



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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NHL rookie scoring leader, Buffalo's Olofsson, out 5-6 weeks

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

January 3, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres forward and the NHL's rookie scoring leader Victor Olofsson will miss between five and six weeks with a lower body injury.

The Sabres provided the update Friday, a day after Olofsson was hurt during the third period of Buffalo's 3-2 overtime win over Edmonton. Upon making a pass to set up Sam Reinhart's goal, Olofsson was untouched when he came up limping behind the Oilers' net.

He currently leads league rookies and ranks second among Buffalo players with 16 goals and 35 points in 42 games.

Olofsson was named the NHL's rookie of the month for December after scoring six goals for 14 points in 14 games.

The Sabres, who host Florida on Saturday, recalled forward Scott Wilson from the minors. Buffalo is already without forward Jeff Skinner, who is expected to miss another three weeks with an upper body injury.

Earlier this season, Olofsson set an NHL record by having his first seven career goals scored on the power play.

At 24, Olofsson has been a late-bloomer after being selected by Buffalo in the seventh round of the 2014 draft. He spent the next four seasons playing in his native Sweden, before signing with the Sabres and playing in Rochester last year.

Michael Frolik ready for fresh start with Sabres after 'tough year' in Calgary

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 3, 2020

As Michael Frolik went through the process of securing a work visa Friday morning, the 31-year-old pondered where he could skate in Calgary until he's cleared to travel to Buffalo.

Frolik, a 12-year veteran of the National Hockey League, wants to be ready for what he called a "fresh start." The former Stanley Cup champion had grown frustrated with his role on the Calgary Flames this season and welcomed the trade Thursday that sent him to the Sabres in exchange for a fourth-round draft pick.

Frolik is averaging a career-low 11:56 of ice time in 38 games and had been scratched the final two games before the holiday break. During a conference call Friday, Frolik declined to reveal whether he requested a trade out of Calgary.

However, the pending unrestricted free agent expressed excitement for joining the Sabres and displeasure with his role on the Flames.

"Obviously frustrated, right?" Frolik, who turns 32 next month and counts \$4.3 million against the salary cap, acknowledged. "When things don't go well it's not easy, and you're frustrated. I felt that my time here in Calgary probably was getting to be over, and I think it was just time to move on. ... I enjoyed my time here and just want to appreciate what they did for me. Obviously it didn't work out in the end, but I have nothing but great things to say about Calgary. It's been tough the last couple of weeks, but I hope it's a good change."

Neither Frolik nor the Sabres are sure when he will be able to join the team, though General Manager Jason Botterill estimated the newly-acquired forward could arrive in Buffalo Monday or Tuesday. Coach Ralph Krueger told reporters following practice Friday he will make a decision on role and playing time once Frolik joins the team.

The likelihood of a prominent role increased for Frolik hours after the trade, when rookie winger Victor Olofsson suffered a lower-body injury that will keep him out of the Sabres' lineup for the next five to six weeks.

Though Rasmus Asplund is likely to receive a first-line audition Saturday against the Florida Panthers, Frolik is the sort of defensively responsible forward the Sabres prefer to use with Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

"He's just a very smart player in the way he manages his game on both sides of the puck," Krueger said of Frolik. "He can make a play with the puck, but without it, he's very strong in his decisions as far as positional play is concerned and being responsible for the team. He'll be an excellent penalty killer for us and also somebody who can mentor this group in managing leads and dealing with in-game situations that we're still learning to get better at that, in the end, decide the scores."

Since the start of the 2015-16 season, Frolik ranked second among all Flames forwards in ice time on the penalty kill, an area in which the Sabres ranked 30th in the NHL entering Friday. Additionally, Calgary's 54.79 percent 5-on-5 shot-differential with Frolik on the ice during that span also ranked second among the team's forwards behind Matthew Tkachuk.

Frolik scored 58 regular-season goals while averaging 15:54 of ice time during his first four years with the Flames, only to have his role reduced entering the final season of his contract. He had five goals among 10 points with a minus-10 rating prior to the trade.

Comparatively, Frolik had 19 goals among 42 points while averaging 17:30 for the Winnipeg Jets in 2014-15, which earned him a five-year contract with the Flames.

"It's tough to say right now," Frolik said when asked what role he envisioned for himself in Buffalo. "New guy coming in. Being (in the Western Conference) for a long time, I don't know much about the East, but I think going out there and I just heard great things about their group and about the coaching staff. I'm just really

looking to go there and be myself, and we'll see how it plays out. Obviously looking forward to getting more ice time than I was getting here in Calgary and prove to myself that I can be that player I used to be."

The Sabres are not expecting Frolik to contribute offensively at the rate of a first-line forward, though he scored 42 goals over his first two NHL seasons with the Florida Panthers from 2008-10. Krueger wants the veteran to support the team's younger players by providing insight and leadership on how to manage close games, but he also expressed confidence in Frolik's ability to complement any line.

Frolik has scored 15 or more goals seven times in his career, and he provides the Sabres with additional playoff experience. He had three goals among 10 points in the Chicago Blackhawks' run to the Stanley Cup in 2012-13. Frolik has appeared in 47 postseason games throughout his career and produced last season, yet a lesser role made an early exit from Calgary seem inevitable.

"It's been a tough year here," Frolik said. "When I was here the years before I always, being on that second line with (Tkachuk) and (Mikael Backlund) here, the last few months it didn't play that way. The ice time was real low, and it's tough to produce when the ice time is not there, and you're not on the power play or PK. Your ice time is eight, 10 minutes, it's not easy to produce, but I feel like lately my game was good. Looking forward to a new opportunity and get the ice time a little bit higher, and hopefully it can help the team. That's what I'm looking for."

Wilson arrives

The Sabres recalled forward Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans ahead of a brief practice Friday in KeyBank Center. Wilson, 27, had six goals among 14 points in 22 games for the Amerks, though he missed time because of injury.

A Stanley Cup champion with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2016-17, Wilson has been unable to secure a full-time role with the Sabres since being acquired from the Detroit Red Wings in December 2017. He recorded three assists in 15 games with the team after missing the first three months of last season.

"I think the biggest thing is dealing with that, not even developing as a player," Wilson said when asked about what he's learned. "As a person, dealing with those things in the right way. You can kind of go sideways and feel sorry for yourself, but at the same time, I've learned everybody goes through that stuff. At this point, I'm just glad to be healthy and ready to go."

Forward Dalton Smith practiced with the Sabres on Friday after clearing waivers.

Amerks all-stars

Rochester Americans defenseman Lawrence Pilut and goalie Jonas Johansson were selected to represent the North Division at the American Hockey League All-Star Classic in Ontario, Calif., on Jan. 26-27.

Pilut, who was selected to participate in the game last season, entered Friday with 20 points in 27 games. The 24-year-old was tied for 10th among all AHL defensemen with 16 assists, and he had 14 points over his previous 19 games dating back to Nov. 15.

Johansson, 24, had a 10-2-2 record, including two shutouts, and he ranked second in the AHL in goals-against average (2.00) and save percentage (.933). Amerks coach Chris Taylor will be behind the bench for the North Division, and former Sabres forward Matt Moulson, now with the Hershey Bears, will captain the Atlantic Division.

New Sabres forward Michael Frolik eager for fresh start

The Buffalo News

January 3, 2020

New Sabres forward Michael Frolik emphasized he's looking for a fresh start in coming to Buffalo following five-plus seasons with the Calgary Flames.

Frolik was acquired Thursday for a fourth-round pick that the Sabres had acquired from Montreal for Marco Scandella.

The News has confirmed Darren Dreger's report that Frolik waived his partial no trade clause to come to Buffalo. Frolik had 10 teams on the list.

When he joins the Sabres remains unclear, though, it is expected to be early next week after work visa issues are resolved.

"I'm really looking for a new opportunity there," Frolik said on a conference call Friday morning. "I'm really excited. It's a fresh start for me there."

Frolik, 31, has five goals and five assists in 38 games for the Flames this season. He has scored at least 15 goals in five of the last six seasons and put together back-to-back campaigns of 21 goals with Florida in 2008-09 and 2009-10. He was a member of Chicago's 2013 Stanley Cup championship team.

"Obviously I'm looking forward to getting more ice time than I was getting here in Calgary and prove to myself that I can be that player I used to be," Frolik said.

Some other items from the call:

On Sabres coach Ralph Krueger: "I definitely know who Krueger is. I've heard great things about him, and I'm looking forward to playing for him."

On killing penalties: "I've been killing penalties for quite a bit, and I think I can bring some help here."

As for the reaction in Calgary, Flames GM Brad Treliving called Frolik a "consummate professional."

"This is a guy who came to work every day and did his job, was an excellent teammate, always had a smile on his face, a great guy to talk to," Treliving told reporters.

"And as a young player, if you want to know how to go about your business, just look at Michael Frolik. He looked after himself. He worked every time he was on the ice. He never would cheat you on effort. And he's just a pleasure to be around. As I said to Michael when I talked to him, he's one of the best guys I've had the pleasure of dealing with.

"Since we signed him five years ago, I think he's given us everything that we had hoped for in his time here, and we wish him the best as he moves on."

Sabres forced to adjust again after losing Victor Olofsson for five to six weeks

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 3, 2020

As the Sabres await the arrival of newly acquired forward Michael Frolik, coach Ralph Krueger will have to decide how he's going to adjust to losing another top offensive player.

Victor Olofsson, who leads all National Hockey League rookies in goals (16) and points (35), will miss the next five to six weeks with a lower-body injury suffered Thursday night during a 3-2 overtime win over the Edmonton Oilers in KeyBank Center.

Olofsson, 24, passed the puck to Sam Reinhart on what became the tying goal in the third period and immediately fell backwards when the blade of his left skate got stuck in a divot on the ice. The Sabres recalled forward Scott Wilson from Rochester ahead of a brief practice Friday, however, it's unclear who will be responsible for filling the void on the team's top forward line Saturday against the Florida Panthers.

