he was parked in front of the net.

It seems like Thompson has been a bit forgotten about after a difficult season last year, but he's bulked up a bit and is still a quick skater. His ability to steal the puck from opponents hasn't disappeared. He's one of the most skilled players with the defensive stick on the team. Those abilities come in handy and if he can put his size to use all over the ice, he could snag a spot on the right wing.

6. Newsflash: Eichel still excellent at hockey

When Eichel digs in there are very few players in the league that can handle him. He rolled out on a line with Sheary and Jimmy Vesey, but it was in overtime where he showed he can singlehandedly own the moment.

Early on in overtime, he gathered the puck in the neutral zone and went one-on-three against the Penguins and beat all of the opposing players on the way to the net. He uncorked his trademark wrist shot from the circle towards the far side of the net only to hit the iron about as loudly as you can.

In the closing seconds, after a calamitous breakdown in the defensive zone that saw the Penguins nearly come away with the winning goal, Eichel snuck out of the zone cheating a bit in hopes of getting a breakout pass for a

breakaway opportunity. He got it and had enough time to settle the puck down and pick his spot for the winner with eight seconds left. It's just preseason but it's still pretty great to see.

Bonus: Pegula Ice Arena is an absolute gem

Terry and Kim Pegula dropped \$80 million to start the men's and women's varsity hockey programs in 2012 and with it the Pegula Ice Arena, which opened in 2013.

It's a gleaming home for hockey and one which was built to make the home ice advantage very apparent. The fans in The Roar Zone, the student section located behind one of the goals, opened each period of Monday's game with a chant of, "Hockey Valley" followed with a chant of "Thank You Terry" with the appropriate rhythmic claps mixed in.

The Roar Zone rises high and steep behind the net to create a wall of sound meant to make life hell on earth for opposing goalies. Penn State fans are rabid, loyal, and don't exactly treat the rest of the opposing roster so kindly either, especially if they've got fodder to be used against them.

"They're crazy there; it was a lot of fun. I think every person in the stands had a picture of me trying to do a pull-up, so that was pretty funny," Sabres center and former Minnesota Golden Gophers star Casey Mittelstadt said.

Mittelstadt infamously didn't register one pull-up at the NHL Draft Combine in 2017. In college hockey, where heckling is part of the norm, he was ripe for ribbing.

"I had a lot of it that year from a lot of different teams, but with them, every single person with a piece of paper sized (photo) of me doing (a pull-up)," Mittelstadt said. "It was pretty funny, our whole team enjoyed it – it was pretty funny, we did the same thing to their guys in different ways. It was a lot of fun."

The Pegulas built an outstanding home for hockey at State College and the LECOM Harborcenter bears a striking similarity to it. It makes you wonder what they could do if they built something on a larger scale.

Sabres prospect Dylan Cozens ready for NHL preseason debut

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
September 16, 2019

BUFFALO – Coach Ralph Krueger wants center Dylan Cozens to relax during tonight's preseason opener. Throughout the recent Prospects Challenge rookie tournament, the Sabres' top pick often tried to do too much.

"He was trying to be a different-maker every time on the ice," Krueger said after the Sabres prepared for the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The seventh overall pick knows he must calm down a little.

"I can't be out there trying to dangle everyone and turning pucks over," Cozens said. "I got to simplify it, especially at this level at the start of the season."

Cozens is one of several big names playing in tonight's contest at Pegula Ice Arena on the campus of Penn State.

Sabres captain Jack Eichel, 40-goal winger Jeff Skinner and defenseman Rasmus Dahlin are also scheduled to dress.

Cozens, 18, should receive some notable ice time. In addition to having him pivot Remi Elie and Tage Thompson, Krueger plans to utilize Cozens on the power play.

"We'll give him an opportunity just to play his game and show his tools," Krueger said. "We're looking for simplicity."

General manager Jason Botterill recently said he doesn't expect Cozens to make the Sabres this year. In a week or two, he will likely be returned to the Lethbridge Hurricanes, his junior Western Hockey League club.

Of course, Cozens knows a dynamic training camp could make the Sabres' decision tough.

