



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

November 25, 2019

Buffalo visits Tampa Bay after Girgensons' 2 goal-game

Associated Press

November 25, 2019

Buffalo Sabres (11-9-3, fifth in the Atlantic Division) vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (11-7-2, sixth in the Atlantic Division)

Tampa, Florida; Monday, 7 p.m. EST

BOTTOM LINE: The Tampa Bay Lightning host Buffalo after Zemgus Girgensons scored two goals in the Sabres' 5-2 victory against the Panthers.

The Lightning are 6-2-0 against the rest of their division. Tampa Bay has scored 74 goals and is the league leader averaging 3.7 goals per game. Nikita Kucherov leads the team with seven.

The Sabres are 5-3-0 against opponents in the Atlantic Division. Buffalo has allowed 19 power-play goals, killing 73.6% of opponent opportunities.

Tampa Bay beat Buffalo 5-3 in the last meeting between these teams on Nov. 9. Patrick Maroon scored two goals for the Lightning in the win.

TOP PERFORMERS: Kucherov leads the Lightning with seven goals, adding 13 assists and recording 20 points. Anthony Cirelli has scored five goals over the last 10 games for Tampa Bay.

Jack Eichel leads the Sabres with 15 total assists and has recorded 29 points. Sam Reinhart has three goals and four assists over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

LAST 10 GAMES: Sabres: 2-7-1, averaging 2.3 goals, 3.6 assists, 4.1 penalties and 10.4 penalty minutes while giving up 3.4 goals per game with a .889 save percentage.

Lightning: 6-4-0, averaging 4.1 goals, 7.5 assists, 4.8 penalties and 12.9 penalty minutes while giving up three goals per game with a .908 save percentage.

Lightning Injuries: Steven Stamkos: day to day (lower body).

Sabres Injuries: Johan Larsson: out (upper body).

Girgensons, Eichel lead Sabres over Panthers, 5-2

By Paul Gereffi

Associated Press

November 24, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Zemgus Girgensons and Linus Ullmark ended the Buffalo Sabres' three-game losing streak.

Girgensons scored twice, Ullmark made 43 saves and the Sabres beat the Florida Panthers 5-2 on Sunday night to snap a three-game losing streak.

"We did a lot of good things tonight and were rewarded with a `W,'" said Jack Eichel, who had a goal and two assists. "We did a good job of finding a way to get that next goal."

Victor Olofsson and Jeff Skinner also scored.

"I thought (Ullmark) played an outstanding game today staying on the initial shots," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "He was the king of the first shots tonight. We're really, really happy with his performance."

Brett Connolly and Noel Acciari scored for the Panthers, and Samuel Montembeault stopped 20 shots. The Panthers have lost two straight after winning their previous three, losing 4-2 to the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday night. They have lost consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season.

"All of a sudden you've got a tough weekend," coach Joel Quenneville said. "Let's get back to the drawing board and tighten things up and do things the right way."

Connolly's power-play goal — on a shot from above the left circle — cut it to 4-2 at 3:08 of the third, but Girgensons countered with his second goal with 6:35 to go. Girgensons was able to push the puck into the corner of the net.

"I just took it to the net, shot it once and it went in," Girgensons said.

Connolly has five goals in his past five games, but the Panthers came away without a point in back-to-back games.

"I think we're going to have to go through something like that," Connolly said. "Every team is going to go through it. It's just a matter of how we respond."

Eichel made it 3-0 at 3:42 of the second on a shot from the right circle that got by the screened Montembeault. Eichel has six goals and four assists in a five-game points streak.

The Panthers closed to 3-1 midway through the second on Acciari's shot from the low slot.

Olofsson responded, taking a cross-ice pass from San Reinhart to the left circle and scoring with 5:19 left in the second.

"We definitely managed the game in a way we'd like to see, finishing on opportunities, creating opportunities, and managing the lead right through," Krueger said.

Notes: Sabres C Evan Rodrigues left after 40 seconds of the first with an undisclosed injury and did not return. D Zach Bogosian made his season debut after offseason hip surgery. Assistant coach Don Granato returned to the team from a medical leave of absence since Oct. 1 due to pneumonia. Chris Taylor, who filled in for Granato, returned to Rochester of the AHL. ... Panthers D Keith Yandle played his 821st consecutive game — the longest active run in the NHL — after missing part of Saturday night's game at Carolina after getting hit in the face with a puck. D Riley Stillman was recalled from Springfield of the AHL on Saturday in case Yandle couldn't play.

UP NEXT:

Sabres: At Tampa Bay on Monday night.

Panthers: At Washington on Wednesday night.

Florida faces Buffalo, seeks 4th straight home win

Associated Press

November 24, 2019

Buffalo Sabres (10-9-3, sixth in the Atlantic Division) vs. Florida Panthers (12-6-5, second in the Atlantic Division)

Sunrise, Florida; Sunday, 5 p.m. EST

BOTTOM LINE: Florida hosts Buffalo trying to prolong its three-game home winning streak.

The Panthers are 3-1-1 in division matchups. Florida ranks second in the league recording 9.9 points per game, averaging 3.6 goals and 6.3 assists.

The Sabres are 4-3-0 against the rest of their division. Buffalo has scored 15 power-play goals, converting on 20.8% of chances.

Buffalo defeated Florida 3-2 in the last meeting between these teams on Oct. 11.

TOP PERFORMERS: Keith Yandle leads the Panthers with a plus-seven in 23 games played this season. Jonathan Huberdeau has totaled 12 assists over the last 10 games for Florida.

Jack Eichel has collected 26 total points while scoring 13 goals and totaling 13 assists for the Sabres. Victor Olofsson has recorded five assists over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

LAST 10 GAMES: Sabres: 1-7-2, averaging two goals, 3.1 assists, 3.9 penalties and 10 penalty minutes while giving up 3.4 goals per game with a .888 save percentage.

Panthers: 6-3-1, averaging 3.7 goals, 6.2 assists, 2.8 penalties and 5.9 penalty minutes while giving up 3.2 goals per game with a .902 save percentage.

Panthers Injuries: Jayce Hawryluk: out (upper body).

Sabres Injuries: Johan Larsson: out (upper body).

Shorthanded Sabres 'build some confidence' with rare road win over Panthers

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 24, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. – Ralph Krueger's plan was in jeopardy only 1:55 into the game Sunday night, when Evan Rodrigues skated slowly off the BB&T Center ice.

Rodrigues, one of only 11 forwards dressed for the Buffalo Sabres, did not return after suffering an undisclosed injury at the end of his 40-second shift. That forced defenseman Brandon Montour to play forward, a position in which he had not manned since junior hockey in Ontario.

The early returns on Krueger's experiment were "erratic." However, goalie Linus Ullmark bought enough time for the Sabres to have a breakout performance that ended with a 5-2 win over the Florida Panthers.

Montour's one assist as a fill-in at forward helped the Sabres (11-9-3) rebound from a stretch of nine losses in 10 games. Building on what Jack Eichel called a "full 60" could require a similar strategy Monday night in Tampa Bay, though.

Rodrigues, who is the sixth Sabres forward to suffer an injury this month, will not play against the Lightning. That could force Krueger to again use his seven-defensemen alignment to cap this three-game road trip.

"The way we play it's about finding your role in the group," Krueger said. "Sometimes D men will be up in the front and forwards will be back and vice versa. It's an easy style of play that you can step into that, but we definitely thought it was better to go 11-7 today. ... With Evan going down so quickly, that's the strength of a player like Brandon Montour. ... He did a great job of filling in and helping us up front because it would have been tough with 10 forwards."

The Sabres have lost Vladimir Sobotka (lower body), Marcus Johansson (upper body), Kyle Okposo (concussion) and Tage Thompson (upper body) since Nov. 1. Johan Larsson also missed three games with an upper-body injury before returning to the lineup Thursday in Boston.

Those injuries forced the Sabres to recall Rasmus Asplund, Curtis Lazar and Thompson, who also went down late in the third period of his season debut on Nov. 17. Krueger had 12 forwards available Sunday against Florida but opted to dress defenseman Zach Bogosian, who had yet to play a game this season because he was working his way back from hip surgery.

The thinking was Bogosian could bolster a penalty kill that had allowed at least one power-play goal in seven consecutive games, and there was some uncertainty how much ice time the 29-year-old would be able to handle. Additionally, Krueger wanted the unorthodox look to make his line changes "unpredictable" and an additional defenseman could potentially neutralize the Panthers' offense, which entered Sunday ranked second in the Eastern Conference with 86 goals in 23 games.

The change seemed to have a negative impact in the early moments Sunday night. The Sabres struggled to cycle in the puck in the offensive zone, while wingers took turns double-shifting on a line with Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons.

Their first power play almost crashed and burned when a turnover gave Panthers forward Colton Sceviour a breakaway. Ullmark, though, made a save that Krueger later called "a turning point in the game."

Less than six minutes later, Krueger's strategy paid off when Jeff Skinner scored on a centering pass from Eichel to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead. Girgensons pushed the lead to two goals when his shot from the left-wing circle deflected off the stick of Florida defenseman Mark Pysyk and into the net with 1:37 remaining in the first period.

Montour began the game on defense, only to switch to forward following the failed power play.

"It's tough," Eichel said of the Sabres having only 10 forwards following Rodrigues' exit. "Obviously, we're a little banged up right now. We're short up front, but I thought Monty stepped in and did a great job up on the wing."

He caused a lot of havoc in their zone. He was good on the cycle, he was moving his feet, skating, so I thought it helped us out."

Eichel, who finished with one goal among three points, pushed the lead to 3-0 with a remarkable individual effort 3:42 into the second period. The Sabres' 23-year-old captain skated a circle around Panthers forward Brian Boyle before firing a wrist shot into the net for his 14th goal in 23 games this season.

Buffalo quickly lost momentum, though. Following a failed power play, Florida center Noel Acciari collected a loose puck in the slot and beat Ullmark with a wrist shot to cut the Panthers' deficit to two goals.

The Panthers' onslaught continued with defenseman Aaron Ekblad hitting the post. However, Ullmark made 27 through two periods, and he was at his best during a game in which the Sabres were outshot, 45-26. That bought time for the Sabres' offense, which capitalized in transition when Sam Reinhart set up Victor Olofsson's eighth goal of the season during a 2-on-1 for a 4-1 lead late in the second.

"Everyone can play with anyone," Girgensons said of playing with seven defensemen. "A lot of guys can play different positions. I think it's a tougher job for Ralph to get the lineup together. He did a good job throughout the game mixing and matching together different guys. It was good."

Though the Sabres allowed a power-play goal for an eighth consecutive game, Girgensons' second goal with 6:35 remaining gave them the insurance they needed to pull away for their first road win over Florida since Nov. 12, 2015.

"It wasn't a perfect game and it was a strange game somehow," Krueger said. "I thought it was a little erratic. Some ups and downs during the game, but we definitely managed the game in a way that we'd like to see as far as finishing on opportunities, creating opportunities and then managing the lead right through."

Krueger's 12-forward lineup had an impressive performance Thursday night in Boston, and the Panthers were playing their second game of a back-to-back. Additionally, only two Sabres forwards had scored over their previous five games.

Seven defensemen seemed to be an unusual strategy for a struggling offense. However, as Krueger explained during his pregame availability, the key for the Sabres is to play within his system. Doing so will allow any lineup combination to succeed, he said.

The goal now is to follow that blueprint Monday in Tampa Bay, regardless of who is on the ice for the Sabres.

"It's big to get a win here against a good hockey team and just build some confidence in our group that if we do the right things over and over we'll get rewarded," Eichel said.

Sabres get former second-rounder Matthew Spencer in minor league deal

The Buffalo News

November 24, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres have acquired defenseman Matthew Spencer from the Tampa Bay Lightning and assigned him to Cincinnati of the ECHL.

Buffalo sent defenseman Devante Stephens to the Lightning.

Spencer was a second-round pick in the 2015 draft and has played 53 games in the American Hockey League with the Syracuse Crunch with seven points with a goal and six assists. He also has played 53 games in the ECHL with Adirondack and Orlando with 18 points on four goals and 14 assists.

Stephens, a fifth-round pick in 2015, has played just three games this season with Cincinnati and has struggled with injuries throughout his career. His best pro season was last year when he played in 69 games with Cincinnati with eight goals and 17 assists.

The Wraparound: Buffalo Sabres 5, Florida Panthers 2

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 24, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. – One breakaway could have changed the complexion of the game Sunday night in BB&T Center.

The Florida Panthers' Colton Sceviour skated alone down the ice and his shot on net was stopped by Buffalo Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark, who was making his third consecutive start, to keep the game scoreless in the first period.

Ullmark's teammates responded with one of their best performances in November, despite playing with only 10 forwards after Evan Rodrigues left with an injury. Jack Eichel had one goal among three points and Zemgus Girgensons scored twice to lift the Sabres to a 5-2 win over the Panthers.

The Sabres (11-9-3) had lost nine of their previous 10 games, and this is the first season in which they've beaten the Panthers (12-7-5) twice since 2016-17. Buffalo also received goals from Victor Olofsson and Jeff Skinner.