The Sabres already were without forwards Tage Thompson, Vladimir Sobotka and Jeff Skinner, who is out three to four weeks with an upper-body injury suffered Dec. 27 against the Boston Bruins.

"It's what coaches need to do, is you look at what you have and not what you don't have," Krueger said of losing Olofsson. "You just work with that group and that's what experience does for that part of your brain. There's no room for emotion in this situation.

"You need to put the best possible group together to compete against Florida tomorrow and deal with Victor as a separate issue until he returns, and he will be gone for a few weeks now. We know that for sure and, of course, he has been a very important catalyst to the good things that are happening here in the team and we need to fill that hole. ... It's definitely a challenging situation, but we'll pull together and fill that hole."

Krueger does not have a ready-made replacement for Olofsson, who ignited the Sabres' power play during their 9-2-2 October and formed instant chemistry with Reinhart and Jack Eichel. Olofsson finished Thursday with 15 points, including six goals, in his last 15 games.

Olofsson's possible replacement, at least against the Panthers, could be his former linemate in Rochester, Rasmus Asplund. Asplund, 22, skated with Reinhart and Eichel for the duration of the third period against the Oilers and finished with zero shots on goal in 13:15 of ice time. Asplund, who has played in 24 consecutive games since being recalled from the Amerks in November, logged fewer than 10 minutes in each of the Sabres' previous five games.

Krueger explained to reporters following practice Friday that he wants a responsible two-way player such as Asplund to skate alongside Eichel and Reinhart since that could give the Sabres' top-two active goal scorers more freedom on the ice.

"There's a defensive component to that position," Krueger said of Asplund. "Releasing Jack and Sam with the confidence that who's playing with them is going to cover, too, and they cover for each other. What we're seeing in Asplund's game is that two-way awareness and the ability, very quickly, to also involve himself in the offense. He's still growing daily in front of our eyes here, but we really enjoyed seeing what we did in the end stretch of the game yesterday with him."

Asplund has one goal among three points with the Sabres after starting the season in Rochester. He had 11 goals among 49 points in his first 88 regular-season games with the Amerks dating back to the start of 2018-19.

There will be lineup mystery leading up to the 1 p.m. puck drop Saturday. Krueger threw together make-shift forward lines in practice Friday since Eichel was given the day off, and the Sabres won't hold a morning skate ahead of their game against the Panthers. They didn't practice special teams.

The Sabres must find a power-play replacement for Olofsson, who has 14 points on the man advantage. Krueger turned to Rasmus Ristolainen as a net-front presence on the top power-play unit Thursday night.

The Sabres' power play ranks 30th out of 31 NHL teams since Nov. 1 and is amid an 0-for-16 slump over its past six games. Entering Thursday, Olofsson's goal and point totals had him on pace for the best offensive season by a Sabres rookie in decades. He was on pace for the most goals by a Sabres rookie since Ray Sheppard's 38 in 1987-88 and the third-most points in franchise history, trailing only Rick Martin (74 in 1971-72) and Gilbert Perreault (72 on 1970-71).

Wingers Jimmy Vesey and Conor Sheary could be candidates to replace Olofsson, as well as Frolik, who has 158 regular-season goals during his 12-year NHL career. Frolik, a 31-year-old acquired from the Calgary Flames on Thursday night, may not arrive until early next week as he works through the visa process.

For now, the first audition likely will go to Asplund.

"I know I can bring a lot of offensive points to this league," Asplund said. "I just need to find my path there. That's what I'm trying to figure out."

Sabres recall forward Scott Wilson from Rochester

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 3, 2020

With newly-acquired forward Michael Frolik not expected to arrive in Buffalo until early next week and Victor Olofsson out five-to-six weeks, the Sabres recalled Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans on Friday morning.

Wilson, a 27-year-old winger, had six goals among 14 points in 22 games with the Amerks, and he missed time this season because of injury. The Sabres were down to 12 active forwards before Victor Olofsson suffered a lower-body injury in the third period of their 3-2 overtime win over the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday night.

Wilson has 187 regular-season games of National Hockey League experience, most recently appearing in 15 games with the Sabres last season. He has 19 goals among 49 regular-season points in his career and appeared in 20 games during the Pittsburgh Penguins' run to the Stanley Cup in 2016-17.

The Sabres acquired Wilson from the Detroit Red Wings in December 2017 for a fifth-round draft pick. Injuries have prevented him from securing a full-time spot on Buffalo's roster. He appeared in only 32 games between the Sabres and Amerks last season, totaling three assists in 15 games with Buffalo. Wilson is a pending unrestricted free agent with a \$1.05 million salary cap hit.

The Sabres are dealing without having Olofsson and Skinner

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 3, 2020

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - With Victor Olofsson out five-to-six weeks with a lower-body injury and Jeff Skinner out two-to-three more weeks with an upper-body injury, the goal-challenged Sabres are going to be challenged more. Including the injured Tage Thompson, five forwards that were in Rochester are up with the big club. Ralph Krueger said, "You look at what you have, not what don't have and there's no room for emotion. You need to put the best possible group together to compete against Florida and deal with Victor as a separate issue until he returns."

Now that doesn't mean the loss won't be felt. Krueger said, "Of course he's been a very important catalyst to the good things that are happening here and we need to fill that hole."

"Guys need to step up as we had the same situation with Jeff, so it's definitely a challenging situation, but we'll pull together and fill that hole."

Rasmus Asplund played all season on a line with Olofsson in Rochester, so they're very good friends. Asplund said they can't sit around and feel sorry for themselves, "We just have to keep going. We're on the right path here and you always will have injuries in a season and a strong group just keeps going."

Olofsson hit a rut on the ice and went down. That leads to the question, is the ice in the arena bad? Krueger said no, "Ruts do develop in the course of play and that was a real freaky one where he caught an edge in one of those ruts and it's a low mathematical situation. So we're not blaming that on the ice at all."

Asplund got the first chance on Thursday to fill in on Jack Eichel's line. Krueger said, "There's a defensive component to that position releasing Jack and Sam with the confidence of who's playing with them will cover too, and what we're seeing in Asplund's game is that two-way awareness."

Asplund said he doesn't change his game just because he's playing with Eichel, "I'm just going to try to bring my game to Jack and Sam and see what I can do for those guys."

In 24 games with the Sabres, Asplund has one goal and two assists. He's always been a player that has been strong at both ends of the ice and he's fully confident his offensive game will come in the NHL, "I'm just trying to find my path here and trying to get used to the NHL level, but I know I can bring a lot of offense and points to this league."

Jack Eichel didn't practice on Friday. Krueger called it a maintenance day because of the minutes Eichel has played lately. On Thursday, Eichel played 23:56, while on Tuesday it was 25:13.

Michael Frolik said he is working on his visa problems, but with the weekend coming up, feels it's going to take a couple of days. Obviously he won't play this Saturday against Florida.

Dalton Smith cleared waivers, but did practice with the team. He also changed his number to 77 so Frolik can have 67.

Join Brian Koziol Saturday at noon for the pregame on WBEN News Radio 930. Joining him will be Krueger, Asplund and Scott Wilson.

Friday's lines:

Asplund - Rodrigues - Reinhart

Vesey - Johansson - Sheary

Girgensons - Larsson - Okposo

Wilson - Lazar - Smith

Olofsson out 5-6 weeks with a lower-body injury

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 3, 2020

The injury news surrounding Buffalo Sabres forward Victor Olofsson may not be as worse as originally thought, but the team will still miss the rookie winger for 5-6 weeks with a lower-body injury.

Olofsson suffered the injury in the third period of Thursday night's 3-2 overtime win over the Edmonton Oilers at KeyBank Center on the game-tying goal by Sam Reinhart. The Buffalo forward went to turn and make a pass to the point to defenseman Zach Bogosian when it appeared that he hit a rut in the ice and lost his balance. Upon replay, it looked like Olofsson got his right leg caught underneath his body, which caused his leg to bend in an awkward way.

According to the timeline given by the Sabres, the earliest that Olofsson would be back on the ice for game action would be on Friday, Feb. 7 against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden.

The 24-year-old has put up some excellent numbers in his rookie season with 16 goals and 19 assists for 35 points in 42 games played. Olofsson leads all rookies in both goals and points, and his 19 assists ranks third behind Colorado Avalanche defenseman Cale Makar and Vancouver Canucks defenseman Quinn Hughes. All three of those players are the likely front-runners for the Calder Trophy this season as the NHL's top rookie.

The Sabres are back to game action on Saturday afternoon against the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center for '90s Day. Faceoff is set for 1 p.m. on our sister station, WBEN News Radio 930 AM with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show getting started at noon with Brian Koziol from the arena.

Frolik looking forward to a fresh start with the Sabres

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 3, 2020

With some much needed help for some forward depth moving forward, the Buffalo Sabres made a pair of moves on Thursday evening that eventually landed the team forward Michael Frolik from the Calgary Flames.

Buffalo first moved defenseman Marco Scandella to the Montreal Canadiens in exchange for a fourth round pick in the 2020 NHL Draft that was originally owned by the San Jose Sharks. The Sabres then flipped that pick to the Flames in order to acquire Frolik, who agreed to waive his no trade clause to come to Buffalo.

After parts of five seasons in Calgary, Frolik is joining his fifth organization in the National Hockey League after starting off as a rookie in the 2008-09 season with the Florida Panthers. In his five years with the Flames, the 31-year-old scored 63 goals and 82 assists for 145 points.

This season got off to a tough start for Frolik, as he has only scored five goals and registered five assists for 10 points in 38 games. His ice time had also gone down in Calgary as his role diminished to being more of a fourth line player.

"I wasn't really happy with my role [in Calgary]," Frolik said during a conference call on Friday with the Buffalo media. "I'm really looking forward to the new opportunity there, and I'm really excited. It's a fresh start for me, and I'm really excited. Looking forward to meet the guys and meet the group, and hopefully it happens sooner than later."

