



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 17, 2019

Henrique scores twice as Anaheim rallies to beat Buffalo 5-2

By Joe Reedy

Associated Press

October 17, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Ryan Getzlaf and Anaheim's power-play unit put plenty of work in leading up to Wednesday's game against the Buffalo Sabres in trying to jump start the unit that had gone scoreless in the first six games.

Getzlaf and the Ducks ended up getting their first power-play goal at the most opportune time. His goal midway through the second period ended up being the go-ahead goal for Anaheim in a 5-2 victory.

"It is nice to get rewarded and have all the hard work pay off," Getzlaf said. "Even early in the game, we had some good movement and shots but couldn't score."

Led by Adam Henrique's two goals and Jakob Silfverberg's three points (goal, two assists), Anaheim rallied after Buffalo scored the first two goals.

Rickard Rakell had a goal and an assist, and Josh Manson added two assists for Anaheim, which has won its first three home games for the first time in five seasons. John Gibson made 31 saves for his fourth win of the season.

Getzlaf gave the Ducks the lead at 9:14 of the second period when he fired a one-timer after a cross-ice pass by Sam Steel. It was their first goal with the man advantage in 18 opportunities, ending their second-longest drought to start a season.

"There's still lots of work to do but it's a relief to finally get one in there," Anaheim coach Dallas Eakin said. "If we didn't, then it becomes a focus and lots of unneeded pressure. Good on that unit for sticking together."

Buffalo entered with the league's best power play with nine goals in 21 opportunities, but was 1 for 7 with the man advantage. The teams combined for 42 penalty minutes in a mildly chippy contest two weeks into the season.

"Our kill was excellent. It was a pretty physical and contested game," Eakins said.

Victor Olofsson scored his team-leading sixth power-play goal for the Sabres, who absorbed their first regulation loss after a 5-0-1 start. Jack Eichel also scored for Buffalo, and Ullmark stopped 26 shots.

"There was a lot of penalties on each side; I think the frustrating part for us was just the lack of execution on the power play. We had a lot of chances," Eichel said.

Henrique got the Ducks on the board with 1:20 remaining in the first period when he redirected Manson's shot past Linus Ullmark. He then got his third goal in the past two games with 13 seconds left in the second, making it 4-2 when he converted a feed into the slot from Max Comtois.

Silfverberg added an empty-net goal late in the third period to put it out of reach.

"We had a bit of a slow start but I thought we did a good job with some pushback and responding as we talked about in between periods," said Henrique, who had his 17th game with two goals.

Eichel opened the scoring at 7:35 when he cut to the net and beat Gibson on his glove side. Eichel stole the puck from Manson near the Buffalo blue line, skated up the wing and then made a nifty move in front of the net for his seventh goal of the season.

Olofsson made it 2-0 nine minutes later when he took Sam Reinhart's pass and buried a wrist shot midway through Buffalo's power play. His first eight goals have come with the man advantage, which is an NHL record.

Rakell tied it at 2 less than a minute into the second after a centering pass from Silfverberg, who forced a turnover deep in the Buffalo zone.

"We had a couple turnovers that gave them momentum," Buffalo coach Ralph Krueger said. "I didn't feel that what happened with the physicality changed the way we were playing, it was just the fact that they got a lot of energy out of their goals."

NOTES: Sabres LW Jeff Skinner got the 200th assist of his 10-year career with the second assist on Olofsson's goal. ... Eichel has three goals and nine points in nine games against the Ducks, along with a four-game point streak.

UP NEXT

Sabres: Make the 30-mile trip north on I-5 to face the Los Angeles Kings on Thursday.

Ducks: Continue their three-game homestand on Friday against Carolina.

Buffalo Sabres take on the Los Angeles Kings

Associated Press

October 17, 2019

Buffalo Sabres (5-1-1, first in the Atlantic Division) vs. Los Angeles Kings (2-4-0, eighth in the Pacific Division)

Los Angeles; Thursday, 10:30 p.m. EDT

BOTTOM LINE: The Los Angeles Kings host the Buffalo Sabres.

Los Angeles went 31-42-9 overall during the 2018-19 season while going 17-21-3 at home. Goalies for the Kings compiled a .900 save percentage while allowing 3.0 goals on 31.2 shots per game last season.

Buffalo finished 33-39-10 overall and 12-24-5 on the road in the 2018-19 season. The Sabres averaged 2.7 goals and 4.6 assists per game last season.

The matchup Thursday is the first meeting of the season between the two teams.

Kings Injuries: None listed.

Sabres Injuries: Conor Sheary: out (upper body).

'The game got away from us': Sabres slow to respond to physical Ducks in loss

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 17, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. – The first skirmish broke out in the corner where the Anaheim Ducks' Carter Rowney hit Buffalo Sabres winger Victor Olofsson from behind.

The second occurred when Jeff Skinner confronted Rickard Rakell for a hit on Rasmus Dahlin, and the most vicious of the confrontations came late in the second period when Nick Ritchie attacked Vladimir Sobotka during a stoppage in play.

The Ducks' antics appeared to cross the line at times. Sabres coach Ralph Krueger told the media afterward he intended to address a few of the hits with officials. However, the consensus inside the visitors' dressing room was the Sabres failed to properly respond to that physicality in a 5-2 loss in Honda Center on Wednesday night.

Rather than counterattacking the Ducks with speed and skill, the Sabres committed turnovers and failed to score on seven power-play opportunities in their first regulation loss of the season.

"That's hockey right there," defenseman Jake McCabe said of the Ducks' physicality. "People could have said that about us the other night at home. You have to respond the right way, myself included. Be more physical and step up to the task. If they're stepping over the line and going to the box then let's score on the power play. We didn't do that tonight and on the penalty kill we let one up as well."

The Sabres (5-1-1) blew a two-goal lead by allowing five consecutive goals, including an empty-netter with 3:13 remaining in regulation. Their power play failed to score on seven straight opportunities following Victor Olofsson's first-period goal.

Buffalo couldn't take advantage of the Ducks' 24 penalty minutes and wavered from the simple style of play that resulted in a 2-0 lead. Jack Eichel scored at 7:35 into the first period with a remarkable individual effort. The Sabres' captain blocked a shot, stole the puck from Ducks defenseman Josh Manson and shielded the puck with his body all the way to Anaheim's net, where he scored against goalie John Gibson.

With the Ducks chasing the Sabres' top power-play unit, Sam Reinhart retrieved a loose puck amid a scrum of players and found Olofsson, who scored his sixth goal of the season at 16:36 to push the lead to two goals. The Sabres also hit the post and tested Gibson with 19 shots on goal in the first period.

Following a challenge that negated an Anaheim goal, the Ducks broke through with 1:20 left in the first period when Adam Henrique deflected Manson's shot from the point to cut the deficit to one goal. The Sabres seemed to unravel from there and puck management was to blame.

"I don't think it affected it as much as we were complicated with the puck," Krueger said of the Ducks' physicality. "We got complicated early in the second period. We had a couple of turnovers that gave them momentum. I didn't feel that what happened then with the physicality really changed the way we were playing. ... The game got away from us. We're not worried about playing physical. We can look teams in the eyes. I feel there's a lot of courage on the bench there. Nobody shied away from anything and we stood up to it. Again, it's a game to learn from in many ways."

The first notable mistake occurred 57 seconds into the second period, when Rasmus Ristolainen's clearing attempt in the defensive zone was knocked down by Ducks winger Jakob Silfverberg. The Sabres weren't able to cover Rakell, who corralled a pass and managed to score the tying goal.

The physicality picked up from there. Henri Jokiharju and Max Comtois were both penalized for exchanging jabs following a change in possession. The Sabres failed to score on their next power play and were unable to prevent the Ducks from peppering Ullmark with shots on the man advantage.

Following a split save by Ullmark, Ducks captain Ryan Getzlaf scored the go-ahead, power-play goal at 9:14 into the second period. Moments later, Olofsson missed on a breakaway attempt and was hit from behind by Rowney. Sam Reinhart came to Olofsson's defense, and the sequence ended with Olofsson being slammed to the ice.

The increase in physicality seemed to swing momentum in the Ducks' favor. Anaheim defenseman Cam Fowler hit the post following the Sabres' failed power play, and Buffalo's defensive structure, which helped the team have a plus-12 goal differential entering the game, crumbled.

The Sabres were chasing the puck in the defensive zone and their lack of discipline resulted in scoring opportunities. Anaheim had scored only 13 goals in six games and was 0-for-14 on the power play.

"Once you kind of get that adrenaline, testosterone going, it's hard to cool down when you're in the heat of the moment," Ullmark explained. "It's definitely a [learning experience] for us. I liked the way we came back in the third. We started playing the way we should be doing. We could have slipped out of our hands and played 40 bad minutes, but I thought we did a really good job of coming back to our game."

McCabe added: "We had a great start. That's exactly the start you want on the road. Doing a lot of good things early. Got away from it. They started playing physical. We didn't respond very well. They kind of just took the game over. We didn't have the push back we wanted."

Sobotka left for the dressing room when he was taken down by Ritchie, who appeared frustrated by a check against the boards moments earlier. Though Ullmark was also penalized on the play, the Sabres earned a power play and nearly scored when Marcus Johansson had a clean look at the net.

However, the Ducks managed to kill off the opportunity and Henrique scored his second goal of the game with 13 seconds remaining in the second period. The Sabres had only seven shots on goal in eight power-play opportunities.

Colin Miller replaced Dahlin on the top unit late in the game. Krueger also used different forward lines and defense pairings in the third period. The Sabres could never recover, though. Another valuable lesson that will require an immediate response.

"We had a lot of chances," Eichel said. "We just didn't capitalize. ... I thought maybe we were a little too cute with it and trying to make the fine play. I thought we had some chances and it's frustrating we weren't able to make them pay for taking the penalties. Overall, we need to learn from this one. I don't know how well we handled the momentum swings of the game."

The Wraparound: Ducks 5, Sabres 2

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 17, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- This wasn't the start the Buffalo Sabres wanted.

Rather than leaving the first stop of their three-game West Coast road trip with a win, the Sabres blew a two-goal lead with their ugliest period of the season and lost to the Anaheim Ducks, 5-2, in Honda Center.

The Sabres fell to 5-1-1 with their first regulation loss and failed to start the season with points in each of their first three road games for the first time since 2011-12. The Ducks (5-2) scored four consecutive goals, including three in a vicious second period that included 30 penalty minutes between the two teams.

Jack Eichel and Victor Olofsson scored for the Sabres. Anaheim killed seven consecutive Buffalo power plays following Olofsson's goal in the first period. The Ducks added an empty-net goal with 3:13 remaining in regulation.

Signature play: If you were to make a highlight reel of the most impressive goals by Eichel, his play in the first period Wednesday may lead the video. Eichel blocked Josh Manson's shot near the blue line, stole the puck from Manson and skated down the left-wing boards.

Eichel used his body to shield the puck from Mason in the offensive zone and scored with an impressive finishing move to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead at 7:35. The goal was Eichel's fourth of the season.

Goalofsson: Ducks coach Dallas Eakins told the media Wednesday morning he didn't want to see the Sabres' power play. Well, he didn't have to wait long for that happen in the first period, and his fears were justified.

Olofsson scored on a pass from Sam Reinhart during a scramble in front of the net, pushing the lead to 2-0 at 16:36. Olofsson's eight career goals have all come on the power play, an NHL record. Jeff Skinner recorded his 200th career NHL assist on the goal.