Ullmark made 43 saves to earn his fifth win of the season. Noel Acciari and Brett Connolly scored for Florida. This was the Sabres' first win in Sunrise, Fla., since November 2015, and they were 1-8-2 in their previous 11 road games against the Panthers.

Momentum shift: The Sabres failed to record a shot on goal during their first-period power play and almost allowed their second shorthanded goal of the season. Ullmark stopped Sceviour's breakaway with 8:13 remaining. Ullmark, who had a .921 save percentage in six career games against Florida, stopped all 12 shots he faced in the first period.

Opening salvo: The Sabres finally broke through with 3:36 remaining in the first period when Eichel stick-handled his way down the ice, skated toward the right circle and fired a centering pass towards the net.

Skinner was there to deflect the pass into the net for a 1-0 lead and his ninth goal of the season.

Quick strike: Girgensons pushed the lead to 2-0 with 1:37 left in the first period, when his shot ricocheted off Panthers defenseman Mark Pysyk's stick and past goalie Sam Montembeault. It was only the sixth time this season the Sabres led after the first period.

Early exit: Rodrigues played only one 40-second shift in the first period and did not return to the game because of an undisclosed injury.

Highlight: Eichel scored one of his signature goals in the second period, skating circles around Panthers forward Brian Boyle before he rifled a wrist shot past Montembeault for a 3-0 lead at 3:42. The goal was Eichel's 14th through 23 games this season. He had a career-high 28 goals in 77 games last season.

Defensive lapse: Acciari cut the Sabres' lead to two goals at 9:29 into the second period when he corralled a loose puck that leaked through the defense and beat Ullmark with a high shot.

Goal ofsson: Following a chaotic sequence in which Ullmark was forced to make difficult saves, the Sabres increased their lead to 4-1 with Olofsson scoring on a wrist shot from the left-wing circle. Sam Reinhart set up Olofsson with a pass during the 2-on-1.

With his secondary assist, Eichel recorded his fifth three-point game of the season, surpassing his total from 2018-19.

Penalty kill: The Sabres allowed a power-play goal for an eighth consecutive game, when Connolly scored with a shot from the top of the left-wing circle with 16:52 left in the third period.

Painful block: Sabres defenseman Marco Scandella walked down the tunnel after blocking a shot with less than 13 minutes remaining in regulation, but he returned to the bench moments later.

Fine finish: Girgensons capped his first multigoal game since Jan. 25, 2016, by scoring on his own rebound with 6:35 remaining in regulation.

Bogo's return: Defenseman Zach Bogosian made his season debut Sunday against Florida, skating alongside Rasmus Dahlin at even strength and contributing on the penalty kill. Bogosian had not appeared in a game since last March while recovering from hip surgery.

Injuries: Center Marcus Johansson (upper body), winger Kyle Okposo (concussion) and forward Vladimir Sobotka (lower body) remained out of the Sabres' lineup. Krueger expressed hope that Johansson will be ready to rejoin the team "early next week."

Winger Curtis Lazar and defenseman Colin Miller were healthy scratches.

Next: The Sabres complete their three-game road trip with a game against the Tampa Bay Lightning at 7 p.m. EST on Monday night in Amalie Arena.

Prospect update: Dylan Cozens, whom the Sabres drafted seventh overall in June, had one goal among five points in Lethbridge's 11-2 victory over Red Deer on Saturday night. It was Cozens' eighth game of four or more points in his Western Hockey League career, and he's now tied with Price Albert center Aliaksei Protsai for the league lead in points.

Sabres game day: Zach Bogosian to make season debut in Florida

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 24, 2019

Matchup: Buffalo Sabres (10-9-3) vs. Florida Panthers (12-6-5)

Where: BB&T Center, Sunrise, Fla.

When: 5 p.m.

TV: MSG.

Radio: WGR 550.

Crowded blue line: Sabres coach Ralph Krueger used practice Saturday to "play with some looks" on the blue line. Rasmus Dahlin was reunited with Zach Bogosian, who could make his season debut against the Panthers. Colin Miller was also playing his off-side on a pairing with Brandon Montour.

Jake McCabe remained with Rasmus Ristolainen and the same goes for Marco Scandella with Henri Jokiharju. It remains unclear whom will be scratched now that John Gilmour has joined the Rochester Americans.

However, Krueger will instead use seven defensemen and 11 forwards. He informed the media Sunday afternoon Miller will be scratched, while Bogosian will make his season debut. The thinking is Bogosian can help on the penalty kill and this look will also make the Sabres less predictable.

Curtis Lazar will also be a healthy scratch.

"I think it's unpredictable if the team likes to match," Krueger said. "As an example, it's almost impossible with lines being mixed and matched and different bodies going different places. It gets complicated. Seven D will be the same. It will be more about us creating pace through that and having good, quick line changes. ... I actually enjoy it. I think it's quite a creative way to play in a system like ours where it's pretty clear what you have to do, no matter who you're on the ice with, whether you're right, left or center.

"It doesn't mean as much as some of the more structured formations here in the league, and I think also for the D there's a certain awareness that when you have different linemates, different D pairs that principles and concepts are more important, really, than thinking outside the box. We need a good team game today and we feel this will set us up for it."

Potential lineup: Center Marcus Johansson remains away from the team as he recovers from an upper-body injury that has forced him to miss five games. Krueger confirmed Johansson won't play Sunday in Sunrise or Monday in Tampa Bay.

"It doesn't look like he'll be joining us here for these two games," Krueger said. "We hope to get him back early next week. He's close but not close enough to bring him down here."

That has tested the Sabres' depth down the middle, however, Rasmus Asplund has performed well since being recalled from Rochester. Though Buffalo has lost nine of its last 10 games, Krueger is thrilled with how the Sabres performed Thursday in Boston.

The Bruins had not allowed as few as four shots on goal in one period in almost four years. That's a significant accomplishment against one of the top teams in the National Hockey League. Here is how the Sabres lined up during practice Saturday:

Vesey-Eichel-Reinhart
Skinner-Rodrigues-Sheary
Girgensons-Larsson-Lazar
Olofsson-Asplund-Mittelstadt

Miller-Montour
McCabe-Ristolainen
Dahlin-Bogolian
Scandella-Jokiharju

Bogolian ready: Naturally, Bogolian smiled at the first mention of possibly returning to game action. He hasn't been on the ice against an opponent since March 23 and was limited to 65 games last season.

Bogolian suffered multiple setbacks in his return from hip surgery last summer, but he could assist the Sabres' penalty kill, which ranks 31st in the NHL during November. Bogolian also formed an excellent pairing with Dahlin last season and can provide the Sabres with the type of physical presence they need.

"Bogo has been really outstanding to have around, first of all as a person," Krueger said. "Off the ice, he's very emotional and so far he's bringing a good spirit in on a daily basis since he's been in practice. He's a personality and he's somebody who can help us moving forward with his experience, his ability to kill penalties and also play the team game. We just look forward, and I'm seeing it more and more in practice, his confidence is going up in practice. I'm sure he'll be an added asset to us."

Ullmark in goal: The Sabres will start Linus Ullmark in goal for the third consecutive game. Ullmark has a .921 save percentage in six career games against the Panthers. Carter Hutton will likely start Monday in Tampa Bay.

Ullmark has a .910 save percentage in 10 games this season, allowing 3.00 goals-against average. Sam Montembeault will start for the Panthers, who lost at Carolina, 4-2, Saturday night.

Bad history: Since the calendar turned to November, the Panthers are 6-3-1 and their power play ranks fourth in the NHL. Additionally, they have a plus-4 goal differential and their top players are leading the way. Jonathan Huberdeau has three goals among 15 points and Aleksander Barkov has six goals among 14 points during that span.

The Sabres defeated the Panthers, 3-2, in a shootout on Oct. 11. However, Buffalo has not won two games against Florida in a season since 2016-17. Since then, the Sabres are 2-6-1 against their Atlantic Division rival.

This would be an opportune time for the Sabres' power play to build off the success it had Thursday night in Boston. The Panthers' penalty kill is converting at a rate of 79.2% since Nov. 1.

Opposing player to watch: Panthers winger Evgenii Dadonov entered Sunday tied for first on the team with 10 goals and his 20 points ranked third. He's also played outstanding against the Sabres during his career, recording six goals among 17 points in 13 games.

Chris Taylor leaves Sabres to resume duties as coach of Rochester

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 23, 2019

CORAL SPRINGS, Fla. – There was one notable absence when the Buffalo Sabres stepped on to the ice for practice Saturday morning in the Panthers Ice Den.

Chris Taylor, who served as an interim assistant coach during Don Granato's medical leave, left the Sabres and will resume his duties this week as head coach of the Rochester Americans. Taylor had been one of three assistants on coach Ralph Krueger's staff since Granato was hospitalized with severe pneumonia ahead of the Sabres' season opener.

Granato, though, returned to practice Wednesday in KeyBank Center, watched the Sabres' game Thursday night from the TD Garden press box and will be back behind the bench Sunday against the Florida Panthers in Sunrise, Fla.

Granato, who spent 11 days in an intensive care unit at Buffalo General Medical Center, became excitable when asked about his first road trip with the Sabres since the preseason.

"It's great to be around the team," he said following practice Saturday afternoon. "Just walking in the room and being part of the team, being able to contribute to the team is all a very good feeling."

Granato, 52, encountered a near-death experience when he sustained an infection in his bloodstream. He underwent successful emergency surgery and faced a long road to returning to his coaching staff.

Taylor, who led the Amerks to consecutive playoff appearances since joining the Sabres organization, stepped into Granato's role and Gord Dineen was named interim coach in Rochester. When Granato was discharged from the hospital, Krueger and General Manager Jason Botterill agreed to allow him to be part of the Sabres' coaching process.

Granato would watch games from home and send his observations to the staff. The work was more analysis-driven than strategic suggestions. After all, Granato was away from the team and did not want to overstep. The process proved to be therapeutic for Granato during his recovery.

"Very beneficial and Ralph and Jason through that process – it was really great for me to feel like I still mattered and I still could contribute something," Granato said. "For those two guys, 'at your own pace.' I never felt pushed and even when I felt I was comfortable to come back it was me pushing, 'I am 100 percent, I am ready to go.' Those guys, again, were concerned for me and my well-being. They were very inclusive."

Prior to joining Krueger's staff in June, Granato spent parts of two seasons on new Panthers coach Joel Quenneville's staff in Chicago. Additionally, Granato worked on the staff of his brother, Tony, at the University of Wisconsin and coached Jack Eichel during his time with the USA Hockey National Team Development Program.

Granato was hired by Krueger to work with the forwards and power play, though each of the Sabres' three assistants are involved in all coaching decisions.

Taylor will rejoin an Amerks team that ended Saturday tied for first in the American Hockey League's North Division, despite being without Rasmus Asplund, Curtis Lazar and Tage Thompson, among others. The experience gained by Taylor could help with the Sabres' player-development model.

Taylor is well-versed on the verbiage and tactics used by Krueger, which will allow for a seamless transition once Amerks are recalled to the National Hockey League.

"Chris is an outstanding coach and friend now," Krueger said of Taylor. "Really filled into a difficult situation here so strongly. Boy, does it ever help us here moving forward to have that connection with Chris now as he's in Rochester and we're interacting regularly. I was able to learn from him, having him on my side. I love having

coaches there that challenge you, that ask hard questions, that speak the truth and he does nothing but that. We enjoyed every minute together and we're connected still in different roles in the organization."

Gilmour clears waivers

Defenseman John Gilmour cleared waivers Saturday, allowing the 26-year-old to join Taylor's blue line in Rochester. Gilmour, who signed a one-way contract with the Sabres in July, made the roster following an outstanding training camp in which he played with the pace and structure Krueger requires of his defensemen.

Gilmour, though, appeared in only four games for the Sabres, the last of which as a forward when the Sabres lost to the Minnesota Wild, 4-1, Tuesday night in KeyBank Center. Gilmour scored 20 goals among 54 points with Hartford last season in the AHL.

Bogosian close

Defenseman Zach Bogosian is expected to return to the lineup Sunday against Florida or Monday at Tampa Bay.

The 29-year-old defenseman has yet to play this season because he was recovering from the multiple setbacks he suffered following hip surgery in April. Bogosian skated on a defense pairing with Rasmus Dahlin during practice Saturday. The former will be evaluated Sunday morning before a decision is made regarding his status for the first game of the back-to-back.

Bogosian had three goals among 19 points in 65 games with the Sabres last season. No defense pairing played more minutes for the Sabres at 5 on 5 in 2018-19 than Bogosian and Dahlin.

Johansson absent

Forward Marcus Johansson was again absent from practice Saturday in Coral Springs, as he recovers from an upper-body injury that has sidelined him for the past five games. Johansson has four goals among 10 points in 17 games with the Sabres this season.

The Sabres will not have an extra forward if Johansson is out Sunday against the Panthers.

Sabres Mailbag: Should Jeff Skinner play on a line with Jack Eichel?