"My goal is to stick here as long as I can," Cozens said. "But if not, I'm going to be happy to go back to Lethbridge and have another year of development. But, yeah, my goal is to make an impression and make a hard decision for them to make."

Through three days of camp, the size and speed of the NHL has wowed the 6-foot-3, 180-pound Cozens.

"I know that I need to get stronger and just faster and quicker in everything that I do," Cozens said. "Just watching these guys and how much they take care of their bodies is something I've learned a lot and I'm going to take with me for the rest of my life."

Here is the rest of tonight's lineup:

- Jimmy Vesey, Eichel and Conor Sheary
- Skinner, Evan Rodrigues and Curtis Lazar
- Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson and Andrew Oglevie
- Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju
- Marco Scandella and Colin Miller
- John Gilmour and Casey Nelson

Krueger said goalie Carter Hutton will start and could be relieved by Jonas Johansson.

While defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen skated with the game group this morning inside KeyBank Center, he won't play tonight. Krueger said Ristolainen and winger Marcus Johansson will also sit out Tuesday's road game against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Krueger said both will eventually play preseason games.

Sabres open preseason with 5-4 win over Penguins in Overtime

By Adam Unger

WKBW

September 16, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Sabres outshot the Pittsburgh Penguins 45 to 13 in the first 60 minutes of their preseason opener. The two teams needed more time, though, as Buffalo beat the Penguins 5-4 in overtime.

The Penguins struck first less than five minutes into the game, but newly acquired defenseman John Gilmour answered for the Sabres just over a minute later. After that, the Sabres kicked it into high gear and took a 4-1 lead into the second intermission.

Three unanswered goals from the Penguins in the third period led to overtime. Then, Jack Eichel scored in the final seconds of the extra frame to win the game for Buffalo.

Offensively, the top line of Conor Sheary, Eichel, and Jimmy Vesey tallied six points. Eichel had an assist to go with his game winning goal, Sheary racked up a goal and two assists, and Vesey added an assist as well.

At the other end, Carter Hutton and Jonas Johansson split time between the pipes. The Sabres' road trip continues from University Park, Pennsylvania to Columbus, Ohio. They play the Blue Jackets tomorrow at 7:00 p.m.

Sabres Open Up Preseason With OT Win Over Penguins

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

September 16, 2019

Buffalo Sabres' Jack Eichel (9) is congratulated by teammates Curtis Lazar (27) and Jimmy Vesey (13) after he scored the winning goal in an NHL preseason hockey game against the Pittsburgh Penguins, Monday, Sept. 16, 2019, in State College, Pa. (AP Photo/John Beale)

The Buffalo Sabres kicked off the preseason with a 5-4 overtime victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins. The Sabres out shot the Pens 47-18, including holding an 18-2 advantage after the first period.

Pittsburgh got on the board first, just under five minutes into the game when Andrew Agozzino beat Carter Hutton on a play that started with a turnover from Rasmus Dahlin. Two of the Penguins' goals on the night stemmed from turnovers from the 2018 first overall pick.

But the Sabres showed they were able to respond quickly, when John Gilmour found the back of the net just over a minute later. Jimmy Vesey created the play, when he fed a pass to Gilmour, who used his speed to tie the game 1-1.

Buffalo would score the next three goals to take a 4-1 lead headed into the third period. The first came late in the first period from Conor Sheary, after Dahlin dished off a perfect pass. Henri Jokiharju would be the next Sabre to light the lamp, on a tic-tac-toe sequence from Gilmour and Sheary. Tage Thompson would find the back of the net on a power play late in the second period.

However, Pittsburgh stepped on the gas in the third period, and scored three unanswered goals to force overtime.

In OT, both teams had great chances, but with just eight seconds remaining, Sheary intercepted a pass and dished it off to Jack Eichel, who went on to score the overtime winner.

The Sabres face Columbus Tuesday, September 17th at 7pm.

Sabres Beat Penguins, 5-4 in Overtime

By Stu Boyar

WGRZ

September 16, 2019

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — The Buffalo Sabres opened the preseason Monday night with a 5-4 overtime win over the Pittsburgh Penguins at Pegula Ice Arena at Penn State.

The Penguins scored the first goal of the game, but just one minute and ten seconds later the Sabres tied when John Gilmour scored. Before the first period ended, Conor Sheary gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead.

