



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

November 19, 2019

Buffalo hosts Minnesota in non-conference battle

By Associated Press

November 19, 2018

Minnesota Wild (7-11-2, seventh in the Central Division) vs. Buffalo Sabres (10-7-3, fourth in the Atlantic Division)

Buffalo, New York; Tuesday, 7 p.m. EST

BOTTOM LINE: Buffalo hosts Minnesota in a non-conference matchup.

The Sabres are 6-2-2 at home. Buffalo has converted on 21.5% of power-play opportunities, recording 14 power-play goals.

The Wild are 3-10-0 on the road. Minnesota has given up 10 power-play goals, killing 83.6% of opponent chances.

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

TOP PERFORMERS: Jack Eichel leads the Sabres with 13 goals, adding 11 assists and totaling 24 points. Sam Reinhart has four goals and five assists over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

Eric Staal leads the Wild with six goals and has recorded 14 points. Jason Zucker has totaled two goals and six assists over the last 10 games for Minnesota.

LAST 10 GAMES: Wild: 4-4-2, averaging 3.2 goals, 5.2 assists, 3.6 penalties and 9.4 penalty minutes while allowing 3.1 goals per game with a .900 save percentage.

Sabres: 2-6-2, averaging 2.1 goals, 3.1 assists, 3.5 penalties and 8.9 penalty minutes while giving up 3.4 goals per game with a .893 save percentage.

Sabres Injuries: Kyle Okposo: day to day (upper body).

Wild Injuries: Marcus Foligno: out (lower body).

Sabres' Okposo out with 4th concussion in less than 3 years

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

November 18, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres forward Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely after being diagnosed with his fourth concussion in a little more than 2 ½ years.

The Sabres provided the update in posting their weekly injury report Monday, two days after Okposo was hurt in a 4-2 win over the Ottawa Senators. It happened with five minutes left in the second period when Okposo took the ice and accidentally collided with Senators defenseman Ron Hainsey.

This marks the fourth consecutive season the 31-year-old player has been sidelined by a concussion. The most serious one happened when he missed the final two weeks of 2017-18 and spent nearly a week in a hospital after what he called a routine hit in practice.

Okposo missed three games in March 2018 after a concussion from a collision with Ottawa's Bobby Ryan. And he missed a week last February when punched in the face by New York Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo.

Okposo is a 13-year veteran in his fourth season in Buffalo. He has a goal and four assists in 19 games.

The Sabres also announced center Tage Thompson will be out three to five weeks with an upper body injury. He was hurt in a 4-1 loss at Chicago on Sunday and after being called up from the minors to replace Okposo.

An 11-7 lineup is one possibility for Sabres. A call-up of Dea is another

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 18, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres practiced with 11 forwards Monday in KeyBank Center. It's possible they could keep that setup and then dress seven defensemen for their game Tuesday against the Minnesota Wild in KeyBank Center.

Coach Ralph Krueger indicated after practice a call-up could be coming from Rochester but that did not happen Monday night. Just like in Buffalo, things are getting pretty thin on the farm.

With Curtis Lazar, Rasmus Asplund and Tage Thompson already in Buffalo – and Thompson now on the injured list – Jean-Sebastien Dea and Andrew Oglevie are the only remaining Amerks on NHL contracts. If the Sabres make a move, Dea would be the likely choice.

Dea, 25, has seven goals and five assists in 16 games for the Amerks this season and is the top remaining scorer on the Rochester roster. He is a favorite of General Manager Jason Botterill from their time together in the Pittsburgh organization, with Dea having played parts of the last six seasons at the Penguins' Wilkes-Barre/Scranton farm club in the AHL.

The organizational injury report issued Monday showed it's tough times in Rochester as well. Potential NHL call-ups C.J. Smith, Scott Wilson and Remi Elie are all out long-term with lower-body injuries. Smith is listed as out four to six weeks with Elie and Wilson as week to week.

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Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian, who has yet to play this year after hip surgery, has been upgraded to day to day. Of course, that would deepen the logjam on defense, where Buffalo already has eight healthy bodies.

"Obviously today I had another good skate and we're just taking it a day at a time," Bogosian said after practice Monday. "We're being cautious about it and anytime you come back from a situation like mine, it's smart to just take it day to day. But I'm feeling good so that's some positive news."

Bogosian filled out the lineup at forward in practice, skating with Zemgus Girgensons and Rasmus Asplund.

"It's just nice to be back out there to be honest with you," he said. "I love the game of hockey so much so as long as I'm out there playing with other guys, it's nice."

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It's always dicey to make assumptions on coach Ralph Krueger's defense pairs based on practice because players are funneling through drills, but it looked like Marco Scandella will be the odd man out against his former team as he skated Monday with John Gilmour.

Scandella was burned badly on a couple of plays Sunday in Chicago, including Patrick Kane's second-period goal. The South Buffalo native beat Scandella to the spot off a faceoff and rifled a quick shot past Carter Hutton to give the Blackhawks a 3-0 lead.

Scandella's partner, Henri Jokiharju, was skating Monday with Colin Miller, who has been a healthy scratch the last three games. The other two pairs remained the same as Jake McCabe was with Rasmus Ristolainen and Rasmus Dahlin was with Brandon Montour.

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Krueger said the Sabres are not currently considering an emergency recall from the junior ranks, which could have involved No. 1 draft pick Dylan Cozens from Lethbridge of the Western League or 2018 draftee Matej Pekar from Barrie of the Ontario League.

Cozens is tearing up the Western League, with 15 goals and 15 assists in the first 21 games for Lethbridge. His 30 points have him tied for third in the WHL in scoring. Pekar has 14 goals and 13 assists in 20 games for Barrie.

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The Sabres will be facing the NHL's last-place club when Minnesota comes to town Tuesday. The Wild have just 16 points, despite a 4-1-2 record at home. That's because they are an NHL-worst 3-10-0 on the road.

The Sabres are just 3-9 at home against Minnesota, but a win Tuesday would give them a three-game winning streak against the Wild for the first time since they joined the NHL in 2000.

Former Sabres winger Marcus Foligno has missed the Wild's last four games and is out with a lower-body injury suffered Nov. 7 in San Jose. He has two goals and four assists in 16 games this season.

Okposo's latest concussion is darkest entry on Sabres' growing injury report

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 18, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres' medical news is almost laughable in one sense, with the team losing a forward to injury for five consecutive games and likely to put a paper-thin lineup on the ice for Tuesday's game against the Minnesota Wild in KeyBank Center.