Risky business: Sabres coach Ralph Krueger risked taking a minor penalty by challenging the Ducks' goal with 1:53 left in the first period. Max Jones capitalized on a rebound beat Linus Ullmark, but Jones appeared to be offside when Jacob Larsson carried the puck into the zone.

The challenge was successful, as the goal was overturned to keep the Sabres' lead at two.

Quick response: Well, the Ducks needed only 33 seconds to put the puck into the net again. Adam Henrique tipped Manson's shot to cut their deficit to one goal. The Sabres out-shot Anaheim, 19-11, during the first period.

Anaheim goalie John Gibson stopped a number of quality scoring chances, most notably Evan Rodrigues' from the right circle at 9:12.

Chaos: That's the best way to describe what unfolded in the second period. The Sabres allowed three goals -- they had a plus-10 goal differential in their first six games -- and several skirmishes broke out, including one that send Sobotka to the trainers' room.

Rickard Rakell tied the score by capitalizing after Rasmus Ristolainen's turnover 57 seconds in to the period. Ryan Getzlaf scored on the power play at 9:14, and the Ducks pushed their lead to two goals when Henrique's shot went between Ullmark's legs.

The physical play began when Henri Jokiharju and Max Comtois exchanged jabs skating up the ice. Olofsson was then hit from behind by Carter Rowney, provoking a reaction from Reinhart. Skinner then went after Rakell for a hit on Rasmus Dahlin in the neutral zone.

Sobotka was blindsided by Nick Ritchie during a stoppage in play and Ullmark was also penalized for retaliating. Finally, a skirmish broke out when Zemgus Girgensons was hit in the head by Korbinian Holzer.

Injury updates: Winger Conor Sheary, who has missed the past four games with an upper-body injury, skated Wednesday morning in Anaheim and will be evaluated Thursday in Los Angeles, Krueger told reporters.

Former Sabres prospect Brendan Guhle, a defenseman whom Anaheim acquired for Brandon Montour last February, missed a third consecutive game for the Ducks with a lower-body injury.

Next: The Sabres aren't expected to hold a morning skate at Staples Center in preparation for their game Thursday night against the Los Angeles Kings. Players and Krueger will be available to the media sometime late in the afternoon, local time.

Ryan Miller using experience with Sabres to impart wisdom on young Ducks

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 16, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. – There are now flecks of gray in his beard, yet Ryan Miller still possesses the wry sense of humor that has endeared him to teammates, fans and the media throughout his 17 years in the National Hockey League.

Miller let out a slight chuckle at the mention of him playing at a "high level" in goal for the Anaheim Ducks at 39 years old and gave a typical humble response when told his coach, Dallas Eakins, called him a "secondary coach" on the ice during practices.

"That's generous," Miller joked Wednesday morning in Honda Center, where the Ducks would face his former team, the Buffalo Sabres, hours later. Though he's no longer an unquestioned starter in goal, Miller is using his wealth of experience to impart wisdom on younger teammates during a time of transition in Anaheim.

Miller treasures every day he comes to the rink, although the commute isn't as stress-free as it was during his 11 years in Buffalo. Anaheim has become home to him and his family. However, Buffalo occupies a significant place in his heart. The Sabres gave Miller an opportunity to start his career, and he uses those experiences to help guide the Ducks on and off the ice.

"I had a great time in Buffalo," Miller said. "It's a huge part of my life. People in Buffalo had a huge impact on my life, from the people I saw at the grocery store to people at the rink every single day. I felt fully a part of the community and fully a part of the organization for a long time. It was and still is a sad day that it wasn't quite working out to where I was going to be in the plans for Buffalo. Accepting that people change and situations change and you move forward in life. I still look back and think about how great it was to be a Buffalo Sabre and I still have a big piece of my heart that feels that way."

The Sabres' golden season celebration has conjured memories of the franchise's memorable runs, some of which occurred with Miller in goal. He remains among the most beloved figures in Buffalo sports history, despite his departure occurring in February 2014.

In 50 years of Sabres hockey, Miller remains the franchise's leader in games played (540) – 49 more than Dominik Hasek, whose number is hanging in the rafters of KeyBank Center – and wins (284). If Miller wins 21 more games, he'll become one of only 13 goalies in NHL history with at least 400. He is already the winningest U.S.-born goalie. His 758 games played rank 22nd all-time.

Miller, a fifth-round draft pick in 1999, led the Sabres to the Eastern Conference Finals in each of his first two seasons as the starter. He was named an All-Star in 2006-07, the season in which Buffalo won the Presidents' Trophy. In 2007-08, he set the franchise's single-season record for games played by a goalie (76), and he won the Vezina Trophy in 2009-10.

Additionally, Miller was the United States' starting goalie at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, where he earned a silver medal and was named most valuable player of the tournament. He has not started more than 21 games since 2016-17 and has served as the backup to John Gibson since signing with Anaheim as a free agent in July 2017.

While many of his teammates were preparing off-ice Wednesday, Miller was in the net working with the Ducks' healthy scratches. He has made a tangible impact on the team's younger players, according to Eakins.

"He's an asset everywhere for me," Eakins, who is amid his first season as the Ducks' coach, said Wednesday morning. "Number one, he's an excellent goaltender. He's already given us an amazing game. In practice he's great for all of our players. He's almost like a secondary coach out there a lot of the times. He's really free with information to the coaching staff. He doesn't just sit there and wonder if we've seen it or not seen it. Then having a guy with that amount of experience to be your teammate, I think is a great privilege for all of our other guys because I'm not sure there's anything in the game that can happen that he hasn't seen before."

Entering Wednesday, Miller had played one of the Ducks' six games, stopping 26 of 27 shots during a 2-1 win over Columbus on Oct. 11. He started 38 of the 48 games in which he appeared during his first two seasons with Anaheim, recording a .921 save percentage.

Miller enjoys his role on a team going through a transition. The Ducks are trying to become younger and faster but success on the ice will require the leadership of veterans such as him. Prior to the game against Buffalo, Miller said the Ducks have a "little spark in this team" that could help them surprise this season. He also downplayed his role as a prominent leader, saying he simply makes himself available to whomever needs advice or guidance.

Miller wants to continue to play at a high level and intends to remain in the NHL as long as he can accomplish that goal. He said he's a "better goalie than I was at a certain age," and credited the Sabres for providing him with the opportunity to accomplish all he has on and off the ice in his career.

"I've learned to be a part of other communities," Miller said. "Vancouver was a great stop for me and this time in Southern California with Anaheim has been great. A real blessing for my family and where my son can watch me play. My wife can be active with things that interest her and do her job. I can still be doing my job at a high level. It's really been quite a journey from Buffalo, but Buffalo is definitely where it started. Looking back on it, I was blessed to get drafted by Buffalo and be with an organization that really put time into the players and a city that really respected the type of work you did on the ice."

Henri Jokiharju's strong start could earn him long-term spot with Sabres

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 16, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. – Only five games into his first season in Buffalo, Henri Jokiharju received an edict from his general manager that any young player on the Sabres' roster bubble wants to hear: move out of the Buffalo Marriott at LECOM Harborcenter and find a more permanent place to live.

"Yeah, of course it feels great," Jokiharju, a 20-year-old defenseman, said. "Get out of the hotel and get your own place. It's awesome."

However, Jokiharju, one of the Sabres' top offseason acquisitions, isn't taking his situation for granted. He discovered last season how quickly circumstances can change in the National Hockey League. Jokiharju led the Chicago Blackhawks in 5-on-5 ice time for the first 15 games, only to have a diminished role once coach Joel Quenneville was fired in November.

Jokiharju finished the season in the American Hockey League and was traded to Buffalo for Alexander Nylander in July. Though coach Ralph Krueger has stated repeatedly that internal competition will continue through the season, the edict from Sabres management to Jokiharju illustrates how he's quickly earned their trust.

Jokiharju seemed to be the logical candidate to be sent to Rochester once Brandon Montour returns from a hand injury. Not anymore.

"Henri's been a positive point, for sure," Krueger said. "Our D corps in general is playing quite aggressive on our gaps through the neutral zone. We're denying entry into our zone quite regularly, which we're happy of. Henri's one of the driving forces there."

"Of course, maintaining possession and breaking out under pressure is the test of a strong defenseman in the National Hockey League and it's a tough test. Teams come hard and fast, especially when they're behind as we've had a few times lately. Henri's been good at solving pressure which is something quite impressive at his age."

Jokiharju has quickly become one of the Sabres' most trusted defensemen. Entering Wednesday, Jokiharju ranked seventh on the team in 5-on-5 ice time, ahead of Rasmus Dahlin, and his 7:40 on the penalty kill was fourth among the team's defensemen.

Additionally, Jokiharju and Marco Scandella formed instant chemistry to become a reliable pairing. The Sabres have controlled possession with both on the ice – they rank eighth in 5-on-5 shot-attempt differential among all NHL pairings to play at least 60 minutes this season, entering play Tuesday – and their efficient play in the defensive zone has illustrated the impact of Krueger's new system.

The Sabres are no longer relying on man-to-man coverage around their own net. Instead, they're playing more zone concepts, which allows defensemen to rely on each other and provides more freedom to pressure the puck in certain situations. The system, Jokiharju said, has made a remarkable difference with his play defensively.

Despite his limitless potential offensively, Jokiharju was viewed as a potential liability by Chicago coach Jeremy Colliton, who replaced Quenneville. Colliton, like former Sabres coach Phil Housley, used man-to-man in the defensive zone. That system is often difficult for young defensemen since there is little margin for error.

"I think the defensive zone, it's big," Jokiharju said when asked what he enjoys about Krueger's systems. "Last year, I had some struggles with man-to-man coverage, but I think this year I'm of course a little bit bigger. I think the defensive-zone structure is really good. I really like it."

"He's making great plays, he's making simple plays, but he's not afraid to hold onto the puck and look for that good pass," Scandella said of Jokiharju. "I feel like he's been really sharp out there."

Jokiharju, a first-round draft pick in 2017, played alongside Duncan Keith on the Blackhawks' top pairing at the start of last season and averaged 21:34 of ice time over the team's first 15 games. Jokiharju had eight assists with a plus-1 rating during that span. He showed the potential of being the sort of dynamic defenseman Chicago lacked since it won three Stanley Cups under Quenneville.

However, Jokiharju was loaned to Finland for the IIHF World Junior Championship last December and averaged only 14:30 of ice time in his final five games with the Blackhawks before he was sent to Rockford. Jokiharju said his confidence never wavered, though. He understood a different coach is going to view games differently and is potentially looking for different qualities from defensemen.

Quenneville, now coach of the Florida Panthers, reflected fondly on his time working with Jokiharju prior to a game against the Sabres on Friday. Hours later, Jokiharju made a brilliant breakout pass to spring Casey Mittelstadt for a breakaway and played 17:40 against the Panthers.

"It seemed like his reads were good and his gap was outstanding," Quenneville said of Jokiharju's play in Chicago. "He had good patience with the puck as well. I thought with how he was defending for a young kid, his reads, his positioning on the rush killing plays, his quick puck movement, supporting the attack and good patience at the offensive blue line, he had a tremendous start to the year.

"You'd expect off a start like that, there's a lot of potential there to be at least a regular, up to a pretty important defenseman."