The Sabres scored twice in the second period taking what appeared to be a commanding 4-1 lead. Henri Jokiharju made it 3-1 and then Tage Thompson made it 4-1 with his first goal of the preseason.

The Penguins scored three times in the third period to tie the game at 4-4 and send it into overtime.

In overtime Sabres captain Jack Eichel scored with eight seconds remaining to give Buffalo the win. Sheary had a goal and two assists on the night.

The Sabres are at Columbus Tuesday night.

Eichel wins it for Sabres with OT goal against Penguins

NHL.com

September 16, 2019

Jack Eichel scored with eight seconds left in overtime to give the Buffalo Sabres a 5-4 victory against the Pittsburgh Penguins at Pegula Ice Arena in University Park, Pennsylvania.

It was the first preseason game for each team.

Eichel, who had an assist, scored on a breakaway after receiving a pass from Conor Sheary inside the red line.

Sheary had a goal and two assists, John Gilmour had a goal and an assist, and Rasmus Dahlin had two assists for the Sabres. Henri Jokiharju scored at 4-on-4 in his Buffalo debut, and Tage Thompson gave the Sabres a 4-1 lead on a power-play goal with 4:02 left in the second period.

The Penguins tied it 4-4 with three straight goals in a span of 7:55 in the third period, from Sam Lafferty, Adam Johnson and Ryan Haggerty. Andrew Agozzino gave Pittsburgh a 1-0 lead at 4:34 of the first.

Carter Hutton allowed one goal on three shots for the Sabres and was replaced by Jonas Johansson, who allowed three goals on 15 shots.

Casey DeSmith made 23 saves on 25 shots for the Penguins before being relieved by Tristan Jarry, who made 19 saves on 22 shots.

NHL Power Rankings: Top storylines entering training camp

By Adam Gretz

Pro Hockey Talk

September 16, 2019

In this week's NHL Power Rankings we take a look at some of the biggest storylines across the league that are worth watching throughout the 31 training camps. The top issue throughout the offseason has been the ongoing RFA standstill, but that has been discussed so much and is starting to resolve itself with signings trickling in that we are going to focus on topics outside of that.

Included among them, a major goaltending competition that could impact one team's entire season, new coaches in new places, coaches on the hot seat, and whether or not a recent league MVP will want to re-sign with his current team.

What else are we keeping an eye on this preseason? Let's get to the rankings to find out!

1. Columbus' goalie competition. It might be the most interesting and important competition in any camp across the league. The Blue Jackets are getting fed up with being told how bad they will be this season, and while they still have a lot of reasons for optimism on the roster the ability of either Joonas Korpisalo or Elvis Merzlikins to adequately replace Sergei Bobrovsky will determine what the team is capable of doing.
2. Joel Quenneville's impact in Florida. It has been a long time since Panthers fans have had a reason for optimism at the start of a season. This might even be the first time since they came off a Stanley Cup Final appearance all the way back in 1996 that they have reason to believe better days are ahead. They had a huge offseason that was kicked off with the addition of a future Hall of Fame, three-time Stanley Cup winning coach.
3. Taylor Hall's future in New Jersey. Ray Shero was one of the NHL's busiest general managers this summer with the additions of P.K. Subban, Wayne Simmonds, Nikita Gusev, and the drafting of Jack Hughes with No. 1 overall pick. His biggest move, though, will be convincing his best player to stay in New Jersey and sign a long-term deal. Hall missed most of the last season due to injury and the Devils were never able to recover from that. Now that he is back the pressure is on New Jersey to get back to the playoffs. If they can't do that after all of their summer additions, what motivation is there for Hall to want to re-sign?
4. Connor McDavid's health. This could probably be even higher on the list, but it seems like he is going to be ready for the start of the season. Still, he is coming back from a pretty significant injury at the end of the last season and there is reason to believe he may not quite be 100 percent at the start. He is the league's best player and if the Oilers have any hope of competing they not only need him to be healthy, they need him to put the entire franchise on his back and carry it. Tough ask.
5. Coaches on the hot seat. Bruce Boudreau has to be pretty high on this list. He has already done the impossible for an NHL head coach and outlasted two GMs in Minnesota, but how long of a leash will he get under new GM Bill Guerin? Winnipeg's Paul Maurice also has to be near the top of this list. The Jets badly regressed a year ago and have a ton of question marks entering the season and a slow start could lead to a change behind the bench.
6. The Colorado hype. They have what might be the best young core in the NHL, addressed their biggest depth needs at forward with the additions of Andre Burakovsky, Joonas Donskoi, and Nazem Kadri, and have a couple of young stars on defense in Cale Makar, Sam Girard, and 2019 No. 4 overall pick Bowen Byram. They already took a huge step a year ago by reaching Round 2 of the Stanley Cup Playoffs and with the roster they have entering this season (as well as the salary cap space at their disposal) there is going to be plenty of pressure to take the next step.
7. First-round picks competing for roster spots. Jack Hughes (New Jersey) and Kaapo Kakko (New York Rangers), the top two picks in the 2019 NHL draft, seem to be locks to make their respective rosters, but are there any other 2019 first-round picks that can find their way onto a roster this season? Kirby Dach with the Blackhawks? Byram in Colorado? Maybe Dylan Cozens in Buffalo?
8. Craig Berube and Jordan Binnington in St. Louis. The hiring of Berube and call-up of Binnington were the two turning points for the Blues on their way to a Stanley Cup. What will the duo be capable of for an encore when