Frolik's name was one that had been talked about in the past with being on the market for other teams to inquire about. Even with the struggles this season in Calgary, Frolik said he had never asked for a trade or to be moved out the Flames organization.

"I wasn't happy with my situation here lately," he said. "All I want to say is thank you to the Calgary Flames and what they did here for me. We had a great time here with the family. I don't really want to go into [asking for any type of trade], but I'm just happy for a new opportunity in Buffalo and I'm really excited."

Over the course of his 831 game NHL career, Frolik has scored 158 goals and picked up 380 points. He also has a Stanley Cup to his name while playing with the Chicago Blackhawks back in the lockout-shortened 2012-13 season.

Over the course of his career, Frolik has been a very solid two-way option on the wing with the ability to chip in on the power play, while really making his presence known on the penalty kill.

The Buffalo Sabres have struggled all season on the penalty kill, currently ranking 28th in the NHL with a percentage of 74.0%. Adding a player like Frolik may help with being able to improve on those stats and turn things around for that unit.

"I've been killing penalties for quite a bit and hopefully I can bring some experience in that department," Frolik said. "Even back in my time in Chicago, I played a key part with the P.K. [penalty kill] and hopefully I can help [in Buffalo] for sure."

It has been a while since Frolik has played in the Eastern Conference. He started his career in Florida, but then has played in the Western Conference since with the Blackhawks, Winnipeg Jets, and the Flames.

Frolik is unsure how he will fit in right away with the Sabres, but he is looking forward to getting to work with the Sabres and trying to get back to the level of game that he had played earlier in his career.

"I'm the new guy coming in, and being out in the West for a long time, I don't know much about the East," Frolik said. "I've just heard great things about the group and about the coaching staff. I'm looking forward to go [to Buffalo] and be myself, and we'll see how it plays out. Obviously I'm looking for a little bit more ice time like I was getting in Calgary, and prove to myself that I can be that player that I used to be."

Following Thursday night's win over the Edmonton Oilers at KeyBank Center, Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger did say that he knew Frolik very well from his play at the international level. When asked about his familiarity with the Sabres head coach, Frolik did not know too much, but is still excited to get to know him regardless.

"I know he's been coaching in Europe, and I know he was here in Edmonton," Frolik said. "I just want to know who he is. I've heard great things about him, and I'm really looking forward to meeting him and play under him."

Frolik has yet to arrive into town because he has yet to obtain a work visa. We know that he will not play this weekend, but Frolik is hopeful that he will be able to get to town as soon as possible and join his new teammates.

"The process with the visa takes a few days," he said. "It kind of sucks that the weekend is coming up, so I think it might take a few days. I'm just starting to work on it this morning, and hopefully it will be a fast process and I can be there real soon."

The Sabres will practice on Friday ahead of Saturday afternoon's matchup with the Panthers at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres bring up Scott Wilson from Rochester

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 3, 2020

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Newly acquired Michael Frolik will have to deal with visa issues before he can get to Buffalo, and Victor Olofsson was injured against Edmonton on Thursday night. That has forced the Sabres to call up Scott Wilson from Rochester.

In 22 games with the Amerks, Wilson has six goals and eight assists for 14 points. Last season, he had an ankle injury, playing only 15 games with the Sabres.

Addition of Michael Frolik should put some starch in the Sabres' wilting penalty kill

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

January 3, 2020

The Sabres' addition of Michael Frolik will try to solve serious issues and help steer the Sabres onto the path toward consistency.

On its face, moving Marco Scandella to Montreal for a fourth-round pick that was used to acquire Frolik from Calgary addresses the glut of defensemen and adds an experienced forward to the mix. Both were matters that had to be taken care of, and it didn't result in taking on a long-term contract with big money.

Those are the basics when it comes to roster makeup, but when it comes to game action, Frolik will give the Sabres someone to provide a good presence in the room, a Stanley Cup winner and a solid performer on the penalty kill.

"He's just a very smart player insofar as the way he manages his game on both sides of the puck," coach Ralph Krueger said. "He can make a play with the puck, but without it, he's very strong in his decisions as far as positional play is concerned and being responsible for the team. He'll be an excellent penalty killer for us and also somebody who can mentor this group in managing leads and dealing with in-game situations that we're still learning to get better at that, in the end, decide the scores."

Sabres center Curtis Lazar was teammates with Frolik over parts of three seasons with the Flames and got a firsthand look at what makes him go, in particular his work killing penalties.

"He's textbook. He's going to play great within our system," Lazar said. "He's so strong in what he does within his game, and it's simple the way he executes. He knows what this league is all about, he's played a lot, and I think he'll be a calming influence for our team. Sometimes we get running around a bit, and he's the type of guy that can make that solid play under pressure. He's always going, his motor is always going, and hopefully he can help with PK. He's had looks on power play, too, but all in all, his leadership, too — that's going to be huge."

In case you haven't noticed, the penalty kill has been an issue this season. It was a problem in the gut-punch losses at home to Boston and Tampa Bay, and the PK vacillates between turning a corner toward being steady and being a leading cause for games being turned on their ear.

"We play great one PK, and then the other PKs it's not good enough," forward Rasmus Asplund said. "I don't think it's a special part of it — it's just the consistency of doing the same thing over and over and over again. I think we relax a little bit when we do good on a PK, so we need to put pride in the work we do and put pride in the PK and the special teams."

The Buffalo penalty kill is 28th in the NHL at 74.0 percent. By contrast, San Jose's league-best penalty kill checks in at 88.0 percent, and Winnipeg's is the worst (71.2 percent). Improving to the middle of the pack (around 80 percent) would be a big step for the Sabres. Penalty kills are the ultimate experience in working together as a team to accomplish a goal.

No one player can kill penalties by himself unless he's an elite goalie, and even then that's difficult. But the right combination of players can make things go well. Measuring an individual player's worth on a PK is difficult to do, and there's not one statistic on its own that will say "yes, this player is great at it" or "no, he's ineffective." Parsing out what a player can do based on a few factors can help illustrate strengths and weaknesses, however. In this case, we'll break things down in a way to show how Frolik compares with current Sabres penalty killers.

Over the past four-plus seasons with the Flames, Frolik has played about 500 minutes (500:13, to be exact) on the penalty kill. In that time, he's been on ice for 787 shot attempts against and 427 shots on goal against. That works out to 94.4 shot attempts and 51.2 shots on goal per 60 minutes played. In all, he's been on ice for 52 power-play goals against during his time in Calgary.

Among Sabres forwards this season, the top four in minutes played on the penalty kill are Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson, Jimmy Vesey and Asplund. The sample size is decidedly smaller comparing this season's Sabres with Frolik's time in Calgary, but for rates, it'll give us an idea:

Player	SA/60	SOG/60	GA
Frolik (500 minutes*)	94.4	51.2	52
Girgensons (107 minutes)	99.8	61.1	19
Larsson (90 minutes)	102.7	63.3	14
Vesey (60 minutes)	95	62	10
Asplund (47 minutes)	83.0	51.1	7

* — entirety of his career with the Flames; the Sabres' totals are for this season only.

To give you an idea of how out of whack the power-play goals against are for the Sabres, consider this: In 2016-17, Frolik was on the ice for 16 power-play goals against, the most in his career, but those came in 169 minutes on the penalty kill.

There's also the responsibility associated with how a team starts on the kill. If you're getting faceoff starts in the defensive zone, you're a bit more trusted as opposed to starting on the fly on a line change. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, Frolik was leaned upon more to start in the defensive zone, but in the past season and a half, he's gotten more time on the penalty kill on the fly.

Compare that with how the Sabres have done things. They've leaned hard on Larsson to start in the defensive zone because of his ability to win faceoffs, and Girgensons has been his usual partner. Everyone else has been worked in by committee, generally joining in on the fly. Given Frolik's reliability, if he doesn't pair up with Larsson on the kill, chances are he'll be giving a lift to whomever he works with up front, be it Lazar, Johansson or, on the rare occasion, Jack Eichel. Frolik is going to help them out.

"I've been killing penalties for quite a bit, and hopefully I can bring some experience in that department, and I'm looking forward to that," Frolik said. "I think even back at times in Chicago I played some key parts on the PK there. Hopefully, I can help there for sure."

— *Statistics courtesy of Natural Stat Trick.*

Duhatschek Notebook: Midseason awards, Ralph Krueger's speech and the Canadiens take a chance on Kovalchuk

By Eric Duhatschek

The Athletic

January 3, 2020

I love the annual Hart Trophy discussion, largely because of the intriguing – and sometimes – confounding way the NHL's de facto MVP award is actually defined.

Officially, the Hart goes to the NHL player "adjudged to be the most valuable to his team." Originally introduced in 1924, it was donated to the NHL by Dr. David Hart, whose father, Cecil Hart, was a former Montreal Canadiens general manager and coach.

I'm not sure if the wording was deliberately intended to be ambiguous, though part of me wishes and hopes that's actually true. It would have been far easier to award the Hart to the NHL's best player, and eliminate all the nuance (and fun!) that the discussion annually generates.

The problem is almost always the same. With the NHL approaching the midpoint of the 2019-20 season, there are a handful of teams with two viable MVP candidates, and thus in a position to potentially split the vote. One could further argue that one of the two best teams in the first half, St. Louis, may not get a lot of Hart Trophy love because the Blues have adopted a collective approach to winning, where every night, there seems to be someone else leading the charge.

The fact that they've fared so consistently well, even without the injured Vladimir Tarasenko since Game No. 10, is a tribute to coaching, scoring balance, toughness, great defensive awareness and a 1-2 goaltending tandem that up until Thursday night, has been mostly been in sync all season.

But none of that really screams Hart Trophy, does it?

Some years, the Hart Trophy discussion mirrors what happens with the coach of the year debate, where the winner isn't necessarily the league's best coach, but the coach that oversaw the biggest year-over-year surge in the standings.