Jokiharju has become that in Buffalo. He's helped address one of the Sabres' debilitating weaknesses from last season: defensive-zone exits. Jokiharju has looked poised under pressure when attempting to break the puck out of the Sabres' end, and his brilliance has helped spark an offense that entered Wednesday with a league-best plus-12 goal differential.

Jokiharju doesn't hesitate to join the rush and is keenly aware of when he should take advantage of such an opportunity. During the third period Monday against Dallas, Jokiharju retrieved a loose puck near his own blue line, darted toward center ice and quickly made the proper read to dish a backhanded pass to Vladimir Sobotka.

Jokiharju then skated down the ice to create a 3-on-1, which ended with Sobotka passing to Jeff Skinner, who scored to push the Sabres' lead to three goals. Jokiharju credited Scandella with providing him with the confidence to make such a play. However, Jokiharju also has earned Krueger's trust by showing maturity in the defensive zone.

"Probably more of an all-around player," Jokiharju said. "I can play the PK now. I think that's one of the biggest things."

Jokiharju's early emergence could create a predicament for the Sabres, who will have eight healthy defensemen once Montour returns. They could attempt to send John Gilmour to Rochester, though the 26-year-old will need to clear waivers. Additionally, Zach Bogosian is expected to return at some point, though he is listed as "out indefinitely" while recovering from hip surgery. General Manager Jason Botterill could make a trade or risk losing Gilmour. There also is the chance an injury could occur.

Regardless of the looming roster decisions, Jokiharju appears to be part of the Sabres' long-term plans.

"I haven't ever seen him as a 20-year-old," Krueger said. "I just see him as a player that needs to be playing a certain way within our framework, and that he's done a really good job of doing that. ... His puck-moving ability has been confirmed, but also the way he attacks and plays on his toes and looks for his gaps early."

Sabres only played 18 good minutes and it cost them the game

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 17, 2019

(WGR 550) - It's amazing how a team can come out and play so well for the first 18 minutes of the game and then just hand it right back in the second period.

Buffalo came out flying to start, and if it wasn't for John Gibson, they could've scored four or five goals. The Sabres were on every loose puck, winning every battle and were skating well, and went out in front 2-0.

The first goal was a great effort by Jack Eichel. He blocked a shot by Josh Manson, then stole the puck from him and skated in behind him. Eichel cut through the left circle, held the puck for just the right time and Gibson had no chance.

The 2-0 goal came on the power play when Jeff Skinner and Sam Reinhart out-worked the Ducks down low and Reinhart sent a slick pass to Victor Olofsson, who had an open net.

Gibson was forced into thievery, robbing Evan Rodrigues, Johan Larsson twice at the end of a penalty kill, as well as Reinhart and Olofsson.

Anaheim appeared to have scored when Rasmus Dahlin stepped up into the middle of the ice leaving a lane for the Ducks to score on a 2-on-1. Ralph Krueger challenged for the first time all season and won as Anaheim was offside.

The Ducks were really taking over the game at that point, and they got one that counted as Dahlin had very poor coverage on Adam Henrique, who tipped in his third of the season.

Gibson made 17 saves in the period, but had a pretty easy night after that. Anaheim decided it was going to hit the Sabres with clean and dirty shots with absolutely no response. Buffalo started turning the puck over with regularity, and the passing went from great to horrendous.

The chippy play led to eight Buffalo power plays, but the Sabres could only capitalize on one of them. I thought some of the dumb penalties Anaheim took put their lead in danger, but the Sabres went quietly.

I have to admit, I never would've guessed when the game was 2-0 that Buffalo would give up five straight goals. There was really only one that Ullmark should've had, but there never should've been a shot as Rodrigues was next to the Anaheim player, but never covered him.

I think this was just one of those nights for the Sabres. They are still 5-1-1 and have only played two poor games all year.

They get right back at it on Thursday night in Los Angeles.

Sabres drop a stinker, 5-2 to the Ducks

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

October 16, 2019

After starting the season 5-0-1, the Buffalo Sabres put together their first forgettable game of the 2019-20 season.

The Sabres coughed up a 2-0 first period lead, and ended up suffering their first regulation loss of the year on Wednesday by a 5-2 score against the Anaheim Ducks at Honda Center.

The Sabres struck first as captain Jack Eichel stole a puck in the Buffalo zone and flew down the ice into the offensive zone. Eichel then created space for himself with his speed and body position, and put a nifty power move on Ducks goalie John Gibson. Eichel buried a goal past Gibson's left pad and the Sabres grabbed the 1-0 lead just 7:35 into the opening period.

Buffalo found themselves on their first power play opportunity of the night at the 15:22 mark of the first period, when Adam Henrique was penalized for holding the stick. Coming into Wednesday's game, the Sabres had the league's best percentage on the man advantage. They added to that marker 1:14 into the power play as Victor Olofsson fired a puck past Gibson on the glove side to give the Sabres a 2-0 lead.

Olofsson also added to his current NHL record in the process, giving him his eighth career goal, all on the power play to begin his career.

With 1:53 left in the first period, the Ducks seemed to slice the Sabres' lead in half courtesy of Max Jones, but head coach Ralph Krueger challenged the play to see if it was offside. After a brief review by the officials, it was confirmed that the Ducks were offside and the goal was overturned. It was Krueger's first challenge as Buffalo's bench boss, and it was a successful one.

However, Anaheim cashed in on a goal that counted just over 30-seconds later as Henrique got a puck to trickle past goalie Linus Ullmark to cut the Buffalo advantage to 2-1 ahead of the first intermission.

The Ducks came out for the second period with a purpose, and ended up tying the game at 2-2 less than a minute into the middle stanza. Rickard Rakell capitalized on a turnover from defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen in the corner of the Buffalo zone and beat Ullmark just 57-seconds in.

Coming into Wednesday's game, Anaheim had yet to score on a power play this season. They were just one of three teams remaining in the league yet to have netted a goal on the man advantage, but that all changed after Johan Larsson was penalized for tripping 8:16 into the period. Just a minute into the power play, Ducks captain Ryan Getzlaf ripped a one-timer into the Sabres' net for the 3-2 lead.

The game then started to get chippy shortly after the Getzlaf goal.

Olofsson was ran hard into the boards after missing on a breakaway by Ducks forward Carter Rowney. Sam Reinhart, Marco Scandella and company came to his aid and the teams had to be separated in the corner of Anaheim's defensive end. A Buffalo power play ensued after penalties were dolled out, but it was quickly erased when Rasmus Dahlin was issued a minor for closing his hand on the puck.

Penalties were aplenty in the second period as the two teams constantly found ways to get under the other's skin.

The Sabres were just seconds away from escaping the period only down a goal, but it was Henrique netting his second goal of the night against Ullmark with 12.5 seconds to go in the second.

The Sabres continued to get handed more chances to close the gap in the third as they started the period with a power play after a skirmish at the end of the second period. Despite being gifted another good chance to respond, the Sabres put forth another low-opportunity man advantage.

Minutes later, Buffalo was awarded, yet, another power play chance as defenseman Jacob Larsson sat for a hook on Eichel. However, for a seventh-straight time, the Sabres were denied as their passes kept getting cut off by Anaheim's penalty killers.

The league's best power play unit was getting taken to school when it mattered most as part of a frustrating evening for the Sabres' playmakers and weapons.

The Ducks all but iced things with an empty-net goal from Jakob Silfverberg with 3:13 left in regulation.

SCORING SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 7:35 - Jack Eichel (4) (Unassisted); 16:36 - Victor Olofsson (6) PP (Sam Reinhart, Jeff Skinner)

ANA: 18:40 - Adam Henrique (3) (Josh Manson, Rickard Rakell)

Second Period:

BUF: NONE

ANA: 0:57 - Rickard Rakell (3) (Jakob Silfverberg); 9:14 - Ryan Getzlaf (2) PP (Sam Steel, Cam Fowler); 19:47 - Adam Henrique (4) (Maxime Comtois, Jakob Silfverberg)

Third Period:

BUF: NONE

ANA: 16:47 - Jakob Silfverberg (3) (Josh Manson)

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 5:07 - Kyle Okposo (Tripping - 2 min.); 12:53 - Henri Jokiharju (Tripping - 2 min.)

ANA: 15:22 - Adam Henrique (Holding the stick - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: 1:45 - Henri Jokiharju (Slashing - 2 min.); 8:16 - Johan Larsson (Tripping - 2 min.); 9:27 - Marco Scandella (Roughing - 2 min.); 10:15 - Rasmus Dahlin (Concealing the puck - 2 min.); 15:57 - Linus Ullmark (Roughing - 2 min.; served by Jimmy Vesey); 20:00 - Johan Larsson (Roughing - 2 min.)

ANA: 1:45 - Maxime Comtois (Interference - 2 min.); 5:44 - Jacob Larsson (Delay of game - 2 min.); 9:27 - Carter Rowney (Boarding - 2 min.); 9:27 - Josh Manson (Roughing - 2 min.); 11:36 - Ondrej Kase (Slashing - 2 min.); 15:57 - Nick Ritchie (Roughing - 4 min.); 20:00 - Korbinian Holzer (Roughing - 2 min.); 20:00 - Adam Henrique (Roughing - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: 19:47 - Jeff Skinner (High-sticking - 2 min.)

ANA: 5:33 - Jacob Larsson (Hooking - 2 min.); 19:47 - Maxime Comtois (High-sticking - 2 min.)

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 33 (19, 8, 6)

ANA: 31 (11, 13, 7)

Goalies:

BUF: Linus Ullmark - 27 saves

ANA: John Gibson - 31 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 1 for 8 (12.5%)

ANA: 1 for 4 (25%)

Three Stars:

Adam Henrique (ANA)

Jakob Silfverberg (ANA)

Rickard Rakell (ANA)

What's next:

The west coast swing continues for the Sabres on Thursday night, as the team travels to the Staples Center to take on the Los Angeles Kings. Puck drop is set for 10:30 p.m. with pre-game coverage starting at 9:30 p.m. on WGR with Brian Koziol and Paul Hamilton.

The Sabres start a three-game road trip in Anaheim

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 16, 2019

(WGR 550) - Both the Sabres and the Ducks are in the same situation as they get ready to play in Anaheim. Both teams played in the east on Monday afternoon and both teams flew to California right after their games were over.

The Sabres played their most complete game of the season, shutting down Dallas 4-0. As for the Ducks, they went to 4-2-0 after losing to the Bruins.

Buffalo is second in the NHL with 11 points, supporting a 5-0-1 record. Carolina has one more point at 6-1-0.

The Sabres are tied for fourth in league goal scoring with Toronto, averaging 4.00 goals per-game. Victor Olofsson is fifth in goals with five, and is second in the league with five power play goals.

Rasmus Dahlin has seven assists, which ranks him seventh overall. Jack Eichel's nine points has him ninth in league scoring.

Both these teams are winning because they're getting great goaltending. Both Carter Hutton and Linus Ullmark have .931 save percentages. In his one game, former Sabre Ryan Miller has a .963 save percentage and in five games, John Gibson is .941 with a 1.82 goals-against.

Hutton got the shutout Monday against the Stars, and my guess is both he and Ullmark will play in back-to-back nights against Anaheim and Los Angeles.

History has been good to the Sabres in Anaheim as they're 11-8-0 all-time.

