



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*February 23, 2020*

## **Eichel scores twice, Sabres races past sluggish Penguins 5-2**

By Will Graves

Associated Press

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Plenty of work remains for the Buffalo Sabres as they try to claw their way into the playoff picture. Streaking past the suddenly listless Pittsburgh Penguins is a pretty good way to start.

Jack Eichel scored twice and Sabres jumped on the Penguins early in a 5-2 victory on Saturday, just their second regulation win over Pittsburgh in the last seven years. Eichel, Zemgus Girgensons and Sam Reinhart all beat Tristan Jarry during an early three-goal outburst and Connor Hutton turned away 41 shots as Buffalo won for the fourth time in five games.

"I thought we played really desperate (and) we got rewarded," said Eichel after pushing his season goal total to 35. "That's a really good team. It's a good way to play there. We smothered them, we back-pressured. We played a good team game on the road."

Jeff Skinner picked up his first goal since early December with a pretty deflection in the third period and Hutton did the rest, staying calm as Pittsburgh turned up the pressure following its sluggish start.

"I think they got some chances," Hutton said. "They have a pretty good hockey team over there. I think the difference today was penalty kill and power play. We held the edge there and it's the difference in the game."

The Sabres went 2 for 3 with the man advantage — both scores coming off Eichel's stick — and killed both penalties they faced. Buffalo remains near the bottom of the Eastern Conference with just a quarter of the regular season remaining but the Sabres are a promising 6-3-1 in their last 10 games.

Making the playoffs isn't much of a concern for the Penguins, who haven't missed the postseason since 2006. A 14th consecutive trip is all but assured but Pittsburgh looked sluggish in the opening minutes and never recovered. After moving into the top spot in the Metropolitan Division for the first time all season with a win over Toronto on Tuesday, the Penguins have dropped two straight, being outscored 9-2 in the process.

Evgeni Malkin picked up his 19th and 20th goals for Pittsburgh and Jarry finished with 21 saves but coach Mike Sullivan admits he's growing concerned about his team's play, particularly in the defensive end.

"I think we're saying the right things, but our actions have to follow our words," Sullivan said. "We come out in the first period, we play a high-risk game. You can't win in this league playing a high-risk game. And we were high risk tonight."

Girgensons needed all of 14 seconds to give Buffalo the lead. The Sabres won the opening faceoff and worked the puck into the Pittsburgh zone. Kyle Okposo intercepted a Malkin chip behind the Penguins' net and fed it in front to a wide open Girgensons, who had little trouble beating a surprised Jarry.

Reinhart doubled Buffalo's advantage 6:48 into the first, deflecting an attempted stretch pass by Pittsburgh's Kris Letang and then chasing down the puck in the Penguins' zone for an impromptu breakthrough. Reinhart roofed a shot to Jarry's short side and Pittsburgh was reeling.

Eichel finished off the early flurry with his 34th of the season, a power-play goal 10:51 into the first in which the three-time All-Star was all alone in the left circle. He collected a pass from Rasmus Ristolainen and whipped a wrist shot over Jarry's right shoulder to make it 3-0.

A frustrated Sullivan called timeout in an effort to get his team to collect itself, but the Penguins never really threatened to get back in the game. Malkin brought Pittsburgh within 3-1 just past the midway point of the second period. But Hutton withstood a late push in the second to preserve the two-goal advantage. After Skinner ended a 22-game goal drought in the third period, the Sabres were on their way to only their second regulation win over the Penguins since Oct. 5, 2013.

"We not play hard defense," Malkin said. "It's fast team. They fight to playoffs and we should understand, we need to play physical."

NOTES: Suspended Buffalo defenseman Zach Bogosian's five-year tenure with the Sabres is over. Bogosian cleared waivers on Saturday, allowing Buffalo to terminate his contract and make him a free agent. The 29-year-old needs to sign with a team by Monday's trade deadline to be eligible to play in the postseason. ... Buffalo scratched D John Gilmour and C Evan Rodrigues. Pittsburgh scratched D Juuso Riihola and Fs Dominik Kahun and Zach Aston-Reese.

UP NEXT

Sabres: Host Winnipeg on Sunday.

Penguins: Will try to beat the Capitals during a Sunday road matinee for the second time this month. Pittsburgh edged Washington 4-3 on Feb. 2.

## **Sabres waive Bogosian with intention of terminating contract**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

February 21, 2020

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)** — The Buffalo Sabres placed suspended defenseman Zach Bogosian on unconditional waivers Friday with the intention of terminating his contract.

The move puts the Sabres in position to part ways with a disgruntled player who asked to be traded earlier this season and spent the past week refusing to report to Buffalo's American Hockey League affiliate in Rochester, New York.

Bogosian will have an opportunity to sign with another team to finish out the season, but the 12-year veteran will lose what's left of the \$6 million he is owed in the final year of his contract should he go unclaimed by noon Saturday.

Under NHL rules, Bogosian must be signed by the NHL's trade deadline on Monday afternoon to be eligible to compete in the playoffs.

There is little expectation Bogosian will be claimed after he cleared waivers a week ago in order for the Sabres to assign him to the minors.

The end of Bogosian's tenure in Buffalo comes a little more than five years after he was acquired along with forward Evander Kane in a multiplayer trade with the Winnipeg Jets. The Sabres gave up four players, including defenseman Tyler Myers, and a first-round draft pick in the first major move in then-general manager Tim Murray's rebuilding plans.

The trade failed to pan out for a Sabres team currently in jeopardy of extending the NHL's longest playoff drought to a ninth year. Kane was traded to San Jose two years ago, while Bogosian has been hampered by a series of injuries — including two hip operations over the past three years.

Bogosian has one goal and four assists in 19 games this season after missing Buffalo's first 22 games while recovering from hip surgery. He played 10 consecutive games before being scratched, which prompted him to request a trade. He was then a healthy scratch in eight of nine games before being placed on waivers last week.

Bogosian, who is from New York, was selected by the Atlanta Thrashers with the third pick in the 2008 draft, and he followed the franchise as it relocated to Winnipeg in 2011. Overall, he has 53 goals and 141 assists in 636 career games.

## **The 'calamity of errors' that cost the Knox family the Sabres' expansion certificate**

By Jason Wolf

The Buffalo News

February 23, 2020

It is among the oldest artifacts associated with the team: The piece of paper granting Buffalo an NHL franchise. So how did it go from being in the possession of the family that started the team to the owner of Dave and Adam's Card World?

Even in celebration, Seymour Knox IV remained haunted by regret.

Of course, it was an accident. An unfortunate series of oversights. "A calamity of errors," he said.

But it gnawed at him. How could he have been so negligent? And with something so precious, the expansion certificate that granted Buffalo an NHL franchise, the document presented to his late father and uncle after they'd spent years working to bring pro hockey to Western New York.

Now it is Dec. 2, 2019, "Founders' Night," and the Knox family is being honored on the ice at KeyBank Center. Knox IV smiles as he peers around the darkened arena at 1 Seymour H. Knox III Plaza.

*"Ladies and gentlemen," the announcer booms, "on this date 50 years ago, the National Hockey League awarded the Knox brothers and the City of Buffalo an NHL expansion franchise."*

The Sabres moved to this arena from Memorial Auditorium in 1996, only months after Knox III died and Knox IV inherited the contents of his dad's office. That seems like so long ago.

It's been 23 years since his dad's death.

Twenty-one years since his uncle, Northrup, passed away.

White banners with their initials hang in the rafters.

"Please join us in welcoming to the ice, the Knox family ... "

Knox, 65, walks along the black carpet to center ice and waves to the crowd. He is grey now, of slight build, the spitting image of his father, and wears a white commemorative 50th anniversary sweater with gold Sabres logo under his suit coat.

The alternate captains present his family with bouquets, and Sabres president and co-owner Kim Pegula hands a small wooden box to his mother, Jean. It contains a gold puck, inscribed with his dad's name and the date.

Then his mom drops a ceremonial puck and hugs Jack Eichel.

This is a memory Knox will keep forever.

Two years ago, memories were all he had left.

In October 2017, Knox said, his code wouldn't open the gate to allow access to his storage unit in Cheektowaga. He had rented it years earlier and filled it with items that had overwhelmed the leaky basement of his small home near Delaware Park. Bins of family photos, documents and memorabilia, artwork and seasonal clothes.