Similarly, when it comes to casting their Hart Trophy ballots, voters generally tend to like a single dominant player on a team that entered the season with minimal expectation and then far exceeded them. It's what happened in the 2017-18 vote, when Taylor Hall of the surprising New Jersey Devils (27-point season-over-season increase in points in the standings) edged Nathan MacKinnon of the even more surprising Colorado Avalanche (47-point season-over-season increase in the points in the standings).

Instructively, both Hall and MacKinnon led their teams from last place in their respective divisions to a playoff berth.

Rarely does the Hart go to a player on a non-playoff team and rarely does the Hart go to a defenceman. Given that one of the most dominant individual performances of the first half was by a defenceman (John Carlson of the Washington Capitals), it will be interesting to see if that trend might be bucked this season.

Without further preamble then, here is our annual midseason look at how the races in a half-dozen major trophy categories may unfold.

(Note: The Hart, Calder, Norris and Selke are all voted on by members of the Professional Hockey Writers' Association. NHL GMs vote for the Vezina and the NHL Broadcasters Association casts ballots for the Jack Adams).

Hart ("player adjudged most valuable to his team")

1. Nathan MacKinnon, Avalanche
2. John Carlson, Capitals
3. Connor McDavid, Oilers

The Bruins' dynamic duo of David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand are running 4-5 in NHL scoring, which gives them a great chance to divide the vote. Pastrnak likely has a slight edge because he is also the NHL's goal scoring leader, ahead of Auston Matthews, Jack Eichel, MacKinnon and Alex Ovechkin. If Pastrnak gets to 60 goals, he will have to get serious consideration. Eichel's candidacy will be greatly enhanced if, in the second half, he can will a Buffalo Sabres team that finished 22 points out of the playoffs a year ago into the postseason this time around. If that happens, he will likely get the same sort of PR push that Hall did the year he won. And the Sabres are without a doubt a different team with Eichel in the lineup than they are with him absent.

So, Eichel's second half will bear watching, as will that of the New York Rangers winger Artemi Panarin, who cost New York a bundle in free agent dollars but is one of those rare UFA acquisitions that has immediately gone about earning his keep. New York was 20 points out of a playoff spot last year but they need a strong second-half surge to make up the necessary ground. If they do, Panarin will get some love from the voters.

Last year, the Oilers finished well outside the playoffs, but were at or near the top of the Pacific Division standings for most of the first half, before slipping back in January. McDavid's Hart candidacy, and that of his running mate, Leon Draisaitl, will be heavily dependent upon team results from now until the finish. If the Oilers do qualify for the playoffs and McDavid wins the scoring title, he will be at or near the top of most voters' lists.

Carlson's outstanding performance in the first half could potentially throw a major wrinkle into the Hart discussion. He had 50 points in his first 40 games, and it wasn't as if he was piling them all up on the power play. Thirty-five of Carlson's 50 points came at even strength. He's helped Washington soar to the top of the Metropolitan Division. Ovechkin has been touting him for the Norris, and unless he's injured at some point in the second half, that seems safe and certain. But if Carlson can duplicate these numbers without a dramatic second-half fall-off and crack the 100-point barrier, he could become the first defenceman since Chris Pronger in 2000 to win the MVP.

At the moment, his biggest competition likely comes from the dynamic MacKinnon, who has practically reeled in McDavid atop the scoring leader board (just two points back as of Friday morning). Colorado played for long stretches of the first half without MacKinnon's two regular linemates, Gabriel Landeskog and Mikko Rantanen, both of whom missed time because of injuries. MacKinnon's linemates varied during their respective absences, but the one constant was his ability to lift everyone's game, whenever they moved up the lineup (and explains, in part, why Matt Calvert and Andre Burakovsky are in the midst of personal-best seasons). Historically, that counts for something among the voters. (In 2010, Henrik Sedin won the MVP, largely because of his continued strong play during brother Daniel's injury absence.) MacKinnon was my Hart choice in 2018 ahead of Hall – and he would be my choice again halfway through 2019-20, narrowly over Carlson. But it's practically a coin flip at this stage.

Norris (“To the defense player who demonstrates throughout the season the greatest all-around ability at the position”)

1. John Carlson, Capitals
2. Roman Josi, Predators
3. Shea Weber, Canadiens

There was a time when I chafed at how voters approached this award because I didn't think they put enough of an emphasis on the actual criteria – 'greatest all-around ability at the position' – and overvalued scoring output. I chafe less now because the position has changed so radically over the past decade. The reality is, nowadays, it is difficult to excel on defence without actually having a major offensive component to your game. In addition to defending, the NHL's elite rearguards must also move the puck and start the rush and join the attack and generally, create offence from the back end.

A handful of the usual Norris Trophy suspects – Brent Burns and Erik Karlsson in San Jose, Drew Doughty in Los Angeles, Morgan Rielly and Tyson Barrie in Toronto, the struggling P.K. Subban in New Jersey, Mark Giordano in Calgary – are not in the conversation at this stage of the season. Two rookies, Cale Makar in Colorado and Quinn Hughes in Vancouver, have both made splashy debuts and will likely contest the Calder, though they are unlikely to crack the top three here.

That's largely because of how many viable candidates there are behind Carlson, starting with Josi, who had 14 goals on New Year's Day, one shy of the total he amassed in the entire season a year ago. He's one of seven

defencemen averaging above 25 minutes per night. In the absence of Subban, Nashville's Big 4 has become a Big 3 – and Josi has become even more of a critical contributor. If Carlson were to somehow falter or get injured, Josi would be in the best position to reel him in.

Voters get a chance to actually put five names on their ballots and at the moment, the competition for No. 3 is tight.

Weber, healthy from the start of the year this season after being limited to only 58 games a year ago, has been a dynamic force for Montreal – physically, with his shot, with his leadership. Columbus has stayed competitive thanks to an equally impactful season from Seth Jones, who doesn't have the same offensive production as the other candidates, but has, most nights, set the defensive tone for a team trying to win tight, low-scoring games.

Kris Letang missed eight games early because of injury, but when healthy, he's been one of the core pieces that kept the injury-riddled Penguins alive in the race for first place in the Metropolitan. Victor Hedman is having another solid season for a thus-far underachieving Tampa team and Dougie Hamilton, in Carolina, has seen his role and thus his contribution tick upwards following the departure of Justin Faulk. The analytics experts have wondered for years why Hamilton's minutes are relatively low compared to his peers – last year, his first in Carolina, he played just 19:40 on average – but this year, he's in the 23-minute range most nights which, if it continues, will represent a career high.

Still, having said all that, Carlson is the runaway leader in the clubhouse, at the midpoint of the season. Last year, Giordano, won the Norris in a landslide, earning 165 of a possible 171 first-place votes. But this year, the balloting could be even more one-sided if Carlson can keep this up.

Calder ("to the player selected as most proficient in his first year of competition")

1. Cale Makar, Avalanche
2. Quinn Hughes, Canucks
3. Victor Olofsson, Sabres

The second half will largely determine which player from the field will finish third in the balloting. Olofsson – the December rookie of the month – is there right now but he's expected to miss 5-6 weeks after suffering an injury Thursday. There are a handful of other forwards – including Jack Hughes (New Jersey), Kaapo Kakko (Rangers), Nick Suzuki (Montreal) and Martin Necas (Carolina) – who can play themselves onto the ballot with strong second-half surges.

But at the moment, it's a two-horse race between two players with similar backgrounds – top-10 draft choices that didn't rush to the NHL as 18-year-olds, but detoured to U.S. college hockey to develop and physically mature. Both had cameos toward the end of last year – Hughes played the final five games of the season for a Vancouver Canucks team that missed the playoffs and Makar made his NHL debut in the postseason with the Colorado Avalanche and showed so much poise that the Avs felt confident they could move on from their previous PP quarterback, Barrie, and hand the reins to Makar. Thus far, neither rookie has disappointed.

An upper-body injury kept Makar out of a handful of games in December, but he's back now. His overall dynamism is simply eye-catching. He plays with the poise of a player beyond his years. There's a fearlessness which combined with his skill level that suggests multiple Norris Trophies could be in his future. Hughes isn't as physically developed as Makar, but his hockey sense is off the charts too. It didn't take long for the Canucks to turn the first PP over to him from Alex Edler and he too looks like a fixture there for years to come. Sometimes, NHL rookies do hit the wall at some point in their first seasons because of the overwhelming physical demands that the league puts on them, but it is hard to imagine any scenario – short of a major injury to one or both – in which they do not finish one-two in the voting.

Selke ("to the forward who best excels in the defensive aspect of the game")

1. Ryan O'Reilly, Blues
2. Patrice Bergeron, Bruins
3. Jean-Gabriel Pageau, Senators

The Selke is often a reputation award and so, it's difficult for a newcomer to break into the ranks of contenders, which is why the Senators' Pageau is listed only third here. On the one hand, he's had an exceptional season. Say

what you will about plus-minus being a flawed stat, that Pageau can be a plus-19 on an Ottawa team where the next closest forward is Connor Brown, at plus-2, speaks volumes about what an extraordinary season he's having on one of the NHL's most anonymous teams. Until his trade to Vegas, Mark Stone was usually Ottawa's most adept defensive forward and last year, Stone crept into the top three in Selke balloting. But this year, in Vegas, Reilly Smith and William Karlsson have been doing a lot of the heavy lifting on the PK. Sean Couturier (Philadelphia), Aleksander Barkov (Florida) and Elias Lindholm (Calgary) have been their usual reliable selves, but both O'Reilly and Bergeron have relentlessly continued to excel as exceptional 200-foot players, which is really what the award has evolved into – not necessarily given to the best defensive forward, but to the most complete forward.

Jack Adams (“to the NHL coach adjudged to have contributed most to his team’s success”)

1. Mike Sullivan, Penguins
2. Barry Trotz, Islanders
3. Paul Maurice, Jets.

As noted, the Adams is an award that often rewards coaches on teams that soar above expectation. So, for example, if any of Buffalo, Arizona or Edmonton make the playoffs this season, then you can be sure Ralph Krueger, Rick Tocchet and Dave Tippett will earn votes for their achievements.