But things took a much darker tone Monday afternoon.

The club announced veteran forward Kyle Okposo suffered another concussion Saturday against Ottawa. That's the fourth one for Okposo since joining the Sabres in 2016 and the second in this calendar year.

Okposo, 31, is listed as out indefinitely. And it's far too early to entertain the thoughts of how much his career is again hanging in the balance, or what the club does with a player still owed \$6 million each of the next three years.

Still, you have to wonder.

"First and foremost, he's a person, right? You think about him and his well-being," said veteran defenseman Zach Bogosian, on the comeback trail himself from hip surgery. "Hockey comes second to everyone in this room as far as health-wise. You think about him. You'll be there for him and his family as well. Obviously, going through what he's been through in his career, it's been tough for him. We're going to be there for him."

Okposo, remember, had a tumultuous summer in 2017 when post-concussion symptoms and reaction to medications landed him in the neuro ICU unit of Buffalo General Hospital. In February, he was concussed as a result of a fight with New York Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo.

His latest concussion was an unfortunate accident.

Okposo had just come on to the ice late in the second period when he was clipped by Ottawa defenseman Ron Hainsey, who was starting to head to the Senators' bench on a change. Okposo immediately looked woozy and went down to his knees before skating slowly to the bench, where Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson helped him over the boards before he headed to the dressing room.

"It was just kind of a freak thing. I saw the whole play develop," Reinhart said. "They had a couple guys trying to get off the ice, and it was very unfortunate the way it happened. I don't think there was any intent there, but it's always scary for someone to be in that spot. We just wish him the best in his recovery."

"It's no secret in the room what he's gone through and we can only support him and be behind him 100% in his recovery. That's the most important thing."

Bogosian played with Hainsey in Atlanta and Winnipeg and agreed with Reinhart's assertion that there was zero ill intent on the play.

"Obviously, just a freak thing," Bogosian said. "He's not the type of guy that would go out of his way to bump someone, especially going off on a change. Just a freak accident."

"I'm learning about the history here and getting caught up in the past. You're always concerned," said coach Ralph Krueger. "You just hope for the best result here as quick as possible. It's all you can really do right now. It's one of those injuries where you need to have patience. It's definitely the inactivity that goes with it is always tough psychologically. But we're there for him. We're going to fix this together."

Okposo, who has just one goal in 19 games, joins Vladimir Sobotka (lower body) among veterans with a long-term injury. Tage Thompson is in a similar predicament as his Sabres season debut ended with what appeared to be a shoulder injury with just more than two minutes to play Sunday in Chicago. The Sabres said Thompson, the leading goal scorer in Rochester this season, will be out three to five weeks.

Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson (both upper body) will again be out for Tuesday's game, with the team hoping at least one might be ready for the upcoming road trip that starts Thursday in Boston.

Krueger conceded it's hard not to feel a little snakebitten when you see an injury like Thompson's happen in a 4-1 game in which the outcome has long been decided.

"You are making decisions on the last five minutes on playing players in a game that's slipped out of reach," Krueger said. "You want to get certain ice time in. You throw Tague out one more time. It was a strange set of circumstances that caused the injury. But, yeah, you definitely hope that's the end."

The Sabres spent much of October with virtually the same lineup, other than a minor injury to Conor Sheary. Things started to go awry when Sobotka was taken out by Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov during the first game in Sweden and haven't stopped since.

"It was a really long stretch with the same forward lines, and there was some good synergy there," Krueger said. "The processes seemed to be quite automatic, especially the way we want to be connected on the ice. Losing a forward a game now for five games in a row has been quite disruptive. But the guys are working hard to find the right path."

Sabres announce another concussion for Okposo; Thompson out 3-5 weeks

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 18, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres opened practice shortly after noon today in KeyBank Center and the injury news got particularly darker for the team just as it stepped on the ice.

In their weekly injury report, the Sabres acknowledged that veteran winger Kyle Okposo suffered another concussion Saturday night against Ottawa and is listed as out indefinitely. The club also announced that winger Tage Thompson is out 3-5 weeks with an upper-body injury. He appeared to injure his shoulder in a collision with the glass with less than three minutes to go in Sunday's 4-1 loss in Chicago.

Centers Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson (both upper body) are listed as day to day but neither practiced Monday. Vladimir Sobotka (lower body) is listed as out 4-6 weeks. Coach Ralph Krueger said after practice that Johansson and Larsson will be out for Tuesday's game against Minnesota here but could be possible for the upcoming road trip that opens Thursday in Boston.

"It was a really long stretch with the same four forwards lines and there was some good synergy there," coach Ralph Krueger said after practice. "The process seemed to be quite automatic, especially the way we want to be connected on the ice. Losing a forward a game for five games now has been quite disruptive but the guys are working hard to find the right path."

Defenseman Zach Bogosian, on the road back from hip surgery, has been upgraded to day to day and was skating at forward in practice so the team could work out with four lines.

The Okposo news is particularly grim because that would be his fourth concussion since joining the Sabres and his second in this calendar year. Okposo suffered another in a fight in February with New York Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo.

Okposo, of course, had serious issues with post-concussion rehab in the summer of 2017, landing in the Neuro ICU unit of Buffalo General Hospital. He still has three more years remaining on his contract that has a cap hit of \$6 million per season. He has just one goal and four assists in 19 games this season.

The Sabres are exceptionally thin at forward now, as the only players left at Rochester on NHL contracts are J-S Dea and Andrew Oglevie. Remi Elie, Scott Wilson and C.J. Smith are all out long-term in Rochester with injuries.

Krueger said the team could dress 11 forwards and seven defensemen for the game against the Wild but is also pondering a callup of one of the two remaining forwards in Rochester. Krueger said the team is not currently considering a callup of No. 1 draft choice Dylan Cozens on an emergency basis from Lethbridge of the Western Hockey League.

Do something Jason

By Chris Parker

WGR 550

November 18, 2019

Do you remember 'do something Darcy'?

We were all younger and Twitter was still pretty new, at least to me anyways, if not the world. The Sabres would be meandering through the first few of what has now grown to an 8 seasons long playoff drought and fans would be begging for then GM Darcy Regier to do something to reverse their fortunes.

Of course nothing would usually happen and that only increased the outcry. A couple of seasons circled the drain and then eventually Regier was fired.

Well I think we've definitely reached the 'do something' stage with current GM Jason Botterill. He's on his second coach and Ralph Krueger is only just getting started so let's not even ponder that being the something to be done.