Buffalo's power play is No. 1 in the NHL with a 42.9% success rate. The Ducks can't say the same as they are last in the league and are 0-for-season with the extra man.

The Sabres have talked about improving their penalty killing as it's only 21st in the NHL. Anaheim does a pretty good job and is ninth.

Olofsson, Dahlin and Sam Reinhart have been Buffalo's most consistent players. All three have points in five-of-six games.

The Ducks have lost two-of-three games, dropping games in Pittsburgh and Boston.

Buffalo just beat the worst scoring team in the NHL, and Anaheim is next with just 2.17 goals per-games. Goaltending is what has gotten this team through, and Gibson and Miller are first in the NHL at a 1.67 goals-against average.

In addition to Miller, the Ducks have a few more former Sabres, including Brendan Guhle, Derek Grant and Nick Deslauriers. Guhle has two assists in four games, Grant has a goal and an assist in six games and Deslauriers has no points in two games. Guhle has missed the Ducks' last two games with the lower-body injury.

Anaheim's leading scorers are Ondrej Kase and Hampus Lindholm with four points in six games. Rickard Rakell has three points while Ryan Getzlaf only has two,

Join Brian Koziol for the pre-game starting at 9:00.

LeBrun: A look ahead to the trade deadline to see who may be in play and which teams may be interested

By Pierre LeBrun
The Athletic
October 17, 2019

One of the interesting things you find out after trades are made is how far in advance some seeds were planted. Despite the fact the first half the NHL season is rarely a time for trades in the salary cap era, GMs routinely check in with each other to find out what's what and often will keep asking about the same player. It's about building up a file on an individual so that you're not scrambling come the Feb. 24 trade deadline. Whether it's via your pro scouts or through check-ins, you're keeping tabs on potential trade targets in one form or another.

It is already happening right now, this early in the season.

Speaking of which, it's not too early to start thinking ahead to some players who could potentially come into play later this season.

Let's take a whirl and discuss some of the names and where they might fit.

Taylor Hall, New Jersey Devils

Might as well start with the Big Kahuna. To my knowledge, there hasn't been further contract discussion between his camp, led by agent Darren Ferris, and Devils GM Ray Shero since their chat during training camp. That doesn't mean there isn't ample time to get an extension done. But what I would say is that if the Devils don't turn around this awful start, their deadline to get a new contract done isn't realistically July 1 when Hall's contract expires but rather Feb. 24.

I do credit Shero for not rushing things this past summer and forcing the sign or trade scenario then, it made sense to wait when Hall was coming off a knee injury that kept him out for most of last season. Teams needed to make sure that he was fully recovered. Is there a Mark Stone scenario here where Hall moves at the deadline and signs with his new team to increase his trade value for the Devils? It's not easy to pull that off. Vegas was a very specific situation where Golden Knights GM Kelly McCrimmon and the player had a relationship going back to junior. If Stone gets traded to any other team last Feb. I don't think he signs an extension. Therefore, odds are that Hall would be moved as a rental and hit the market on July 1. Of course, a month from now we all could be enjoying New Jersey's turnaround stretch and hearing rumors that Hall likes what he's seeing as contract talks with the Devils pick up. Still, lots to play out on this front. But the slow start to New Jersey's season has spiced up this situation in a hurry.

Ilya Kovalchuk, Los Angeles Kings

The most important thing to point out in Ilya Kovalchuk's situation is that soon enough, his contract represents a bargain. Half of his \$5.3-million signing bonus for this year was paid out on July 15, with the other half due on Dec. 15. Once that's been taken care of, the Kings will have paid out all \$13.15 million in signing bonus money on Kovalchuk's contract, and will have paid most of his \$700,000 salary this season by the time Feb. 24 rolls around. If a contender wants to gamble on two playoff runs with the 36-year-old all they have to pick up is his remaining \$4.25-million salary for next season (although his cap hit is \$6.25 million). He's got a point a game to open the season and seems re-energized under new Kings coach Todd McLellan. Remember that teams like Boston and San Jose were heavy bidders on him two years ago before the Kings got him. Could the Bruins and Sharks circle back? Their cap situation might make it difficult unless the Kings are willing to eat some money. Perhaps a cash-conscious contender will be more interested in adding him instead.

Erik Gudbranson, Pittsburgh Penguins

While Jack Johnson is the player most talked about in trade speculation, I just don't see a taker out there given the term left on his contract — three more seasons after this year at a \$3.25-million cap hit and he's 32. Whereas Gudbranson is 27 and has just one more year on his deal after this season at \$4 million. Only because we know the Ducks tried to trade for a right-handed D-man last month in Justin Faulk, I wonder if Anaheim wouldn't also

look at Gudbranson, a more rugged player who could fit on their third pair. Anaheim is flush at forward, which is a positional need for the Penguins.

Vladislav Namestnikov, Ottawa Senators

I know, I know, he just got to Ottawa. But he's also a pending UFA July 1 and the rebuilding Senators are going to be a draft lottery team. I could easily see GM Pierre Dorion flipping him before the Feb. 24 trade deadline for another pick.

"It's way too early to tell," Namestnikov's agent Dan Milstein said on Wednesday. "It's possible he gets moved but he could also sign. He likes it in Ottawa."

Ryan Murray, Columbus Blue Jackets

Another club deep in numbers on the blue line and Murray, 26, in my mind is the guy most likely to move if the Jackets ever go that route. He's not a rental, either, with another year his deal at a \$4.6-million cap hit. One rival front office executive, when asked about Murray, told me he thinks he's still a good player that perhaps could benefit from a change of scenery. "He can play as a complimentary No. 4," said the exec.

Marco Scandella, Buffalo Sabres

If Rasmus Ristolainen ends up staying, and it sounds like he's happy right now, then something has to eventually give on a Sabres blue line that's going to be bubbling with bodies once everyone is healthy. Not that there's any hurry to decide anything. Especially not with a trip overseas coming next month. But at some point this season I suspect the Sabres could deal a blueliner given those numbers. Scandella is a pending UFA on July 1 and currently carries a cap hit of \$4 million. It's not out of the question depending on league-wide interest that he's the odd man out later in the season. He's a quality veteran teams normally look to add closer to the deadline.

Chris Kreider, New York Rangers

The Rangers, according to a source, had a very short contract discussion with his camp in June and nothing since. It might be that the Blueshirts are waiting for the New Year to revisit that discussion with the pending UFA, see how their season shakes out by then and where all the pieces fit moving forward. But it's just as likely they'll part ways before Feb. 24 if the Rangers are out of a playoff spot. He's got a modified no-trade clause, which features a list of 11 teams where he can not be traded to without his approval. By all accounts, Kreider likes it in New York and would rather stay on. He's always been a guy that's been in great physical shape and while teams are generally worried about players in their late 20s/early 30s, I think this is an excellent skater who has lots of runway left in his career. If the Rangers don't extend him, he could be a rather sneaky deadline addition for a contender.

Kyle Turris, Nashville Predators

It's just never been a great fit since Turris ended up with the Predators and now he finds himself in a bottom-six role on the team although he's got two goals and two assists in six games. No question the team tried to move him during this past offseason but found no takers. The fact he's in the second season of a six-year, \$36-million deal is the reason why. I still think the 30-year-old forward has something to offer but the Predators would have to eat some of that contract to move him in my opinion. I wonder about Pittsburgh as a potential fit but again, the contract would be an issue for the cap-challenged Penguins. I think it's a long shot that he moves in-season. This is probably revisited in the offseason and in the meantime, there's time for Turris to reclaim his value within the club. Which is what I think Turris would prefer as his ultimate end game. His family is happy in Nashville and I think he wants it to work despite his current role on the team.

‘The people of Buffalo had a huge impact on me’: Facing his former team, Ryan Miller reflects on his Sabres tenure

By John Vogl

The Athletic

October 16, 2019

ANAHEIM, Calif. – It’s been more than five years since the Sabres traded Ryan Miller.

“It was – and still is – a sad day,” the goalie said Wednesday.

Of course, part of him never left Buffalo. As he’s said often, he grew into a well-rounded man (and world-class netminder) in Western New York. His subsequent stops have also been fine – his current home in Anaheim has actually been perfect for his family – but there’s no way he’d be the person he is today without Buffalo.

And, as the Sabres celebrate their 50th anniversary, there’s no way the organization would be what it is without Miller.

“I had a great time in Buffalo,” he said in Honda Center. “It’s a huge part of my life. The people of Buffalo had a huge impact on me, from the people I’d see at the grocery store right on up to the people at the rink every single day. I felt fully a part of the community. I felt fully a part of the organization for a long time.

“But accepting that people change and situations change, you move forward in life. But I still look back and think about how great it was to be a Buffalo Sabre. I still have a big piece of my heart there.”

He also has his name all over the record book. Miller appeared in 541 regular season games, 49 more than Dominik Hasek. Miller won 284 games, 50 more than Hasek (though The Dominator, with 70 ties, didn’t have the benefit of shootout wins).

From 2005 to 2014, Miller was essentially the face of the franchise.

“Looking back on it,” he said, “I was blessed to get drafted by Buffalo and be with an organization that really put time into the players and a city that really respected the kind of work you did on the ice.”

Before serving as the Ducks’ backup against Buffalo, the 39-year-old Miller took time to look back on the Sabres’ runs in 2006 and 2007, growing up alongside Jason Pominville, Thomas Vanek, Paul Gaustad and Derek Roy, where the NHL is going and what could have been.

Fifty years is a long time. No other Sabres goalie has played as many games and has as many wins. What does that mean to you?

It means a lot. There’s been some great goalies, obviously. I came in from juniors and college wearing No. 39, so I had to change that pretty quick in following Dominik Hasek. To have some great moments in Buffalo and have some years that still mean a lot, it’s pretty cool.

And I’m happy the organization is where it is. It seems to have always been in good hands with the Pegula family. I think the fans have been patiently waiting for things to kind of settle into an identity and I think Jack Eichel is starting to give the team a little more direction as he matures. With a few other guys signing long-term there and coming through, I think they’re going to have guys that represent the club. I think the fans kind of sense that, so it’s cool.

It’s interesting that you mention the number. No one’s worn 30 since you left. What would it mean to one day be next to Dom in the rafters?

I don’t know, that’s up to other people. I think it’s always been something that people get confused about with athletes is that we expect something to happen. It would be a great honor from the organization or Buffalo or the fans – whoever is in charge of that – because I did love my time there and it was a lot of hockey. There’s a lot of great hockey games in that rink, so it’d be nice.

But Dom is the man. He had, what, like two Harts in a row (1997, 1998) and six Vezinas. He just dominated, obviously, for lack of a better word. So that's the standard.

I was just happy to represent myself. That's always what I was trying to do is just be the best I could be with the group I had. I was lucky that we had that group that came up at the same time as me. We had Pommer and Van, Goose and Roysie, Henrik Tallinder was a little ahead of that, but I was just lucky to be a part of a group of six or seven guys who really came up and made an impact. You don't get a chance to do that a whole lot, especially in that era. Maybe now you see more rookies and more guys coming through at a younger age, but we just hit at the right time and it was a lot of fun.

And it is still fun. People look back at that time as really a glory era of the 50 years.

It was a great time. We had two shots to get at it (the Stanley Cup final). Fate had other ideas, but I thought we played the right way and we tried our best.