By Lance Lysowski
The Buffalo News
November 22, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. – Ralph Krueger did not take the loss Thursday night in Boston lightly.

The Buffalo Sabres coach described the 3-2 setback as "painful" and called the performance at 5 on 5 their "best of the season." His players, meanwhile, were not interested in settling for a silver lining. This was the second consecutive game a forward failed to score and the penalty allowed a goal for a seventh consecutive game.

The Sabres' offensive struggles have fans calling for Jack Eichel to be reunited with Jeff Skinner. Let's start there with my latest mailbag, which features questions submitted by readers on Twitter.

@HockeyIQ716: Why hasn't Krueger reunited Eichel and Skinner?

Lance Lysowski: There has been some revisionist history with how well that line performed last season. Sure, there's no disputing their success offensively. The Sabres had a 51.82% shot differential at 5 on 5 and produced 53 even-strength goals with Eichel and Skinner on the ice together last season.

However, the line was deficient defensively. The Sabres' improved play without the puck is what separates this team from the one that finished 27th in the NHL last season.

Krueger has prioritized having at least one above-average defender on each of his forward lines this season, which makes Victor Olofsson or Jimmy Vesey a logical wing for Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

The thinking there is Olofsson or Vesey will free Eichel and Reinhart up to take more risks. It might be time to make a change, though. Reinhart has the ability to drive his own line. Krueger could pair Skinner with Eichel and have either Olofsson or Vesey at right wing.

Krueger does not sound interested in making such a change, but he's found ways to use the two star forwards together at 5 on 5. With Eichel and Skinner on the ice together in 27:39 at 5 on 5, the Sabres have generated 11 more shot attempts than their opponents.

Rob Gregoretti: How likely is it that General Manager Jason Botterill can make a trade that helps the Sabres now and long-term since he waited until now?

Lysowski: The Sabres bolstered their blue line this offseason by adding Colin Miller and Henri Jokiharju. That provided them with the depth and competition they needed during training camp. Remember, the situation on defense was so dire last season that Matt Tennyson played NHL games for this team.

Rasmus Ristolainen put the Sabres in a very difficult position by publicly expressing frustration, and let's face it, the 25-year-old played poorly last season. Botterill wasn't going to settle for a lesser return, and the intent was to compete this season. Selling low on Ristolainen would be counterproductive. Additionally, Marco Scandella's trade value was quite low after how he played last season.

The Sabres have a good problem right now, and no one could have predicted they would be hit with this many injuries at once. The narrative is far different if Tage Thompson was able to contribute upon being called up from Rochester. A trade is inevitable given the salary-cap situation and the team's need at forward.

However, trades are far more difficult to complete in November. In hindsight, the Sabres could have used another forward this offseason, but nothing materialized on the trade front after they acquired Vesey.

Matt Weiner: Is the cap for the team next year as beneficial for the Sabres as we keep hearing? How much is realistically going to change between this year and next?

Lysowski: Yes, the Sabres are projected to have more than \$33 million in space next season, according to CapFriendly.com. A significant chunk of that will likely be paid to Reinhart and Brandon Montour. Additionally, the

Sabres could be interested in re-signing Vesey, Conor Sheary, Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons. Casey Mittelstadt and Evan Rodrigues are also pending restricted free agents.

Cap space quickly disappears when you're talking about potentially committing a combined \$14 million to \$16 million to Reinhart and Montour, plus Botterill will need to save enough room to sign Rasmus Dahlin to a long-term contract. Still, the Sabres are set up nicely to add through trades and free agency next summer.

We've seen how much can change in one summer. Despite the Sabres' recent struggles, their roster is significantly deeper with Miller, Jokiharju and Marcus Johansson, all of whom were added this past offseason.

Justin Dickenson: What are your thoughts on the Sabres' ability to target potential players in trades? Detroit seemed to pay a low price for Robby Fabbri.

Lysowski: That hasn't been the issue. The Sabres successfully bought low on Jokiharju and Miller, though it's odd the latter has been a healthy scratch as of late. Additionally, Botterill somehow acquired Montour for Brendan Guhle, who has struggled to stay on the ice in Anaheim.

Botterill isn't to blame for this recent slide, in my opinion. I know fans will never get over the Ryan O'Reilly trade, but the Sabres were going nowhere with him on the roster. Trading O'Reilly allowed them to acquire Skinner and Miller, among others. The Sabres lacked depth because of former General Manager Tim Murray's impatience. You can't speed up a rebuild.

Fans have every right to be losing patience. However, Botterill has done a nice job under difficult circumstances. The problem is on the ice. Aside from Eichel, the Sabres' best players have been inconsistent from shift to shift during this recent slide. Neither Botterill nor Krueger can force them to make better decisions with the puck.

Nick Alberga: What leads you to believe that the Sabres aren't Sabres-ing again?

Lysowski: This situation is far different than last season. The Sabres were horrible defensively during their 10-game win streak last November. You're not seeing the same amount of odd-man rushes or defensive-zone breakdowns.

The Sabres allowed only one 5-on-5 goal during their 3-2 loss in Boston on Thursday night. Their goaltending has also been more consistent. The biggest question is how they respond to adversity. They seem to lose energy following a difficult goal against and continue to struggle with consistency.

The leadership group is stronger than years past, buoyed by the maturity of Eichel and the addition of a veteran like Johansson. Krueger also appears to be the ideal coach for this group because he has an innate ability to motivate.

The Sabres are talented and have shown they have the formula to win, yet their play is unpredictable.

Janusz Urbanski: Is Eichel the true leader of the team?

Lysowski: Absolutely. Eichel's effort on the ice can inspire his teammates. You saw that with his decision to drop the gloves Tuesday night against the Minnesota Wild. Eichel has also been the Sabres' most consistent player, having contributed on seven consecutive goals. He's also put in the work to improve defensively, and he's starting to shoot the puck more.

Sure, Eichel has committed some defensive lapses, and yes, he can commit turnovers when trying to do too much. But Sabres fans have to love the way his game has evolved. Eichel is also quick to defend his teammates, and we're not seeing some of the bad body language that popped up at times last season.

Eichel is constantly communicating and encouraging his teammates.

Scott: Do you think the Sabres would have had more success had they landed Mike Babcock instead of Dan Bylsma?

Lysowski: Yes, I do. Babcock is a tremendous coach. He would have worked wonders with the Sabres' young core. Bylsma's inability to communicate with players prevented them from adopting the habits that are needed at this level. The hire looked great on paper, though.

Bylsma won a Stanley Cup in Pittsburgh and was beloved by the Penguins during his time there. However, I was told by a former Penguins player that he and his teammates grew tired of Bylsma, who seemed distracted late in his time there. Fit and timing are as important as the resume when it comes to coaching hires. Babcock would have checked all the boxes.

Brandon Montour brings his inspiring story to indigenous hockey camps

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 22, 2019

Talent was never Brandon Montour's problem.

He has always had an effortless stride and possessed the skill to play forward during his junior career. Yet Montour, now a 25-year-old defenseman for the Buffalo Sabres, wasn't seen by many scouts and went undrafted by the Ontario Hockey League in both his years of eligibility.

That forced him to play tier-two junior hockey for three years before he went to the United States Hockey League, UMass-Amherst, the National Hockey League and, most recently, the IIHF World Championship.

His story resonates with children, particularly those of indigenous heritage. Montour spent part of his childhood in Ohsweken, a village in the Six Nations of the Grand River reserve near Brantford, Ont.

Montour wants to use his platform to show children there is hope, no matter their socioeconomic background or heritage. He spent almost two days at an indigenous camp in Whitehorse, Yukon — the small town that produced Sabres first-round draft pick Dylan Cozens — and attended another in Prince Edward Island, Ont., with former Sabre Cody McCormick last summer.

"It's good to give back in general," Montour said. "For my culture that's even bigger, and they can see it's bigger. Whether they're native or not, I want to help kids. It's not just aboriginal kids that need help. Everybody experiences that. I'm glad I could help."

Montour did not have an NHL player to deliver that message to him as a child. His inspiration was his parents, Cam and Tammy. Cam's career as an iron worker forced him to be away from home a month at a time, and the location of some job sites prevented him from seeing his sons' hockey or lacrosse games. He would travel home on weekends when he was within driving distance.

Tammy, meanwhile, would prepare dinner for her three boys in the afternoon, pick them up from school and take them to the rink. Colin, Brandon and Cameron used to practice consecutively before going home for the night. The sacrifice was not lost on Brandon. Though he also excelled in lacrosse, hockey was always his first love. His talent allowed him to play AAA midget hockey in Brantford, and he later joined the Junior-B level Greater Ontario Hockey League.

Montour went undrafted by the OHL during his first season of eligibility and attended a tryout with the Guelph Storm. He performed well enough to earn a roster spot but was told he would likely spend the season as an extra defenseman. That led Montour to Caledonia, a small town east of Brantford, for another season of Junior-B level hockey.

Montour had 103 points over his final two seasons in the GOHL. The problem was exposure. Only family and friends sat in the bleachers of the small rinks in which he played.

"He's always taken the back way to get where he is, like not playing in major junior," his father said. "He's never really been on the radar because of that. He never really went the mainstream route. In that short time, playing on different teams and stuff, more and more people would talk about how he would skate."

Montour left home to play in the USHL for Waterloo (Iowa), where he finally had the opportunity to play in front of NHL scouts. He was ranked the 92nd-best North American skater in the 2014 draft class by NHL Central Scouting, and the Anaheim Ducks selected him in the second round that June.

Montour has since recorded 76 points in 197 regular-season games between Anaheim and Buffalo, appeared in 21 playoff games with the former and represented Canada on the international stage at the IIHF World Championship last May. The latter accomplishment was surreal, given Montour was not viewed as an elite junior prospect in Ontario.

"How many kids can experience the world championships after doing that? Montour asked. "The idea of being able to do that, having the belief for kids coming into that, not being drafted or whatnot, keep pushing and you'll never know what can happen.

"I got my opportunity and here we are."

About 110 children from the 13 First Nations communities across the Yukon Territory attended the camp in Whitehorse in July. Montour skated with two of the three groups, spoke to the children about his path to the NHL and reminded them to never get discouraged.

Montour viewed his time in Whitehorse as mutually beneficial. The trip provided him with an opportunity to see the mountainous landscape around Whitehorse — Cozens offered a few travel tips to Montour prior to his departure — and views these camps as an opportunity for personal growth.

Some children in Whitehorse have to travel hundreds of miles to play hockey competitively, while others' only on-ice obligation is the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament every March. Many don't have the financial means to pursue hockey beyond a recreational level. Local sponsors donated to offset the cost of attending the camp.

"It's really an eye-opener for the community kids to see someone like Brandon come to Whitehorse and hangout with them," said Karee Vallevand, who organized the camp for Yukon First Nations Hockey Association. "They realize he's just a regular guy. He's just like them. They had so much fun. He was really cool with the kids and this isn't just for indigenous children. It's for everyone in the surrounding communities. We want everyone to have access to hockey players like Brandon."

Many reserves across Canada deal are isolated and have been ravaged by drug and alcohol abuse. Montour's trip to the First Nations reserve on Lennox Island, which is located off the northwest coast of Prince Edward Island, showed him what other challenges children in these communities may face.

The ice surface on which the children skated was the same size or smaller than the Sabres' dressing room inside KeyBank Center, Montour recalled. Though McCormick spoke glowingly of the reserve's leadership and dedication to providing extracurricular activities to youth, Lennox Island is isolated. A visit from current and former NHL players provides a respite and, in some ways, hope.

" You go to a lot of rural areas and you see the same thing," said McCormick, who is of First Nations heritage and has continued to visit reserves across Canada since his 11-year NHL career ended. "It's not always great. The isolation, the abuse, the alcohol and drug abuse that a lot of these places face. The youth have to kind of persevere through that. Brandon doing that sort of thing is amazing to see because of the platform he's on and the influence he can have on the youth. It means something when they see somebody who is a product of the same place they're coming from.

"Brandon coming from a reserve, Six Nations, and he's made it. He may have dealt with some of the struggles that they're facing. He just never made it his identity. He persevered through it. For him to come back and talk to the youth in different communities — I know that means a lot to them."

The visits remind Montour how fortunate he was to have two parents working diligently to ensure he and his brothers would have the opportunity to pursue their dreams. He called his job with the Sabres a "privilege," and expressed gratitude for his parents' sacrifice.

The past nine months have been somewhat of a homecoming. Montour's trade to the Sabres last February allows his parents to make the 70-minute drive down the Queen Elizabeth Expressway to attend games or have a family dinner. His father often has to stay home because of his work commitments the following morning.

However, Cam Montour called off work on May 10 to watch Brandon represent Canada for the first time at the world championships. Though Montour and his countrymen suffered a 3-1 loss to eventual champion Finland, the game reminded both father and son that sacrifice could make anything possible.

"It makes it all worthwhile," Cam said.

Sabres goalie prospect Erik Portillo reaching 'another level' in Dubuque

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

November 23, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. – Jason Botterill and his staff did their homework on Erik Portillo ahead of the NHL draft in Vancouver.