Of course I'm talking about a trade. I, and many if not most Sabres fans, have been awaiting a trade involving a defenseman since, I don't know, July maybe? The entire off season was spent acquiring defenseman, right handed ones at that, for what surely seemed like an opportunity to flip some of that d-man depth for help up front.

We all know how that turned out. Months went by with no move and now here we sit. The Sabres have won only 2 of their last 10 after a really nice start to the season. Injuries up front are mounting and one of the prizes of the summer, d-man Colin Miller, has been a healthy scratch the last 2 games because they have too many bodies back there. The most recent forward recall, Tage Thompson suffered what looked like a pretty serious arm/shoulder injury Sunday night in Chicago. And sure, Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson aren't thought to be too seriously injured, but this team needs help up front even with all of those dudes healthy.

If none of those 3 are ready to play Minnesota on Tuesday, here's what Paul Hamilton tells us the Sabres have as options...

"We'll have to see if Marcus Johansson or Johan Larsson are ready to play. If not, it would have to be J.S. Dea or Andrew Oglevie from Rochester. Krueger could also go with seven defensemen."

I mean, nothing against J.S. Dea or Andrew Oglevie, but what? And dressing 7 defensemen is not a place I want to visit at this point. Botterill has had months to make a move to really bolster his scoring depth by moving a defenseman. Take your pick, the Sabres have young-ish guys with term, older veteran rentals and even relatively unproven prospect types. Instead, he sat here with those assets and did nothing as summer turned to fall and now we're already shoveling snow.

Let's go man! It's been 8 years without the playoffs. Only Florida and Toronto have gone longer without winning a playoff round, by the way. These seasons are long enough that you can salvage them before too much damage has been done. The Sabres have been going the wrong way here almost since they got back from California, which is close to a month ago.

Do something Jason.

Sabres' Okposo has suffered another concussion

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 18, 2019

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The Sabres got some terrible news as Kyle Okposo is once again fighting a concussion.

Okposo went through a very dark place a few years ago where he didn't know if he'd be able to function as a husband and a father. Zach Bogosian is of course worried, "First and foremost he's a person. You think about him and his well-being, and hockey comes second to everyone in this room. So you think about him, you're there for him and be there for his family as well.

"Going through what he's been through in his career, it's been tough for him, so we're going to be there for him."

Ralph Krueger said Johan Larsson and Marcus Johansson are day-to-day and still aren't ready for Tuesday's game. Bogosian is day-to-day and also sounded like he's not ready.

Tage Thompson is out 3-to-5 weeks with an upper body injury.

The Sabres went a long time with very few injuries up front. Krueger said, "Losing a forward per-game now, five games in a row has been quite disruptive. But guys are working hard to find the right path and it's a different kind of challenge, but it's good for us to get to know our ability to adjust and to inject new players."

A call up from Rochester isn't easy because C.J. Smith is out 4-to-6 weeks, while Remi Elie and Scott Wilson are week-to-week.

The choices are J.S. Dea or Andrew Oglevie. Krueger said they could also play Tuesday with seven defensemen.

Colin Miller was playing with Henri Jokiharju at practice with Marco Scandella and John Gilmour the two defensemen out.

Ask a noted jerk: Should Ristolainen and McCabe be paired differently and other Sabres mailbag questions

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

November 19, 2019

Timing out when to do a mailbag shouldn't be too difficult, right? Try doing that when the team you cover goes from being the toast of the league to just being toasted.

I asked Twitter to bring forth Sabres questions in a long enough window that a modest losing streak turned into a dire stretch of injuries and a scoring drought. You know... timing hasn't really been my thing.

Huge thanks to everyone who replied, we'll do another one down the road. For now, you've asked me a bunch of questions and I'm going to answer them immediately – right here, right now – so let's get to it:

"Greetings from the Capital District. Since there are so many comparisons available, how does this coach compare to his predecessors as it relates to players, his staff and management?" – Mike M.
Mike, you're first up because I'm pulling home region favoritism (Waterford, yo!) to your benefit.

This is my seventh season covering the Sabres and, yeah, there have been a few coaches to get to know. I missed out on Lindy Ruff, got an appetizer's worth of time with Ron Rolston, witnessed the Ted Nolan Reunion Tour, spent time as a Dan Bylsma doppelganger in his presence, surfed through Phil Housley's tenure, and now enjoy the daily chats with Ralph Krueger. Let me tell you, talking hockey with Ralph is unlike anyone I've encountered in the sport.

Krueger's stress on keeping lines of communication open and being as up front as he can about things is an honest-to-goodness treat. His thoughtfulness on questions and the time he offers in giving his thoughts makes him unique. If there's anyone I could compare him to in hockey, it might be Winnipeg Jets coach Paul Maurice. It's probably no surprise that those two are friends. While Ralph is great, the king will always be former GM Tim Murray when it comes to quotability and candor and occasional bouts of not saying profane words in a press conference.

"the Risto/McCabe pairing flunks the eye test and also the analytics numbers are dreadful. how is it these guys are leaned on, when they should be separated and paired differently to minimize their shortcomings?#AskANotedJerk" - Bob

Let me just crack my knuckles before digging into this one because it's got multiple layers to it.

A few things have conspired to make this happen. Part of it has to do with how Rasmus Dahlin has been a bit off at the start of the season. Part of it has to do with how the defense has been built. But a huge part of it is how both Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen check a lot of boxes that other guys don't.

Both guys play physical hockey and can clear the area around the net. Ristolainen can be the puck-mover on that pairing while McCabe, ideally, is the heads-up defenseman. When you look at the other players who could play 20+ minutes per game, there are questions.

Dahlin will do it eventually, but right now it's probably not the best time. Brandon Montour is getting back into the mix and if/when Ristolainen is traded, he's probably your top pair righty defenseman. Marco Scandella and Henri Jokiharju have been solid, but that pairing was on ice for both of Kirby Dach's goals Sunday against Chicago. Colin Miller was a healthy scratch for three games because they're working things out for him. John Gilmour has played in three games and is clearly their No. 8 guy and probably headed to Rochester when Zach Bogosian is ready to go. And you have to think Lawrence Pilut will be back at some point, but he's still getting back to it after offseason shoulder surgery.

So... they're a little stuck at least until they make a trade. And they will make one.

"If you had a goal song, what would it be? #AskANotedJerk" – Ty

If I was going to use a song that had my name in it, Jimi Hendrix's "Hey Joe" isn't exactly a celebration song. I'm not going to go shoot my old lady because she's been messin' around town – I just want to snipe, dangle, celly boys.