You mentioned Van and Pommer. I remember back when you were doing the CBA negotiations during the 2012 lockout, you said one thing that's going to happen is the middle-class guys – like your brother – would get pushed out. I think we're seeing that. Those are two guys who had 16 and 17 goals last season.

I know. It's wild, right? These guys produce. If you talk to a GM right in the middle of the season and they're looking at their stats and where they are in the playoff position, if they know they could have a guy sitting at about 10 goals at the midpoint, just chipping in, it's almost comical at this point. There's a big class of guys in the NHL who deserve to play in the NHL.

That was my case for coming back this year. Last year when I left, I told them, 'I think I can still do it. If you guys agree with me, hopefully we can do something.' But even that comes with the price of you have to reduce the expectation on the contract and you have to work with the organization because they have to make the salary cap work, they have to make contracts work. It's a whole new era of signing (RFA) guys who haven't really done a whole lot. I mean, there's some world class players getting signed, but when you get down to it they've only played three years. It's wild.

You need a middle class. We're dealing with that with the politics in our country right now, you know what I mean? When the top gets too much and people get desperate at the bottom, it's a microcosm. That's a different conversation, but you'd like to see some guys who are definitely NHLers be in the league.

While it's a different conversation, it's a conversation you've had. I read Josh Cooper's stuff last year. Is that different now? Obviously, you've always been a thinking person. But is it different that you do speak out about it? Are you more comfortable, I guess?

Yeah, I mean, if people ask. I try not to go too far out on it. There's just certain things and that one revolved around separating families. I just thought there's certain things in America you have to say no to. Whether you're a Democrat or Republican, I think we want to handle ourselves a certain way. There has to be a solution where we deal with people in a humane way. So that was just how that came up and that's why I participated more in that.

I just play goalie. I'm not going to act like an expert in everything. There's two points of view – more than two points of view – for almost everything in the country. That was just the one I felt strongly about, just picturing being in a desperate situation and having my kid taken away. I couldn't put that together in my head as to why that was OK. There had to be a way to do it differently and I think we ultimately have proven as a country that we don't want that.

You mention you just play goalie. Still having fun with it, obviously.

It's been nice. I don't think it's out of my system yet. I think if I were having trouble adapting to the game or my body didn't feel right, I would have more than acceptance of what I need to be doing in slowing it down, not pushing it so far. But I felt like I played at a high level last year. Maybe even being hurt extended my feeling about what I need to be doing because I missed 10 weeks and I missed eight or 10 games that I could be

playing in the role I have now. So I wasn't really getting out of it what I thought I could be getting out of it. So I just didn't feel like I got it out of my system.

Thinking back to those years when you were playing 76 games, what is that like?

They don't recommend that anymore. I'm proud I was able to do it. Unfortunately, that was the year we missed the playoffs by a couple points. Another year I was scheduled for a bunch of starts and was hurt and we also missed the playoffs. Looking back on those close misses, it was disappointing.

Because I know what a championship would have meant. Of all the Buffalo athletes I've covered, you understood most what it would have meant not only to the players involved but the fans.

I know, but we had our chance. We had two really good chances and it just didn't work out. We put ourselves in position. We had the right kind of attitude, the right kind of game plan. Losing to Carolina and losing to Ottawa, that's how it goes.

Henrique scores twice, helps Ducks end Sabres point streak at six

By Dan Arritt

NHL.com

October 17, 2019

ANAHEIM -- Adam Henrique scored two goals for the Anaheim Ducks in a 5-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Honda Center on Wednesday.

The Sabres (5-1-1) lost for the first time in regulation this season and had their streak of six straight games with at least a point end.

"We just need to stick to the game plan and we'll be fine," Sabres forward Vladimir Sobotka said. "The first six games we played a full 60 minutes and we won the game. Right now, I didn't think we played all 60 and we got the result."

Jakob Silfverberg had a goal and two assists and Rickard Rakell had a goal and an assist for the Ducks (5-2-0), who trailed 2-0 in the first period. John Gibson made 31 saves.

Jack Eichel and Victor Olofsson scored, and Linus Ullmark made 26 saves for the Sabres, whose NHL-leading power-play unit (9-for-21, 42.9 percent) went 1-for-7 and dropped to second (35.7 percent) behind the Edmonton Oilers.

"I would have liked to see us get a few more power plays than penalty kills, but ultimately I thought we did a good job of sticking up for one another without getting carried away," Ducks forward Ryan Getzlaf said.

Rakell scored off his own rebound 57 seconds into the second period to tie the score at 2-2.

The Ducks took a 3-2 lead and ended a 0-for-16 start to the season on their power play when Getzlaf scored from the left circle at 9:14.

"There is still lots of work to do [on the power play], but it's just a relief to get one in there for everyone because it becomes a focus, and with that comes a lot of unneeded pressure," Ducks coach Dallas Eakins said. "We have an expectation there that is a little bit different, but we had worked hard on that for a number of days and good on that unit for sticking with it."

Henrique scored at 19:47 off a centering feed from Max Comtois to make it 4-2.

Silfverberg scored into an empty net at 16:47 of the third period for the 5-2 final.

"We're not worried about playing physical. I feel there's a lot of courage on the bench," Buffalo coach Ralph Krueger said. "It all began with our puck management. We put ourselves in bad positions."

Eichel gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead at 7:35 of the first period.

Buffalo killed two power plays before scoring on its first for a 2-0 lead at 16:36.

The puck was loose to the right of Gibson when Jeff Skinner made a quick pass to Olofsson for a one-timer. Olofsson has scored the first eight goals of his NHL career on the power play -- six this season -- extending his NHL record.

Anaheim forward Max Jones appeared to score off a rebound at 18:03, but goal was overturned on video review.

Henrique scored 37 seconds later off a deflection in front to make it 2-1.

"We lost the way," Krueger said. "It seemed like the no-goal worked, almost, against us versus for us. We let our guard down there, the next shift they got the 2-1 goal. We really lost our way then, right up into the third period."

They said it

"[The Ducks] are a team that wants to get us going, trick us into playing their game. Unfortunately, they were successful." -- Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark

"We're going to be scoring by committee all season long. We've got a lot of young players that are playing key roles for us and we're going to need them to contribute just as much as everybody." -- Ducks forward Ryan Getzlaf

Need to know

Skinner, who got his 200th NHL assist, has an eight-game point streak against the Ducks (six goals, five assists). ... Eichel has seven points (three goals, four assists) in his past four games. ... The Ducks have three straight wins at home to start the season for the fourth time in their history and first since 2014-15. ... Rakell has five points (three goals, two assists) in his past five games. ... Henrique has 22 points (eight goals, 14 assists) in 24 games against the Sabres. ... Henrique and Silfverberg each finished plus-4.

What's next

Sabres: At the Los Angeles Kings on Thursday (10:30 p.m. ET; FS-W, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Ducks: Host the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday (10 p.m. ET; PRIME, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

Sabres at Ducks preview

By Dan Arritt

NHL.com

October 16, 2019

SABRES (5-0-1) at DUCKS (4-2-0)

10 p.m. ET; ESPN+, PRIME, MSG-B, NHL.TV

The Game

The Buffalo Sabres will try to continue their best start in 12 seasons when they play the Anaheim Ducks at Honda Center on Wednesday.

The Sabres have at least a point in the first six games of a season for the first time since starting 6-0-2 in 2008-09.

The Ducks matched their best five-game start (4-1-0) before losing 4-2 at the Boston Bruins on Monday to cap a four-game road trip.

Players to watch

Sabres forward Victor Olofsson is the first NHL player to score his first seven goals on the power play. He accomplished that feat with the first goal in a 4-0 win against the Dallas Stars on Monday, his fifth power-play goal of the season.

Ducks forward Rickard Rakell had three points (two goals, one assist) during the four-game road trip.

They said it

"We were extremely confident going into training camp what we needed to do with this group ... to find out what it was made of, and we didn't know what that was, where that potential would take us. We had no idea we'd be sitting here (5-0-1) after six games." -- Sabres coach Ralph Krueger

"Stay the course. Everybody just take a breath. I think the more you hammer away on (the lack of success on the power play), the higher the frustration comes and the tighter the hand goes on the sticks, and now you've got a way bigger problem than you want." -- Ducks coach Dallas Eakins on Anaheim's 0-for-14 start on the power play

Sabres projected lineup

Victor Olofsson -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Kyle Okposo
Jeff Skinner -- Marcus Johansson -- Vladimir Sobotka
Jimmy Vesey -- Casey Mittelstadt -- Evan Rodrigues

Jake McCabe -- Rasmus Ristolainen
Rasmus Dahlin -- Colin Miller
Marco Scandella -- Henri Jokiharju

Carter Hutton
Linus Ullmark

Scratched: Curtis Lazar, John Gilmour

Injured: Conor Sheary (upper body), Brandon Montour (hand)

Ducks projected lineup

Max Comtois -- Sam Steel -- Ondrej Kase
Rickard Rakell -- Adam Henrique -- Jakob Silfverberg
Nick Ritchie -- Ryan Getzlaf -- Troy Terry
Max Jones - Devin Shore -- Carter Rowney

Hampus Lindholm -- Josh Manson
Michael Del Zotto -- Cam Fowler
Jacob Larsson -- Korbinian Holzer

John Gibson
Ryan Miller

Scratched: Nicolas Deslauriers, Derek Grant

Injured: Brendan Guhle (lower body)

Status report

Sheary is on the three-game California trip after missing the past three games. He practiced in Anaheim on Tuesday but did not participate in line rushes and remains day to day. ... Guhle did not practice Tuesday and is unlikely to play against the Sabres, who selected him in the second round of the 2015 NHL Draft before trading him to Anaheim on Feb. 24 for Montour, who is not on the trip. ... The Ducks assigned forward Isac Lundestrom to San Diego of the American Hockey League on Tuesday.

Stat pack

Buffalo has scored nine power-play goals in 21 opportunities situations. Their 42.9 percent success rate leads the NHL. ... The Ducks have allowed one first-period goal, tied with the Ottawa Senators for fewest in the League.

Just the Stats: Sabres and Avs are hot, Devils are cold

By Kevin Gibson

TSN

October 16, 2019

Hot

- The Buffalo Sabres (5-0-1) and Colorado Avalanche (5-0-0) are the only teams that have yet to lose in regulation. Both teams are a perfect 4-0-0 at home. The Sabres play five of their next six games on the road, including a California road swing that starts Wednesday night. The Avs are 1-0-0 so far on their six-game road trip, winning in Washington on Monday.

- Last season, four players scored four goals or more in a game. We just hit mid-October and we have already have three – Oilers winger , Bruins winger and Red Wings winger . Mantha has six goals on the season, but just one in his last four games played. Neal is the early leader for the NHL Cy Young Award, with eight goals and no assists (8-0). Pastrnak has six goals over his past four games played and is well on his way to a fourth consecutive 30-goal season. Each of the past three seasons his goal production has gone up, from 34 to 35 to 38.

- Arizona goalie is 2-2-0 on the season, but he's only allowed six goals, with a goals-against average of 1.52 and save percentage of .955. The Coyotes have allowed only nine goals through five games, and just five of those were at even strength. That's some great defence, but they are struggling on offence, with just 11 goals for the season. The Coyotes did end a 10-game losing streak in Winnipeg on Tuesday. The team hadn't won in Manitoba since Jets 2.0 returned.