Knox walked into the manager's office to address the issue – they knew him, he said – and the woman behind the desk stammered.

"Mr. Knox, I don't know how to tell you this," he recalled hearing, "but you don't have your unit here anymore."

He had defaulted.

### **'This is unique'**

Adam Martin could hardly believe what he was reading, but Heritage Auctions is a major player in the high-end sports memorabilia market.

In its November 2017 catalog, listed as Lot #82521, was the expansion certificate the NHL presented to the Niagara Frontier Hockey Corp. acknowledging the Knox brothers' professional hockey club as a member of the league.

Dated May 15, 1970, it was signed by Clarence Campbell, the third president of the NHL.

It measured 11 inches by 10 1/2 inches, slightly larger than a standard letter.

And it came with two certificates of authenticity.

"Originally obtained with an array of pieces once owned by Sabres co-founder Seymour H. Knox III," the listing read, "it is easily one of the most historic pieces in Buffalo, New York, sports history."

It is among the oldest artifacts associated with the team.

"Over the years, I've definitely seen some similar pieces where teams or franchises are sold," Martin said.

"Certainly a lot of player contracts. Babe Ruth's contract when he was sold from the Red Sox to the Yankees, that went for some huge amount of money. So I've seen a lot of great documents in sports sell over the years, but not Buffalo related. Nothing like this. This is unique."

Martin owns Dave & Adam's Card World, a sports memorabilia and trading card company rooted in Buffalo in 1991. It's now among the largest dealers of unopened boxes of trading card packs in the industry, with a warehouse in Tonawanda, a superstore in Clarence and an office in the Philippines.

John Grimaldi, the president of the company, said another employee brought the auction to his attention. And he, too, was in disbelief.

"I'm sitting there, like, 'There's no way this is what they're saying it is ... ' " Grimaldi said. "And I remember just looking at the listing and then you go through the certificates of authenticity that come with it, and you're like, 'Oh, my god. This looks like it might be the real deal.' "

The auction was scheduled to end in less than 24 hours.

"So I immediately reached out to Adam," Grimaldi said.

Martin submitted a maximum bid of \$10,000.

And he won.

For \$2,040.

There were only four bids.

"I wasn't as surprised that we won it," Martin said. "I was surprised that we were able to win it at a reasonable price. ... It seemed to me that the auction house, if they just tweeted something at the Sabres and the Sabres had retweeted it, I think there would have been hundreds of bids, potentially. But they didn't. We just got really, really lucky."

The acquisition was reported in Sports Collectors Daily and the local TV and radio news.

That's how Knox learned the certificate had been in a box in the storage unit. And that it was gone.

### **Lost in the shuffle**

Knox said he defaulted on the unit because the company changed its name from Uncle Bob's to Life Storage.

When he got a bill, he assumed it was junk mail.

When he got phone calls and emails, he thought they were spam and paid them no mind.

"You wouldn't be thinking Uncle Bob's changed to Life Storage," Knox said. "You're not there all the time. You're not cognizant of what's going on."

The company sent a certified letter to his office, a space he was renting and in the process of moving out of, Knox said. But when the letter arrived he was out of town, and the person at the front desk signed for it and slipped it under his door.

When he returned, he didn't go through his mail right away.

"I put it in a pile and boxed everything up," Knox said.

He was 2 1/2 months in arrears when his belongings were auctioned in summer 2017.

"Because I didn't pay the \$250 that I owed for back rent," Knox said. "Whatever the figure was. I don't think it was very far away from that."

Life Storage said it strictly adheres to the timelines established by New York State and each of the other 28 states it operates in as it relates to the lien process, associated fees and auctions.

"Throughout his time as a customer, we contacted Mr. Knox close to 30 times via phone and email," company spokesperson Kristen Richthammer wrote in an email to The News. From the time Knox's account went into delinquency until it was auctioned, the company attempted to contact him by telephone 10 times and sent numerous emails, regular mail and a certified letter, it said.

The company publicly announced its rebranding in July 2016, according to the statement, and notified its customers in a variety of ways, including by email, letters on Life Storage letterhead, media, advertising and on its website. Buffalo-area stores switched to new signs in September 2016.

"Based on our records, Mr. Knox's account was current for several months following the rebranding," the statement read.

Knox said the company did nothing wrong.

He blames himself.

### **Good news, bad news**

Chris Nerat, the consignment director and resident hockey expert at Heritage Auctions, said he received an email from a man looking to offload Sabres memorabilia acquired in a storage unit auction.

The expansion certificate immediately piqued his interest.

"It's very rare that something that's this significant comes to auction," Nerat said, "just because something like this usually stays with the team or with the franchise. This is an important document in the team's history, so the fact that it ended up in a storage unit is a little bit bizarre."

But the provenance checked out, and so did Campbell's signature, scrawled in light blue ink with a ballpoint pen.

The lot also included a letter from the City of Buffalo to the Knox brothers expressing gratitude for bringing a hockey team to Buffalo, as well as artwork, photographs and letterhead "From the desk of Seymour Knox."

"The provenance is basically that it came out of a unit with other Sabres artifacts that would have only been issued or available to someone that was tied deep within the organization," Nerat said. "That's basically what led us to be able to authenticate this, just based on what else it came with."

The man who consigned the pieces declined an interview request through the auction house and wished to remain anonymous, Nerat said, but he passed along a phone number for his employer, Cheryl Burgio.

Burgio owns CM Gold, a shop in Williamsville that deals in antiques and collectibles and buys and liquidates estates.

"We actually bought the storage unit through Life Storage," Burgio said. "Think of 'Storage Wars.' It's exactly like that. There is a public notice. You don't know the contents prior to bidding. Literally you just get a sneak peek inside the unit, choose to bid whatever and when you purchase it, it's either garbage or sometimes you find something, a diamond in the rough."

CM Gold then determines the most efficient way to sell items for a profit, including on Facebook Marketplace and eBay. The expansion certificate stood out.

"When we found it, we knew it was something that was rare," Burgio said. "As far as being able to trace it further back, we don't know whose unit it was previously. We can speculate, just as much as anybody else, but typically we try to keep that information confidential if we do know, just for the integrity of whose matter it may be."

Knox said that shortly after losing the storage unit, he shared his story with an appraiser who was looking at a friend's estate.

"And I said sort of off the cuff that I had the weirdest thing happen not too long ago," Knox said. "I just found out my storage unit had been auctioned off."

He described what he'd lost: Memorabilia, artwork, antique fishing equipment, boxes of Christmas cards and items that had no real value to anyone outside his family.

"I said if by chance you hear about it, let me know," Knox said. "It was October or November, and I got a call and he said, 'You won't believe it. Somebody upstairs is looking out for you big time. Some guy just brought in five tubs of your stuff.'"

"I said, 'Oh, my god. I'm elated. I'm dancing on the ceiling.'"

"And then he's like, 'That's the good news. The bad news is somebody else owns it. And you have to buy it back in an auction.'"

Taking ownership

Knox said he reacquired many of the lost belongings. But not all of them.

He was heartbroken to learn Dave & Adam's won the expansion certificate through Heritage Auctions.

"Believe me, if I had known I would have been bidding," Knox said.

He thought about trying to buy it back, and he even went to one of the stores, a location in Tonawanda that was closing. Knox said he did not introduce himself, choosing to play it low-key. He was told the certificate was not for sale but would go on display at the new superstore in Clarence in 2018.

"There was a trickle of collectors who read about the piece and came in and wanted to see it," said Martin, the company owner.

At the time, it wasn't much to look at, just a black and white certificate in Old English font and a blue mat, unframed, shipped by Heritage as it was received.

At some point, it was folded in half, and it retains a vertical crease.

After several weeks, Martin moved it to the conference room in the corporate office in Tonawanda.

He had it framed with blue and gold matting in a large composite that reads "BUFFALO SABRES" across the top, "EST 1970" along the bottom and incorporates photographs of Knox's father and uncle with Punch Imlach, the team's first general manager and coach.

In one, they're displaying home and road sweaters. In another, they're holding crossed swords. In a third, Knox's dad stands on carpet atop the ice, just like his mom on Founders' Night, and drops the ceremonial puck on opening night at the Aud.