The downside of that voting bias is that many under-the-radar coaching achievements can get overlooked, including the work that Craig Berube has done to help the defending Stanley Cup champion Blues soar to the top of the Central Division, while playing without Tarasenko for much of the season.

Winnipeg had the entire right side of its NHL defence wiped out in the offseason – Jacob Trouba, Tyler Myers and Dustin Byfuglien – and also lost the useful Ben Chiarot to free agency. Keeping that team afloat, with a strong defensive awareness, has been a challenge that Maurice has met and exceeded.

For good reason, Trotz was the runaway winner a year ago. He helped to oversee a culture change with the Islanders that saw them go from last in the league defensively to first – and unexpectedly make the playoffs in a year when they lost their most productive player, John Tavares, to free agency. In some ways, what the Islanders have done this year may be just as remarkable. Usually, when a team surges the way the Islanders have, they revert to the mean the next year. Moreover, the Islanders are catching nobody unaware anymore. And yet, once again, they are in the thick of the playoff hunt, even with a major change to their Jennings-winning trophy duo – Robin Lehner out, Semyon Varlamov in.

But when you frame the discussion the way broadcasters usually do (coach-as-miracle-worker), it is difficult to look past what Sullivan has done with a Penguins team that has lost critical pieces – Crosby, Malkin, Letang, now Jake Guentzel – for significant portions of time and is still competitive night after night. Really quite an extraordinary story.

Vezina (“to the goalkeeper adjudged to be best at his position”)

1. Frederik Andersen, Maple Leafs
2. Jordan Binnington, Blues
3. Darcy Kuemper, Coyotes

The era of the 65-plus game workload for NHL goaltenders appears to be over, as more teams realize that when they stretch their No. 1 to the limit in the regular season, that decision can often undermine his effectiveness and performance in the playoffs.

Last year, for example, the three top teams in collective goals-against average (the New York Islanders, Dallas Stars and Boston Bruins) didn't have a goalie on the roster to play above 46 games – and you had to go all the way down to the No. 10 team, the Vegas Golden Knights, to find a team where the starter made above 60 appearances (Marc-André Fleury).

Accordingly, load management has become a genuine thing right across the NHL – and usually, when there are exceptions, as is the case in Toronto, it's because a team is in a life-and-death struggle for a playoff spot and the gap between the No. 1 and No. 2 is a chasm. But it also makes the job of voting for the Vezina – which is in the hands of NHL GMs – more difficult because they tend to favour workhorse goalies.

The Vezina picture has a real chance to shift in the second half, but we're giving the nod to Andersen, because he has shouldered a monstrous workload in Toronto, overcame a system change, a coaching change and has to live with the fact that the Leafs have yet to settle on a reliable backup. For GMs, that still seems to factor into their voting habits.

A month ago, Hellebuyck might have been the front-runner, but he's cooled off in the last nine games or so – similar, in some ways, to what happened to John Gibson in Anaheim a year ago, when Gibson kept the Ducks afloat for a while until reality finally set in. In his first full year as a starter, Binnington has been impressive, although the Blues are getting equally solid work from the resurgent backup, Jake Allen. Similarly, in Dallas, Ben Bishop is having another excellent season, but there is little to distinguish his numbers from those of backup Anton Khudobin. Until his injury, Kuemper was having another excellent under-the-radar performance for the defensively sound Coyotes.

Frankly, the Vezina is a convoluted a mess right now. Good luck to NHL GMs sorting it all out.

A few random final thoughts

An interesting series of trades took place Thursday, in which Montreal traded Mike Reilly to Ottawa for a fifth-rounder and then acquired Marco Scandella from Buffalo for a fourth. Scandella is an upgrade on Reilly and the acquisition cost seems minor in the grand scheme of things. That shuffle represents a win for Montreal. Buffalo then flipped the fourth-rounder they got from Montreal to Calgary for the veteran Michael Frolik, a versatile forward that can play up or down a team's lineup. Back when Frolik played in Winnipeg, he was a favourite of Maurice's. I always look for threads to explain minor deals and the only thing I could come up with is this: Maurice is friends with Krueger, the Sabres' coach. You could probably make a small wager that somewhere along the line, when the two were talking shop, Maurice's favourable impressions of Frolik might have come up in the conversation.

Krueger's 14-minute press conference on New Year's Day was all the rage on Twitter, because Krueger made an emphatic, impassioned speech about processing pain and why, in the NHL, you have to let go of losses quickly and focus on being better and the fight forward. Krueger, of course, is known for his skills as a motivational speaker and thus understands that you can't deliver the Gettysburg Address every single day of the year, or it loses its effectiveness.

Part of the value in these oratorical exercises is correctly identifying the timing. You'd have to think it wasn't a coincidence that Krueger spoke so candidly on the heels of a second trade request after Zach Bogosian's, this one coming from journeyman Evan Rodrigues.

Scandella's departure clears up the Sabres' logjam on defence to a degree, but it doesn't change the fact that Bogosian could still be on the move. The problem with trading him is twofold: the cap number and his injury history. Bogosian is in the final year of a seven-year contract with a \$5.142 million cap charge (that pays him \$6 million in actual cash, something that can and does matter to budget teams). On the other hand, he is a veteran defenceman, on an expiring contract and plays the right side – all attractive qualities for a depth option. Moreover, the contract becomes less onerous the closer you get to the Feb. 24 trade deadline.

Oddly enough, the team that's in greatest need for help on the right side is Bogosian's ex-team, Winnipeg, which as noted – had its right side wiped out last year, through trades, free agent defections and Dustin Byfuglien's decision at the start of camp not to play. Now, if Byfuglien decides to return – and earlier this season, I floated a scenario in which he might – then the picture changes completely. If he doesn't, well, then the Jets have a decision to make.

They say you can't go home again – and Bogosian, who moved with the Atlanta Thrashers franchise to Winnipeg at the start of the 2011-12 season, did play 194 games for the Jets before getting traded to Buffalo in that monster deal back in February 2015. It was Bogosian, Evander Kane and Jason Kasdorf for Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford, Joel Armia, Brendan Lemieux and a first-round pick that the Jets turned into Jack Roslovic. Five years later, only Bogosian and Roslovic remain on their teams' respective rosters.

Kovy lands

Armia, by the way, is one of the many Canadiens forwards out injured at the moment (the list also includes Brendan Gallagher, Paul Byron and Jonathan Drouin). All of which may partly explain why the Canadiens were willing to roll the dice on Russian forward Ilya Kovalchuk, who signed a one-year contract with the team at an absolute bargain-basement number – the league minimum \$700,000 in the NHL but only \$70,000 in the minors. Presumably, that answers the primary question about Kovalchuk's motivation and intent after Los Angeles terminated his contract in mid-December. Since he's practically playing for free by his usual standards, Kovalchuk must still want to prove he can be a viable NHLer. The lure of playing for a historic franchise likely also played into the decision.

And finally

Pittsburgh suffered a devastating blow earlier this week when Guentzel was lost for the season as a result of a shoulder injury in the only game on Monday's NHL schedule. As noted above, the Penguins have done a remarkably good job of turning to the next-man-up when a key player has gone down. During Malkin's absence, Crosby picked him up. During Crosby's absence, Malkin picked him up. But who, among Penguins wingers, can pick up Guentzel? On the power play, almost certainly Patric Hornqvist. At 5-on-5? It may fall to ex-Hab Alex Galchenyuk, who'll get the opportunity to play a greater role now after a disappointing start to his career in Pittsburgh. It's odd to think this but the Penguins have found internal solutions to their injury woes/underperformance in goal, on defence and down the middle. But the loss of Guentzel? That might sting the most. Weirdly, Guentzel's extended absence might be the hardest of all their injuries to overcome.

Michael Frolik looking forward to fresh start with Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 4, 2020

BUFFALO – Like a lot of NHL players, Michael Frolik's role started changing after he turned 30. His minutes dropped. He even became a healthy scratch.

After spending most of his tenure with the Calgary Flames skating on the second line with Mikael Backlund and Matthew Tkachuk, the Czech winger often played under 10 minutes this season.

"I wasn't really happy with my role," Frolik, 31, said on a conference call Friday to discuss his trade to the Sabres.

So Frolik, according to multiple reports, waived his 10-team no-trade clause. On Thursday, the Flames dealt him to the Sabres in exchange for a 2020 fourth-rounder. The Sabres had just sent the Montreal Canadiens defenseman Marco Scandella to acquire the pick.

"I'm really looking for a new opportunity (in Buffalo)," Frolik said. "I'm really excited. It's a fresh start for me there. I'm really excited and really looking forward to meeting the guys and meeting the group."

Frolik, who has played 831 NHL games, won't play this afternoon against the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center. He said he started working on his visa Friday morning and was still in Calgary.

"Hopefully I can be there pretty soon," he said.

The Sabres sorely need help up front. Their forward depth was weak before rookie Victor Olofsson and Jeff Skinner were both injured in the last week.

While Frolik has compiled 158 goals and 380 points over 12 seasons, he has morphed into more of a role player. He could provide an impact killing penalties, an area he excels at and the Sabres have often struggled.

"He's just a very smart player in the way he manages his game on both sides of the puck," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "He can make a play with the puck but without it he's very strong in his decisions as far as positional play is concerned and being responsible for the team."

"He'll be an excellent penalty killer for us and also somebody who can mentor this group in managing leads and dealing with in-game situations that we're still learning to get better at that, in the end, decide the scores. We're excited about the wealth of experience he's going to bring into our room and just the person that he is."

Krueger said he asked some coaches about Frolik and heard "nothing but compliments on the human being that he is."

Frolik, who won the Stanley Cup with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2013, acknowledged a few times his difficult situation in Calgary made him unhappy. Still, he refused to say much more.