Portillo, a 19-year-old goalie, had played the previous season in Frolunda, the same Swedish program that developed Rasmus Dahlin, and was committed to Botterill's alma mater, the University of Michigan.

Botterill called Portillo a "longer-term project" after the Sabres drafted him 67th overall in June and expressed excitement for adding a player whom they view as a future National Hockey League goaltender.

Patience will be important, though. Portillo needs one season in Dubuque of the USHL, followed by a possible four-year collegiate career. The transition to the smaller North American ice surface can be particularly difficult for goalies and their development curve tends to be volatile.

However, Portillo has quickly become one of the Sabres' most promising prospects. His 43 saves in wins against Tri-City and Lincoln earned him the honor of USHL Goaltender of the Week, and he entered play Friday with the league's second-best goals-against average.

"I think Erik has been good and then last weekend he took it to another level where he showed he can really close the door and be unbelievable," Dubuque General Manager Kalle Larsson said. "He's been great. He's been everything we could have expected. I think he's been even better early on than I thought. I still expect him to after Christmas really hit his stride and be at that top level the whole time. He's been awesome. He's a great teammate, he's a good kid and obviously he's a heck of a goalie."

Portillo called the weekly honor a "big thing," yet he gave most of the credit to his teammates. Entering play Friday, Dubuque was second in the Eastern Conference with a 10-2-1 record. Portillo was in goal for 10 of those games and entered Friday ranked 10th in the USHL with a .907 save percentage.

The experience is important for Portillo. Like fellow prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, Portillo needs game reps to get accustomed to the increased game speed on the North American ice surface. He was outstanding during the Sabres' development camp in June, but only so much can be gained from practices and the 3-on-3 scrimmage.

Portillo shone in his first significant test since being drafted. The third-round draft pick played well for Sweden during the World Junior Summer Showcase in Plymouth, Mich., making 32 saves in a 2-1 overtime win over a United States team that included NHL draft picks Trevor Zegras, Arthur Kaliyev and Matthew Boldy, among others.

That might help Portillo secure a spot on Sweden's roster for the IIHF World Junior Championship, which will be held Dec. 26 through Jan. 5 in Czech Republic. Those who watched him last year weren't surprised, though.

Portillo was outstanding during his final season in Frolunda, posting a 1.99 goals-against average and .931 save percentage in 26 games for its Under-20 junior team. He credits his goalie coach, Peter Andersson, with that success. Portillo learned the value of communicating with his defensemen and improved his technique.

That caught the eye of NHL scouts during Portillo's second season of draft eligibility.

"I am always working hard and I've done that all my life," Portillo told The Buffalo News in a phone interview Wednesday. "Last year I had a new goalie coach who came in and really helped me take my game to the next level. That's what helped me get here and now I'm doing the same stuff. I'm trying to get to another level again."

In addition to working with Dubuque's staff, Portillo communicates often with Sabres goalie development coach Seamus Kotyk, who visits Iowa to work with the organization's latest project. Portillo's main objective is to continue to get accustomed to the smaller ice surface.

The biggest challenge is unsuspecting shots, Portillo said. The European ice allows forwards to take their time when entering the offensive zone. Goalies also rarely deal with traffic in front of the net. That makes the position much easier.

The USHL is an ideal training ground for Portillo. Teams play a more physical game and many of the players are either possible NHL draft picks or future Division I athletes.

"It's small technical stuff in the game that's different," Portillo said. "Like one thing is the readiness. You have to be prepared for a shot as soon as the puck enters the zone here in North America. On the big ice, you have a little bit more time to get set for a shot. Here the puck can get thrown to the net at any moment. It's small stuff like that you have to adjust and learn."

Portillo has shown steady improvement, but he'll also be tested by the Fighting Saints' 62-game regular-season schedule. The physical and mental grind can be difficult for European players, most of whom play approximately 30 games during their junior seasons. An ability to rebound from a difficult performance typically separates elite goaltenders.

Following a difficult performance at world juniors in 2018, Luukkonen returned the following year to have a breakout tournament in which he led Finland to a gold medal. Portillo has shown promise early in Dubuque, recovering quickly from a difficult game against the USA Hockey National Team Development Program's Under-17 team. He allowed five goals in 29 shots in a 5-4 overtime loss.

"His bounce back with us has been excellent," Larsson said. "There's only been one game where he's kind of gotten lit up. We played the U-17s. That's the only game where he had goals he may have wanted back, but he responded with his next start being excellent. His response to easy goals or negative events has been really good. Instead of pouting he's been really focused. ... I'm sure he can handle it, but it's going to be a test."

Portillo is awaiting word on whether he'll be able to realize his dream of representing Sweden at world juniors. The country's hockey federation is expected to announce its roster during the first week of December and will likely carry three goalies for the tournament

Portillo's progress over the past year has him in consideration; however, he's not allowing himself to think about potentially accomplishing his goal.

"It's a lifelong dream to be picked for that team, but I'm trying to do my best here in Dubuque and do the things I can really affect and do them as good as possible," Portillo said. "I'm trying to stay hungry, humble and keep on working."

Sabres place John Gilmour on waivers

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 22, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres took the first step toward loosening their logjam on defense Friday by placing John Gilmour on waivers in hopes of getting him to Rochester.

Zach Bogosian, who has not played this season after hip surgery, is on the team's Florida road trip and could be ready to play either Sunday in Florida or Monday in Tampa Bay. Bogosian, who has been taken off injured reserve became Buffalo's ninth healthy defenseman at the NHL level.

With General Manager Jason Botterill unable to make a trade of a defenseman for a badly needed forward, the Sabres had no room for Gilmour. A strong skater who has played just three games at defense this season and was used at forward during Tuesday's loss to Minnesota, Gilmour has no points but could be attractive to other teams looking for some skating and offense for their back end.

The Sabres are obviously hoping he can clear waivers and be a big boost to the Rochester lineup, both on defense and the power play.

Gilmour, 26, set a franchise record last year among defensemen for the Hartford Wolf Pack with 20 goals and was second in the AHL to the 21 by Rochester's Zach Redmond. Gilmour had 54 points and was named an AHL all-star for a second consecutive season.

The Sabres are off Friday. They practice Saturday in Fort Lauderdale before meeting the Panthers Sunday at 5.

Sabres' Ullmark steals the show in Florida

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 24, 2019

(WGR 550) - The Sabres went on the road and played the top two teams in the Atlantic Division and split the four points. It's a shame for them that they didn't take three points or all four because Buffalo played its best game of the season in Boston and didn't get a point.

The Sabres were certainly opportunistic in Florida, but they needed Linus Ullmark to stand on his head and make 43 saves to get the 5-2 win over the Panthers.

If you want to simplify this game, the Sabres got the goaltending and the Panthers Sam Montembeault had a really rough night.

Buffalo got outshot in the first period, 12-5, yet left leading 2-0. It was a totally opposite of what happened in Boston.

You had to love the way the Sabres scored their goals too. Jack Eichel made a very nice play to Jeff Skinner who was going to the net. Skinner had come into the game with one goal in nine games.

Curtis Lazar was a scratch and Ralph Krueger decided to go with seven defensemen. In one of his first shifts up front, Brandon Montour chipped a puck up to Zemgus Girgensons for his first goal of the game. Coming in Girgensons hadn't scored in 13 games.

Just 3:42 into the second period, the Sabres had a 3-0 lead on a beautiful individual effort from Eichel. Zach Bogosian got an assist in his first game of the season. Bogosian played 22:03 and led the team. I thought he handled the ice-time very well.

There was one shift in the second period where Bogosian and Rasmus Dahlin got hemmed into the defensive zone for 1:52. Buffalo got completely run over and dominated, but a funny thing happened after Ullmark put a stop to it and froze the puck. Eichel led a breakout to Sam Reinhart who in turn sprung Victor Olofsson and his laser of a shot made it 4-1 Sabres. The Swedish winger had come into the game with one goal in 15 games.

The beauty of this game was every time Florida got up off the mat, the Sabres knocked them back down. It was a game where things happened, the team survived and then they responded.

Brett Connolly's power play goal had cut Buffalo's lead to two, but it was Girgensons again banging away in the crease and connecting for his second goal on the game.

The Sabres hadn't won in Sunrise since 2015 and were 1-8-2 in their last 11 games in that building. Buffalo is now one point in back of Toronto in the Atlantic Division, they're two behind Montreal and four in back of second place Florida.

Despite two losses to the Lightning, the Sabres remain one point in front of Tampa Bay with a game there on Monday. Join Schopp and the Bulldog for the pregame starting at 6:00.

Sabres defeat Panthers 5-2 in Florida

WGR 550

November 24, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres are back at it as they try to win for the first time in three games. Brandon Montour is the 7th defenseman tonight taking a slot on a line with Zemgus Girgenson and Johan Larsson. Zach Bogosian makes his return to the lineup.

Late in the 1st period, Jack Eichel drove the puck in to the Panthers zone and carried the play with him, drawing a couple Panther defenders towards him so he could make a great play to Jeff Skinner, who tipped it past Panthers goalie Sam Montembeault. Nearly two minutes later, Zemgus Girgenson used a Panther defender as a screen to make it 2-0.

The 2nd period started with the Sabres adding to their lead. Jack Eichel controlled the puck along the wall in Florida's zone and got free enough to fire a shot in off the post and past Montembeault. In the middle of the period, after killing off a Jack Eichel hooking penalty, Jake McCabe tried to clear the puck off a faceoff, but he wasn't able to get enough mustard on it. Noel Acciari stole it away and capitalized to put the Panthers on the board. Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark was tested very soon after that and was beaten, but Aaron Ekblad fired it off the post.

Late in the period, Sam Reinhart started a breakout from the Sabres zone and fed Olofsson open toward the net and he made no mistake about it, zipping a laser past Montembeault to put the Sabres up by three goals.

The Sabres found themselves down a man early in the 3rd period and it helped the Panthers bring things within two goals again. Brett Connolly had a nice pass fed from Aaron Ekblad and he was able to get it by Linus Ullmark to make it 4-2 Buffalo. The Sabres would regain their three goal lead later in the period off a nice breakout from Jimmy Vesey. He found Zemgus Girgenson sprinting up the right side boards who put a weak backhand on before getting a better piece of the puck make it squeak by Montembeault.

GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary

First Period

BUF: 16:24 - Jeff Skinner (9) (Eichel), 18:23 - Zemgus Girgenson (unassisted)

FLA: None

Second Period

BUF: 3:42 - Jack Eichel (14) (Dahlin, Bogosian), 14:41 - Victor Olofsson (8) (Reinhart, Eichel)

FLA: 9:29 - Noah Acciari (unassisted)

Third Period

BUF: 13:25 - Zemgus Girgenson (3) (Vesey, Larsson)

FLA: 3:08 - Brett Connolly (11) (Ekblad, Trocheck) - PP

Penalty Summary:

First Period

BUF: None

FLA: 11:31 - Aleksander Barkov - Hooking (2 minutes)

Second Period

BUF: 15:26 - Jack Eichel - Hooking (2 minutes), 7:09 - Slashing (2 minutes)

FLA: None

Third Period

BUF: 2:14 - Henri Jokiharju - Tripping (2 minutes), 14:05 - Rasmus Ristolainen - Interference (2 minutes)

FLA: 17:21 - Aleksander Barkov - Holding (2 minutes)

Shots on Goal:

BUF: 26 (5, 9, 12)

FLA: 45 (12, 16, 17)

Goalies:

BUF: Linus Ullmark - 43 saves

FLA: Sam Montembeault - 21 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 0/2 (0%)

FLA: 1/4 (25%)

Three Stars:

1) Jack Eichel

2) Zemgus Girgensons

3) Linus Ullmark

What's Next:

The Sabres take on the other Florida team in Tampa tomorrow night as they go for two in a row. Tune in to WGR 550 starting at 6 PM for the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show. Faceoff is at 7 PM at Amalie Arena.

Chris Taylor is heading back to Rochester to coach the Amerks

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 23, 2019

(WGR 550) - With Don Granato returning to the Sabres coaching staff, Chris Taylor has gone back to Rochester. Taylor filled in during Granato's medical leave.

Taylor will resume being the Amerks head coach next week.

The Sabres are practicing on Saturday in Coral Springs, Florida.

At noon on Saturday, John Gilmour cleared NHL waivers and was sent to Rochester.

Dreger: Botterill is 'open to just about anything' to acquire forward help

WGR 550

November 22, 2019

It has already been a whirlwind 2019-20 season for the Buffalo Sabres, and the year is only a quarter of the way done.

After a hot start in October, where the team finished the month 9-2-2, the team has taken a nose dive in the standings in November with a 1-7-1 record in nine games. The team still sits with four points out of a Wild Card spot in the Eastern Conference Standings, but are just five points ahead of the last place Detroit Red Wings.

To start the season, the Sabres were slightly banged up on the blue line while the forward group was relatively healthy heading into November. That script has now completely flipped as the Sabres are finally back to full strength on the blue line, and the team has suffered a few significant injuries up front.