Not

- The New Jersey Devils are the NHL's only winless team (0-4-2). They've managed just 13 goals on the season. First-overall pick has zero points and 12 shots on net in the first six games of his pro career.

- The Rangers have cooled off just by barely seeing the ice. The team has only played three times so far this season, including a week off between their second (Oct. 5) and third (Oct. 12) games. New York centre had four goals and four assists in the first two games of the season, but was held off the scoresheet in a 4-1 loss to the Oilers last Saturday. The Rangers are back in action Thursday night against the Devils.

Are the Sabres the real deal?

By Joey Alfieri
Pro Hockey Talk
October 16, 2019

It's way too early in the season to be asking this question, but we're going to do it anyway. Are the Buffalo Sabres the real deal?

Through six games, the Sabres have rattled off a 5-0-1 record and they have the best goal differential at plus-12. Not bad, not bad at all. New head coach Ralph Krueger has seemingly pushed all the right buttons and his players have responded in a positive way. Now, all he has to do (easier said than done) is keep it going for 76 more games!

"Anytime you get off to a good start and get results, confidence naturally comes with that," forward Jeff Skinner said after Monday's win over Dallas. "What you have to do is keep working at your game and use the confidence in a positive way. We still have things to work on, we still have things we want to improve. Being able to get off to a good start results-wise is nice. Now we have to keep that momentum going."

There's a few things that stand out when you take a look at why they've been so good. First, their power-play has been lethal. Raise your hand if you thought Rasmus Dahlin, Jack Eichel and Victor Olofsson would all be in the top six when it came to power play points to start the season. What? Anybody? Thought so.

Buffalo has scored at least one tally on the man-advantage in five of their six games. They scored three power play goals against the New Jersey Devils, two against the Columbus Blue Jackets and two against the Montreal Canadiens.

The Sabres' power play was ranked 16th last season at just under 20 percent. This year, they're clicking at 42.9 percent while the league average is right around 21 percent. As dynamic as they are when they're up a man, there's no way they're going to roll at over 40 percent all year. To put that number into perspective, the Tampa Bay Lightning, who had the best power play in the league last year, were firing at just over 28 percent.

One of the other strong parts of their game has been their goaltending. Carter Hutton has been rock-solid between the pipes and Linus Ullmark has been really good, too. Hutton, who has started four of the team's six games, has a 4-0-0 record with a 1.74 goals-against-average and a .931 save percentage this season. He's coming off a 25-save shutout in a 4-0 win over the Dallas Stars.

"A lot of it is the fact that they both get to play then they both feel like they have a little bit of a rhythm going," assistant coach Mike Bales, who works with the goaltenders, told the Sabres' website. "One guy's not going to sit for too long. So, they always feel game-ready because of that too. It helps a lot.

"You can practice all you want, but when you get into games it feels a little bit different. The traditional, old-school way of doing it where you have one guy play 65 games and the backup would come in and mop up once in a while, wouldn't get that many starts, was tough on backups for rhythm and feeling ready so I think having two guys going all the time helps them be ready when they do play."

Whether or not Hutton and Ullmark can keep this going remains to be seen, but it's imperative that they get great goaltending if they're going to earn a playoff spot in 2019-20. Ullmark hasn't been a regular in the NHL for as long as Hutton, so it's tough to get a gauge of what he can do over a full season. As for Hutton, he's a veteran and he's been around the league a lot. He got off to a very strong start last year before fading in a hurry in the second half of the season.

Another reason they haven't lost in regulation yet is because of their balanced scoring. Through six contests, Buffalo has had 10 different scorers. Olofsson leads the way with five goals, Skinner has four, Marcus Johansson, Sam Reinhart and Jack Eichel each have three, Conor Sheary has two, while Johan Larsson, Marco Scandella, Kyle Okposo and Dahlin have all found the back of the net once. Now that's balance.

As fun as the Sabres have been, it's tough to envision them staying ahead of teams like Boston, Tampa Bay and Toronto, but they don't have to finish atop the Atlantic Division to have a successful season. Making it back to the

postseason in a Wild Card spot would be a huge success. They still have plenty of work to do before they can reach that point, but this team filled with youth seems to be on the right track.

31 Thoughts: Taylor Hall contract status looms over slow-starting Devils

By Elliotte Friedman

Sportsnet

October 16, 2019

Wednesday's news is that the New Jersey Devils put assistant GM Tom Fitzgerald on the bench next to head coach John Hynes. We've seen teams try something like this before — they put a member of the front office or a GM right behind the players. Last year, Bob Murray did it in Anaheim. Lou Lamoriello has done it in New Jersey. Generally it's for one reason. They want to see first-hand who is part of the solution and who isn't. My experience with this kind of move is that the New Jersey front office wants that answer.

We knew that the Devils and their pending UFA Taylor Hall were going to be one of the major storylines of 2019–20. What we never suspected was it might happen so quick.

Let's be clear about one thing: There's no reason to believe, at this time, the Devils are weighing any option other than signing Hall to a long-term extension. That is the plan; that is the hope; that is what the organization and his agent were discussing prior to the season.

Yes, it is early — and it will be interesting to see which poor starter(s) declare themselves "this year's St. Louis Blues," holding together in hope of late-season resurrection.

Yes, the Devils have played three opponents' home openers, not a schedule anyone would want. (They were outscored 14–2 by Buffalo, Philadelphia and Boston in those games.)

And yes, they've suffered two absolutely mind-numbing defeats, blowing a 4–0 lead against Winnipeg and a 4–1 cushion to Florida. Only in your worst nightmares does that continue.

The most interesting person to me in all of this is GM Ray Shero. There was a time he had a cautious reputation. Then he swung the 2008 trade that brought Pascal Dupuis and Marian Hossa to Pittsburgh. Whether buying or selling, he'll weigh the pros and cons, make a decision and go for it. There's not a lot of fear there.

When Shero was GM in Pittsburgh, it was specifically written into his contract that he couldn't trade two particular players without ownership permission. (No prize for guessing who.) I'm not sure what language exists now, but these decisions do not occur in a vacuum. This was a huge off-season for New Jersey, which won its second lottery in three years, took on P.K. Subban's full salary and made a smart one-year gamble on Wayne Simmonds in an effort to get back to the playoffs.

NHL owners will tell you how critical it is to make the playoffs. In what is still a gate-driven league, the difference between getting in and missing out has massive financial implications. Every indication is the organization recognizes it's still early. This is the same ownership group that runs the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, which recently went through a rebuild that needed the patience of Job.

The biggest question the Devils need to ask themselves is: What do they believe Hall wants to do? They've already been talking to him. The 2018 Hart Trophy winner has said many times that he loved being in the playoffs two years ago, and New Jersey knows the best chance of making him happy is making him believe they can consistently get there.

At last year's NHL/NHLPA media event in Chicago, it was clear that, of all the players, Hall was most intrigued by John Tavares's free-agent process. He said it "took a lot of guts" for Tavares to do it, and has asked the current Toronto captain about it.

That's no guarantee of anything — just another piece of this puzzle the Devils must put together. At some point, they're going to put a number on the table and gauge Hall's reaction.

A lot of the heat is coming down on Hynes, but he got an extension nine months ago and I can't imagine barbecuing hot dogs all summer made him forget how to coach. One of their biggest problems is stopping the cycle, and they've already looked at adding a blueliner. I could see them continuing/expediting that search to help with the defensive work.

Right now, they'll call other teams to see what might be out there. If things don't improve, those talks will reverse — with others asking them, "What are you going to do?"

1. Jinx alert: Heading into Wednesday's games, there is only one player in the NHL who has been on ice for at least 80 minutes in all situations and not suffered through a goal against. That is Anaheim's Rickard Rakell (107:48, 4-0 Ducks). He does kill penalties, and Buffalo's lethal man-advantage is in town. There are only two players who have played 100 five-on-five minutes and not been scored upon. They are Anaheim's Cam Fowler (101:57, 6-0 Ducks) and Tampa Bay's Ryan McDonagh (100:46, 4-0 Lightning). Jordan Staal was in the conversation, but that ended with Pierre-Luc DuBois' game-winner for Columbus last Saturday. (Source: Natural Stat Trick.)
2. One thing I'm hearing a lot: the bottom of the Eastern Conference is much, much better than a year ago. "Those teams are improved," one scout said. "There won't be as many (higher-seeded clubs) coasting to the playoffs, like a few of them were used to."
3. The Canucks are unbeaten since Bo Horvat was named captain, and, in a huge turnaround, trail only Carolina and Nashville for goals by defencemen. Troy Stecher's ice-time was down from 19:55 in 2018–19 to 13:58 in the first four games of 2019–20. There were rumblings that the Canucks would look to move him for a prospect or a draft pick to ease their cap crunch — but that was denied. Stecher scored his first of the year Tuesday night against Detroit. His ice time was a slightly deceiving 12:16 as he missed the last six minutes due to a misconduct.
4. Bruce Boudreau and the Wild had smiles on their faces when they arrived at Scotiabank Arena for morning skate on Tuesday. A win will do that, getting off the schneid with a 2–0 victory in Ottawa on Monday. But the frustration was back after a 4–2 loss in Toronto. Word on Minnesota is that GM Bill Guerin will listen on everything, but isn't in a rush to do anything simply for the sake of it. I think they'd like to address a recurring problem — the team's lack of right-handed shots. Boudreau is in the last year of his coaching contract (there is a consulting gig with the organization scheduled to begin next season). I don't get the sense Guerin is in any hurry there. If a move did happen, Boudreau's history as an immediate turnaround artist keeps him in the conversation if anyone else wants to make a change.
5. Not exactly a stunner to see Leon Draisaitl (25:08) and Connor McDavid (23:10) carrying the mail in Edmonton. They were first and second in ice time for forwards a year ago, and are back in that spot to start 2019-20, although now Draisaitl is number one. While the captain is up 20 seconds, Draisaitl's rise is a whopping 2:33. No forward has averaged 25 minutes a game since 2001-02. That was Pavel Bure, the second of two times he did it. The only others to cross that threshold are Jaromir Jagr, Paul Kariya and Joe Sakic. Only one player this decade even sniffed that air. That was Ilya Kovalchuk — 24:26 in 2011-12 and 24:44 in 2012-13. The Rangers' Mika Zibanejad, by the way, has jumped from 20th to fourth.
6. At even strength, Draisaitl and McDavid are 18:47 and 18:38 respectively. They were first (McDavid) and third (Draisaitl) last season, joined by Patrick Kane and Dylan Larkin as the only forwards above 18. Right now, they are almost one minute ahead of everyone else, but the interesting thing is who is third. The Islanders' Mathew Barzal is at 17:41, up almost three minutes. Barzal's overall time is 18:51, so he's not getting a ton on the power play. His influence is growing.
7. Pat Maroon paused when asked what questions the Lightning asked most about winning the Stanley Cup.
"The thing they asked most about was how we handled it when things went wrong. How were we able to overcome that?" Maroon pointed to Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final, where St. Louis blew a 2-0 lead, losing 4–2. "We plateaued in that game, and didn't feel good about ourselves when we lost. Craig Berube said he didn't understand why we were reacting that way. We knew it was going to be a grind, we'd handled things before — (we had to) get back to who we were. That's the kind of thing I talk about (with the Lightning)."
8. The NHL is on notice: Sidney Crosby is back in Hart Trophy consideration. He won his second in 2014, and almost single-handedly willed the injury-ravaged Penguins to a 2–1 victory over previously unbeaten Anaheim last Thursday. That started a three-game win streak.