It's the crown jewel of Martin's collection.

"As far as how it presents, and what it means to me personally, growing up in Buffalo my whole life, being a Sabres fan since I was a little boy, it means the most to me," Martin said. "That's why I wanted it in my office so I can see it, rather than having it in a safety deposit box like some of the other items that I own."

Knox said he never visited the Dave & Adam's superstore.

"My own stupidity is why it's there," he said, before learning it had moved.

He said he's never spoken to Martin.

"I don't know if he would be up for the sympathetic story," Knox said.

Knox sits at a restaurant down the road and taps on his phone, scrolling through family Christmas photos for sale on eBay for \$9.99 apiece.

"It's not mine. And I didn't want to go in and blow up on the guy," Knox said. "It's his.

"Sometimes you just have to put something behind you. And if I were to reacquire it, then what am I going to do? I'm 65. My kids say, 'Dad, you're buying stuff that you lost. You're chasing stuff.' "

Knox said he's thankful the person who bought his storage unit consigned the certificate to a reputable auction house. It could have ended up at some pawn shop or in the trash.

He said he's glad Martin put it on public display, at least for a time, and he hopes Martin one day loans it to the Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame, once it establishes a location.

Martin liked that idea. And he said he'll do Knox one better.

"I would be happy to, having heard the story," Martin said. "The best place for this would be with the Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame when they open up a facility, with a plaque that indicates it's here courtesy of myself and Seymour Knox IV."

## **Sabres' Jeff Skinner ends scoring drought with third-period goal**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH -- There was no significant celebration or expression of joy from Jeff Skinner when he pushed the Buffalo Sabres' lead to three goals in the third period Saturday in PPG Paints Arena.

Skinner didn't say much about the goal, his 12th of the season, when speaking to the media in the aftermath of a 5-2 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins. The two-time All-Star did not want to use the term "relief" when asked what emotions he experienced after snapping a career-long 22-game goal drought that dated back to Dec. 2.

Skinner, who signed an eight-year, \$72 million contract last June, said he was simply happy to contribute to an important road win over one of the best teams in the National Hockey League.

"I felt pretty good," Skinner said with a smile. "I don't know. I feel like I scored a few times and usually it feels pretty good. ... You can use 'relief,' I guess, if that sort of fits the story line because of how long it's been. I don't know. I just feel happy to get another goal and add to the lead a little bit more."

Skinner's teammates expressed excitement, though. The 27-year-old redirected a pass from Marcus Johansson between goalie Tristan Jarry's leg pads at 5:39 into the third period for a 4-1 Sabres lead. It was the end of a bizarre scoring drought in which Skinner consistently created scoring chances.

His drive to the net Tuesday in Ottawa resulted in Brandon Montour scoring the Sabres' first goal in a 7-4 loss. A strong defensive play by Michael Frolik earned Skinner a 2-on-1 opportunity in the second period Saturday, but his wrist shot was stopped by Jarry.

This was one of Skinner's better all-around games since he suffered an upper-body injury against Boston on Dec. 28. He tied Kyle Okposo for the team lead with three shots on goal and had two hits in 13:45 of ice time in his 12th game since returning to the Sabres' lineup.

"They were really celebrating," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said of his players' reaction to Skinner scoring. "I mean, this group really cheers for each other. You could see the faces. Jeff's beaming but everybody else, too, and cheering loud. So let that be the beginning of some momentum for him."

### **New assignment**

Krueger declined to say whether Jack Eichel not taking any faceoffs against Pittsburgh was related to the center's absence from practice Thursday. Sam Reinhart centered the Sabres' top line, winning five of 14 faceoffs during his 18:04 of ice time.

Eichel missed practice Thursday for what Krueger called "maintenance" though the 23-year-old showed no signs of potential injury when he scored his 34th and 35th goals of the season Saturday.

"There's really no conversation around it," Krueger said. "We know that Jack had a maintenance day. We know that it's that time of year. We're just playing it safe. We got Sam who can take draws really well and Curtis (Lazar). But Jack's fine, Jack's feeling good."

### **Hutton's response**

Sabres goalie Carter Hutton stopped 41 of 43 shots to earn his fifth win in six starts. The 34-year-old allowed six goals on 39 shots Tuesday in Ottawa.

Krueger called Hutton the Sabres' "most important penalty killer," a point that was illustrated during a first-period Pittsburgh power play in which Buffalo's goalie stopped Sidney Crosby's rebound chance. Afterward, Penguins coach Mike Sullivan noted that Hutton was the reason why Pittsburgh was unable to overcome the early three-goal deficit.

"I thought we played hard," Sullivan said. "We battled to try to get back into the game, but give their goaltender credit. He made some big saves for them. That's hockey. That's why you can't beat yourself because sometimes you're going to run into a goalie that makes some big saves."

### **Bogosian clears**

Former Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian cleared unconditional waivers Saturday, paving the way for his contract to be terminated by the team. The 29-year-old will become an unrestricted free agent and can sign elsewhere, though he will need to have his contract completed by 3 p.m. Monday to be eligible for the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

According to CapFriendly.com, the Sabres have an estimated \$8.4 million in salary cap space, though they need to allocate some of that money for performance bonuses on players' entry-level contracts.

Bogosian, who was acquired from Winnipeg in February 2015, had one goal with four assists in 19 games this season. Injuries limited Bogosian to 243 games with the Sabres, as he recorded 13 goals with 54 assists and a minus-49 rating.

## **Sabres rediscover their identity, start fast in 5-2 win over Pittsburgh**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH – The start to the game Saturday afternoon was everything coach Ralph Krueger envisioned when preparing the Buffalo Sabres.

His checking line, led by Johan Larsson, forechecked the Pittsburgh Penguins into a mistake and scored 14 seconds into the first period when Zemgus Girgensons was left uncovered in front of the net.

The Sabres' lead grew to three goals less than 11 minutes later when Jack Eichel fired a wrist shot under Tristan Jarry's blocker, causing Penguins coach Mike Sullivan to call a timeout. It was the third time in as many games Buffalo built a lead of two or more goals.

The Sabres didn't crumble this time, though. Four days after blowing a two-goal lead in Ottawa, Buffalo had four different players score, including two from Eichel and a slump-ending goal from Jeff Skinner, in a 5-2 win over the Penguins in PPG Paints Arena.

The manner in which the Sabres dispatched the Penguins, who are tied for first place in the Metropolitan Division, illustrated how Eichel and company have improved since their second-half collapse last season.

"A year ago, I don't think we would have had an effort like that in this situation, and I think we've all grown up a little bit," Eichel said after scoring his 34th and 35th goals. "It's just about that consistency."

It was an important response after the Sabres allowed four goals in less than four minutes during a 7-4 loss Tuesday in Ottawa. Krueger used their last two practices this week to drill the importance of being responsible without the puck.

Strong defense and goaltending kept the Sabres in the race when Victor Olofsson missed most of January with a lower-body injury. In addition to having Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, the Penguins entered Saturday having allowed the second-fewest goals in the National Hockey League. Their 22 home wins led the league and their goaltending duo's .925 save percentage in Pittsburgh ranked second.

Buffalo's players didn't deviate from an identity Krueger has described as "Sabres hockey." It began with the first shift when Kyle Okposo retrieved a loose puck behind Pittsburgh's net and sent a centering pass to Girgensons, whose low shot beat Jarry for a 1-0 lead.

Sam Reinhart then used his stick to deflect Kris Letang's breakout pass and knocked the puck out of the air with his hand. Reinhart drove to the net with the puck on his backhand and moved it to his forehand before lifting a shot over Jarry's blocker for a 2-0 lead at 6:48 into the game.

"We really just came in here, regrouped and tried to get back to what we were doing in the games before," Krueger said. "I'm just really pleased with the four-line, six-D, goaltending effort all the way through the lineup. Everybody contributed today. Yeah, it's an excellent reaction in a very tough building to react in."

The Penguins made a critical mistake by giving Eichel plenty of time and space on the power play. The Sabres' 23-year-old captain received a pass from Rasmus Ristolainen and faked a shot to the far post before unleashing a wrister near side for a 3-0 lead at 10:51 into the game.