expectations will undoubtedly be higher than they were when they made their Blues debuts? The biggest question probably rests with Binnington's ability to duplicate his 2018-19 performance over a full season.

9. Ralph Krueger in Buffalo. The Sabres' head coaching position has been a revolving door of mediocrity over the past eight years. Can Krueger be the one break the cycle that has seen them make a change every two years? Or will his tenure be more of the same for an organization that has given its loyal fans nothing but grief for nearly a decade now?

10. Will it be another lost season for the Southern California teams? The Kings were terrible from the start a year ago, while the Ducks eventually cratered in the second half after goaltending carried them as far as it could early in the year. Is there any reason to expect anything different this season? The Ducks already lost veterans Corey Perry (buyout), Ryan Kesler and Patrick Eaves (injury) and did not really add much to their roster over the summer. The Kings still seem stuck in limbo in what direction they want to take as an organization and will be relying heavily on bounce-back years from veterans. Instead of fighting for a Stanley Cup, this intense rivalry might be about draft lottery odds.

Sabres unveil roster for tonight's preseason game at Columbus

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

September 17, 2019

Coming off a 5-4 overtime win against the Pittsburgh Penguins on Monday, Buffalo Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger will go with an entirely different lineup for the team's preseason game tonight.

Of the 21 players set to take on the Columbus Blue Jackets, 14 of them suited up for Buffalo or Rochester last season and five players (Jean-Sebastien Dea, Kyle Olson, Arttu Ruotsalainen, Henri Jokiharju and Andrew Hammond) are completely new to the organization. Jokiharju is the only player on the roster who played Monday.

The game will be streamed live on Sabres.com in the Sabres' local broadcast market starting at 7 p.m. from Nationwide Arena. You can also listen to Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray call the action on WGR 550.

Here's the roster:

Forwards

15 Jean-Sebastien Dea
17 Vladimir Sobotka
20 Scott Wilson
21 Kyle Okposo
23 Sam Reinhart
25 Arttu Ruotsalainen
37 Casey Mittelstadt
49 C.J. Smith
68 Victor Olofsson
73 Matej Pekar
74 Rasmus Asplund
82 Kyle Olson

Defense

3 William Borgen
10 Henri Jokiharju
19 Jake McCabe
44 Brandon Hickey
45 Casey Fitzgerald
62 Brandon Montour
78 Jacob Bryson

Goaltenders

35 Linus Ullmark
36 Andrew Hammond

We'll have full line combinations and defensive pairings for you when the team takes the ice for the morning skate at KeyBank Center.

Sabres earn OT win in Krueger's debut

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 16, 2019

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. - With only three days to prepare and six new faces in the lineup - plus another behind the bench - the Sabres came to Penn State for their first game of the preseason with the goal of playing a simple, aggressive game.