"All I want to say is I want to thank the Calgary Flames, what they did here for me," he said. "We had a great time here with the family, and I don't really want to go into that, but I'm happy for the new opportunity."

The Flames scratched Frolik four times this season, including Dec. 22 and 23. He scored just one goal in his first 29 games. He skated under 10 minutes 10 times this season.

Frolik knew his days in Calgary would likely be ending soon.

In his last appearance Tuesday, he scored his fifth goal this season and skated 14 minutes, 10 seconds in the Flames' 5-3 loss to Chicago.

"It's frustrating, right?" said Frolik, who scored four goals in his last nine outings with Calgary. "When things don't go well, it's not easy and you get frustrated. I felt that my time here in Calgary was probably getting to be over and I think it was just time to move on."

Having played in the Western Conference for nearly 10 years, Frolik doesn't know a lot about the Sabres.

"I just heard great things about their group and about the coaching staff," he said. "I'm just really looking to go there and be myself and we'll see how it plays out. Obviously, looking forward to getting more ice time than I was getting here in Calgary and prove to myself that I can be that player I used to be."

Replacing rookie Victor Olofsson will be tough for Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 4, 2020

BUFFALO – Winger Victor Olofsson's absence for the next five to six weeks could extinguish the Sabres' playoff hopes. From the get-go, they've relied on the Swedish rookie to score goals.

Now, the lower-body injury he suffered in Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against the Edmonton Oilers could sideline him until mid-February, the Sabres announced Friday.

Having scored 16 goals and 35 points in 42 games, including six power-play goals in the first seven contests, Olofsson has been a top Calder Trophy candidate all season. In his first weeks in the NHL, he quickly seized a spot at left wing on the top line with captain Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart, utilizing his wicked shot to score.

Replacing Olofsson, 24, won't be easy. The most likely candidate, winger Jeff Skinner, suffered an upper-body injury last week and will be sidelined three to four weeks.

Perhaps Skinner, who enjoyed his first 40-goal season playing beside Eichel a year ago, can move up when he returns.

In the meantime, it's unclear who will sub for Olofsson this afternoon against the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center.

Eichel had a maintenance day Friday, meaning the Sabres did not showcase their new No. 1 line. Rookie Rasmus Asplund moved into Olofsson's spot up late Thursday.

"You look at what you have and not what you don't have and you just work with that group," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said following Friday's practice. "That's what experience does for that part of your brain. There's no room for emotion in this situation. You need to put the best possible group together to compete against Florida tomorrow and deal with Victor as a separate issue until he returns."

Asplund, whose ice time has been dipping, could stay up with Eichel. Krueger tries to put a defensive presence on each line.

"There's a defensive component to that position, releasing Jack and Sam with the confidence that who's playing with them is going to cover, too, and they cover for each other," Krueger said. "What we're seeing in Asplund's game is that two-way awareness and the ability, very quickly, to also involve himself in the offense which he's still growing daily in front of our eyes here.

"But we really enjoyed seeing what we did in the end stretch of the game yesterday with him."

Asplund said he won't change his style if he plays on the top trio again.

"My philosophy is if they give you a chance, it's because you've done something good," he said. "If you start changing up what you've been doing, I just think that's the wrong thing to do."

Olofsson injured himself early in the third period when his skate got caught in a rut in the ice, causing him to fall backwards after he passed the puck.

Eichel said following the game the ice wasn't good.

"Ruts develop in the course of play and that's a real freaky one where because of the move he was making at the time," Krueger said. "He caught an edge in one of those ruts and it's a low mathematical kind of situation.

"We're not blaming that on the ice at all. That can happen. It's one of those freak injuries that I've seen before and you don't like to see it because of the fact it was so surprising. He had no chance to catch himself and that's what causes then the stress on the body."

With Olofsson out, the Sabres recalled winger Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans on Friday.

Wilson, 27, has scored six goals and 10 points in 22 games with the Amerks this season.

The 5-foot-11, 177-pound Wilson played 64 games with the Sabres over the last two years, compiling six goals and 17 points. He won the Stanley Cup as a regular with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2017.

–

Winger Dalton Smith cleared waivers Friday but stayed with the Sabres.

Smith, a tough guy who made his NHL debut Tuesday, has already changed his number.

Sabres newcomer Michael Frolik has worn No. 67 his entire career, so Smith switched to 77.

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Amerks goalie Jonas Johansson and defenseman Lawrence Pilut have been named to the North Division team for the AHL All-Star Classic on Jan. 27 in Ontario, Calif.

Johansson, 24, has compiled a 10-2-2 record with a 2.00 goals-against average and a .933 save percentage in 15 games this season.

Meanwhile, Pilut, 24, has scored four goals and 20 points in 27 games.

Amerks coach Chris Taylor will coach the North Division.

–

After Krueger finished talking to the media Friday, he walked back to the microphone to make sure he said, "Go Bills!"

The Bills play an AFC Wild Card playoff game today against the Houston Texans.

Sabres rookie Victor Olofsson out five to six weeks with lower-body injury

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 3, 2020

BUFFALO – A lower-body injury will sideline rookie winger Victor Olofsson, the Sabres' second-leading scorer, five to six weeks, the team announced today.

His loss is a massive blow to a team fighting for a playoff spot. He ranks second in goals and points on the Sabres, trailing only captain Jack Eichel, his center.

Olofsson has scored 14 goals and 35 points in 42 games this season. He has been a threat from the get-go, utilizing his wicked shot to score goals from the circles.

The Swede, 24, left Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against the Edmonton Oilers early in the third period after passing the puck to defenseman Zach Bogosian seconds before linemate's Sam Reinhart's tying goal.

He appeared to get one of his skates caught in the ice.

Rookie Rasmus Asplund subbed for Olofsson at left wing beside Eichel and Reinhart late in the game.

Sabres recall Scott Wilson from Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 3, 2020

BUFFALO – The Sabres recalled winger Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans this morning.

Wilson, 27, has scored six goals and 10 points in 22 games with the Amerks this season.

The Sabres lost rookie winger Victor Olofsson to an undisclosed injury early in the third period of Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against the Edmonton Oilers.

The 5-foot-11, 177-pound Wilson played 64 games with the Sabres over the last two years, compiling six goals and 17 points. He won the Stanley Cup as a regular with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2017.

Olofsson sidelined with injury

By Josh Reed

WIVB

January 3, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) — Sabres forward Victor Olofsson will miss 5-6 weeks with a lower-body injury.

The rookie suffered the injury in the 3rd period of Thursday's 3-2 overtime win against Edmonton.

The 24-year-old was having a great season prior to the injury.

Olofsson leads all rookies in both goals(16) and points(35).

The Sabres next game is Saturday against Florida at KeyBank Center.

Sabres' Olofsson to miss several weeks due to injury

WGRZ

January 3, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. — One day after the Sabres made a trade to try and improve their output on offense, the team announced a key forward will be out of the lineup for a while.

Victor Olofsson will be out five to six weeks with a lower-body injury, according to a tweet by the team on Friday morning.

Olofsson left Thursday's overtime victory against Edmonton in the third period with an injury.

Just hours before the game against the Oilers, Olofsson was named NHL rookie of the month for December.

Olofsson has 16 goals in 42 games for the Sabres this season.

Frolik excited about new opportunity with Buffalo Sabres

By Kristen Anderson

Calgary Sun

January 3, 2020

Michael Frolik did not hide the fact that he wasn't satisfied with his role in the Calgary Flames lineup.

But that didn't change how the 31-year-old Kladno, Czech Republic, native went about his business, showed up at the office, prepared for games, and maintained positive relationships with teammates, the Flames coaching staff and general manager Brad Treliving.

"Obviously I wasn't happy with my situation lately," Frolik explained on a conference call Friday when asked if he'd specifically asked for a trade from the organization which he had been with since the 2015-16 campaign. "I think all I want to say is I want to thank the Calgary Flames for what they did here for me. We had a great time here with the family.

"I don't want to really go into that but I'm just happy for a new opportunity with Buffalo and I'm really excited."

Frolik arrived during free agency in the summer of 2015 after playing a pair of seasons with the Winnipeg Jets and was inked to a five-year deal worth \$21.5-million with an annual cap hit of \$4.3-million.

The following campaign, he was united with Mikael Backlund and then-rookie Matthew Tkachuk and would play with those players for a large portion of Frolik's time in Calgary. On Thursday, that ended with a trade to the Buffalo Sabres for a fourth-round pick in the 2020 NHL draft.

From the Flames' perspective, the cap relief was needed but they have also sharpened their depth and it became clear that Frolik was slipping down the chart. Prior to the holiday break, he had been a healthy scratch for two games and four games total this season.

For over a year, the left-shooting, right-winger and penalty kill specialist had been frustrated with his usage — most recently on the third and fourth lines — but remained dedicated and committed to the team's progress.

"It's obviously frustrating when things don't go well," he said. "It's not easy and you're frustrated. I felt that my time here in Calgary was getting to be over and it was just time to move on. That's what happened here. But the relationships with us (between teammates) and Tree and with the coaching staff, they're great guys and a great group of guys here.

"I really enjoyed my time here and I appreciate what they did for me. Obviously, it didn't work out in the end but I can only say great things about Calgary and it was tough the last couple weeks. I hoped it could change but it didn't look like it was going in that direction and we kind of decided to move on."

Frolik explained that immigration issues to the U.S. may hold up his arrival in Buffalo and he was planning on finding some ice in Calgary for the time being.

After scoring 63 goals and nine short-handed tallies along with 82 assists in 319 appearances with the Flames and 831 games at the NHL level, he still believes he can contribute and is excited for the new opportunity which, he hopes, will include more ice time.

"I'm just really looking forward to going there and being myself and we'll see how it plays out," Frolik said. "I'm obviously looking for a little bit more ice time than what I was getting here in Calgary and prove myself that I can be that player I used to be."