Sullivan explained to reporters afterward that the Penguins were "beating ourselves," so he decided to use his timeout to reinforce the need for a more responsible approach. The Sabres, meanwhile, were discussing the importance of continuing to apply pressure on defense and to prevent Pittsburgh from generating offense off the rush.

A potential turning point occurred less than five minutes following Eichel's goal when Colin Miller was penalized for shoving Patric Hornqvist to the ice, an act of retaliation after the Penguins forward elbowed Marcus Johansson near the right-wing boards.

The Sabres' penalty kill, which entered Saturday ranked 30th in the NHL, proceeded to kill off the infraction. Goalie Carter Hutton stopped Crosby's rebound shot near side to preserve the 3-0 lead.

"It's a really good hockey team over there, and I think when we come in this building we understand what we're up against and the way we need to play," Eichel said. "I don't think we deviate from that and I think that's what makes us successful. It's important that you come in with that mindset no matter who you're playing or where you are. It seems like when we go on the road and play against some of these top teams in the league we really respect the opponent and we respect our game."

The first goal against didn't have much of an impact. Malkin scored his first of two goals by knifing across the slot and beating Hutton with a wrist shot 11:10 into the second period. After a brief lull, the Sabres finished the second period with two significant scoring chances, including Skinner's wrist shot during a 2 on 1.

A strong start to the third led to more offense, when Skinner ended his career-long 22-game goal drought by redirecting a pass from Johansson between Jarry's leg pads to make it 4-1 at 5:39 into the third period. Consistent defensive play from every forward allowed Krueger to sparse out the ice time, as no Sabre logged more than 18:30 and no less than 12:39. Ten different Sabres had at least two shots on goal and there weren't any significant defensive blunders after Henri Jokiharju turned the puck over moments before Malkin's first goal.

The Sabres' power play, which entered Saturday ranked 18th in the NHL, struck again with 7:43 remaining in regulation. Eichel scored on another wrist shot from the left circle, though he fooled Jarry with a shot to the top corner.

"I think we did a good job of sticking with it," Skinner said. "The D did a great job all night sort of being up the ice and limiting their time and space in the neutral zone. It allowed us to get more breakout opportunities instead of them carrying it in off the rush. I thought even after that first goal we were able to stay aggressive and that was big for us."

Malkin made it 5-2 by scoring off a rebound, but Hutton finished with 41 saves to close out Buffalo's fourth win in five games. The Sabres (28-25-8) avoided falling further out of the playoff chase and host Winnipeg on Sunday for the final game before the trade deadline.

The deficit can seem daunting considering only 21 games remain in the regular season. However, the Sabres have a blue print for success, something they lacked during their historic collapse a year ago.

"We're just trying to chip away," Hutton said. "In the big, grand scheme of things we've got a lot of work to do, but right now, we can just only focus on what's at hand here and what's in front of us."

## **The Wraparound: Sabres 5, Penguins 2**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH – The Buffalo Sabres needed only 14 seconds Saturday afternoon to silence the crowd in PPG Paints Arena.

The Sabres weren't done there, either. Zengus Girgensons opened the scoring 14 seconds into the game and Buffalo pulled away for a 5-2 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Sabres (28-25-8) have won four of their last five games and won both of their games in Pittsburgh, including a season-opening win Oct. 3. Jeff Skinner snapped his career-long 22-game goal drought by scoring 5:39 into the third period, his first goal since Dec. 2 and 12th in 51 games this season.

Jack Eichel also scored two goals, his 34th and 35th of the season, on the power play, and Sam Reinhart also scored in the first period. Carter Hutton made 41 saves against the Penguins (37-17-6), who received two goals from Evgeni Malkin.

**14 seconds:** Girgensons was left uncovered in front of the net to score his 11th goal of the season. Kyle Okposo found Girgensons on a centering pass from behind the net 14 seconds into the game.

**Defense:** Reinhart got a stick on Kris Letang's pass and knocked the puck out of the air before driving to the net for his 22nd goal of the season. Reinhart beat goalie Tristan Jarry with a shot over the blocker for a 2-0 lead at 3:55 into the game.

**Timeout:** Penguins coach Mike Sullivan called a timeout after Eichel gave the Sabres a 3-0 lead at 10:51 into the game. Pittsburgh gave Eichel plenty of time and space to fire a wrist shot from the left circle for his 34th goal of the season.

**Skirmish:** Colin Miller was penalized for roughing late in the first period after he shoved Patric Hornqvist to the ice, an action of retaliation after Hornqvist elbowed Marcus Johansson near the right-wing boards.

**Momentum killer:** Rather than gaining energy from a second period power-play, the Sabres lost momentum when they failed to record a shot on goal with Justin Schultz in the box for tripping Victor Olofsson.

Moments after the penalty expired, Henri Jokiharju committed a turnover in the defensive zone, and Malkin scored after cutting across the slot to create a shooting lane from the slot. The goal was Malkin's 19th of the season and 16th in 40 career games against the Sabres.

**Better finish:** Though the Sabres' lead was cut to two goals, they had a strong finish to the second period. Skinner had a shot on goal during a 2 on 1, and Conor Sheary's one-timer from the slot was stopped by Jarry. Entering Saturday, Buffalo was 21-1 when leading after the second period.

**Slump ends:** Skinner's scoring drought ended when he redirected a pass from Marcus Johansson past Jarry for a 4-1 lead in the third period.

**Streak continues:** With his primary assist on Eichel's second power-play goal, Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin extended his point streak to a career-high six games. He has at least one point in 14 of his last 17 games dating back to Jan. 4.

**Lineup:** Forward Evan Rodrigues and defenseman John Gilmour were healthy scratches for the Sabres. Winger Michael Frolik returned from an illness after missing the past two games.

**Next:** The Sabres host the Winnipeg Jets in KeyBank Center on Sunday at 3 p.m.

## **Zach Bogosian free to sign with another team after clearing waivers**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH -- Zach Bogosian cleared unconditional waivers Saturday, officially ending the defenseman's stint with the Buffalo Sabres and allowing him to sign with another team.

In order to be eligible for the Stanley Cup Playoffs, Bogosian must sign before 3 p.m. Monday. The Sabres are also off the hook for the remaining \$1.68 million in salary. According to CapFriendly.com, General Manager Jason Botterill has approximately \$8.14 million in cap space ahead of the trade deadline, though the Sabres will need to pay year-end performance bonuses to players on entry-level contracts.

After scratching Bogosian in eight of nine games following the All-Star break, the Sabres waived the 29-year-old last Friday. He was assigned to Rochester after clearing waivers and was suspended for failing to report, allowing the team to terminate his contract.

Though Bogosian forfeited the remainder of his salary, he finally got the fresh start he desired. He requested a trade after being a healthy scratch for the first time in his career Dec. 12. Bogosian had played in 10 consecutive games after returning from his second hip surgery in three years.

Bogosian missed all of training camp and the first 22 games of the season after undergoing the procedure last April, and he suffered a setback during the summer. Botterill was not able to find another team willing to take Bogosian's \$5.14 million cap hit, and Bogosian mostly struggled when inserted in the lineup. His final game as a Sabre included a minus-3 rating in 17:09 of a 6-1 loss to the Colorado Avalanche on Feb. 4.

Bogosian had one goal and four assists in 19 games this season. He appeared in 243 games with the Sabres after arriving in a trade with Winnipeg in February 2015, compiling 13 goals with 54 assists and a minus-49 rating.

## **Carter Hutton starting in goal for Sabres in Pittsburgh**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH -- Carter Hutton will start in goal for the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday afternoon in Pittsburgh, coach Ralph Krueger told the media in PPG Paints Arena.

Hutton, 34, received a limited workload in practice Thursday, as he's playing through what Krueger described as a minor lower-body injury. Hutton has a 4-1 record and .936 save percentage in seven career games against the Penguins, including a 28-save percentage in the Sabres' season-opening win in Pittsburgh on Oct. 3. He is 4-0 with two shutouts in six career games in Pittsburgh.

With Hutton starting in Pittsburgh, the Sabres will likely turn to Jonas Johansson in goal on Sunday against the Winnipeg Jets in KeyBank Center.