"We're lucky enough to see it every day," GM Jim Rutherford said last week. "In games, in practices, he always brings 100 per cent."

9. Head coach Mike Sullivan indicated Pittsburgh's nine defencemen might have to get used to a rotation. Rutherford admitted there "wasn't much" of a trade market for what he had out there.

"We might stay with what he have until everyone gets healthy — see where we are then."

It helps when you have a nuclear weapon like Crosby, and one man's injury is another man's opportunity. Among those who have stepped up: Sam Lafferty, who had five points in weekend wins over Minnesota and Winnipeg. A scouting friend had praise for the winger, taken 113th overall in 2014 out of NCAA Brown.

"I saw him at a rookie tournament (in 2018) and didn't think he was going to be good enough," he said. "The next thing I knew, he had 50 points in the AHL. Good on him — he worked hard to get better."

10. Rutherford was not willing to give any timelines on Evgeni Malkin, but said the cornerstone did not undergo surgery. When I asked about the uncertain timelines soft-tissue injuries can present, he laughed and said, "That's why we don't give updates."

11. One thing the GM made clear: He is not interested in trading Pittsburgh's 2020 first-rounder.

12. I do think Montreal — which has kept an eye on left-shot defenders — took a look at Juuso Riikola. (Rutherford was not the source on this one.)

13. Buffalo is another team looking to move a defender, and I thought Arizona might make sense for one of these blueline-heavy clubs when Niklas Hjalmarrsson went down. He's a huge part of what they do. Since he's going to be back and they are tighter to the cap, a big move is unlikely. The Coyotes believe in 22-year-old Kyle Capobianco, whose 2018-19 season was shortened by a knee injury. He played 13:18 in Tuesday's victory in Winnipeg.

14. Win or lose, Nashville is going to score and score a lot. They've got 28 goals in six games, a league-leading 4.67 (yes, I know it's early). Fourteen different players have at least one. There's been some dialogue in the last few days between the Predators and Roman Josi. There's a "want" from both sides to get this done, but the magic number looks like it starts with nine.

15. Ottawa owner Eugene Melnyk halted the search for a President of Hockey Operations until at least the end of the season. What is uncertain is if the search will continue, or if GM Pierre Dorion's work convinces Melnyk that no new hire is necessary. It is believed Melnyk was asking an experienced executive for suggestions (I'd heard Glen Sather), but we can't be sure if that will continue, either.

16. We're going to see some changes to the All-Star Skills Competition for January's event in St. Louis. Some of the events that players have really struggled with (such as puck control) are on the chopping block. The NHL and NHLPA agree that you want your guys having fun and looking happy. The opposite is not the best advertisement for the sport. St. Louis has a fantastic alumni group, and discussions are under way on how to involve them — but my dream of having Al Iafrate win the hardest shot while smoking a cigarette appears unlikely. Like the all-stars themselves, there is concern about having alumni compete and not look good. I assume female players will be invited again, too.

17. The most impressive thing about Nashville's latest win was that it came in Vegas, site of a legit Stanley Cup contender. The Golden Knights were 53-22-7 at home during their first two seasons, giving rise to the "Vegas flu" theory — that the added distractions from the fun capital of North America made it harder to win there. (Trust me, it makes it harder to broadcast there, too.) I love the way the Knights play — they're a throwback to an edgier era.

"We're at our best when we play an angry game, when we have emotion, when we're pissed off," defenceman Brayden McNabb said last week. "A lot of guys have that identity. Finishing checks fuels our team."

How big a part do you play in that?

McNabb laughed.

"I don't think it's myself. You know who it is."

Ryan Reaves?

"Yes, blame him. Him and (William) Carrier."

They've lost at home to the Predators and Bruins, so they'll be squirrely for Ottawa's arrival on Thursday.

18. McNabb, a better puckhandler than he gets credit for, spent a lot of time working on the power of his first few steps. He was looking to create muscle memory, because, "If you overthink everything, you get what you get."

You can bet coach Gerard Gallant will be on them over the next 48 hours to get back to who they are. McNabb will be a part of that.

"I learned from my time in Los Angeles that winning is hard. It comes with bumps and bruises. But if you prepare around the clock, it makes you confident."

19. Carolina improved to 6-1 with a 2-0 win in Los Angeles Tuesday night. Prior to the road trip, I asked Rod Brind'Amour if he's noticed a change in how his team is perceived after going to the Eastern Conference Final.

"I do," he answered. "I like to watch video of what coaches say after we play them to hear what they think about the game. Last year, when we beat a team, there would be a lot of, 'We played poorly' — not '[the Hurricanes] played well.' ... Our wins this year have been hard games. We are getting everyone's best. You can see the intensity. Our guys have got to be ready. And that respect is good. It's not bad to be dialled in because the other team is pushing."

20. Coaches are supposed to worry, to find things they don't like even when the situation looks solid.

"Our record is great and that's what we get graded on," Brind'Amour said. "We're not quite where I'd like, but we're pretty close."

What more would you like?

"We have another gear. We're a little inconsistent in the way we have to play. We've given up too many good looks."

When they smothered Tampa last week, allowing just two shots in the final 42 minutes, one of the Lightning said the Hurricanes were more aggressive with the short change, and much less so with the longer one in the second period. Brind'Amour thought that was overthinking it a bit. After going to 5-0 with a 5-2 win over the Islanders last Friday, defenceman Brett Pesce told The Athletic's Sara Civan that he'd never had so much freedom in the offensive zone, which creates an almost a position-less style of play.

I could hear Brind'Amour smiling through the phone when asked about that.

"It's a tricky question. I watch systems and see more and more teams do it. Our guys love to promote that. I think it's half tongue-in-cheek. We have a definite commitment to play without the puck. But I do want them to be themselves."

21. Carolina hasn't given up hope of Justin Williams returning, maybe as late as Christmas/New Year's. In the meantime, Brind'Amour thought a lot about "tone" in his second season as a head coach.

"I wanted to keep doing what we did last year, setting a standard for this is still how we do things. I don't know any other way. You push your guys, but it has to be a give-and-take. I love the group. I always joke that when I played, I didn't have a real job, but now I've got one."

22. Remember Anthony Mantha's four-goal game against Dallas?

The fourth (1:02 mark of the above video) came off a face-off where Detroit's coaching staff wanted the draw on the other side of the ice.

"[Larkin] told us they had a play they wanted to try," head coach Jeff Blashill said last week, referring to the group of Larkin, Mantha and Tyler Bertuzzi.

Assistant coach Dan Bylsma handles the pre-game planning in this department, letting the trio know about opponent tendencies and what to look for. Blashill loved Larkin stepping up in that situation.

"The best lines in hockey drive their teams to winning. It goes beyond points. For them to have the confidence to say they wanted to try that is great for us."

23. Blashill felt a late-season winning streak last March gave his players some confidence. The Red Wings won eight of nine, including five over playoff-bound clubs: the Islanders, Vegas, San Jose, Boston and Pittsburgh.

"Against real teams, we played really good hockey," he said. "Confidence matters. The margin of victory in this league is razor thin. You better believe ... it matters to an individual and a team."

Blashill praised the likes of Dennis Cholowski, Filip Hronek and current AHLer Joe Veleno for how they prepared during the summer, but we spent the majority of our conversation on the top line.

"They have learned a shared responsibility. It's not one of them looking at the other two (to do something). I don't like the phrase, 'two-way players.' I prefer 'winning players.'"

What does that mean?

"It means they are not cheaters. They have developed into that."

What percentage would you put on them to indicate how close they are to where they need to be?

"I won't answer that. It puts a ceiling on them and I won't do that. This league is relentless and ongoing night after night. They are all better today than they were a year ago, three years ago, five years ago. Credit to them."

24. Blashill on working with Ken Holland and Steve Yzerman: "They are not a whole lot different. Two of the most respected men in the NHL. (Holland) should be a Hall of Famer, his success speaks for itself. Great man. Yzerman is there, extremely respected. Both men believe in reality. No short-cuts. Build through the draft. And they both believe young players have to go through a process. Steve could have forced young players on our team, but would only allow it if they were 100 per cent ready."

25. Only Connor McDavid has more power-play points (seven) than Jack Eichel's six. Buffalo's captain is off to an excellent start, and nothing exhibited his strong relationship with new coach Ralph Krueger more than the aftermath of the Sabres' only loss — 4-3 in overtime to Columbus last Monday. Eichel was bumped off the puck by Nick Foligno, who set up Alexandre Texier for the winner.

Asked 48 hours later how he handled it by Jeff Marek, Krueger responded. "I took that on myself. I put Jack out, he was the first shift (in overtime). We went back to him on the third (shift). In retrospect, he wasn't quite ready. His first shift was quite long.... It was not only his deal. We move on quick here. Everybody's trying to do the right things. We've got a group of players that have completely bought in to what we are doing here and we're going to make mistakes along the way. We park those quick and move on to the next challenge."

Eichel would certainly seem to appreciate his coach having his back. He had four points in the next game against Montreal, and the Sabres won three straight.

26. Okay, bear with me here. On Thanksgiving Sunday, we went to go see Alegria, the Cirque du Soleil show in Toronto. One of the performers could twirl four hula hoops around her body at once:

Pretty impressive, eh? I sure thought so. As it turned out, so did a trainer of NHL players who happened to be at the show. He said hula hoop routines are being incorporated into rehab programs. I asked for examples, and the one offered up was Arizona defenceman Jakob Chychrun, who had knee surgery in April 2018.

27. The crazy thing about these videos is they happened not long after the operation. Chychrun's surgeon was recommended to him by well-known chiropractor Mark Lindsay.

"He was a great surgeon," the Coyote said. "He had a post-operation protocol. Very careful, from week one to four, only certain things you can do — bend your knee 120 degrees, little checkpoints like that. But Mark said, "No, you've got to go see Bill."

Bill is Bill Knowles. Based in Pennsylvania, he told the Sun (United Kingdom version) in November 2018 that he "doesn't define his role as working in rehabilitation but rather reconditioning." Chychrun walked into Knowles's facility with his father, Jeff, who played 262 NHL games.

"[Bill] was like, 'Hey, what's that?' It was my brace. He says, 'That's cute — take that off.' My dad and I were thinking, 'What's going on here?' He told me to leave my crutches in the corner, too. He believes training the brain to use muscles to protect the surgery makes your brain dumb. He wants your muscles to activate, to wake up and fire again. The hula hoops start firing the muscles after you walk on your own. He's also big with using (a pool) after surgery."

Can Chychrun do four hula hoops at once like the woman from the show?

"No, I can't do that," he laughed. "She's in Cirque for a reason."

28. Capobianco used Knowles after his own surgery. Chychrun introduced teammate Jason Demers to the program, and players from other teams have started to reach out.

"I trust (Mark Lindsay) with my body more than anyone else. If he tells me Bill is the best guy for me — I have an open mind."

Another exercise Knowles got Chychrun to do is the skier's edge. "It's my favourite machine, the most similar thing to skating you can find. I bought one for the cottage, and the team has one. It's great for your quad strength."

29. Saturday night on Hockey Night in Canada — Doughty/Tkachuk, the rematch. Brian Burke noticed in the first meeting that Kyle Clifford poked his head in a couple of times to make sure Doughty didn't need to fight. No wonder teammates like Clifford so much.