To add insult to injury, the Sabres' offense has gone dry in the scoring department with a number of players failing to contribute up to expectations.

The last Sabres goal from a forward not named Jack Eichel came back on November 14 when Johan Larsson scored a goal off his leg. In the four games since then, Eichel has scored five goals, while defensemen Brandon Montour and Rasmus Ristolainen have accounted for the rest of the scoring.

With the Sabres seeing a stock pile of healthy NHL defensemen, general manager Jason Botterill has been exploring the trade market to see if he can flip any assets to acquire some help at forward. This process has been ongoing for Botterill for a while now, who has been open to the idea of trading a defenseman since last year's NHL Trade Deadline.

TSN hockey insider Darren Dreger has been following the Sabres' situation closely, and was on with Andrew Peters and Craig Rivet on The Instigators on Friday to provide the latest update on what Botterill's intentions are moving forward.

Here is what Dreger had to say:

Dreger on the progress Botterill has made in trade talks:

"I think it's beyond Jason Botterill actively looking. My information is that he's made offers, and I believe they are offers on forwards, but I don't know the specifics of the forward or the teams that he's been most in conversation with. This conversation has been ongoing. He's just simply trying to help things out. It's not just because he sees an area of concern or he wants to better what he has up front, it's also through necessity with the injuries that they have up front."

Dreger on why the Sabres haven't been able to strike a deal yet:

"The problem that Botterill and other general managers who are also interested in making trades are having right now is that so many teams have players on long-term [injured reserve] that that gums things up from a cap perspective. Not just from a Buffalo's standpoint. But with a team that you're dealing with, it gets really snarly. I think there are 10, maybe 12 who are in [long-term injured reserve] right now. Despite the fact that it's relatively early. Usually you get to U.S. Thanksgiving, which isn't that far away, things do loosen up a bit, but what is unique, to some degree, about this year is the number of injuries that have happened around the National Hockey League, and how paralyzing that can be for teams who are, at least, interested in talking about a trade.

Botterill was hopeful, I know, and talking to other sources who he may have been in contact with earlier this week, he was hoping to make one, maybe two trades within the next week to 10 days to two weeks. That tells you he's pretty active and eager."

Dreger on what Botterill would give up in a possible trade:

"I think that Botterill is open to just about anything. We have to be a little bit careful because when you talk about acquiring a top-six forward, and I think in a perfect scenario that might be two of the trades that Botterill is referring to in adding a top-six and adding a bottom-six. If you're adding a top-six forward, what are you willing to pay out to get that player? Are you taking pieces off your existing roster?"

"It's been believed all along that with [Zach] Bogosian healthy now, it would be a piece from the back end. [Marco] Scandella or someone else that acquires that piece. Now the sense I'm getting from my Buffalo sources is that Botterill likes the depth that he has defensively, and although he's not opposed to considering moving a piece from his blue line, maybe you'd prefer to do it elsewhere. Well, where is elsewhere? What player are we talking about if you're trying to acquire a top-six [forward]? If it's not a roster player, then it's gotta be a pretty damn good prospect or a prospect and a draft pick."

Dreger on the possibility of a trade and when one may happen:

"I think it's possible that he could make a couple of trades. At least that was the direction he was hoping to go in at the start of this week. If he's making a couple of trades, I think it's safe to assume that you're, at least, getting two players back, and maybe there are multiple pieces that can be in play. I want to defend Jason in all of this. This guy is working hard. He's trying to find and acquire help up front, especially up front, but he hasn't found the right mix yet. He hasn't found the right fit, and a lot of that has to do with the finances. But this is by no means through the lack of effort. I wouldn't be surprised if he is successful in the days ahead, be it days or the next 10 days to two weeks."

Gilmour clears waivers

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

November 22, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres placed defenseman John Gilmour on waivers on Friday for the purpose of assignment to the Rochester Americans in the American Hockey League.

When the clock struck noon on Saturday, no team decided to put a claim on Gilmour, allowing him to clear waivers and join the Amerks.

If Gilmour clears waivers on Saturday at 12 p.m., the 26-year-old will be assigned to the Amerks. Gilmour had appeared in just four games this season with the Sabres after making the 23-man roster out of training camp. In those games, Gilmour has been held pointless, while registering five shots on goal and a minus-2 rating.

With the Sabres activating defenseman Zach Bogosian from injured reserve on Thursday, the Sabres were in need of a move to create some roster space for the veteran blue liner. Bogosian is finally ready to return to action after undergoing offseason hip surgery and suffering a setback during the summer.

The Sabres' defensive group is back to full strength now, with the exception of Matt Hunwick, who will miss all of the 2019-20 season with a neck injury.

In another roster move made on Thursday, the Sabres have placed forward Tage Thompson on injured reserve as he will miss nearly 3-5 weeks with an upper-body injury.

The Sabres were off from practice on Friday, but will return to the ice on Saturday before Sunday's matchup with the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center. Faceoff is set for 5 p.m. with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 4 p.m. on our sister station, WBEN 930 AM.

How the ice time for the Sabres shook out with Zach Bogosian finally back

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

November 25, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. — If you had to guess who led the Sabres in ice time against the Florida Panthers on Sunday, who would it be? Bet it wouldn't have been the guy playing his first game since March 23.

Yes, Zach Bogosian was the minute mule in Buffalo's 5-2 victory. With 22:03 time on ice, he had the most minutes played by more than a minute above forwards Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart. Among defensemen — seven suited up — he bested usual leaders Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen by nearly three minutes, and his impact was noticeable.

"Very, very positive, of course, is the return of Bogosian," coach Ralph Krueger said. "I thought he played well and a lot of minutes. We weren't sure how he would feel, how it would go. In general, our ability to score today was strong. It was deserved after what happened in Boston (a 3-2 loss Thursday). I'm happy for the guys. It's a good start to the weekend."

Bogosian spent most of the game paired with Rasmus Dahlin and, like the other pairings against the Panthers, they had a hard time preventing shot attempts. Linus Ullmark had a brilliant start and made 43 saves. As it was, the Panthers out-attempted the Sabres 69-43 for the game and 55-39 at five-on-five. Per NaturalStatTrick.com, Bogosian and Dahlin had nine shot attempts for and 17 against (34.6 CF%) at five-on-five, worst among the three defense pairs, but the other two were also below 50 percent.

It's not ideal, but when you win 5-2 going away after playing a great game but losing in Boston, it can feel as if the universe corrected itself.

Bogosian's return prompted Krueger to go with 11 forwards and seven defensemen. That move against Minnesota last week didn't work out, and it could've backfired against Florida because Evan Rodrigues was injured during his first shift of the game and did not return. He won't play Monday against Tampa Bay, and the 11-7 setup could be in play again.

What's more interesting about that arrangement this time around was the first few shifts of the game pointed toward Krueger rotating the defensemen through while double-shifting wingers on a line with Johan Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons. With Bogosian in and Rodrigues leaving early, the plan was scrapped, and Brandon Montour settled in at forward for the remainder of the game. That turned out to be a stroke of luck, as he sprung Girgensons for the first of his two goals.

"The way we play, it's about finding your role in the group," Krueger said. "Sometimes D-men will be up in the front and forwards will be back and vice versa. It's an easy style of play that you can step into that, but we definitely thought it was better to go 11-7 today. It was our choice because of Bogosian coming in. Not sure how he was feeling and also knowing we had the back-to-back here to keep our D fresh and energized."

If there's one interesting takeaway from Bogosian's return, it's how it affected his defensive teammates' ice time. Here's how their ice time against Florida compared with their average ice time this season:

Defenseman	Sunday	Season
Rasmus Ristolainen	19:05	24:07
Jake McCabe	19:04	20:44
Rasmus Dahlin	18:13	19:21
Marco Scandella	20:37	16:54
Henri Jokiharju	16:33	16:40
Brandon Montour	11:25	19:27

Two notes here: Montour played at forward, and Scandella played 4:11 on the penalty kill against Florida, which boosted his ice time quite a bit. What's startling is how Bogosian's return dropped Ristolainen's minutes by just over five minutes compared with his season average. Ristolainen played more shifts than Bogosian and also played power play and some time short-handed. All it takes to skew things a little are a couple of long shifts, and

Bogosian had two of those in the second period, but that's still a big difference. Many complaints about the Sabres defense rest on reducing ice time for the top pairing, and those wishes were granted for a night.

Bogosian played 3:33 shorthanded with Scandella to help the Sabres' beleaguered penalty kill. The PK slipped up again in the third period, allowing a goal by Brett Connolly after a questionable tripping penalty by Henri Jokiharju, and Bogosian was on ice for that goal against. But the Sabres stopped Florida on three other opportunities in the game and limited them to three shots on goal on the power play overall. When it comes to killing penalties, there have been nibbles of success followed by letdowns that pile up so far this season. Bogosian's presence there allowed for some semblance of calm when the action ramped up.

"It was pretty nice to see '4' back out there running around, running into some guys on the other team," captain Eichel said. "It was great to see him. I know how hard he's worked in the offseason and everything he's done to get back to this point, some of the adversity he's went through. ... I thought he came in and brought a bit of leadership and a lot of intensity. I thought he made some great passes, finished his checks. It was just great to see him back out here. It was a good team win."

It's been an emotional road back to the ice for Bogosian after another hip surgery and a setback during the summer. That he was able to return to action and play in all situations (he got a spin on the power play late in the game, too) and even pull down a secondary assist on Eichel's second-period goal is encouraging. Last season feels like an eternity ago, but if Bogosian can return and play the way he did and provide a steadying hand by leaning into aspects of the game other defenders might struggle with, it can be a net positive for the Sabres.

Sabres trade Devante Stephens to Lightning for Matthew Spencer

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 24, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres traded Devante Stephens to the Tampa Bay Lightning tonight in exchange for Matthew Spencer, a swap of ECHL defensemen.

The Sabres have assigned Spencer, 22, to the Cincinnati Cyclones.

The Lightning drafted the 6-foot-2, 206-pound Spencer in the second round in 2015, 44th overall. He has split his three pro seasons between the AHL Syracuse Crunch and ECHL, compiling five goals and 25 points in 106 total games.

Spencer played two games with the Crunch this season and three with the ECHL Orlando Solar Bears.

The Sabres drafted the 6-foot-2, 188-pound Stephens in the fifth round in 2015, 122nd overall.

Stephens, 22, has spent most of his first three pro seasons in Cincinnati, registering eight goals and 35 points in 105 games. He enjoyed his most productive campaign in 2018-19, scoring eight goals and 25 points in 69 contests.

He also played seven games with the Rochester Americans.

John Gilmour clears waivers, assigned by Sabres to Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 23, 2019

Defenseman John Gilmour has cleared waivers and been assigned to the Rochester Americans, the Buffalo Sabres announced this afternoon.

Gilmour, 26, compiled zero points in four games with the Sabres. Following an impressive training camp, they scratched him 18 times, including the first 11 contests.

The Montreal native made his last appearance as a winger in Tuesday's 4-1 loss to the Minnesota Wild.

Defenseman Zach Bogosian's return from a hip injury made Gilmour expendable.

Gilmour scored 20 goals and 54 points in 70 games with the Hartford Wolf Pack last season.

The Amerks play a road game against the Binghamton Devils tonight.

Interim Sabres assistant Chris Taylor to resume role as Amerks coach

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 23, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres announced this morning interim assistant coach Chris Taylor will be resuming his regular role as the Rochester Americans' head coach next week.

Taylor, 47, has been filling in for assistant Don Granato, who returned to the Sabres on Wednesday after taking a leave of absence. Granato, 52, was hospitalized with severe pneumonia before the season.

The Amerks have started the season 11-3-1-2 under interim coach Gord Dineen, one of Taylor's assistants.

The Sabres play the Panthers on Sunday afternoon in Florida.

Sabres waive John Gilmour; Zach Bogosian likely set to return

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 23, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres waived defenseman John Gilmour today, meaning veteran Zach Bogosian is likely ready to play after missing the first 22 games this season.

Gilmour, 26, compiled zero points in four games. Following an impressive training camp, the Sabres scratched him 18 times, including the first 11 contests.

The Montreal native made his last appearance as a winger in Tuesday's 4-1 loss to the Minnesota Wild.

If Gilmour clears – given his torrid production in the AHL, someone might claim him – the Sabres would likely assign him to the Rochester Americans. Gilmour scored 20 goals and 54 points in 70 games with the Hartford Wolf Pack last season.

Gilmour signed a one-year, one-way contract worth \$700,000 on July 1.

Bogosian, 29, underwent hip surgery in April. The Massena native, who started practicing last week, hasn't played since March 28.

The reeling Sabres, who have today off, have lost three straight games and nine of the last 10 (1-7-2).

The Sabres play the Panthers on Sunday afternoon in Florida.

Girgensons leads the way with two goals in Sabres 5-2 win over Florida Panthers

By Adam Unger

WKBW

November 24, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres preserved a record above .500 with a win in the sunshine state. They beat the Florida Panthers 5-2 on Sunday night; Zemgus Girgensons led the way with two goals. The Sabres play the Lightning for the third time this year tomorrow night.