Krueger would not confirm any lineup changes against the Penguins, though he expressed optimism that winger Michael Frolik (illness) will return from a two-game absence. Frolik has an empty-net goal and an assist in 15 games since he was acquired from the Calgary Flames for a fourth-round draft pick.

Krueger emphasized the need for a strong defensive performance after the Sabres lost to the Ottawa Senators, 7-4, Tuesday in Canadian Tire Centre. Entering Saturday, the Penguins (37-16-6) were in a tie for first place in the Metropolitan Division and have allowed the second-fewest goals in the National Hockey League. Tristan Jarry (20-8-1, 2.13, .931) will start in goal for Pittsburgh.

Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin have thrived against the Sabres over the years, posting 61 and 50 career points, respectively.

"We really worked a lot on the game without the puck," Krueger said of the Sabres' preparation for Pittsburgh. "There was a lot of physicality in both practices. We're expecting, as we take our show on the road here for the next few weeks -- other than the Winnipeg game -- we have a need for our very best defensive game to show up here. The work without the puck will be critical for us to set ourselves up for opportunities to win, so that was a major focus here. It slipped slightly in the Ottawa game and by the time we got it back it was too late. We need to, on the road, be extremely strong defensively and have a good penalty kill, which is our motor defensively."

The Sabres (27-25-8) are sixth in the Atlantic Division, 10 points behind the third-place Toronto Maple Leafs. Defenseman Rasmus Dahlin has one goal with five assists during his career five-game point streak, and Victor Olofsson has at least one point in each of his four games since returning from a lower-body injury.

## **Lots of lessons for Sabres to take from Penguins' season**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 21, 2020

More than four months and 60 games ago, the Buffalo Sabres dominated the Pittsburgh Penguins and were deserving of full marks in a 3-1 win that opened their season.

A whole lot has happened since then as the teams reconvene 1 p.m. Saturday in PPG Paints Arena.

The Sabres have battled injuries all season and their maddening inconsistency has left them too far out of the playoff hunt to avoid being sellers yet again at Monday's NHL trade deadline. The Penguins remain the Penguins, hunting yet another Stanley Cup even in the face of a colossal injury battle that would have almost assuredly crushed the hopes of most teams.

"They certainly have a core of experienced players where anybody coming up filling those holes, it seems like it's nonnegotiable to play the right way in Pittsburgh," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said after practice Friday in KeyBank Center.

The Penguins' current injury list includes center Nick Bjugstad (40 games), defenseman Brian Dumoulin (32), winger Jake Guentzel (20), defenseman John Marino (6) and forward Zach Aston-Reese (2).

It's been an epidemic all season. Captain Sidney Crosby missed 28 games over two months after core muscle surgery. Other key absences and the games they've missed are: defensemen Justin Schultz (23) and Kris Letang (8) and forwards Patric Hornqvist (16) and Evgeni Malkin (13).

Even after Thursday's 4-0 loss in Toronto, the Penguins have gone 23-7-2 in their last 32 games to wipe out a 13-point deficit and tie Washington for first place in the Metropolitan Division. Pittsburgh was fifth in the division through 27 games (14-9-4).

"They slipped off their game for a bit last night for a period, but we have so much respect for what they do and the consistency they bring," Krueger said. "That's what you're working on here, a consistent culture where the players in the end are the biggest part of the check system and the coaches are guiding."

Sabres winger Conor Sheary scored two goals in that October matchup and knows exactly what makes those Penguins tick from his days as a Cup winner with them in 2016 and 2017.

"It's sticking within your system. When you lose a guy like Sid (Crosby) in their lineup or if Jack Eichel goes down in our lineup, it's time for other guys to step up," Sheary said. "You get more opportunity and you have to take advantage of that. If you stay within the system, that's when the team is at its best and it's not an individual game. They've done a really good job of that this year and they're in a good spot in the standings because of it."

Crosby has 23 points (7-16) in 14 games since returning from his injury, third in the NHL in that span behind Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl and Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov. He had a four-point night in his first game back.

"We have great character and leadership in our room and these guys never look for excuses," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "They find ways to win games. When someone goes down, it provides an opportunity for someone else to step up. A lot of it is your own attitude and perception and I give these guys a lot of credit. The expectation is that we have enough to win."

"It's a next-guy-up sort of mentality," Eichel said. "They've always been really good at that. They've had key guys go down at different times and they always seem to find a way to get through it."

Injuries, of course, have been a key problem for the Sabres all season and prolonged absences of Victor Olofsson, Rasmus Dahlin, Jeff Skinner, Linus Ullmark and Vladimir Sobotka have been a major detriment to their season.

The Sabres have also rarely found the kind of all-around performance they authored in Game 1, when they got a strong effort at both ends of the ice and airtight goaltending from Carter Hutton.

"It was quite astounding out of training camp the habits we showed, the energy we had and the speed with which we played," Krueger said of the opener, which he said he reviewed Thursday. "That keeps popping up. At least we have that picture in our heads."

"That's probably the poster right there for our style and exactly how we want to play," Eichel said. "Obviously we haven't done it every night this year, but we did it on opening night against a really good hockey club."

The Sabres have found that kind of game from time to time, especially on the road in places like Edmonton, Dallas and New York. Just not nearly enough.

"Pittsburgh is a group that's got that nailed and it's quite remarkable how they find that consistency every season," Krueger said. "Even through injuries, the machine keeps rolling. Even through transfers in the summertime, the machine keeps rolling and we can take a lot from that."

"We just need to keep working on the execution behind it. That first game truly going back and looking at it was quite an amazing performance coming out of training camp. It continues to be one of the benchmarks of the season."

## **Taylor Leier's new contract provides Sabres organization with forward depth**

By Bill Hoppe

The Buffalo News

February 21, 2020

The Sabres signed Amerks winger Taylor Leier to a one-year, two-way contract worth \$700,000.

Amerks General Manager Randy Sexton said Leier, who inked a one-year AHL deal after tearing his labrum last May, would have received an NHL contract last offseason if he had remained healthy.

Shortly after his season debut Dec. 11, Leier, 26, scored five goals over a four-game stretch. Then a frightening injury – teammate Kevin Porter's shot hit him in the neck, causing him to be stretchered off the ice – sidelined Leier for 12 games.

"I've had a chip on my shoulder since the surgery happened and then my neck injury," Leier said. "I think I've become stronger because of it. You learn a lot about yourself when there's adversity in front of you.

"It hasn't been the easiest year. Just without a training camp, no exhibition games. But at the same time, I obviously knew I wasn't going to start in Buffalo.

"I had one job to do, and it was come play for the Amerks, which I was very grateful for and the contract they gave me."

Leier, who played 55 games with the Philadelphia Flyers earlier in his career, said he tried not to think about earning an NHL contract.

"I just tried to feel like my old self, which I have, and things just kind of took care of itself," he said.

Leier, of course, boosts the Sabres' forward depth in Rochester.

"We don't have a ton of guys here on NHL contracts, particularly up front, so we wanted to make sure we have some depth just in case things go a different way come trade deadline," Sexton said.

Leier has scored seven goals and nine points in 18 games this season.

## On Deadline Day, Sabres fans can only hope for a (pleasant) surprise

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 21, 2020

One easy mindset to have about the Sabres for Deadline Day: Temper your expectations. Expect little and be pleasantly surprised if something significant happens.

There's only a small chance the Sabres are going to emerge as a better team come Monday afternoon. The much more likely scenario is they're actually worse, given the potential of trades involving pending unrestricted free agents such as Jimmy Vesey, Conor Sheary, Johan Larsson or Zemgus Girgensons that will likely yield only draft picks in return.

Good luck to General Manager Jason Botterill trying to sell that kind of day Monday, when he dumps UFAs and calls up the likes of Taylor Leier from Rochester to fill the roster over the final 20 games. You have to hold out hope that Botterill can make the kind of move he did at last year's deadline, when defenseman Brandon Montour was acquired from Anaheim with a year left on his contract.

No one ever really knows what's going to happen on these days. If you had tape recordings of most GMs' conversations, the bet here is it would be a surprise what names get talked about. But the salary cap is one impediment, and hockey GMs by nature are a conservative lot, not prone to some of the wild impulse moves we see sometimes in the NBA.