30. Noted University of Alberta cheerleader Bob Stauffer was all over me last year about Golden Bears centre Luke Philp. Calgary signed the free agent, and he's at AHL Stockton. Luke's younger brother, Noah, is playing at the university now that his WHL days in Kootenay and Seattle are complete. He did play two games at Stockton last season, but may get another shot in the future.

31. There were many great stories about Ted Green shared last weekend, after the Oilers announced the former player and coach had died at 79. There are three things about Green that get mentioned the most: the vicious stick-swinging incident with Wayne Maki in 1969; his incredible physical conditioning that lasted well after he retired; and his efforts in serving the homeless in Edmonton.

Here's another: Years ago, I interviewed Anders Hedberg for a piece on Borje Salming. Off camera, he told a fantastic story about Green, who played with him on the WHA's Winnipeg Jets. Hedberg and Swedish teammate Ulf Nilsson received plenty of rough treatment. Hedberg said he wanted to be tougher, only to be told by Green that true toughness was continuing to play at a high level no matter what others did to them. That, he told Hedberg, was true toughness. That's a great philosophy, and it goes far beyond the rink.

Sabres look to take lessons from loss to Ducks

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 17, 2019

ANAHEIM - Standing outside the locker room following his team's first regulation loss of the season, Ralph Krueger already had his focus turned toward the next game.

The Sabres jumped out to a 2-0 lead inside Honda Center on Tuesday night, but allowed five unanswered goals in a physical, special teams-filled affair that ended as a 5-2 victory for the Anaheim Ducks.

Krueger detailed the areas where he felt the game got away from the Sabres and spoke about turning them into learning opportunities for their next contest, less than 24 hours away in Los Angeles.

"Our reaction is what's important now," he said.

The Sabres opened the game playing the same simple, aggressive style that led them to a 4-0 win over Dallas at home on Monday. Jack Eichel put them on the board with an incredible individual effort at 7:35 of the first period, a play in which he blocked a shot, forced a turnover, and beat goalie John Gibson at the other end. Victor Olofsson added to the lead with a power-play goal less than 10 minutes later.

The Ducks' response began with a goal that was overturned, off the stick of Max Jones with 1:53 left in the period. The Sabres successfully challenged for an offside entry, but Adam Henrique tipped a shot by Rickard Rakell to put the Ducks on the board 33 seconds later.

"We were really pleased with the kickoff," Krueger said. "We thought in every facet of the game, we brought the speed we wanted to, we brought the simplicity, and we were ahead, for sure, for deserved reasons.

"Then we lost the way. It seemed like the no-goal worked almost against us versus for us, like we let our guard down there. The next shift, they got the 2-1 [goal] and we really lost our way then right up into the third period."

Next home game: Oct. 22 vs. San Jose

Rakell capitalized off a defensive-zone turnover to tie the game less than a minute into the second period. Ryan Getzlaf buried a one-time shot on the power play to give the Ducks a permanent lead, which Henrique added to with his second of the night with 12.5 seconds left before the second intermission.

Jakob Silfverberg sealed the game with an empty-net goal, lofted from his own zone with 3:13 remaining in the contest.

The Ducks set a physical tone during their second-period push. Carter Rowney received a boarding penalty for a hit from behind on Olofsson just seconds after Getzlaf scored to give the Ducks a lead. Nick Ritchie temporarily sent Vladimir Sobotka to the dressing room with a hit well after the whistle, drawing a double-minor along with some jabs from goalie Linus Ullmark.

Photo Gallery

Each moment drew a physical response in the form of extra-curriculars. The response the Sabres truly wanted, though, was to get back to the type of game they played to start the first period.

"I don't think it affected us as much as we were complicated with the puck," Krueger said of the Ducks' physicality. "We got complicated early in the second period. We had a couple of turnovers that gave them momentum. I didn't feel that what happened then with the physicality really changed the way we were playing.

"It was just the fact that they got a lot of energy out of their goals, about coming back in the game, and we just couldn't turn it and the game got away from us. We're not worried about playing physical. We can look teams in the eyes. I feel there's a lot of courage on the bench there. Nobody shied away from anything and we stood up to it. Again, it's a game to learn from in many ways."

McCabe echoed his coach.

"Just dig in and win battles, win your one-on-one battles," he said. "Get the pucks behind their defensemen. That's what was working for us earlier, then we started playing a little bit cuter of a game and we didn't manage the puck well.

"Now, all of a sudden they're forechecking us and we're on our heels. It's just each guy bearing down and winning each individual battle. I mean, each guy in here battles a different way and that's what it comes down to is individual puck battles."

The other opportunity for response was the power play, an area in which the Sabres excelled throughout their 5-0-1 start. They improved to 10-for-22 on the season with Olofsson's first-period goal, then went without a goal on their next six tries.

"Our power play's been really good for us this year," Eichel said. "Tonight, it wasn't what it needed to be for us to win the game. We had a lot of chances, we just didn't capitalize. Give the penalty kill credit over there, but it's on us.

"... I thought we were maybe a little bit too cute with it, trying to make the fine play. I thought we had some chances and it's frustrating we weren't able to make them pay for taking the penalties. Overall, we just have to learn from this one."

#Goalofsson strikes again

Olofsson's marker moved him into a tie with Edmonton's James Neal for first in the NHL with six power-play goals this season. He also extended his own record as the only player in league history to score his first eight goals with the extra man.

The play was set up by Sam Reinhart, who corralled a rebound and delivered a quick pass through traffic for his seventh point in as many games this season.

Up next

The California tour continues in Los Angeles on Thursday. Pregame coverage on MSG begins at 10 p.m., or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 10:30.

At the Horn: Sabres 2 - Ducks 5

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 17, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres started off strong Wednesday night, but some loose play and lapses in the defensive zone ultimately allowed the Anaheim Ducks to muscle their way back into the game and skate away with a 5-2 victory at Honda Center.

Anaheim scored five unanswered goals - including three in the second period - led by a pair of goals from Adam Henrique.

Buffalo's power play, which entered the game No. 1 in the NHL, went just 1-for-8 on Wednesday. In 11:23 of ice time on the man advantage, they managed 7 of their 33 shots on the night.

The Sabres certainly had their opportunities - especially early on - when Jack Eichel and Victor Olofsson scored to give Buffalo an early lead. Anaheim netminder John Gibson was busy early on, but Anaheim turned up the physicality and aggressiveness to put Buffalo on its heels for most of the game.

Linus Ullmark made 26 saves for the Sabres.

How it happened

Just 28 seconds after the Sabres killed off Anaheim's first power play of the night, Eichel started out of his own end, outworked defenseman Josh Manson and cut in to beat Gibson 7:35 into the game.

Then with 3:24 remaining in the first period, Olofsson did what he does best: score on the power play. With Jeff Skinner poking around the front of the net, the puck eventually made its way to Sam Reinhart, who was able to find Olofsson locked and loaded for a one-timer in front.

Olofsson's quick release extended the NHL record he set last game. He is now the only player in league history to score his first eight career goals on the power play. He scored twice while on the man advantage last year and has six power-play goals so far in 2018-19.

The Sabres put the pressure on early, but Anaheim eventually fought back against that early Buffalo pressure and generated some high-danger chances of their own late in the period. They were finally able to capitalize with 1:53 remaining when Max Jones scored, but the goal was called back when Buffalo won an offside challenge.

So what did Anaheim do? They came right back and scored again. This one, a deflection in front by Henrique, counted and cut Buffalo's lead to one heading into the second period.

Anaheim tied it 57 seconds into the second when Jakob Silfverberg picked off a puck in the corner and fed Rickard Rakell in front to make it 2-2.

Ryan Getzlaf scored on the power play 9:14 into the middle frame to give the Ducks the lead. Then Henrique beat Ullmark again with just 12.5 seconds remaining in the period.

Henrique now has 22 points (8+14) in 24 career games against Buffalo.

Silfverberg added an empty netter with 3:13 left in regulation.

What it means

Buffalo saw its three-game winning streak snapped and the team sustained its first regulation loss of the season. It also marked the Sabres' first loss in Anaheim since Feb. 24, 2016.

The Sabres are now 5-1-1 on the year and still off to their best start in a decade.

They'll look to shake this one off and move on to Thursday night's game in Los Angeles against the Kings.

Roll the highlight film

Eichel's goal - his fourth of the season - is certainly worth watching again:

Coming up

The Sabres have a quick turnaround as they'll play Los Angeles Kings on Thursday in the second game of the three-game road trip. The Buick Game Night pregame show will get going at 10 p.m. on MSG with the opening faceoff set for 10:30.

They'll face San Jose at SAP Center on Saturday before returning home to take on the Sharks once again at KeyBank Center on Tuesday. Tickets for that game are on sale now.

And don't forget about '70s Night on Nov. 2. Over a dozen alumni are set to attend.

Sabres prepping for physical battle in Anaheim

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 16, 2019

ANAHEIM - Linus Ullmark will start in net when the Sabres open a three-game California road trip tonight in Anaheim.

Ullmark is coming off a 41-save effort in his last outing, a 3-2 shootout win over Florida on Friday. He's posted a .931 save percentage in two starts this season.

The Sabres are back on the road after sweeping a three-game homestand, which concluded with a 4-0 win over Dallas on Monday. They had 10 different skaters record a point in that game and have had 17 players find the score sheet through their first five games.

"This is a good game for that because so far Anaheim has been a four-line team," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "They've got the top [lines] around 18 [minutes], the bottoms around 13 on their four lines so it's that kind of a game today where we also will need all four lines.

"Of course, we're enjoying threats from all different lines and all different positions five-on-five. I think that's something we're building towards here."

The Sabres enter the contest 5-0-1, their longest point streak to begin a season since the team started 6-0-2 in 2008-09. They're looking to earn points in their first three road games for the first time since 2011-12.

Pregame coverage on MSG begins at 9:30 p.m., or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 10.

Scouting the Ducks

Anaheim has allowed an average of 1.67 goals per game, tied for the NHL lead. The Sabres are tied for fourth in the league with an average of 4.00 goals scored per game, which is the number they put up against Vezina Trophy candidate Ben Bishop of the Stars on Monday.

"The strongest defensive team that we've played so far if you look especially here at home allowing only two goals in their first two home games and then going on the road and allowing only eight in four is quite impressive," Krueger said of the Ducks.

"We need to definitely be that much better driving to the net, we need to be stronger in the slot, be ready for some additional physicality here to get opportunities. They like to keep their D posted net-front to protect the goalies so that space is tight. There is room outside in the O-zone and we need to generate some speed there through cycles and cutbacks and so on."

John Gibson will start for the Ducks, sporting a .941 save percentage and 1.82 goals-against average through five contests this season. His career save percentage of .922 is tied with Ken Dryden and Dominik Hasek as the highest among all-time NHL goalies with at least 200 games played.

Projected lineup*

68 Victor Olofsson - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 21 Kyle Okposo
53 Jeff Skinner - 90 Marcus Johansson - 17 Vladimir Sobotka
13 Jimmy Vesey - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 71 Evan Rodrigues

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 33 Colin Miller
6 Marco Scandella - 10 Henri Jokiharju

35 Linus Ullmark
40 Carter Hutton

*Based on Tuesday's practice and subject to change.