3 observations from Sunday's game:

11 + 7 = 18

The return of Zach Bogosian makes the Sabres' blue line even more muddled, with all eight defensemen being capable of regular minutes. Head coach Ralph Krueger went with eleven forwards and seven defensemen on Sunday night; he chose to do so in order to get a better look at the power play and the penalty kill and put out more options for those units. As a result, Curtis Lazar and Colin Miller were the odd men out of the lineup.

Brandon Montour was the odd defenseman out for most of the night; the Sabres paired Jake McCabe & Rasmus Ristolainen, Rasmus Dahlin & Bogosian, and Marco Scandella & Henri Jokiharju. After tonight's result, going with eleven and seven might be something we see more often from Ralph Krueger, but the individual personnel should continue to shift-- Colin Miller was left off the ice entirely on Sunday.

Quality over quantity

We hear language all the time-- "We need to get more pucks to the net." "You can't score if you don't shoot." The Sabres were outshot 45-25 in tonight's game. But the scoreboard didn't reflect that. Even though the Sabres didn't pepper Sam Montembeault, they got to the right areas of the ice, took advantage of chances when they had them, and held onto the puck instead of pressing the matter.

Of the Sabres' five goals tonight, one came right in front and the other three were fired from the slot. Of those four, three of them came on the rush. When the opportunities presented themselves, the Sabres took them and that's how they got the job done. By getting pucks to the right area and by getting bodies in front of the net, too.

Secondary Scoring

It's the weakness of this team. It's been beaten into the ground. Three of the goals tonight were scored by Jeff Skinner, Jack Eichel, and Victor Olofsson. The three of them and Sam Reinhart need more help. You can't bank on a two-goal night from a fourth liner on a game-by-game basis.

The loss of Marcus Johansson due to injury hurts severely-- that's what Johansson was brought in to do. But the other offseason addition at forward, Jimmy Vesey, still hasn't scored a goal this season. Casey Mittelstadt hasn't grown into what he was expected to be either. Unless going with eleven forwards and seven defensemen is the long-term answer, that depth at defense has to be sacrificed to bring in more scoring help.

Sabres assign defenseman John Gilmour to Rochester Americans

By Adam Unger

WKBW

November 22, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Defenseman John Gilmour has been assigned to the AHL's Rochester Americans. After the 24 hour waiver period on Saturday, Gilmour wasn't claimed by another NHL team.

Before joining Buffalo, Gilmour played only five NHL games with the New York Rangers in 2018-19.

Gilmour has played in four games this season, including an appearance at forward. In those four games, he has no points and five shots on goal.

Sabres Snap Skid, Defeat Florida 5-2

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

November 24, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres generated secondary scoring Sunday night as they snapped their two game losing streak, defeating the Florida Panthers 5-2.

Zemgus Girgensons led Buffalo on the night with two goals. Jack Eichel finished with a goal, his 14th of the season, and an assist. Jeff Skinner and Victor Olofsson each had a goal a piece.

Skinner opened up the scoring for the Sabres late in the first period with a tap in in front of the net off a pass from Eichel.

Less than two minutes later, Girgensons scored his first on the night off a pass from Brandon Montour.

Just under three minutes into the second period, Eichel lit the lamp with a stellar move in the Panther's zone.

Florida would get on the board near the midway mark of the period with a goal from Noel Acciari. But Buffalo would regain their three goal lead about five minutes later on a breakout. Sam Reinhart slipped a pass to Victor Olofsson who dinged his shot off the post and into the back of the net. The Sabres headed into the second intermission up 4-1.

The Panthers came out charging in the third period, and Brett Connolly would beat Linus Ullmark to cut Buffalo's lead to just two. However, Girgensons would all about put the game away with his second goal of the night just about ten minutes later.

Florida out-shot Buffalo 45-26 in the match-up. Ullmark finished the night with 43 saves. The Sabres conclude their three game road trip Monday, November 25th against Tampa Bay.

Sabres Fans Can Be Holiday Angels for Families in Need

By Andy Young

Spectrum News

November 22, 2019

Theresa DeLuca unpacks puzzles soon headed to the homes of local kids. It's how she spends her days, thinking of how to help people in need.

"When you see a need out there and you know you can do something about it, it's a tremendously heartwarming feeling," DeLuca said. "It makes a tremendous difference for the families."

DeLuca heads the adopt-a-family program for Child & Family Services in Buffalo. Through the generosity of others, they're able to bring happy holidays to underprivileged folks in the area, delivering gifts at Christmas time.

"There is just overwhelming joy, often to point of tears, because the families can't believe the generosity of the community and how willing they are to do something so special for their family and they don't even know them," DeLuca said.

Teamwork makes it happen, and Sabres fans can lend a hand through the club's partnership with Child and Family Services, and Spectrum News. The Sabres' Holiday Angels program allows fans to give gifts to selected families or individuals.

"What I've always enjoyed seeing how much the fans really seem to enjoy participating in it and it's that holiday spirit and the idea of going out and helping others and doing something for others," said Rich Jureller, Sabres vice president of community relations.

Last year, they were able to give presents to more than 300 families.

"And the nicest part is always after the fact to hear the impact that our fans made," Jureller said.

If you'd like to get involved, go online to sabres.com/holidayangels to register and let them know how you can help. You'll then receive an email with details like age, gender, clothing sizes and wish lists. If you choose to adopt a family, you'll shop for each member of the house — kids and adults alike.

You can drop off the unwrapped items the week of December 9-13 at Child and Family Services, 824 Delaware Avenue, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Or bring them on December 16 to Alumni Plaza outside KeyBank Center, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Beyond toys, clothes and gift cards, some families have even received beds, appliances and electronics over the years. It's another example of the City of Good Neighbors.

"We are so grateful to the Sabres and the Sabres fans because we know that any family we are working with that has a need, we're going to be able to meet that need," DeLuca said. "We know that this holiday season is going to be special to them."

Ullmark makes 43 saves, Sabres defeat Panthers to end skid at three

NHL.com

November 24, 2019

Linus Ullmark made 43 saves in a 5-2 win for the Buffalo Sabres against the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center on Sunday.

Jack Eichel had a goal and two assists and Zemgus Girgensons scored two goals for Buffalo (11-9-3), which ended a three-game losing streak.

Ullmark saved 16 of 17 shots in the third period.

"He's been doing it all year for us," Eichel said of the Sabres goalie. "Timely saves like that are so important. He's the backbone, him and [Carter Hutton], of this team. They play like that, they give us a chance to win every night. There's a lot of confidence in the group in front of them.

"It was awesome to see him. I thought he did a great job coming out, playing the puck. I thought he controlled the game well and he allowed us to kind of find our game."

Noel Acciari and Brett Connolly scored for Florida (12-7-5), which lost consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season. Sam Montembeault made 21 saves.

"Obviously we had our chances, but it's not good enough," Panthers captain Aleksander Barkov said. "We've got to play better. [Buffalo] didn't get that many shots, but they got a lot of good chances to score and they got a lot of 2-on-1s and breakaways. [We] left [Montembeault] by himself in the net. We just have to clean those [up] and play a lot better."

Jeff Skinner gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead when Eichel banked a shot from the bottom of the circle off Skinner's skate and into the net at 16:24 of the first period.

Girgensons made it 2-0 when his quick shot from the left circle hit Mark Pysyk's stick at 18:23.

Eichel scored at 3:42 of the second when he worked his way around Brian Boyle and beat Montembeault top corner, blocker side to give Buffalo a 3-0 lead.

Acciari capitalized after the Sabres were called for icing when a loose puck found its way to him below the hash marks to cut it to 3-1 at 9:29.

Victor Olofsson made it 4-1 at 14:41 with a quick shot from the left side off the rush.

"I think tonight's game is one of those games where you think you might be playing OK, but whether you're outshooting or out-chancing them and out-possessing them but you're still behind for reasons," Panthers coach Joel Quenneville said. "We've been playing with that danger all year long of giving up goals that don't even look like there is a chance it ends up in our net and all of a sudden you're down a goal, down two goals. We've got to make them earn them."

Connolly scored from the top of the left circle on the power play to make it 4-2 at 3:08 of the third period.

Girgensons pushed his own rebound past Montembeault at the side of the net at 13:25 for the 5-2 final.

"That's what we need, we need other lines scoring," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "I thought we had a real strong training day of practice [Saturday]. We had multiple meetings since the Boston game (a 3-2 loss on Thursday), and I never felt anybody lose spirit or lose confidence in what we're doing here. That's one of the reasons the group was able to step up today."

They said it

"It was good to see us put a full 60 [minutes] in. That's a really good team over there and obviously they can score with the best of them, so it was nice to that we got a lead and were able to play with it. I thought we did a good job of trying to find a way to get that next goal." -- Sabres captain Jack Eichel

"We've been scoring a lot of goals, so I think it was only a matter of time before we hit a little bit a rut in the season. It's not going to be perfect every night. We've been getting tested a little bit the last couple of games, but it's a solid group in here." -- Panthers forward Brett Connolly

Need to know

Buffalo won at Florida for the first time since Nov. 12, 2015, ending an 0-5-2 stretch. ... Sabres forward Evan Rodrigues left with an undisclosed injury after playing one shift in the first period. Krueger said he will not play against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday. ... Eichel has had a point streak of at least five or more games in each season since his NHL debut in 2015-16. ... All nine of Skinner's goals have been scored 5-on-5. ... It was the first time the Panthers scored fewer than three goals since Nov. 9 (2-1 loss at the New York Islanders).

What's next

Sabres: At the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday (7 p.m. ET; SUN, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

Panthers: At the Washington Capitals on Wednesday (7 p.m. ET; NBCSWA, FS-F, NHL.TV)

Sabres at Panthers preview

By Alain Poupart

NHL.com

November 24, 2019

The Game

Keith Yandle, who holds the longest current games played streak in the NHL, is expected to play for the Florida Panthers against the Buffalo Sabres at BB&T Center on Sunday.

The defenseman, who has played in 820 consecutive games, had dental work done Sunday after he played the third period of a 4-2 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday with a cage on his mask. Yandle was hit in the face by a puck in the first period and missed the second period. He has not missed a game since March 22, 2009 when he was with the Arizona Coyotes.

Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian could make his season debut after having offseason hip surgery. Bogosian practiced Saturday and Coach Ralph Krueger said he likely would play Sunday or against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday.

Buffalo has lost its past three games in regulation and is 1-7-2 in its past 10 games.

Players to watch

Sabres center Jack Eichel has five goals and two assists during his current four-game point streak.

Panthers defenseman Aaron Ekblad was involved in four consecutive goals (three goals, one assist) against the Anaheim Ducks on Thursday and Carolina on Saturday, the longest streak for a Panthers defenseman since Nov. 9-14, 1997 (Robert Svehla).

They said it

"We were extremely disappointed after how the result played out in Boston, but what can you see is the guys understand that we don't need to be disappointed with the process that was shown there and that we need to stick with that and you could feel that energy today." -- Sabres coach Ralph Krueger

"It's part of being a pro, back-to-backs all the time. We've got to find a way to be a little better (today). Ten percent [more] from each guy and we're going to be fine." -- Panthers defenseman Aaron Ekblad

Sabres projected lineup

Jimmy Vesey -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart
Jeff Skinner -- Evan Rodrigues -- Conor Sheary
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Curtis Lazar
Victor Olofsson -- Casey Mittelstadt -- Rasmus Asplund

Jake McCabe -- Rasmus Ristolainen
Colin Miller -- Brandon Montour
Rasmus Dahlin -- Zach Bogosian

Carter Hutton
Linus Ullmark

Scratched: Marco Scandella, Henri Jokiharju

Injured: Matt Hunwick (neck), Vladimir Sobotka (lower body), Marcus Johansson (upper body), Kyle Okposo (concussion), Tage Thompson (upper body)

Panthers projected lineup

Jonathan Huberdeau -- Aleksander Barkov -- Evgenii Dadonov
Frank Vatrano -- Vincent Trocheck -- Brett Connolly
Dominic Toninato -- Denis Malgin -- Mike Hoffman
Brian Boyle -- Noel Acciari -- Colton Sceviour

Keith Yandle -- Aaron Ekblad
Mark Pysyk -- Anton Stralman
Mike Matheson -- Josh Brown

Sam Montembeault
Sergei Bobrovsky

Scratched: Riley Stillman

Injured: Jayce Hawryluk (upper body), MacKenzie Weegar (upper body)

Status report

Bogosian, who was activated from injured reserve Thursday, skated on a pairing with Dahlin on Saturday. ... The Sabres assigned defenseman John Gilmour to Rochester of the American Hockey League on Saturday. ...

Montembeault is expected to start the second half of a back-to-back after Bobrovsky started each of the past six games. ... Stillman was recalled from Springfield of the American Hockey League on Sunday.