Botterill's trade chart is hard to digest. The Montour trade was a good idea, even if it cost the Sabres one of their first-round picks. I'll take an experienced young defenseman over futures any day of the week.

Cliff Pu for Jeff Skinner and Alex Nylander for Henri Jokiharju are hard to argue as well, with Skinner's current issues not being his trade cost but the exorbitant free agent deal the Sabres signed him to last summer.

The Ryan O'Reilly trade, of course, is a well-documented disaster, and it's what Botterill has to avoid if he's entertaining talks involving Rasmus Ristolainen. A deal for your most physical, minutes-munching defenseman simply must return a quality top-six forward, especially given that Ristolainen still has two more years left on a deal with a reasonable cap hit of \$5.4 million. It's far easier to work that kind of deal at the draft and over the summer than now.

Still, it's not hard to wonder if the O'Reilly deal has dropped Botterill into a paralysis-by-analysis mentality, where he's gun-shy of making another major misstep that would seal his fate with this organization.

Here are some other topics key topics this corner will watch as the 3 p.m. Monday deadline approaches:

**Vincent Trocheck:** Buyer beware. And that includes the Sabres. The Florida center had 31 goals and 75 points two seasons ago. Last year, he was at just 10-24-34 in 55 games. This season, he enters the weekend at 10-25-35 in 54 games. Are you giving up a solid defenseman like Ristolainen or Montour for that?

**Chicago goalies:** Two-time Stanley Cup champion Corey Crawford and old friend Robin Lehner are both UFAs after the season. Crawford, 35, has a \$6 million cap hit and Lehner, 28, has a \$5 million hit. Lehner would like stay on a long-term deal, but it's unclear what path the Hawks will go. Crawford has a no-trade clause while Lehner could be on the move.

**San Jose's Joe Thornton and Patrick Marleau, Chicago's Duncan Keith:** Three longtime veterans and franchise icons, respectively. Their teams are going nowhere this year, so will they give the OK to go somewhere else to chase a Cup?

**Chris Kreider:** The Rangers winger is on a \$4.625 million cap hit heading into UFA status. He has 20-plus goals for the fifth time in six seasons and would look awfully good in either Boston or St. Louis, where the Blues dearly miss Vladimir Tarasenko.

**Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Ilya Kovalchuk:** What will the Senators and Canadiens, respectively, do with this pair? Both could be dealt or both could be re-signed. The Sabres would love to see Pageau out of the Atlantic Division after he torched them for five goals this season. Ottawa has scary potential with two lottery picks coming, their own and San Jose's in the Erik Karlsson deal.

**Columbus:** The Blue Jackets are a disaster due to injuries, and 21-goal scorer Oliver Bjorkstrand is the latest to join the list, leaving Nationwide Arena on crutches after Thursday's overtime loss to Philadelphia and being ruled out Friday for 8-10 weeks to a severe ankle injury. The Jackets lost defense stud Seth Jones for the rest of the regular season last week due to ankle surgery. They enter the weekend leading the wild-card race and two points out of third in the Metro and will have to make a couple of moves to stay in the race.

### **The Scandy Man can**

Old friend Marco Scandella's debut Thursday night for St. Louis in a 1-0 win over Arizona: 19:24, plus-1, three hits, one blocked shot. Played 2:51 on the penalty-killing unit. Scandella has been given a huge role, in Jay Bouwmeester's spot alongside Colton Parayko.

"He's just got to be aggressive and play his game," Blues coach Craig Berube said before the win. "We want him to be a good defender, use his shot, but the system stuff will take time like it always does. He can still be a good player by having an aggressive mindset, move the puck quick, get up in the play and use his shot. That's what he does."

Scandella was thankful for the 20 games he played for Montreal, his hometown team, but he was obviously thrilled to get traded to a defending Stanley Cup champion looking to repeat.

"I feel like I lived the dream," he said of his time in Montreal. "Even though it was a small stint. It was just two months. ... Got the opportunity to play there, play in front of my family and my friends. Scored at the Bell Centre against the Leafs. So some big moments there.

"Playing in the playoffs is everything in hockey. So just to be a part of this team, this franchise, I feel like I'm really lucky."

### **No Miracle on TV**

Saturday is the 40th anniversary of the Miracle on Ice at the Lake Placid Olympics — and one of the great "oops" moments in Buffalo television history.

Folks too young to remember will be surprised to learn that the iconic USA-Russia game was not televised live in the United States because it was a 5 p.m. start and the International Ice Hockey Federation declined to move to the game to prime time to accommodate ABC. The show went on at 5 — but folks in Buffalo and other border cities got the chance to watch it live on CTV.

The 4-3 victory was over by the time the puck dropped on ABC shortly after 8. During the second intermission — with Team USA trailing, 3-2 — a commercial break featured Irv Weinstein's nightly update previewing Channel 7's Eyewitness News at 11. Intoned Irv looking at the night's top stories: "Celebrating a big hockey victory."

Whoops. Channel 7 got plenty of complaint calls that night because that's how many people found out the score before Al Michaels screamed, "Do you believe in miracles? YES!"

Amazing how we all lived before the Internet.

### **Mom Knows Best for Rangers**

One of the funniest team-produced videos you'll see came prior to the Rangers' win Wednesday in Chicago. It was the team's moms trip and the cameras were inside the locker room as Ryan Strome's mother, Trish, was given the chance by coach David Quinn to announce the starting lineup to the team.

Some pearls from her chat:

"Centering my first boy ... (Artemi) Panarin, move him the puck. Move. Him. The. Puck."

"Adam Fox: Happy birthday. Get a birthday goal tonight."

"(Ryan) Lindgren: You just got your stitches out. Don't let your mom see you hurt that again."

"(Igor) Shesterkin: I just love saying 'Shesterkin'"

Ryan Strome took the opening faceoff against younger brother, Dylan, and scored a goal in New York's 6-3 win. Tweeted Ryan Strome after the game: "What a moment tonight. I only aged 5 ... maybe 10 years as she read the lineup card" followed by a laughing emoji and a hand-to-forehead emoji."

### **Around the boards**

- The Canucks did an incredible ceremony to retire the jersey numbers of the Sedins last week, and it's shame the Sabres didn't have an option to similarly put a number in the KeyBank Center rafters in their 50th anniversary season.

Really the only remote possibility for that honor would be longtime defenseman Mike Ramsey and his last year here was 1992. If the team was going to retire Ramsey's No. 5, it would have long ago done so. The Sabres don't have a slam-dunk candidate like Vancouver did with the Sedins.

- Rounding up the recent announcements about the league's upcoming events: This year's draft will be in Montreal on June 26-27. The 2021 Winter Classic will be at Target Field in Minneapolis with the Wild hosting an undetermined opponent (the bet here is St. Louis), and the 2021 Stadium Series will be Feb. 20 in Raleigh, with the Hurricanes' foe for the game at North Carolina State to be announced.

The 2021 All-Star Game will be Jan. 30 at Florida's BB&T Center and the 2021 draft site has not been announced, though there's lots of chatter the league would like to do it in Seattle and pair it with the expansion draft if the city's reconstruction of Key Arena allows that to happen.

- The NHL had to do some shuffling to accommodate the rescheduling of the St. Louis-Anaheim game that was halted Feb. 11 because of Bouwmeester's collapse. It will now be played March 11, and the Blues' home game vs. Florida that was slated for March 10 was pushed back a day to March 9.

The Blues-Ducks game was stopped at 7:50 of the first period with the score tied at 1-1. The league announced it will be started over and all 60 minutes played, but that the two goals will count and the game will begin with the 1-1 score rather than 0-0.

- Memo to NBC and NBCSN: The Detroit Red Wings are terrible, maybe one of the worst teams of the salary cap era. How in the world do they keep showing up on your telecasts? It's like the days of watching the tank year Sabres on NBCSN 11 times. Just plain goofy scheduling.

## **Bogosian placed on contract termination waivers, ending Buffalo career**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 21, 2020

Zach Bogosian's days in the Buffalo Sabres' organization are officially over.

Just more than five years after he was acquired from the Winnipeg Jets along with winger Evander Kane, the Sabres announced Friday they have placed the veteran defenseman on unconditional waivers with the intention of terminating his contract.