It's got sounds, it's got a full blast of guitars, it's got a thumping drum beat and it's by a band that was cool enough to play a couple shows for my college radio station in Oswego back in the day. Oh and a couple members are from Western New York. Perfect.

"#askanotedjerk are we at point Tix are left on windshields and still not used?" - Stefan

Gosh, everyone's pretty down. At least the Bills are winning? No, we're not there now. But the upcoming slate of games could hasten the process of getting there if things don't improve.

Their schedule is obscenely packed thanks to the Sweden visit. In the 30 days from Nov. 14 to Dec. 14 they have 17 games. During the week of U.S. Thanksgiving they have five games in seven days. Five games in a week and three of them are on the road and two sets of back-to-backs! And they've got a pile of injuries up front!

To answer your question, if they can't carve out a .500 points percentage during that run, the winter is going to feel really long and the arena is going to get pretty empty for those weekday games. As it is, attendance for Thursday's thrilling 5-4 OT loss to Carolina was announced as 16,603. The holidays are always good for getting people in, especially those visiting from out of town. Once those pass, the Sabres have to be in the hunt (sorry) to make sure the building is full up.

"#AskANotedJerk Is it me, or does this team still feel soft in terms of dealing with adversity? Losing 4 in a row, then giving up a backbreaking goal in the last 3 seconds of the second is not what you're looking for." – Alex T.

There's no worse word to use to describe a hockey player than calling them "soft" and this team isn't soft. Do they fight? No, unless you're Jimmy Vesey in Chicago. Do they play overly physical? Not really, but that's not really what the NHL is these days. Do they get to the dirty areas around the net consistently enough? Based on the research I did recently on where shots are coming from, they're not getting there enough.

The defense has had some problems in coverage in their zone during the recent skid and that's distressing. But as winning and scoring goals swings momentum, allowing goals and losing tough games does the opposite. Krueger has said the players need to find better ways to control those emotional swings in games so things don't get out of hand. With a young roster, that can be a process.

"Who would've been worth more to keep: Drury, Briere, or Campbell? #AskANotedJerk" – Connor H.

Love a question that lets us work on hindsight. All three guys went on to continue great careers elsewhere and in Campbell's case he got to win the Stanley Cup in 2010 with Chicago. Drury played for four more seasons after Buffalo while Campbell played nine more and Briere eight. What's wild is Campbell (328) had more points than Briere (320), but also played nearly 200 more games.

Briere would've been great to have with Derek Roy, Jason Pominville, Thomas Vanek, and Drew Stafford for the next few seasons, but Campbell was an incredible puck mover. That's something the team has lacked the most since he was traded to San Jose. It's a tough, tough call but my pick is Campbell.

"Basic question here: If the Sabres make a trade for a mid level forward before the deadline, will they be good enough to sneak in as a wild card considering the competition in the Atlantic? #askanotedjerk" – Evan W.

A basic question is still a good question, Evan. A mid-level forward would be a huge help with or without the current injury plague going on, but good enough for the postseason? It's hard to say that right now. We've seen the good and the bad of the team lately so we've got to figure out which team is closer to who they really are. Adding a good player never hurts and they could use scoring help for sure. It would at least put them into the hunt for longer.

That said, gosh, I'm really interested in the idea from Darren Haynes in Calgary pondering if the Flames should move Johnny Gaudreau. Flames Vice President of Hockey Operations Don Maloney spent part of early October

watching the Sabres in Buffalo for a couple games at least. Sometimes people just like to watch a game, sometimes they're looking for particular players.

We know the Sabres have an overload of defensemen and they're trying to move someone and seeking a top-nine forward. But if Gaudreau was honestly available, I'd be picking up the phone immediately. Please note: I am not a general manager.

As Sabres forwards continue to crowd injury list, Rochester faces similar problems of its own

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

November 18, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. — When players get hurt, the mentality is generally “next man up.” In the case of the Sabres, the list of possible next men is getting shorter and shorter.

Since we discussed the roster stress that a handful of injuries up front were causing the Sabres just last week, three more forwards have gone down in Buffalo.

Johan Larsson suffered an upper-body injury in the 5-4 overtime loss to Carolina that forced Rasmus Asplund up from Rochester. Kyle Okposo sustained a concussion in Saturday’s 4-2 win against Ottawa in an accidental collision by the benches with Senators defenseman Ron Hainsey and Tage Thompson, who was recalled from Rochester on Sunday to replace Okposo, was injured late in the third period against Chicago after he took a hit in the corner from Blackhawks defenseman Olli Maatta. And that’s after Marcus Johansson and Vladimir Sobotka suffered injuries during the two-game set in Stockholm versus the Lightning.

“Losing a forward a game now for five games in a row has been quite disruptive, but the guys are working hard to find the right path,” coach Ralph Krueger said. “It’s a different kind of challenge but it’s a good one for us to get to know our ability to adjust and inject new players and get to know our depth. So there’s always some positives on the other side, but you’d like to get some of those bodies back as soon as possible.”

What makes the forward injuries more difficult is that Rochester is dealing with some maladies of their own. In a normal situation, guys like C.J. Smith, Scott Wilson, or Remi Elie would be on the way up to help put a tourniquet on the bleeding. Instead, both teams are running out of options. The Americans played 11 forwards and seven defensemen on Saturday in Utica as it is.

So what’s next?

Krueger stated that their options are to use 11 forwards and seven defensemen or to recall another forward from Rochester.

Monday’s practice was so bereft of forwards that Zach Bogosian skated with Asplund and Zemgus Girgensons. Bogosian isn’t a serious option as he’s still working his way back into form, but going with 11 forwards and seven defensemen is not very appealing for a team whose biggest problem of late, apart from health, is scoring goals.

But here’s a thought. If using seven defensemen is the choice, it presents an opportunity to experiment with defense pairs during the course of the game. Colin Miller is poised to return to the lineup after sitting out the past three games as a healthy scratch, likely replacing Marco Scandella. If the Sabres have settled on these players as their top-seven on defense, tinkering with pairings during the game is worth trying.

Maybe that sounds foolish, but teams that go with seven defensemen in a game don’t generally slot that seventh defenseman in as a forward. Instead they rotate on a pairing and get their minutes that way.