Stat pack

Buffalo, which defeated Florida 3-2 in a shootout Oct. 11, has not won consecutive games in the series in the past 32 games since a three-game winning streak from Feb. 10 to Oct. 20, 2011. ... Florida is averaging four goals per game in its 10 home games and hasn't scored fewer than three in any of them.

Trade market 'gummed up' by LTIR teams

TSN

November 22, 2019

Buffalo Sabres general manager Jason Botterill stated earlier this week that he was "actively looking" for forward help to spark his slumping team, but according to TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger, it's not easy to manoeuvre in the trade market at the moment.

"It's a moving target," Dreger said on Insider Trading Thursday. "Jason Botterill, the general manager of the Buffalo Sabres, has, in fact, made offers on forwards but the system is gummed up a little bit – the financial system of the National Hockey League. There are so many teams, 10-plus teams, who are working with LTIR players and that can get very, very problematic.

"There are some out there that believe that Botterill is feeling a sense of urgency and he'd like to make at least one, maybe even two, trades in the next week to two weeks. But he's got to find the right fit and the right match."

Including the Sabres, 11 teams - the Toronto Maple Leafs, Arizona Coyotes, Boston Bruins, Sabres, Dallas Stars, Calgary Flames, St. Louis Blues, Vancouver Canucks, Philadelphia Flyers, Washington Capitals and Detroit Red Wings - currently have players on long-term injured reserve providing cap relief, according to CapFriendly.

The Sabres lost their third straight game on Thursday, falling 3-2 to the Bruins and are now 1-7-1 in the month of November. However, Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger said after Thursday's loss he believed his team deserved a better result.

"It's really painful right now," Krueger said, "to digest a game where, in Boston, against for me the best team in the league at the moment, we played as good a first period as we could play, and dominated in every, every area of the game except for the score. You know coming in out of that period 1-1, the guys deserved more from that, and I thought they stuck with it and never gave up and kept playing well.

"Boston raised their game a touch, but we still dominated."

Buffalo has been outscored 11-4 over their past three games and has dropped to 10-9-3 on the season after losing just two games in regulation through the first month of the season.

The Buzzer: Another big night for Eichel; Neal's bounce-back continues

By Adam Gretz

NBC Sports

November 24, 2019

Three Stars

1. Jack Eichel, Buffalo Sabres. Having lost nine of their previous 10 games the Buffalo Sabres desperately need to start stacking some wins together. They got a big one on Sunday when they crushed the Florida Panthers, 5-2, to snap what had been a three-game losing streak. Eichel was one of the big stars in this one as he finished with a goal and two assists in the win. He now has 12 points over his past six games.

2. Sebastian Aho, Carolina Hurricanes. The Carolina Hurricanes' 2-0 win over the Detroit Red Wings was a one-goal game until the final minute when they added an empty-net goal, but it was never really that close. Carolina was in control from the very beginning and ended up nearly doubling up the Red Wings on the shot chart, holding them to just 19 shots on goal for the game. Aho was the big star for the Hurricanes by scoring the game-winning goal and adding an assist on Teuvo Teravainen's empty-net goal. After a slow start that saw him record just one point in his first six games, Aho now has 19 points in the 17 games since.

3. James Neal, Edmonton Oilers. His bounce-back year continues. He scored his 14th goal of the season — and 10th on the power play — in the Oilers' 4-3 shootout win over the Arizona Coyotes. Keep in mind this is the Oilers' 26th game of the season. He scored seven goals in 63 games a year ago for the Calgary Flames before they traded him this offseason. No player on the Flames currently has more than 11 goals so far this season. Sunday's win moved the Oilers into sole possession of first place in the Western Conference, moving them two points ahead of the St. Louis Blues.

Other notable performances from Sunday

James Reimer stopped all 19 shots he faced for the Hurricanes on Sunday to record first shutout of the season and his first as a member of the Hurricanes.

Zemgus Girgensons scored two goals for the Sabres in their win against Florida, while starting goalie Linus Ullmark stopped 43 out of 45 shots in net.

The Coyotes gained another point in the standings and defenseman Alex Goligoski played a big role in that with a three assist night.

Highlights of the Night

Eichel's goal on Sunday was a great example of how he can make opposing defenders look silly and how quick his shot is.

Factoids

Andrei Svechnikov is the second teenager in Hurricanes/Whalers history to have a point streak of at least eight games, joining Ron Francis from the franchise's Hartford days. [NHL PR]

Connor McDavid's point streak reaches 11 games, making it the second longest streak of his career. He also scored the game-winning goal for the Oilers in the shootout. [NHL PR]

The Sabres' win snapped a six-game losing streak in Florida against the Panthers. [NHL PR]

Scores

Buffalo Sabres 5, Florida Panthers 2

Carolina Hurricanes 2, Detroit Red Wings 0

Edmonton Oilers 4, Arizona Coyotes 3 (SO)

Jack Eichel, Sabres trying to get back on track

By Marisa Ingemi

Boston Herald

November 23, 2019

History repeats itself — at least for the Buffalo Sabres.

After getting off to a torrid start last season, the Sabres still ended up on the outside of the playoff picture looking in with a measly 76 points. This season, they began 9-2-1 before their schedule got tougher. After Thursday's loss in Boston, the Sabres had dropped 10 of 12.

The same old Sabres, perhaps. But Jack Eichel, their captain and leading scorer, is still hoping they turn things right back around. After all, they've already shown they have it in them — twice.

"I think we started well," said Eichel. "Obviously we've faced some adversity with a rough patch in this last little bit here but we just have to dig our way out of it."

Eichel, a Chelmsford native, had his best season a year ago with 82 points. That was growth from his 64 the season previous, and 56 and 57 the first two years of his career.

He earned the captaincy at 22 and has become the franchise player for a Sabres organization desperate for anything to latch onto.

In the offseason, he comes home.

"I work out in Middleton with Mike Boyle," he said, referencing the former NHL trainer who has several gyms around Massachusetts. Along with working out locally, he also spends time with family and friends when he's back home during the offseason.

That doesn't mean playing in front of a hometown audience has lost any luster for the center. He still has friends and family at every game, even if he doesn't get a chance to get out and explore his home state as much.

After all, it's still his home when he's not playing hockey.

"I live here in the summer, so I usually just go see my parents, have dinner," he said. "Relax a bit, I live here so no need to savor the couple hours I'm here. It's a short trip so just get in and try to focus on the game."

Eichel is far from the only local connection with the Sabres; his former Boston University linemate Evan Rodrigues centers the second line, while Melrose native Conor Sheary and Boston local — and Harvard product — Jimmy Vesey are also on the team.

It's a local affair for that entire group when they come to Boston, but Eichel's roots run plenty deep as the guy who brought BU to the national championship game as a Chelmsford product and went on to be the second overall selection in the draft after one year of college.

He may get to come home all the time, but he only gets to play at home with his family in the crowd twice a year.

That's always special.

"It's nice to play in front of a lot of family and friends," he said. "Playing in a building I came to a lot growing up, it never loses its shine."

Sabres, Pens heading down familiar paths

By Anthony Sambrotto

The Bradford Era

November 21, 2019

Here we go. Again.

You can pretty much set your calendars to it every season, but it doesn't make it any less noteworthy: the Pittsburgh Penguins are managing to stay competitive despite several key injuries while the Buffalo Sabres seem determined to continue on with their decade of futility.

The Sabres haven't made the playoffs since the 2010-2011 season. President Obama was still in his first term, Jack Eichel was in high school and Dan Bylsma was in just his second year as Pittsburgh's head coach.

Buffalo's top scorer in that postseason — Marc-Andre Gragnani — has been out of the league since 2014.

But forget about the five head coaches, last-place finishes and countless players that have rolled through Western New York since then for a minute.

This year was supposed to be different, and it certainly started off that way.

Under first-year head coach Ralph Krueger, Buffalo got off to a blazing hot 8-1-1 start. They were winning games on both ends of the ice, got contributions from some key free agent acquisitions, and won the close games they had found ways to lose in the past.

But when the first sniff of adversity hit, the Sabres folded. Injuries to role players Marcus Johansson, Vladimir Sobotka as well as several banged up defenseman was apparently too much for the Sabres to overcome.

Buffalo is 2-6-2 over its last 10 games and has lost to some of the NHL's worst teams in that span. But perhaps nothing better illustrates the differences in the makeup of the Penguins and Sabres than the Tuesday night's results.

The Penguins, going up against the New York Islanders (31 points through 19 games) without the likes of Sidney Crosby or Kris Letang, gave the Isles all they could handle. Pittsburgh took a team with the second best record in the Eastern Conference to overtime, before suffering a competitive 5-4 loss.

The Sabres, meanwhile, had a golden opportunity to snap out of their slump. Buffalo was hosting the Minnesota Wild, which had the worst record in the Western Conference before puck drop.

By now, you know how they did. An embarrassing 4-1 loss to a team that had just 16 points with the only highlight of the night coming via a second period fight that Eichel had with a Minnesota player.

Speaking of Eichel, anyone else feel horrible for the 23-year-old? Eichel, of course, was the Sabres' second overall pick in the 2015 NHL Draft. This floundering Buffalo franchise is all that he's known in his four and a half years in the league. The Sabres have finished no better than sixth in the Atlantic in that span — despite the best efforts of one of the league's most talented young players.

Eichel is far and away the best player on the team again this year.

He has 13 goals (five more than the next closest), 25 points (eight more than anyone else) and seems to be one of the few players on the team willing to put in maximum effort on a nightly basis.

And here lies another stark contrast between the two franchises. The Penguins have been without Sidney Crosby — one of the best players to ever lace up skates — for the better part of two weeks. What's happened in his absence? They've gone 5-2-3, stayed in contention in the Metropolitan and have had depth players step up without their captain.

Eichel tallies 3 points as Sabres bounce back in Florida

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 24, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. - In the aftermath of a loss in Boston on Thursday, Sabres coach Ralph Krueger focused on the need to move forward. The result was painful, he said, but the effort and structure with which they played would bring them victories more often than not.

The Sabres stayed positive through a spirited practice on Saturday, then followed through with another strong outing on Sunday. This time it brought them the result they wanted, a 5-2 win over the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center.

Jack Eichel contributed a goal and two assists for his fifth three-point outing of the season, already matching his career high. Zemgus Girgensons added a pair of goals, while Jeff Skinner and Victor Olofsson also found the back of the net.

Linus Ullmark made 43 saves.

"I had mentioned after the Boston game and this difficult stretch as of late that the spirit has been outstanding in the room," Krueger said. "I thought we had a real strong training day of practice yesterday.

"We had multiple meetings since the Boston game and I've never felt anybody lose spirit, lose confidence in what we're doing here, and that's one of the reasons the group was able to step up today and let us take that momentum forward into Tampa tomorrow night. Let's build on this win, for sure."

With Zach Bogosian making his season debut and another game awaiting them in Tampa on Monday, the Sabres chose to dress seven defensemen and 11 forwards. The plan going into the game was for Brandon Montour to fill in on the wing when necessary.

That plan changed when the team lost Evan Rodrigues to an injury on his first shift of the night. Montour moved to the wing full-time for the remainder of the game. In 10:16 with him on the ice at 5-on-5, shot attempts were 10-7 in favor of Buffalo.

Montour kept the game simple, looking to get involved in the cycle and create havoc near the net. The Sabres monitored their shift lengths and ended the night with relatively balanced ice times up front - a point of emphasis from Krueger prior to the game. Aside from Eichel and Sam Reinhart, both of whom exceeded 20 minutes, all of Buffalo's forwards played between 12 and 18 minutes.

Another point Krueger had emphasized was the element of surprise playing with 11 forwards could offer. All five Buffalo goals included a different combination of forwards on the ice.

"It's an interesting style to play on the road," Krueger said. "It's very unpredictable, although within our team it's predictable because everybody was maintaining the structure of the team and maintaining the principles of the team. I think for the opposition, it's difficult."

Buffalo had to balance the disadvantage of being down a man with the challenge of protecting its lead against a Florida team that had erased four-goal deficits on two occasions this month. Following first-period goals from Skinner and Girgensons, Eichel put the Sabres up 3-0 at 3:42 of the second.

Each time the Panthers began to chip away, the Sabres had a response. Noel Acciari's second-period goal was answered by a laser from Olofsson, who banked a shot off the far post streaking down the left side on the rush.

Brett Connolly tallied a power-play goal early in the third, only for Girgensons to jam home his second goal of the game with 6:35 remaining.

When the going got tough, Ullmark was crucial as a last line of defense. He set the tone with a breakaway save on Colton Sceviour with the game still 0-0 in the first period, then stood tall during a 17-save third period.

"That's a moment where we can get down and he stepped up," Krueger said. "I thought he played an outstanding game today, staying on the initial shots. We were battling out in front to take away second opportunities and second chances, but he was the king of the first shots tonight. Really, really happy with his performance."

Though the outcome was different than their game in Boston, the message in the locker room following the win was the same. It was another performance worth building on, with another divisional opponent awaiting them Monday.

"It's big to get a win here against a good hockey team and just build some confidence in our group that, if we do the right things over and over, we'll get rewarded," Eichel said.