The basic objective outlined by coach Ralph Krueger was to limit time spent defending by extending possession with high-pressure play on offense. Though it became closer than they would have liked, the Sabres were largely pleased with how they played to that end in a 5-4, overtime win over the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"We just had a lot of pace," Krueger said. "We played aggressive, everybody was on their toes, we managed the puck really well and pushed them on their heels. We were in their end most of the time. We had lots of long puck possession, which we were really striving for today."

Jack Eichel buried a breakaway shot with eight seconds remaining in overtime to preserve the victory after puck management miscues allowed the Penguins to erase a 4-1 deficit in the third period.

Save for those costly errors, it was a dominant performance from the Sabres against a young Penguins lineup. The Sabres outshot the Penguins, 47-18, and earned goals from John Gilmour, Conor Sheary, Tage Thompson and Henri Jokiharju to establish their lead in the first 40 minutes.

Carter Hutton only faced three shots in 29:22 before giving way to Jonas Johansson, who went 12-for-15 on save opportunities.

Krueger felt that overly complicated play with the puck led to the Penguins' comeback, which came on the strength of three goals scored in a span of 8:46 to open the final period. Even then, he felt they clamped down and picked up where they had left off heading into the second intermission.

"Quite clearly, we just got complicated with the puck and we gave them some momentum, some confidence, fell on our heels," Krueger said. "But I thought the group settled down after the 4-4 [goal] and dominated right to the end and really deserved to win it then."

Gilmour steps up

After signing Gilmour to a one-year deal on July 1, Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said the defenseman's ability to jump up in the play would make him an ideal fit in the Sabres' system. He put that skill on display to net Buffalo's first goal of the preseason in the first period.

The play began with Jimmy Vesey carrying the puck out of the Sabres' zone along the right wall with two Penguins defenders stationed in front of him. Gilmour found a lane on the weak side and sped by both of them, then buried a hard wrist shot across the body of goaltender Casey DeSmith.

"I definitely think it's part of my game, getting up ice," Gilmour told Brian Duff after the first period. "I think I'm a pretty decent skater so if I have a chance to join the rush, that's what I'm going to do. But, more importantly, I'm going to be quick to get back and help out the defense first and foremost."

It was a promising start to exhibition play for the defenseman, who's looking to crack the NHL roster after leading the AHL with 20 goals and 54 points last season. He also tallied an assist on Jokiharju's goal in the second and used his speed to pinch down along the boards and extend possessions throughout the night.

"They want us to be aggressive," he said. "If we have a chance to be the first guy on the puck and go down the wall there, we've got to do that and help our forwards out. They're going to come back and take our spots on the blue line, so we feel the support there in every zone and we're confident to play aggressive."

Strong in front

Establishing a consistent net-front presence is one area the Sabres are looking to improve upon from recent seasons, and it was an area of emphasis coming into their first preseason game. They responded well, turning that presence into a pair of goals in the second period.

"I think that was one of our main focuses going in, getting guys in front of the net and creating chaos and traffic in front of their net," Thompson said. "I just tried to do that all night and be strong on the puck and down low behind the net. Those were kind of my focuses heading into the game."

Thompson used his large frame to screen goaltender Tristan Jerry on a point shot from Rasmus Dahlin, then buried the rebound for his power-play goal in the second. Earlier in the period, Jokiharju scored on a shot from the left circle with Evan Rodrigues jostling for position in the crease.

Those goals were microcosms of a larger picture, with forwards on all four lines rotating to the net-front throughout the night.

"We started with a lot of puck possession, not enough presence, and we really asked the guys to increase the pressure on the net and they did," Krueger said. "It was in that second period, it was truly outstanding when you see how much pressure there was and we need to continue to build on that."

Cozens' debut

Another player who wasn't shy about attacking the net was 18-year-old Dylan Cozens, who made it a point to play confidently in his first preseason game.

"I felt good out there," Cozens said. "I wanted to play with confidence, I don't want to play scared. I don't want to play like I'm going to make mistakes because then I'll make mistakes, so I just went out there and played with confidence. It's the same game I've played my whole life. It's not that much different, so I just stuck to what I know."