Why the recent trade action is only the beginning for the Flames and Sabres

By Jared Clinton
The Hockey News
January 3, 2020

So, it's trades you wanted? Then it's trades you will get. With the NHL's holiday roster freeze over and big-league clubs able to wheel and deal once again, there was a flurry of interconnected trade action Thursday that involved four teams, four players, two draft picks and a partridge in a pear tree. OK, fine, the holidays are over, so scratch that last one. But you get the idea.

Following the details of the trades – plural – is a bit like keeping an eye on a bouncing puck, but the deals shook out as such: First, the Montreal Canadiens sent defenseman Mike Reilly to the Ottawa Senators in exchange for AHL winger Andrew Sturtz and a 2021 fifth-round pick. Next, the Canadiens used their newfound cap space to acquire defenseman Marco Scandella from the Buffalo Sabres for a 2020 fourth-round pick that previously belonged to the San Jose Sharks. And that fourth-round pick was subsequently shuffled along to the Calgary Flames, who sent winger Michael Frolik the Sabres' way to complete the four-team swap meet.

Got all that? Good. Now you can basically forget about the impacts for all but two of the teams involved.

For the Senators' part, the deal was about getting cost certainty on a blueliner who can stick in the lineup next season, as Reilly has one year remaining on a deal that pays him \$1.5 million. That's a paltry sum to pay a rearguard who can skate bottom-pairing minutes, making him a fit in Ottawa given the organization's current spending practices. Meanwhile, the Canadiens picked up another helping hand on the back end, though Scandella, whose deal expires after this season, is likely to be no more than a fourth defenseman. Neither the Senators or Canadiens are the teams we're here to talk about, though, because frankly, Ottawa is headed for a basement finish and Montreal GM Marc Bergevin is more likely to stay the course than he is to trade futures to make a splashy acquisition. (That's not to mention the bargain signing of Ilya Kovalchuk takes care of some of the injury-related need.)

That brings us to the Flames and Sabres.

From a Calgary standpoint, there are two aspects of Thursday's move worth addressing. The first is that it finally brought closure to Frolik's time with the franchise, which has been winding down for some time now. It was speculated (read: all but confirmed) that he was nearly moved at the trade deadline last season in what would have been a swap for Minnesota Wild winger Jason Zucker. That trade fell through, of course, but Frolik's name has remained in the rumor mill since, and his move to Buffalo puts an end to that as he skates out the final year of his five-year, \$21.5-million pact.

Primarily, though, what the move affords Calgary is cap space. Sweet, sweet cap space. By trading Frolik – and without retaining a single, solitary cent of his deal – the Flames opened up \$4.3 million in the budget and now have a little north of \$4.7 million with which to operate. Calgary GM Brad Treliving made clear, too, that his desire is to use the newfound spending room to provide his roster with an upgrade. And an upgrade might be just what the Flames need.

Merely keeping pace with the top dogs in their division after finishing atop the Pacific by six points last season, Calgary hasn't met expectations and could certainly use another offensive piece with the big guns, particularly the fresh-off-a-career-year Johnny Gaudreau, struggling to find the same form as last season. As a result of the struggles of the projected top scorers, an offense that tied for second in the NHL with 3.52 goals per game last season ranks 24th this season and has mustered 2.67 goals per game. The good news is there are potential reinforcements available for the attack that could come in under budget for the Flames. Pending unrestricted free agent forwards Jean-Gabriel Pageau, Chris Kreider and Tyler Toffoli all carry cap hits that would allow Calgary to make a deal without moving additional dollars out.

It may just so happen that the players the Flames pursue, though, are the same ones in which the Sabres could have interest. Though Buffalo has been leaky defensively, giving up the eighth-most goals against per game, the Sabres are also scoring the eighth-fewest goals per game and the offense has been dependent on Jack Eichel and Jack Eichel and Jack Eichel. Others have chipped in, to be sure, as Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson (who is

sidelined for at least five weeks with a lower-body injury) are 30-point players, but there's not a single Sabres forward beyond those three who have eclipsed the 20-point plateau.

Assuredly, the thought process behind the Frolik acquisition is that he can relieve the pressure on the top unit. The now-former Flames winger was averaging nearly 16 goals and 39 points per 82 games across the three seasons prior to the current campaign. That's enough to make him a useful secondary scorer. But if Buffalo wants further help, and particularly a secondary scorer who can fill in for Olofsson and truly take some of the onus off of the top unit, it's likely there's more pure offensive upside in a player such as Pageau, Kreider or Toffoli.

There is an extra wrinkle to the Sabres' situation, however. Their roughly \$2.2 million in cap space is hardly enough to add any of the more sought after scoring options on the market, at least not without some help by way of salary retention. But what makes Buffalo an intriguing team moving forward beyond their possible interest in adding another option up front is that they also have a few players who are seeking trades. Defenseman Zach Bogosian and winger Evan Rodrigues reportedly want out of Buffalo, and with a combined cap hit of \$7.14 million, shedding the salaries by selling for cheap or including both or either in a swap gives the Sabres the option to acquire more financial flexibility.

One way or another, though, it seems certain we'll hear from the Flames and Sabres once again, be it ahead of the deadline or in the not-too-distant future. Calgary has aspirations of Stanley Cup contention, ones they're not ready to stash away for the season, and Buffalo has their sights set on ending a playoff drought that has dragged on far too long. And given the results through the first half of the season, the only way either team will reach their goals this season is by going back to the trade market.

How long is Victor Olofsson out? Injury timeline, return date, latest updates on Buffalo Sabres rookie

By Jace Mallory
Sporting News
January 3, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres suffered another blow Friday with news of rookie forward Victor Olofsson's injury.

Olofsson will miss time with a lower-body injury he sustained in the third period of Thursday's 3-2 OT win against the Edmonton Oilers.

On a play in which he recorded an assist, skating with the puck in the corner, the rookie landed awkwardly after his skate looked to catch an edge on the ice. Just before the fall, he fed the puck to Zach Bogosian at the point for a shot that was deflected in by Sam Reinhart to tie the game at two.

Olofsson led all rookies in goals (16) and points (35) at the time of his injury and was second on the team in goals, points and assists (19), trailing Jack Eichel in all three categories.

How long will Victor Olofsson be out?

Preliminary reports by the team suggest that Olofsson will miss five to six weeks with a lower-body injury.

"He will be gone for a few weeks now, we know that for sure," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "Of course he has been a very important catalyst to the good things that are happening here in the team and we need to fill that hole. Guys need to step up as we had the same situation with Jeff [Skinner]. It's definitely a challenging situation but we'll pull together and fill that hole."

The specifics of his injury have not be announced.

Victor Olofsson injury timeline

The rookie winger suffered a lower-body injury Jan. 2 in the third period against the Edmonton Oilers.

On Jan. 3, the team announced Olofsson will likely miss five to six weeks with the injury.

Panthers at Sabres preview

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

January 3, 2020

PANTHERS (21-14-5) at SABRES (18-17-7)

1 p.m. ET; MSG-B, FS-F, NHL.TV

The Game

The Buffalo Sabres will play their first game without forward Victor Olofsson when they face the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

Olofsson, who leads NHL rookies with 16 goals and 35 points, will be out 5-6 weeks after sustaining a lower-body injury in the third period of a 3-2 overtime win against the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday.

Rasmus Asplund is expected to replace Olofsson on the top line for the Sabres, who are 1-4-0 in their past five games and 2-6-1 in their past nine.

The Panthers, who are coming off a 6-3 win against the Ottawa Senators on Thursday, have won six of their past eight games and are 9-for-29 (31 percent) on the power play during that span.

Players to watch

Panthers forward Jonathan Huberdeau has 18 points (six goals, 12 assists) in his past eight games.

Sabres forward Sam Reinhart has 19 points (nine goals, 10 assists) in 19 games against the Panthers.

They said it

"They're a team that you've got to respect. Jack Eichel's playing as good as anyone in the League right now; we've got to be aware of him. We've got to do a better job with the puck against this team. We've got to get more inside like we've talked about the last couple of games. I thought we did a better job of that [on Thursday]. We're going to need that [Saturday]." -- Panthers coach Joel Quenneville

"My philosophy is if they give you a chance, it's because you've done something good. If you start changing up what you've been doing, I just think that's the wrong thing to do. So I just tried to play my game [Thursday] with Jack [Eichel] and Sam [Reinhart]. I will try to do it [Saturday] again." -- Sabres forward Rasmus Asplund

Panthers projected lineup

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

Keith Yandle -- Aaron Ekblad
Riley Stillman -- Anton Stralman
Mike Matheson -- Josh Brown

Sergei Bobrovsky
Chris Driedger

Scratched: Denis Malgin, Jayce Hawryluk
Injured: MacKenzie Weegar (upper body)

Sabres projected lineup

Rasmus Asplund -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart
Jimmy Vesey -- Marcus Johansson -- Conor Sheary
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Kyle Okposo
Curtis Lazar -- Scott Wilson

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

Linus Ullmark
Carter Hutton

Scratched: Evan Rodrigues, Dalton Smith

Injured: Victor Olofsson (lower body), Jeff Skinner (upper body), Tage Thompson (upper body), Vladimir Sobotka (lower body)

Status report

Eichel did not practice Friday but coach Ralph Krueger said it was a maintenance day "due to minutes played" (23:56 against Edmonton; 25:13 against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday). ... Wilson was recalled from Rochester of the American Hockey League on Friday.

Stat pack

Eichel has 10 points (two goals, eight assists) in his past 10 games against the Panthers, including a goal and two assists in a 5-2 win on Nov. 24. ... Barkov has 20 points (eight goals, 12 assists) in 20 games against the Sabres. ... Huberdeau needs one goal to pass Nathan Horton (142) for sixth in Panthers history.

Olofsson out 5-6 weeks for Sabres with lower-body injury

NHL.com

January 3, 2020

Victor Olofsson will be out 5-6 weeks for the Buffalo Sabres because of a lower-body injury.