If specialized deployment to lean into playing to the strengths of the players is something that can be done, why not lean into it? If there’s a particular defender that’s struggling in the defensive or offensive zone or if there’s a pairing that’s having a hard night, tinkering with setups and combos could provide an opportunity for something new when the injuries lighten up.

It might be better than the limited choices out of Rochester at the moment.

With the Americans’ injury issues, the Sabres have two healthy forwards left on NHL contracts to draw from the AHL with Jean-Sebastien Dea and Andrew Oglevie. Dea has 29 games of NHL experience and seven career points (five goals, two assists) and is versatile at center or wing. Oglevie has not yet played in an NHL game, but that could change at a moment’s notice.

Krueger clarified Larsson and Johansson will be day-to-day after Tuesday's game with Minnesota. With games in Boston Thursday and a road back-to-back Sunday in Sunrise and Monday in Tampa, the sooner they're back the better.

Johansson provides hope to help get the offense back on track and Larsson can again relieve some stress at the faceoff circle and steady the energy part of the forward units. But for the forwards that are still healthy, trying to do too much is high on their list of what not to do.

"I think staying in the moment helps. Doing what you can at any given time that might help," forward Sam Reinhart said. "Our depth is going to have to show and it's going to have to be by committee."

If things somehow get worse off, there's the chance either Dylan Cozens or Matej Pekar could be called out of junior hockey on an emergency basis, but Krueger said that's not an option at this point. Given that developing these players at that level has been stressed, it would have to be an even more dire situation than what's currently going on.

The most distressing news, however, concerned Okposo. The concussion is Okposo's fourth since March 2017. We know the hell he went through after that. Since then he has missed time from a hit by Bobby Ryan in March 2018 and sustained another concussion after a fight with New York Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo last season.

"It's emotional. He's been a really important part of this group and has been an example of how we want to play and is somebody that's completely embraced the game," Krueger said. "And Larsson and Girgensons and Kyle together were always important to lead the way somehow so that we hope he has a speedy recovery and we hope that this goes well for him."

As the Sabres hit the quarter-season mark, a key stat for every player from A(splund) to Z(emgus)

By John Vogl

The Athletic

November 18, 2019

Through the Sabres' wildly up-and-down first quarter of the season, there was one constant. The fans, who'd seen this before, hesitated to buy in.

When Buffalo improved to 8-1-1 against San Jose on Oct. 22, there were 3,194 unsold seats in KeyBank Center. For the next game against Arizona on Oct. 28, there were 3,712 unsold seats. You'd think there would be some uptick in interest after one of the best starts in franchise history, even for a Monday night game against a non-rival.

But after getting their hopes squashed last season, fans took a wait-and-see approach for the opening 20 games. As that 8-1-1 start turned into a 2-6-2 slide, it was clear why.

With basically one-quarter of the schedule down, the Sabres have put up stunning numbers – good and bad. Here's a key stat for every player from A(splund) to Z(emgus), plus bonus figures for general manager Jason Botterill and coach Ralph Krueger.

Rasmus Asplund – One shift, one hit.

The 21-year-old played the first two games of his NHL career this weekend, and he showed on his opening shift that he wasn't going to make life easy for the opposition with a crushing blow. He also has a team-best Corsi of 61.8 percent, helping the Sabres to a 21-13 shot-attempt edge during his 18 minutes of ice time.

Jason Botterill – \$3.875 million.

That just happens to be the cap hit for Colin Miller, who has been a healthy scratch for three straight games. It's poor asset management. While it made sense for Botterill to stock up on quality defensemen, it doesn't make sense to have expensive ones sit in the press box. The club needs offense, and every day the Sabres scratch a good defenseman instead of flipping one for a forward is a wasted day.

Rasmus Dahlin – 12 assists in 20 games.

There's no secret this hasn't been the ideal start for the 19-year-old sophomore, as Saturday's benching proved. But he's tied for 11th among all NHL defensemen in assists and is on pace for 49, which would be fifth in the Sabres' 50-year history. By comparison, Erik Karlsson had 32 helpers in his second season at age 21. If Dahlin can do this while looking "bad," it's a promising sign that great things remain on the horizon.

Jack Eichel – 10 goals and 18 points in 10 home games.

The captain is worth the price of admission when the Sabres play in Buffalo. He's treated fans to two game-winning goals, including his four-goal performance Saturday. He's accounted nearly one-third of the 32 goals scored at home (excluding shootouts).

Eichel is also up to three goals and six points in 10 road games, a drop off that still puts him on pace for 13 goals and 25 points with harder defensive matchups away from Buffalo.

John Gilmour – A healthy scratch 17 times.

The defenseman has speed and puck-moving ability, but the offseason signing sits squarely as the No. 8 blueliner. He'll dip to ninth when Zach Bogosian returns to health any day now.

Zemgus Girgensons – Corsi of 52.2 percent.

Though he has gone 11 games without a point, Girgensons and the Sabres' fourth line continue to put pressure on the opponents. He set a career-best 49.3 percent Corsi last season.

Carter Hutton – Goals saved above average of 0.36.

The goalie is as close to average as you can find in the NHL this season. He's not great, he's not bad.

Marcus Johansson – He had a 7-1 goals-for advantage during his opening eight games and was outscored 8-3 in the next eight.

The Sabres opened hot thanks to a balanced attack, including an impressive five-on-five goals rate for Johansson. But the secondary scoring has again dried up and Johansson's line was getting beat before he missed the last three games with an injury.

Henri Jokiharju – 20 games played.

He's tied for the team lead among defensemen with two goals. He's tied for second in defense points with seven. He's third with a 53.1 percent Corsi. Add them all up and it's easy to see why the 20-year-old has been in the lineup for every game, something no one expected heading into training camp.

Ralph Krueger – 237 minutes, 1 second.

That's the number of minutes the top line of Eichel, Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson has skated together. They've been apart for just 46 minutes. For better or worse, Krueger is sticking with the same forward lines and defense pairs, a big change from last season's nightly flip-flop.

Johan Larsson – Offensive-zone start percentage of 40.6 after 16.6 last season.

Having a coach believe you can be a two-way player instead of just a defensive-zone robot has allowed Larsson to feel like a contributing part of the team. He's on pace for a career-best Corsi at 51.6 percent.

Curtis Lazar – One goal on one shot.

The forward scored on his opening shot in a Buffalo uniform Thursday, becoming the 56th player to score in his Sabres debut and the first since Kyle Okposo on Oct. 16, 2016.

Jake McCabe – He's been on the ice for a team-high 17 goals against at five-on-five.