"We have to be happy with the results, so we play another really good hockey team tomorrow night and just have to find a way to bring that same effort."

Bogosian's debut

The game marked the end of a long absence for Bogosian, who last played in Montreal on March 23 of last season. He missed all of training camp after undergoing offseason shoulder surgery and did not join his teammates for practice until Nov. 13.

Bogosian skated 22:03, including 3:33 on the penalty kill, and tallied an assist on Eichel's second-period goal.

"It was great to see him," Eichel said. "I know how hard he's worked in the offseason and everything he's done to get back to this point, some of the adversity he's went through. ... I thought he came in and brought a bit of leadership and a lot of intensity. I thought he made some great passes, finished his checks. It was just great to see him back out here. It was a good team win."

Up next

The Sabres conclude their road trip against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday. Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m., or you can listen to the game on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 7.

At the Horn: Sabres 5 - Panthers 2

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 24, 2019

Led by three points from Jack Eichel and a 43-save performance by Linus Ullmark, the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Florida Panthers 5-2 on Sunday at BB&T Center.

The Sabres got out to a 3-0 lead and held on to earn a pair of points in the second leg of their three-game road trip.

Ullmark made his third start in a row for Buffalo and Eichel picked up his eighth multi-point game of the season. It's the fifth time he's posted at least three points in a game this year.

With a goal and two assists, Eichel also extended his point streak to five games. He has 10 points (6+4) during the streak.

Zemgus Girgensons scored twice, his first two-goal game since Jan. 25, 2016. Jeff Skinner and Victor Olofsson also lit the lamp for Buffalo.

What happened

Buffalo potted two goals with within 1:59 of each other toward the end of the first period to take a 2-0 lead.

First, Eichel went coast to coast, threw the puck in front, and Skinner redirected it with 3:36 remaining in the first to open the scoring.

Then with 1:37 left, Girgensons scored his first of the game, beating Sam Montembeault with a wrist shot from the left faceoff dot. At that point, Buffalo had scored twice on five shots.

The Sabres went up 3-0 at the 3:42 mark of the second period when Eichel, in the midst of a cycle, circled around the Panthers zone and waited for some chaos in front of the net before unleashing a wrist shot for his 14th goal of the season.

Zach Bogosian, who made his season debut, picked up an assist for his first point of the season. Buffalo started the game with 11 forwards and seven defensemen in the game, but found themselves down to 10 forwards early on because Evan Rodrigues left on his first shift 1:55 into the game and did not return.

Ullmark had to sharp between the pipes as Florida increased their pressure after the third Buffalo goal. The Panthers finally got on the board when Noel Acciari scored in the slot with 10:31 remaining in the second after play drifted to the middle of the ice following a faceoff in the Buffalo zone.

About two minutes later, Aaron Ekblad hit the crossbar as Florida threatened to make it a one-goal game.

Olofsson give Buffalo some breathing room when he snapped home a wrist shot with 5:19 left in the second for his eighth goal of the season.

Florida scored again early in the third period. At the 3:08 mark, Brett Connolly scored a power-play goal on a quick one-timer from the point.

With 6:35 to play, Girgensons banged home a rebound for his second goal of the night for the final marker of the game.

What it means

The Sabres improve to 11-9-3 on the season and 5-6-1 on the road.

With 14 goals in 23 games so far this season, Eichel is already halfway to his previous best goal total (28), set in the 2018-19 season.

Eichel's output through 23 games currently has him on pace to finish the season with 49 goals and 103 points, which would be the highest goal and point totals by a Sabre since Pat LaFontaine (53+95) and Alexander Mogilny (76+51) in 1992-93.

All nine of Jeff Skinner's goals this season have come during 5-on-5 play. According to NaturalStatTrick.com, he is tied for sixth-most in the league entering play.

It's the third time Buffalo has scored at least five goals in a game and the first since Oct. 9.

Roll the highlight film

Olofsson's shot really is something.

Up next

The Sabres will be in Tampa on Monday to play the Lightning at Amalie Arena. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. with coverage on MSG starting at 6:30. Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will have the call on MSG and WGR 550.

Stay tuned to Sabres.com for news and notes throughout the day.

Bogosian to make season debut in Florida

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 24, 2019

SUNRISE, Fla. - Zach Bogosian will make his season debut for the Sabres when they visit the Florida Panthers tonight at BB&T Center.

Buffalo will dress seven defensemen and 11 forwards. Curtis Lazar will be scratched up front to make room for Bogosian in the lineup. Colin Miller will sit on defense.

It will be Bogosian's first game since March 23. The defenseman missed all of training camp as he recovered from offseason hip surgery. He skated on his own for roughly a month prior to joining the team for practice on Nov. 13.

"It's been a long time. The team is here to support him," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "I think going with seven D helps Zach to know there's support and he can find his rhythm. We'll see how much he can handle, and we'll take it a shift at a time.

"He'll be a huge addition to our penalty killing. He's already a big addition as a person in the room and it's clear Zach Bogosian will be an important part of our future here."

In addition to providing flexibility to ease Bogosian's transition, Krueger said the decision to dress seven defensemen was made with consideration to potential looks on the power play and penalty kill. At 5-on-5, it can present matchup difficulties for the opposing team.

"It will be more about us creating pace through that and having good, quick line changes, using everybody," he said. "It's not about top-minute guys getting more minutes. It's more about spreading out.

"... I think it's quite a creative way to play in a system like ours where it's pretty clear what you have to do, no matter who you're on the ice with, whether you're right, left or center. It doesn't mean as much as some of the more structured formations here in the league, and I think also for the D there's a certain awareness that when you have different linemates, different D pairs that principles and concepts are more important, really, than thinking outside the box. We need a good team game today and we feel this will set us up for it."

Linus Ullmark will start in net. He made 41 saves in the first meeting between the teams this season, a 3-2 shootout victory in Buffalo on Oct. 11.

Scouting the Panthers

Florida is coming off a 4-2 road loss to Carolina on Saturday. It snapped a three-game winning streak for the Panthers, who rank second in the Atlantic Division with 29 points.

The Panthers rank second in the NHL with an average of 3.61 goals per game, though their average of 3.52 goals against is the third-highest mark in the league.

Jonathan Huberdeau leads Florida with 30 points (10+20) in 23 games. Aleksander Barkov is right behind him at 29 (7+22), and both rank in the NHL's top 11.

Tune in

Coverage on MSG begins at 4:30 p.m., or you can listen live on WGR 550. The puck drops at 5.

Bogosian expected to return during road trip

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 23, 2019

CORAL SPRINGS, Fla. - Zach Bogosian is expected to return to the lineup for the Sabres in one of their next two games, coach Ralph Krueger announced Saturday. The team's road trip continues against the Florida Panthers Sunday and concludes in Tampa on Monday.

Bogosian missed all of training camp as he recovered from offseason hip surgery. He skated for roughly a month prior to joining the team for practice on Nov. 13.

"It's nice to be around the group," Bogosian said following practice on Saturday. "I spent a lot of time at home. I love my family, but it was time to get back to work. It's been fun."

The Sabres practiced with eight defensemen Saturday after assigning John Gilmour to Rochester. Bogosian skated on a pair with Rasmus Dahlin, though Krueger affirmed that the pairs might not necessarily reflect what we see against the Panthers on Sunday.

"We're expecting to bring him in this weekend," Krueger said. "We just played with some looks today in practice, but we'll make the final decision after assessing today's practice and make that call tomorrow."

At full health, Buffalo's current depth on defense means two players are being scratched on a nightly basis. Colin Miller sat against the Bruins on Thursday; Marco Scandella was out the game prior.

Krueger said players were prepared for these scenarios in conversations during camp and stressed the need for all eight defensemen moving forward as the Sabres navigate a condensed schedule. Their game in Florida opens a stretch of five contests in seven days.

"It's part of being a team is that you're not always going to like the role you have, the ice time you get, or if you're scratched," Krueger said. "But how do you react to that? How do you still support your teammates?"

"So far, we've seen nothing but support from players who haven't been called to play in a game and are watching from the outside. They're the first guys in the room to greet the guys coming off the ice at the end of the game. We need to continue with that spirit."

Granato to return to the bench in Florida

With assistant coach Don Granato ready to resume his role on the Buffalo bench Sunday, Chris Taylor has returned to Rochester and will continue as head coach of the Amerks next week.

Taylor worked as an assistant on Krueger's staff while Granato recovered from a bout with severe pneumonia that hospitalized him in early October.

"I mean, Chris is just an outstanding coach and friend now," Krueger said. "Just really filled into a difficult situation here so strongly. Boy, does it ever help us moving forward to have that connection with Chris now that he's in Rochester and we're interacting regularly."

"I was able to learn a lot from him having him at my side. I love having coaches there that challenge you, that ask hard questions, that speak the truth and he does nothing but that. We enjoyed every minute together and we're connected still, just in different roles in the organization."

Granato, meanwhile, offered perspective on how the experience changed him. He was told by doctors at Buffalo General Hospital he would have minutes to live unless they sedated him, then woke up two days later and began a long road to recovery.

"It enhances your perspective," Granato said. "It gives you more clarity on, for me, more clarity on doing what I love every day. I'm not doing a nine to five job that I look forward to having my weekend at home. When you

aren't at the rink and you cannot go to the rink and work with players and even watch video, you realize how much you like and miss it. So, it's a great perspective on that."

In the meantime, Granato offered insights from afar. He credited Krueger and general manager Jason Botterill with still finding ways to keep him involved while not pushing to expedite his return.

"That process was really great for me to feel like I still mattered and I still could contribute something," he said. "But, for those two guys, at your own pace. I never felt pushed and even when I felt that I was comfortable to come back, it was me pushing. I am one hundred percent, I am ready to go."

Saturday's practice

The Sabres held an up-tempo, high energy session in the wake of their 3-2 loss in Boston. Krueger said after that game that he was pleased with how the team played in that game despite the result, a message he reiterated on Saturday.

"The way the group is processing pain is remarkable," he said. "I mean, we were extremely disappointed with how the result played out in Boston, but what you can see is the guys understand that we don't need to be disappointed with the process that was shown there and that we need to stick with that. You could feel that energy here today."

Marcus Johansson remained absent with his upper-body injury. Here's how the lines and pairs looked:

13 Jimmy Vesey - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
53 Jeff Skinner - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 43 Conor Sheary
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 27 Curtis Lazar
37 Casey Mittelstadt - 74 Rasmus Asplund - 68 Victor Olofsson

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 4 Zach Bogosian
33 Colin Miller - 62 Brandon Montour
6 Marco Scandella - 10 Henri Jokiharju

40 Carter Hutton
35 Linus Ullmark

Sabres assign Gilmour to Rochester

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 23, 2019

Defenseman John Gilmour cleared waivers and has been assigned to Rochester, the Sabres announced Saturday.

Gilmour was named to the AHL's First All-Star Team last season after finishing among the league's top 10 defenseman in goals (2nd, 20), assists (8th, 34), points (2nd, 54), and game-winning goals (2nd, 5). He has recorded 105 points (32+73) in 190 career AHL contests.

The defenseman has appeared in four games with the Sabres this season, recording five shots and averaging 17:03 of ice time.

The Amerks play tonight in Binghamton and then host the Toronto Marlies next Friday.

Taylor to resume role as head coach in Rochester

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

November 23, 2019

Chris Taylor is returning to the Rochester Americans and will resume his role as head coach next week, the Sabres announced Saturday.

Taylor has filled in as an assistant on Ralph Krueger's staff in Buffalo in the absence of Don Granato, who was recovering from a case of severe pneumonia. Granato rejoined the team for practice on Wednesday and watched Thursday's game in Boston from the coaches' booth.

"He's been watching all the games lately and we wanted to get him 100 percent, not 90, not 80, not 70 - he had to be 100," Krueger said Thursday. "He's been really able to watch for a while so it's a fresh perspective coming in now to the coach's room and his experience will definitely help us in this situation."

The Amerks are 11-3-1-2 this season, tied atop the North Division with 25 points. They play in Binghamton tonight, then host the Toronto Marlies on Friday.

Sabres place Gilmour on waivers

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 22, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres announced today that the team has placed defenseman John Gilmour on waivers.

Gilmour has played in four games for Buffalo this season, recording five shots and averaging 17:03 of ice time per game.

He signed with the Sabres as a free agent on July 1. Gilmour spent the last three seasons as a member of the New York Rangers' organization. He was named to the 2018-19 AHL First All-Star Team after finishing the season among the AHL's top 10 defensemen in goals (2nd, 20), assists (8th, 34), points (2nd, 54) and game-winning goals (2nd, 5). He has recorded 105 points (32+73) in 190 career AHL games and five points (2+3) in 37 NHL contests.

Including Gilmour, Buffalo has nine defensemen on the roster. Zach Bogosian, who had offseason hip surgery, is close to making his season debut.

The Sabres are scheduled to practice on Saturday ahead of their game on Sunday against the Florida Panthers at BB&T Center. Faceoff is scheduled for 5 p.m. with the Buick Game Night pregame show starting at 4:30 on MSG.