Centering a line with Tage Thompson and Remi Elie, Cozens was able to showcase the package of size and speed that made him the seventh overall pick in this summer's draft. Most of all, he impressed his coach with his demeanor.

"I think emotionally, there's so many things for him to step into this space for the first time," Krueger said. "He managed it really well. He was very calm on the bench. He's an energetic kid trying to learn every shift."

"It was an exciting coaching opportunity for me to stand behind somebody with that much skill in their very first game at this level. He's got some exciting years ahead of him."

Up next

The Sabres continue their preseason schedule in Columbus on Tuesday. The game will be streamed live within the local broadcast market on Sabres.com, with puck drop set for 7 p.m.

Cozens among players set to make debut at Penn State

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 16, 2019

Ralph Krueger smiled as he walked into the KeyBank Center press conference room on Monday morning.

"Good morning," the coach said. "Let's play."

It will be an evening of debuts as the Sabres open their preseason schedule tonight against the Pittsburgh Penguins at Pegula Ice Arena on the campus of Penn State University. The game will be streamed within the Buffalo broadcast market right here on Sabres.com, with puck drop set for 7.

In addition to it being the first game for Krueger and his coaching staff, six players will make their exhibition debuts with the Sabres: forwards Dylan Cozens, Curtis Lazar, and Jimmy Vesey; and defensemen John Gilmour, Henri Jokiharju, and Colin Miller.

Of that group, Cozens is unique in the sense that this will be his first taste of NHL competition. The 18-year-old has practiced for three days in the same group as veterans like Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner, and Rasmus Ristolainen, taking note of the increase in strength and speed from his three-game stint at the Prospects Challenge.

Cozens and Krueger agreed that simplicity will be a focus for his first preseason game.

Tickets for Saturday vs. Toronto

"I can't be out there trying to dangle everyone and turning pucks over," Cozens said. "I've got to simplify it, especially at this level at the start of the season. You've just got to simplify things and just play more of a simple game and get things done."

"I think this is a lot different than the rookie games," Krueger added. "What we're looking for is simplicity. I thought in the rookie camp at times he was trying to be a difference maker every time on the ice, and he doesn't have that pressure here. We'd like to see him execute within the principles, keep it nice and simple and just have fun."

Cozens will center a line with Remi Elie and Tage Thompson and see time on a power-play unit with Gilmour, Miller, Conor Sheary, and Evan Rodrigues.

Cozens and Thompson have spent time together away from the rink after forming a friendship as roommates at development camp, chemistry they hope will translate to the ice.

"On the ice, he's so explosive," Thompson said. "He's a really fast player. He's got great skill. I think he's kind of a playmaker, past-first kind of guy so for me I've just got to get open. He's so dynamic with his speed that he creates chances just by himself."

"For me, it's just getting open into those shooting areas. I think he's got great enough vision that he'll find me."

Behind the bench

Krueger admitted the game will be a learning experience as he and his staff manage the bench for the first time. Considerations he'll need to address in the coming weeks include how much teaching will be done in-game, how technology will be used on the bench, and how new rule changes will impact the game.

One change that coaches will be feeling out this preseason is a new rule allowing offensive teams to choose the circle where a faceoff is held after icings and at the start of power plays.

"We're going to be playing with that a little bit in the beginning today," Krueger said. "It's definitely a factor, let's be honest. Also, watching what the opposition power play does - who you're going to have on your PK on the draws and how much sticks are going to make a difference."

"We're going to track the right versus right, left versus left and so on and so forth on the players a lot now versus in the old days when you might not have, you just looked at plain percentages. Now, I think it gets a little more baseball-like where you're looking at the right-handed hitter and the left-handed hitter. That's another dimension that's new for all coaches that we need to get very good at."

Projected lineup

13 Jimmy Vesey - 9 Jack Eichel - 43 Conor Sheary

53 Jeff Skinner - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 27 Curtis Lazar

81 Remi Elie - 42 Dylan Cozens - 72 Tage Thompson

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 52 Andrew Oglevie

26 Rasmus Dahlin - 10 Henri Jokiharju

6 Marco Scandella - 33 Colin Miller

58 John Gilmour - 8 Casey Nelson

40 Carter Hutton

34 Jonas Johansson