The forward was injured in the third period of a 3-2 overtime win against the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday after he fell awkwardly in the corner.

"What coaches need to do is you look at what you have not what you don't have," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said after practice Friday. "You just work with that group and that's what experience does for that part of your brain. There's no room for emotion in this situation."

Olofsson leads all rookies in goals (16) and points (35), and is second on the Sabres in those categories, trailing center Jack Eichel in each (26 goals, 54 points).

Forward Rasmus Asplund is expected to replace Olofsson on the top line with Eichel and Sam Reinhart when the Sabres (18-17-7) host the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center on Saturday (1 p.m. ET; MSG-B, FS-F, NHL.TV).

"I don't know if that's the case tomorrow, but if that's the case, I'm just going to try to enjoy (it) as much as possible and bring my game to Jack and Sam and get the game I'm used to playing and see what I can do for those guys," Asplund said.

Buffalo is also without forward Jeff Skinner; it was announced last week he will be out 3-4 weeks because of an upper-body injury.

"You need to put the best possible group together to compete against Florida tomorrow and deal with Victor as a separate issue until he returns," Krueger said. "He will be gone for a few weeks now, we know that for sure. Of course he has been a very important catalyst to the good things that are happening here in the team and we need to fill that hole. Guys need to step up as we had the same situation with Jeff [Skinner]. It's definitely a challenging situation but we'll pull together and fill that hole."

NHL.com independent correspondent Heather Engel contributed to this report

Frolik eager for fresh start with Sabres

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 3, 2020

Michael Frolik expressed excitement about the potential for a fresh start with the Buffalo Sabres during a conference call with reporters on Friday.

The Sabres acquired Frolik from Calgary in exchange for a fourth-round pick, which they received from Montreal for defenseman Marco Scandella on Thursday. Frolik said a change of scenery was welcome after seeing limited playing time with the Flames this season.

"I'm really looking for a new opportunity there," he said. "I'm really excited. Like I said, it's a fresh start for me there and I'm really excited. I'm looking forward to meet the guys and meet the group and hopefully it happens sooner than later."

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill cited Frolik's 5-on-5 game and experience on the penalty kill as characteristics that made him an attractive addition to the team's forward group. The 31-year-old scored 14 even-strength goals last season. He's scored at least 12 goals at even strength in five of the past six seasons.

Frolik has averaged 1:08 of shorthanded ice time this season for a Calgary penalty kill that ranks fifth in the NHL. He ranked third on the Blackhawks in shorthanded ice time during their Stanley Cup run in 2013, valuable experience for a Sabres penalty kill that ranks 28th.

"I've been killing penalties for quite a bit," he said. "Hopefully, I can bring some experience in that department and I'm looking forward for that."

Frolik's average ice time dipped to a career-low 11:56 in 38 contests this season. Four of his five goals, however, have come since the beginning of December.

The opportunity for ice time exists with Jeff Skinner and Victor Olofsson both recovering from injuries, though Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said it will take seeing Frolik in person before determining his role on the ice.

"He's just a very smart player in so far as the way he manages his game on both sides of the puck," Krueger said. "He can make a play with the puck but without it he's very strong in his decisions as far as positional play is concerned, being responsible for the team. He'll be an excellent penalty killer for us and also somebody who can mentor this group in managing leads and dealing with in-game situations that we're still learning to get better at that in the end decide the scores."

"We're excited about the wealth of experience that he's going to bring into our room and just the person that he is. I've spoken to a few of his coaches from the last few years and just nothing but compliments on the human being that he is, which adds another person of character into this dressing room."

Frolik, too, is willing to be patient and earn his role.

"I just heard great things about their group and about the coaching staff," he said. "I'm just really looking forward to go there and be myself and we'll see how it plays out. But obviously looking for a little bit more ice time than what I was getting here in Calgary and to prove to myself that I can be the player that I used to be."

Asplund, Wilson earn opportunities following injury to Olofsson

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 3, 2020

With the news that Victor Olofsson is expected to miss five to six weeks with a lower-body injury, Buffalo Sabres coach Ralph Krueger was already focused on how to succeed in the rookie's absence by the time practice began at KeyBank Center on Friday.

After adding to the team's forward depth with the addition of Michael Frolik from Calgary on Thursday, the Sabres recalled veteran winger Scott Wilson from Rochester on Friday morning. Fellow rookie Rasmus Asplund, meanwhile, got the first crack at replacing Olofsson alongside Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

"It's what coaches need to do, is you look at what you have and not what you don't have and you just work with that group," Krueger said. "That's what experience does for that part of your brain. There's no room for emotion in this situation. You need to put the best possible group together to compete against Florida tomorrow and deal with Victor as a separate issue until he returns.

"Of course, he has been a very important catalyst to the good things that are happening here in the team and we need to fill that hole. Guys need to step up. ... It's definitely a challenging situation, but we'll pull together and fill that hole."

Olofsson sustained his injury during the sequence that led to Sam Reinhart's game-tying goal in the third period against Edmonton on Thursday. Olofsson got the edge of his skate caught in a rut on the ice as he turned to pass back to Zach Bogosian at the point, forcing him to fall awkwardly on his right leg.

The winger has been a fixture on the team's top scoring line alongside Eichel and Sam Reinhart this season. His season totals of 16 goals and 34 points lead league rookies and rank second on the Sabres. He was named NHL Rookie of the Month for the second time on Thursday.

The Sabres were already without forward Jeff Skinner, whose recovery timetable was set at three to four weeks after sustaining an upper-body injury last Friday. Vladimir Sobotka (knee) and Tage Thompson (upper body) are both out indefinitely.

Krueger liked what he saw from Asplund playing alongside Eichel and Reinhart in the third period against the Oilers. Asplund has become a trusted defensive presence since earning his first career recall in mid-November, a factor that Krueger said makes him a fit to fill in for Olofsson.

"There's a defensive component to that position, releasing Jack and Sam with the confidence that who's playing with them is going to cover, too, and they cover for each other," Krueger said. "What we're seeing in Asplund's game is that two-way awareness and the ability, very quickly, to also involve himself in the offense which he's still growing daily in front of our eyes here. But we really enjoyed seeing what we did in the end stretch of the game yesterday with him."

Asplund considers himself a two-way player and expects to add more offense as he continues to grow more comfortable in the NHL. As a rookie in Rochester last season, 23 of his 41 points came in the team's final 22 games.

"I know I can bring a lot of offensive points to this league," Asplund said. "I just need to find my path there. That's what I'm trying to figure out."

With Frolik awaiting a work visa and not expected to arrive until next week, the Sabres recalled Wilson to round out a group of 13 healthy forwards available for Saturday's home game against Florida.

Wilson, 27, has tallied 14 points (6+8) in 22 games with the Amerks this season. He appeared in 64 contests for the Sabres since being acquired from Detroit early in the 2017-18 campaign, though an ankle injury in training camp limited him to just 18 games last season.

Krueger said Wilson was given a to-do list at the end of training camp of what he needed to accomplish to get back to the NHL level. He checked all those boxes despite missing part of December with an upper-body injury.

The main point of emphasis, Wilson said, was being aggressive.

"I think they know too when you're coming back from injuries, it's second nature to kind of hold back in some areas of the ice," he said. "The last few weeks I really focused being physical, being aggressive, getting in on the forecheck. Not only do I do that down there, but that's my major role up here so I'm just going try and do that."

Friday's practice

Jack Eichel took a maintenance day after skating 23:56 on Thursday. Here's how the Sabres lined up, with Evan Rodrigues filling in between Asplund and Reinhart.

Forwards:

74 Rasmus Asplund - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 23 Sam Reinhart
13 Jimmy Vesey - 90 Marcus Johansson - 43 Conor Sheary
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 21 Kyle Okposo
20 Scott Wilson - 27 Curtis Lazar - 77 Dalton Smith

Defensemen: 4 Zach Bogosian, 10 Henri Jokiharju, 19 Jake McCabe, 26 Rasmus Dahlin, 33 Colin Miller, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 62 Brandon Montour

Johansson, Pilut named to AHL All-Star Roster

Goaltender Jonas Johansson and defenseman Lawrence Pilut have been selected to represent the North Division at the 2020 AHL All-Star Classic, the league announced Friday. The event will be held Jan. 26 and 27 in Ontario, California.

It's the second straight AHL All-Star selection for Pilut, who is tied for 10th among AHL defensemen with 16 assists. His average of .74 points per game ranks 12th among defensemen with at least 10 games played.

Johansson is 10-2-2 with two shutouts in 15 games. He ranks second among AHL goalies in both goals-against average (2.00) and save percentage (.933).

The two players join Amerks coach Chris Taylor, who will lead the North Division All-Star Team.

Olofsson to miss 5-6 weeks due to injury

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 3, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres announced today that forward Victor Olofsson will be out five to six weeks with a lower-body injury.

Olofsson exited last night's 3-2 win over the Edmonton Oilers in the third period after colliding into the end boards on Buffalo's game-tying goal.

The 24-year-old rookie has posted 16 goals and 35 points in 42 games this season.

He was named the NHL's Rookie of the Month for both October and December.

Sabres recall Wilson from Rochester

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 3, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres announced today that the team has recalled forward Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans (AHL).

This season in Rochester, Wilson has 14 points (6+8) in 22 games. His six goals tie for third-most on the team.

Since being acquired by the Sabres in a trade with Detroit on December 4, 2017, Wilson has recorded six goals and 11 assists in 64 games with Buffalo. Last season, he picked up three assists in 15 NHL contests after missing the first 42 games of the season due to an ankle injury.

Drafted in the seventh round of the 2011 NHL Draft (209th overall) by Pittsburgh, he went on to win a Stanley Cup as a member of the Penguins in 2017.

The Sabres are set to practice this afternoon as they prepare for a game against the Florida Panthers on Saturday at 1 p.m.

Tickets for the game, which will celebrate '90s Sabres history, are on sale now.