Tied to the hip with defense partner Rasmus Ristolainen this season, they're knotted at the top for most times digging the puck out of the net. At all strengths, McCabe has been on the ice for 28 goals against and 14 goals for.

Colin Miller – 1.1 missed shots per game.

Accuracy has been an early issue for Miller. The defenseman, who scored 10 times for Vegas two seasons ago, has no goals after putting 28 shots on net and another 18 high or wide.

Casey Mittelstadt – Two shots on goal in 24 periods.

In one hour, 42 minutes, 41 seconds of ice time from Oct. 25 through Nov. 16, the center tested goalies just twice. He's 12th among forwards in even-strength ice time at 10:26 per game, which is less than ideal for a 20-year-old prospect. Our preseason "bold predictions" story suggested AHL time may be needed and Mittelstadt continues to trend in that direction.

Brandon Montour – Goals-for percentage of 71.43, the Sabres' highest.

In his six games back since suffering a preseason hand injury, the defenseman has been on the ice for five goals by the Sabres and just two for the opponents. He's also skating 19:41 per night, fifth on the Sabres since his Nov. 2 debut behind Ristolainen (23:17), Eichel (22:41), Sam Reinhart (20:32) and McCabe (20:06).

Kyle Okposo – Corsi of 55.19 percent, highest on the Sabres for skaters who've played more than two games.

Part of the puck-possession fourth line, Okposo has been on the ice for 133 shots by the Sabres and 107 for the opponents. The scary stat, however, is one concussion (suffered Saturday). The right winger, who already went through hell after a head injury, is out indefinitely.

Victor Olofsson – Six goals in the opening seven games.

The top-line left winger has cooled off with just one goal in his last 13 outings, but his start put him in the NHL record book and was a big reason the Sabres began so well.

Sam Reinhart – Averaging 0.85 points per game.

With eight goals and 17 points, the right winger is on pace for career highs of 33 goals and 70 points. Only five of his points have come on the power play (compared to 12 at even strength).

Rasmus Ristolainen – Team-high 23:59 of ice time per game.

Death, taxes and Ristolainen playing too much. The Sabres have added Dahlin, Montour, Miller and Jokiharju during the past two seasons, yet Ristolainen still dwarfs everyone in ice time. He ranks 22nd in the NHL despite getting outscored 30-21 in all situations.

Evan Rodrigues – Healthy scratch in nine of 20 games.

The forward watched the opening three games, failed to impress in the next four and sat for another four. He hasn't scored but is at least shooting the puck, ranking sixth among forwards with 1.91 shots per game.

Marco Scandella – Corsi of 54.13 percent, highest among Buffalo defensemen.

Scandella is starting in the offensive zone just 44.8 percent of the time, but he's been getting the Sabres up the ice and into the zone with better passing and puck movement than previously seen. Maybe it's the new tattoos.

Conor Sheary – No goals in the last 12 games.

The Sabres need secondary scoring behind Eichel, Reinhart and Jeff Skinner, but Sheary isn't providing any. He scored three times in his opening four games but has been blanked on his last 17 shots in a dozen outings.

Jeff Skinner – All eight goals at even-strength, tied for 11th in the NHL.

The left winger has skated with Eichel for just 26:15 in the Sabres' 20 games, yet he's still among the league's best at five-on-five. Skinner is on pace for 33 goals and a career-high 295 shots while driving his own line.

Vladimir Sobotka – Goals-for percentage of 56.25.

Sobotka was a turnstile last season, getting outscored at five-on-five by 45-23. Before suffering a long-term leg injury in Sweden, he was enjoying a scoring edge of 9-7 while skating with Skinner and Johansson.

Tage Thompson – One game.

The forward made his season debut Sunday, but he suffered an upper-body injury that will keep him out for three to five weeks.

Linus Ullmark – Average goal distance of 13.4 feet.

When opponents score on the netminder, they do so at close range, according to Natural Stat Trick. No other goalie in the NHL has a closer goal distance than Ullmark, who ranks 54th with a .760 high-danger save percentage.

Jimmy Vesey – No goals in 17 games.

This is not what the Sabres expected from the winger, who was acquired from the Rangers in the offseason for a 2021 third-round pick. In addition to not scoring, Vesey is also averaging a career-low 1.35 shots per game.

There is still three-quarters of the season left for the Sabres to turn things around or, in the good cases, keep it up.

Injury-plagued Sabres must make decisions to replenish lineup

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 18, 2019

BUFFALO – Having lost five forwards in the last five games, a stunning run of injuries, the reeling Sabres have two options for Tuesday's game against the Minnesota Wild.

The Sabres can either dress seven defensemen and only 11 forwards, coach Ralph Krueger said, or they can recall a forward from the Rochester Americans.

They stayed remarkably healthy over the first month of the season, utilizing the same lineup most games. But the injuries have come fast in the last two weeks, leaving a team that has lost eight of its last nine games looking for replacements.

The Sabres, who announced Monday winger Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely after suffering a concussion Saturday, have only two healthy forwards on NHL contracts in the AHL: Jean-Sebastien Dea and Andrew Oglevie.

Tage Thompson, a winger the Sabres summoned to replace Okposo hours before Sunday's 4-1 loss in Chicago, is out three to five weeks after suffering an upper-body injury late against the Blackhawks.

Thompson, one of the Sabres' top prospects, left the ice favoring his right arm or shoulder.

"As a coach, you are making decisions on the last five minutes on playing players in a game that's slipped out of reach," Krueger said. "You want to get certain ice time in. You throw Tage out one more time.

"It was a strange set of circumstances that caused the injury. But, yeah, you definitely hope that's the end."

If the injuries don't stop, the Sabres could be forced to sign a forward – hello, Jason Pominville? – or make a trade. Krueger said they won't recall a junior player, meaning center prospect Dylan Cozens, the eighth overall pick in June, isn't an option.

The injuries started Nov. 8 in Sweden, when Tampa Bay Lightning star Nikita Kucherov hit Sabres winger Vladimir Sobotka, who's out four to six weeks with a lower-body injury. Sobotka has been wearing a cast on his leg and using crutches.

Centers Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson, meanwhile, are both day-to-day with upper-body injuries. Krueger said they're definitely out for Tuesday's game.

Right now in Rochester, the Amerks have five forwards sidelined, including three with big league experience – Remi Elie, C.J. Smith and Scott Wilson all have lower-body injuries – on NHL deals.

Elie is week-to-week. Smith, meanwhile, has been wearing a walking boot and is out four to six weeks. Wilson is week-to-week.