Once Bogosian clears, the Sabres will officially be off the hook for the remaining \$3.9 million of his salary cap hit. He was costing the team \$5.124 million until he was sent to Rochester last week, which initially reduced the number. The Sabres suspended him for failing to report to the AHL and Friday's move now locks in the cap hit at zero.

It also gives Bogosian a chance to immediately become an unrestricted free agent. He must sign a deal by Monday afternoon's 3 p.m. NHL trade deadline to be eligible to play in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Bogosian has one goal and four assists in 19 games this season after missing Buffalo's first 22 games while recovering from hip surgery.

The Sabres have been trying to work out a trade for Bogosian since he requested one in December. There have been no takers, even though it's widely known the team was willing to retain salary in any move and TSN reported Friday that General Manager Jason Botterill had indicated to teams the Sabres would retain the maximum 50 percent of Bogosian's cap hit to get a deal done.

Bogosian pocketed around \$28 million during his injury-plagued stint with the Sabres. He played 243 games, scoring 13 goals and adding 54 assists while compiling a minus-49 rating.

### **Full lineup at practice**

The Sabres had a full lineup for practice Friday in KeyBank Center as Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo returned after taking maintenance days on Thursday and winger Michael Frolik also rejoined the team after missing most of the last week, including two games, due to the flu. All three are expected to play in Saturday's matinee against Pittsburgh.

"Definitely with what he had, he was distanced from the team," coach Ralph Krueger said of Frolik, who was bedridden for a few days. "Today he was actually welcomed back into the team meeting because even yesterday he still practiced on his own to be sure. There was a separation there to keep that illness locked up in one person which I think is really important that you don't let it spread in the team. That's how we deal with it. Once the doctors give the green light, he's back in. He looks fresh and strong today so we're happy to have him back."

Frolik skated Friday on a line with Jeff Skinner and Curtis Lazar. Eichel returned to his normal spot between Victor Olofsson and Sam Reinhart while Okposo slotted back in with Zemgus Girgensons and Johan Larsson.

## **Sabres prospect Will Borgen enjoys being 'hard guy to play against'**

By Bill Hoppe

The Buffalo News

February 21, 2020

ROCHESTER – When an opportunity materializes to join the rush and showcase his offensive skills, Buffalo Sabres defense prospect Will Borgen tries to pounce on it.

"The majority of the time I just like to play safe, play my role," Borgen said. "But if I see an opportunity, I'm going, yeah."

On Wednesday, Borgen spotted a chance in the Americans' 3-2 overtime loss to the Belleville Senators, zoomed to the net and nearly scored his first goal this season.

Amerks coach Chris Taylor said Borgen, 23, possesses the talent to generate more offense.

"He's not here just to play defense," Taylor said after the Amerks blew a late two-goal lead in Blue Cross Arena. "If there's opportunities to jump in plays, we want everybody to be included in the offense. He's the type of player that he skates well, he's got a good shot. We need to see more of it."

Still, Borgen, who believes he can reach another level offensively, doesn't want to veer too far out of his comfort zone.

"My job is defense — that's my position — so that's what I take priority in first," said Borgen, who has compiled eight assists in 52 game this season.

The 6-foot-3, 198-pound Borgen takes pride in stymieing the opposition.

"Will embraces the physical ... hard guy to play against," Amerks General Manager Randy Sexton said. "He wants that role, he's embraced it, we've encouraged him to do it. I mean, that in his mind is his identity."

One scout who has watched Borgen regularly throughout his pro career called him a "big, strong, physical, stay-at-home defenseman."

He "is a good skater and is hard to play against but does not bring a lot of offense or creativity from the back end," the scout said. "He will keep other teams' players honest and on their toes."

Considering Borgen rarely displays much flash, other Sabres defense prospects and even an Amerks veteran often overshadow him.

Lawrence Pilut, who has been shuttling between Buffalo and Rochester, quickly developed into one of the American Hockey League's top offensive defensemen following his arrival from Sweden in 2018. The diminutive Jacob Bryson has quietly established himself as one of the Sabres' best prospects as an AHL rookie.

Zach Redmond, a 10-year pro, has followed up a dynamic career season in which he was named the league's top defenseman by recording 30 points in his first 50 games.

The Sabres recalled Borgen, who played his first four NHL games late last season, in October but did not dress him for any game.

Since then, the Sabres have summoned Pilut and defenseman John Gilmour ahead of Borgen.

"We have a lot good defensemen, we have a lot of depth in this organization, which is really good," Borgen said. "It just brings everyone's game up a level in practice and in games, so, yeah, you're always fighting for a spot. ...

"If somebody else gets called up, you got to be just happy for them."

Former Sabres General Manager Tim Murray drafted Borgen in the fourth round in 2015, 92nd overall. Organizationally, defense is their deepest position.

The Sabres could use Borgen as an asset to help them find more forward depth before Monday's deadline.

**Notes:** Bryson scored his first AHL goal Wednesday in his 52nd appearance. "It took a long time to get there," he said. ... Taylor said Amerks defenseman Casey Nelson is week-to-week with an upper-body injury. Nelson has missed the last five games. ... Goaltender Michael Houser has been reassigned to the Cincinnati Cyclones (ECHL). ... The Amerks host the Lehigh Valley Phantoms on Friday and the Cleveland Monsters on Saturday.

## **Plenty to like from the Sabres' 5-2 win in Pittsburgh**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 22, 2020

Saturday's 5-2 win by the Buffalo Sabres over the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG Paints Arena was a total team effort. The home team had their moments, but Buffalo controlled the play for longer stretches and did not wilt when the Penguins tried to push the team around.

Ralph Krueger decided to start the energy line for the blue and gold and it paid off seconds into the contest. Zengus Girgensons was left all alone in front of the net and he cashed in his 11th goal of the season on a one-timer from Kyle Okposo. The pass came from below to goal line and stunned Tristan Jarry on the first shot of the game.

Pittsburgh tried to press the play immediately after the goal, but the blue and gold played solid defensively in front of Carter Hutton to allow the lead to double later in the frame. Sam Reinhart created a turnover on a pass by a Penguins defender. The winger broke in on goal and from in tight scored his 22nd goal of the year.

Buffalo went to the power play with a 2-0 lead, similar to their situation in Ottawa on Tuesday. It was that power play, and a subsequent shorthanded goal allowed that gave the Senators life. There was no such opportunity for the Penguins on Saturday. Jack Eichel buried a shot from the left wing faceoff dot past Jarry to balloon the lead to 3-0. Reinhart collected his second point of the game with an assist on the power play tally, along with Rasmus Ristolainen.

Pittsburgh's lone power play of the opening period came after Colin Miller stood up for Marcus Johansson. Patric Hornqvist delivered a big hit on Johansson, making contact with the head of the Buffalo forward. Miller did not waste any time going back at Hornqvist and was assessed a roughing minor. However, Buffalo killed off the penalty thanks, in part, to some good work in net by Hutton. He stopped Sidney Crosby on a shot in-tight.

Buffalo's second power play chance of the game did not have the same results as the first. It felt like the team never really get setup in the offensive end. Pittsburgh had a chance or two shorthanded where Hutton had to make a save. That seemed to give the home team extra life, which they used to their advantage moments later.

Evgeni Malkin danced into the offensive zone and around the Buffalo defense to score his 19th goal of the season and cut the Sabres lead to 3-1 halfway through the middle frame. It was the first goal for the Penguins in nearly six periods.

Jeff Skinner has been the most talked about Sabres player recently, and more specifically what the reason for his scoreless drought is. The forward had a quality chance late in the second period, but could not beat Jarry with a wrist shot. Skinner had time and space, trying to go five-hole on the Penguins netminder. It would have been nice for the Sabres if he was able to find a way to pick a corner and make it 4-1, instead of staying a 3-1 game.

The Sabres had the better of the play to start all three periods in this game. Sheary and Jimmy Vesey nearly combined to extend Buffalo's lead back to three goals on their first shift of the frame. Jarry had to come up with a save on Vesey right at the top of the blue paint.

Skinner's goalless drought finally came to an end with a re-direction on a pass by Johansson to the slot. The entire Sabres bench was smiling as Skinner skated by on his 12th marker of the year.