The Sabres have only 44 players signed to NHL contracts in the organization. Teams are allowed 50.

Okposo, having suffered at least four concussions in his four seasons here, has a concerning history. He was hospitalized in intensive care after sustaining one late in 2016-17.

A freak accident knocked Okposo out of Saturday's 4-2 win over Ottawa. Okposo, 31, jumped off the bench in the second period and collided with Senators defenseman Ron Hainsey.

Okposo got up, skated to the bench and left the game.

"You're always concerned," Krueger said of Okposo. "You just hope for the best result here as quick as possible. It's all you can really do right now. It's one of those injuries where you need to have patience. It's definitely the

inactivity that goes with it is always tough psychologically. But we're there for him. We're going to fix this together."

The Sabres' rash of forward injuries comes after they utilized the same lineup up front for nearly a month.

In fact, they did not even use someone from Rochester until winger Curtis Lazar played Thursday.

"That's just the way the cookie crumbles sometimes," Sabres center Evan Rodrigues said of the injuries. "Some teams go a whole season without having any major injuries. Sometimes you kind of get what's going on here. Guys seem to be going down game-by-game."

Krueger said the Sabres' situation early on was "more than relatively stable."

"It was a really long stretch with the same forward lines, and there was some good synergy there," he said. "The processes seemed to be quite automatic, especially the way we want to be connected on the ice. Losing a forward a game now for five games in a row has been quite disruptive."

With so many forwards sidelined, Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian practiced up front Monday.

Bogosian, out since undergoing hip surgery in April, started practicing Wednesday. The Sabres list him as day-to-day.

"It's just nice to be back out there, to be honest with you," he said of skating up front. "I love the game of hockey so much, so as long as I'm out there playing in front of guys, it's nice."

Sabres' Kyle Okposo out indefinitely with concussion

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 18, 2019

BUFFALO – Winger Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely after suffering another concussion Saturday, the Sabres announced this afternoon.

Okposo has a scary history of concussions. This is at least his fourth since he joined the Sabres. After suffering one late in 2016-17, he was hospitalized in intensive care.

In the second period of Saturday's 4-2 win over Ottawa, Okposo, 31, jumped off the bench and collided with Senators defenseman Ron Hainsey. Okposo got up, skated to the bench and left the game.

Stay tuned for more updates on Okposo, who's one of five injured Sabres forwards.

The Sabres also announced this afternoon winger Tage Thompson is out three to five weeks after suffering an upper-body injury Sunday in Chicago.

Thompson, who was recalled earlier in the day, left the 4-1 loss to the Blackhawks in the final minutes favoring his right arm or shoulder.

According to the team's injury reports, defenseman Zach Bogosian (hip) and centers Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson (both upper body) are day-to-day.

Buffalo Sabres forward Kyle Okposo out indefinitely with a concussion

WKBW

November 18, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Buffalo Sabres forward Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely with a concussion, according to the team's latest injury report.

Okposo has been playing on a line with Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons this season, tallying one goal and four assists. He suffered a concussion in the second period of Saturday's game against the Ottawa Senators at KeyBank Center.

This is Kyle Okposo's fourth season in Buffalo. He spent the previous nine with the Islanders. In his 13th season in the NHL, Okposo has a history of injuries-- particularly concussions. Most recently, he was diagnosed with a concussion in February. Prior to that injury, Okposo's 2017 season ended at the end of March, when a seemingly-routine bump in practice turned into a long-term health scare that included at trip a stay in the ICU.

Okposo has concussion, out indefinitely for Sabres

NHL.com

November 18, 2019

Kyle Okposo is out indefinitely with a concussion, the Buffalo Sabres announced Monday.

The 31-year-old forward was placed on injured reserve after he left during the second period of a 4-2 win against the Ottawa Senators on Saturday.

"You just hope for the best result here as quick as possible. It's all you can really do right now," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "It's one of those injuries where you need to have patience. It's definitely the inactivity that goes with it is always tough psychologically. But we're there for him. We're going to fix this together."

Okposo has missed time each of the previous three seasons because of concussions, including the final six games in 2016-17, his first with the Sabres after signing a seven-year contract July 1, 2016.

"First and foremost, he's a person, right? You think about him and his well-being; hockey comes second to everyone in this room as far as health-wise," defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "You think about him, you're gonna be there for him and be there for his family as well. Obviously going through what he's been through in his career, it's been tough for him so we're going to be there for him."

In 767 regular-season games with the Sabres and New York Islanders, who selected him in the first round (No. 7) of the 2006 NHL Draft, Okposo has 492 points (188 goals, 304 assists). He has 15 points (seven goals, eight assists) in 24 Stanley Cup Playoff games.

Forward Tage Thompson, who had been recalled from Rochester of the American Hockey League to replace Okposo, will miss 3-5 weeks because of an upper-body injury sustained during a 4-1 loss to the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday.

Because Rochester also has several players injured, Krueger said he's unsure what Buffalo's lineup will look like Tuesday when the Sabres host the Minnesota Wild at KeyBank Center (7 p.m. ET; MSG-B, FS-N, FS-WI, NHL.TV). The coach did say Buffalo could dress 11 forwards and seven defensemen.

Injured forwards Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson will not play Tuesday. Johansson, who is on injured reserve, has missed three games because of an upper-body injury; Larsson (upper body) has been out the past two.

"Just seems there's been guys going down at one moment, which is unfortunate," Sabres forward Sam Reinhart said. "I think the toughest thing is trying not to do too much. Our depth is going to really show for us, with guys in the minors and so forth. There's been some good play from guys coming up and we're just going to need to do it by committee and not rely on one or two guys like we kind of have the last few games, with [center Jack Eichel] scoring all the goals. Everyone's got to chip in that little bit extra and it's a fine line of not trying to do too much as well."

NHL.com independent correspondent Heather Engel contributed to this report

Jokiharju-Nylander trade now seems like win-win for both Blackhawks and Sabres

By Ben Pope
Chicago Sun-Times
November 18, 2019

In an offseason of otherwise popular moves with the fan base, Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman immediately took a lot of flak for the trade that sent Henri Jokiharju to the Sabres for Alex Nylander.

Four months later, the one-for-one swap has turned out better than expected for the Hawks — and just as good as expected for the Sabres.

If anything, the early verdict is a win-win trade, which is presumably what Bowman and Sabres GM Jason Botterill were going for.

Although neither Nylander nor Jokiharju particularly stood out Sunday in a game the Hawks won 4-1, both showcased just how substantially the trade has elevated their respective roles and careers.

Jokiharju has appeared in every game this season for Buffalo and averaged a sizable 16:37 per game, proving himself as a reliable player while the Sabres' supposed top two defensemen (Rasmus Ristolainen and Rasmus Dahlin) struggle.

And Nylander — unable to permanently crack the Sabres' bottom-tier roster the last three seasons — has played in 19 of 20 games for the Hawks, doubling his game total from the last three years, and averaged 12:53 per game.

"He's playing very well," coach Jeremy Colliton said Sunday. "Based on his play, [he] could have more goals, more points, and so [we're] very happy for him."

Comparing their respective campaigns is difficult, considering the positional differences. Nylander holds the lead in points, 9-7. Jokiharju's shot-attempt and scoring-chance ratios are better. Hockey Reference's point shares statistic, which evaluates individual impact on standings points earned, gives Jokiharju a slight edge, 1.3 to 0.9.

But considering the doomsday mentality through which many initially viewed the trade, a slight edge to the Sabres is a welcomed outcome.

The comparisons might be pointless, anyway. It was obvious all along that Nylander needed a change of scenery to rejuvenate his young career, and it has become increasingly clear that Jokiharju and Colliton weren't compatible, either.

In Jokiharju's return to the United Center on Sunday, he said he somewhat expected to be traded over the summer and referenced his lack of a relationship with Colliton as a key reason why. The 2017 first-round pick was sent to the AHL shortly after Colliton's arrival last season and never returned, despite solid results in his NHL tenure under Joel Quenneville.

"Honestly, I thought, 'Maybe it's going to be me [who gets traded],'" Jokiharju said. "Too many D-men. I saw a couple guys coming in."

"It's a little bit [about] how the coach sees you as a player and as a person. I think that was one of the issues in here."

Jokiharju admitted it would be weird to face off against Duncan Keith, a key mentor for him last season. Nylander said the same about the Sabres' Victor Olofsson, a longtime AHL teammate and friend.

But as far as seeing their old organizations again, both seemed uninterested in offering up more than basic platitudes. There isn't exactly a reservoir of happy nostalgia to tap into.

That's why the summer trade, as lopsided as it appeared at the time, has worked out rather well for both parties. Fans still can make a convincing argument that the Hawks deserved a small second asset in addition to Nylander, but those usually prove to be irrelevant in the long run.

As both teams move on in the season, Sunday's game should close at least the first chapter of debate on the Jokiharju-Nylander swap.

Injury bug bites again as Thompson expected to miss 3-5 weeks

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 18, 2019

For the first month of the season, the Sabres had little movement within their forward group. Health and production allowed coach Ralph Krueger to roll the same four lines on a nightly basis, save for subtle situational tweaks made within games.

The injury bug has bitten often since the beginning of November, and it continued Tuesday. The team announced that Kyle Okposo sustained a concussion in Saturday's game against Ottawa and is out indefinitely, while Tage Thompson - who was recalled to replace Okposo - is expected to miss three to five weeks after sustaining an upper-body injury on his final shift last night.

The Sabres were already without Vladimir Sobotka, who is out four to six weeks, as well as Marcus Johansson and Johan Larsson, both of whom are day-to-day. Krueger said that neither Johansson nor Larsson will play against the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday.

"It was a really long stretch with the same forward lines, and there was some good synergy there," Krueger said. "The processes seemed to be quite automatic, especially the way we want to be connected on the ice.

"Losing a forward a game now for five games in a row has been quite disruptive. But the guys are working hard to find the right path. It's a different kind of challenge, but it's a good one for us to get to know our ability to adjust and also get to know new players."

The Sabres practiced with 11 forwards and nine defensemen this afternoon. Zach Bogosian - entering his second week of practice as he continues the late stage of his recovery from hip surgery - filled in up front for some drills.

Krueger said the team will decide later this afternoon whether they will recall a forward from Rochester for Tuesday's game or play with seven defensemen. Remi Elie, C.J. Smith, and Scott Wilson are dealing with injuries in Rochester, leaving Jean-Sebastien Dea and Andrew Oglevie as the two options on NHL contracts.

Curtis Lazar and Rasmus Asplund have both taken on key roles since being recalled during the past week. Lazar scored in his debut Thursday; while Asplund has often been one of the first players over the boards on the penalty kill.

"There's good play from guys coming up," said Sam Reinhart, who's filled in as an alternate captain in Johansson's absence. "We're just going to need to do it by committee and not rely on one or two guys. You can't have the last two games with Eichs scoring all the goals.

"I think everyone's got to chip in that little bit extra, and it's a fine line of not trying to do too much."

On defense, Bogosian saw his status upgraded to day-to-day on Monday's injury report. Asked if he might return to the lineup at some point this week, he kept his sights focused on the day at hand.

"We'll see," Bogosian said. "Today I had another good skate. We'll just take it a day at a time. We're obviously being cautious about it. I think any time when you come back from a situation like mine, it's smart to just take it day to day. But I feel good, so that's positive news."

Jack at 20

We're 20 games into the season, and Eichel is once again off to the best start of his career. Here's a look at how his goal and point totals through 20 games have increased each season since he entered the league:

2015-16: 10 points (6 G + 4 A)

2016-17: 15 points (8 G + 7 A)

2017-18: 16 points (5 G + 11 A)

2018-19: 18 points (4 G + 18 A)

2019-20: 24 points (13 G + 11 A)

Eichel said on the opening day of training camp that he wanted to have more of a goal scorer's mentality this season, and it's translated through the first quarter of the season. His five goals over the last two games boosted him into a tie with Nathan MacKinnon and Brad Marchand for sixth in the NHL.

Nine of Eichel's goals have come at even strength - also a career-high through 20 games - placing him in a seven-way tie for fourth in the league, trailing Leon Draisaitl (15), Marchand (11), and Auston Matthews (10).

According to NaturalStatTrick.com, he's averaging 9.09 individual scoring chances per 60 minutes at 5-on-5, up from 8.11 last season.

Krueger spoke following Eichel's four-goal game on Saturday about the captain's mindset on offense.

"There's no question his hunger to make plays is larger often than his hunger is to shoot," he said. "... We've been speaking about it a lot lately in he really wants to get a balance. He wants to have that threat, it'll open up the guys for passes again.

"I'm sure this game will begin a good process in his mind to understand how lethal he can while still making plays as he also did tonight."