## **Sabres begin back-to-back in Pittsburgh**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 22, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres have had three days to forget about their 7-4 loss to the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday. They hit the ice on Saturday at PPG Paints Arena against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo each had the day off on Thursday for a maintenance day, but were back on the ice on Friday before leaving for Pittsburgh. The pair, along with Michael Frolik (illness), will be on the ice for warmups. Buffalo will have all 13 forwards on the ice in the pregame skate, meaning Evan Rodrigues will also dress for warmups. We will not know until line rushes who is in and who is the odd man out.

Carter Hutton will start in goal for Buffalo. He was in net for the lopsided loss in Ottawa earlier in the week, and looks to rebound against a Penguins team that was drubbed 4-0 by the Toronto Maple Leafs on Thursday.

The home team is going with Tristan Jarry in between the pipes on Saturday afternoon. He had the night off two nights ago and has 20 wins this season. Jarry boasts a .931 save percentage this year.

Pittsburgh has the most home wins of any team this season, winning 22 of their 31 games at PPG Paints Arena. They have gone 22-5-4, with one of the five regulation losses coming to the Sabres this season.

Buffalo won the lone meeting this year between the two teams. The blue and gold scored a 3-1 win in the first game of the season with ex-Penguins forward Conor Sheary scoring twice, including the game-winning goal.

Following Saturday afternoon's game, the Sabres will return home to welcome the Winnipeg Jets for a 3 o'clock faceoff at KeyBank Center.

## **Sabres dominate the Penguins with a 5-2 win in Pittsburgh**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

February 22, 2020

After a disappointing 7-4 road loss to the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday night, the Buffalo Sabres had some time to recuperate and get ready for a Saturday matinee matchup with the Pittsburgh Penguins.

That time off from game action ended up paying off for the Sabres as they score early and often in a 5-2 win over the Penguins at PPG Paints Arena in Pittsburgh.

Leading the way for Buffalo was captain Jack Eichel, who finished the afternoon with two power play goals, while Jeff Skinner was able to finally end a 22-game goalless drought with his 12th goal of the season in the third period.

It didn't take the Sabres long to take the early 1-0 advantage when Zemgus Girgensons potted his 11th goal of the season just 14 seconds into the game. The 26-year-old managed to get to the front of the net, and linemate Kyle Okposo managed to feed a nice pass from behind the net to Girgensons, who fired his shot through the five-hole of Penguins goalie Tristan Jarry.

A little more than six-and-a-half minutes later, the Sabres increased their lead to 2-0 off a beautiful all-around effort from Sam Reinhart. The Buffalo winger managed to steal a Kris Letang pass just outside of the Penguins' blue line and go in for a short breakaway on Jarry. Reinhart then put his shot up and over the short-side blocker of the Pittsburgh netminder for his 22nd goal of the season.

Nearly three minutes later, the Sabres were gifted their first power play chance of the game as Penguins forward Evgeni Malkin went to the box for slashing.

It only took a little over a minute for Buffalo to capitalize on the man advantage with Eichel's 34th goal of the season. After some good puck movement in the Pittsburgh zone, defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen found Eichel at the top of the left faceoff circle completely uncovered. The Sabres captain was able to walk in and get a shot off that beat Jarry past the short-side blocker hand to extend the Sabres' lead to 3-0.

With a secondary assist on the goal, Reinhart was able to pass the 50-point mark on the season, joining Eichel as the only two players on the Sabres roster with 50 or more points this year.

Pittsburgh was given a chance to get back in the contest when Sabres defenseman Colin Miller was penalized for roughing after coming to the defense of forward Marcus Johansson, who took a strong hit from Penguins forward Patric Hornqvist in the Penguins end. Despite getting a few good chances, including one from captain Sidney Crosby that was stopped by Sabres goalie Carter Hutton's shoulder, the Penguins failed to convert on the man advantage.

The Sabres finished the first period of play in front 3-0, and looked like the better team in the opening 20 minutes despite being outshot 12-10.

The Penguins responded with a strong start to the period with some sustained zone time in the Buffalo end.

Buffalo was able to get a chance to extend the lead to 4-0 when Penguins defenseman Justin Schultz was penalized for tripping Victor Olofsson, but the Sabres didn't do enough to generate any quality scoring chances.

Less than a minute after Pittsburgh killed off the penalty, Malkin helped pull the Penguins back to within two as he converts off a Henri Jokiharju turnover in the Buffalo end. Malkin was able to take the puck off the boards and get defenseman Jake McCabe to overcommit to block a possible pass, and then fired a shot past the blocker of Hutton to make it a 3-1 game in favor of Buffalo.

The Penguins ended up outshooting the Sabres again in the second period, 13-11, but the Sabres managed to hold Pittsburgh to just a goal through 40 minutes of play.

The Sabres were able to re-gain their three-goal lead at the 5:39 mark of the third period when Skinner snapped a career-long 22-game goalless drought to give Buffalo a 4-1 lead. As Buffalo entered the Penguins zone on an offensive rush, Johansson controlled up puck at the blue line while Skinner attempted to get into scoring position. As Skinner was able to get enough room past forward Sam Lafferty, Johansson threw the puck towards the net and Skinner was able to re-direct the puck through the five-hole of Jarry for his 12th goal of the season.

After killing off another penalty later in the period, the Sabres went back to work on the power play after Penguins forward Brandon Tanev retaliated with a cross-check to Jake McCabe after the defenseman laid a nice body check on him.

It took Buffalo just 51 seconds to make it a 5-1 score as Eichel fired home his second power play goal of the game. With Ristolainen camped out in front of the net and providing a screen for Jarry, Eichel was able to fire in a wrist shot from where he scored his first goal for his 35th goal of the season.

Malkin was able to add another goal for the Penguins with just 2:03 remaining in the game to cut the deficit to 5-2, but it was not enough as the Sabres managed to come out of Pittsburgh with the win.

After a shaky start on Tuesday against the Senators, Hutton was much better on Saturday against the Penguins, making 41 saves on 43 shots faced.

## **GAME SUMMARY**

### **Goal Summary:**

#### **First Period:**

BUF: 0:14 - Zemgus Girgensons (11) (Kyle Okposo); 6:48 - Sam Reinhart (22) (Unassisted); 10:51 - Jack Eichel (34) PPG (Rasmus Ristolainen, Sam Reinhart)

PIT: NONE

#### **Second Period:**

BUF: NONE

PIT: 11:10 - Evgeni Malkin (19) (Unassisted)

#### **Third Period:**

BUF: 5:39 - Jeff Skinner (12) (Marcus Johansson, Michael Frolik); 12:17 - Jack Eichel (35) PPG (Rasmus Dahlin, Rasmus Ristolainen)

PIT: 17:57 - Evgeni Malkin (20) (Unassisted)

### **Penalty Summary:**

#### **First Period:**

BUF: 15:52 - Colin Miller (Roughing - 2 min.)

PIT: 9:44 - Evgeni Malkin (Slashing - 2 min.)

#### **Second Period:**

BUF: NONE

PIT: 8:24 - Justin Schultz (Tripping - 2 min.)

#### **Third Period:**

BUF: 6:05 - Brandon Montour (Tripping - 2 min.); 8:03 - Curtis Lazar (Roughing - 2 min.)

PIT: 8:03 - Evgeni Malkin (Roughing - 2 min.); 11:26 - Brandon Tanev (Cross-checking - 2 min.)

### **Strategic Financial Solutions Stats of the Game:**

#### **Shots on Goal:**

BUF: 26 (10, 11, 5)

PIT: 43 (12, 13, 18)

#### **Goalies:**

BUF: Carter Hutton - 41 saves

PIT: Tristan Jarry - 21 saves

**Power Plays:**

BUF: 2 for 3 (66.6%)

PIT: 0 for 2 (0%)

**Three Stars presented by Losi and Gangi:**

Jack Eichel - BUF

Carter Hutton - BUF

Evgeni Malkin - PIT

**What's Next:**

The Sabres return home on Sunday for a matchup with the visiting Winnipeg Jets at KeyBank Center. Faceoff is set for 3 p.m. on WGR with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 2 p.m. with Joe DiBiase.

## **Dreger: Botterill still wants to add a forward with term**

WGR 550

February 21, 2020

The NHL Trade Deadline is upon us at 3 p.m. on Monday league-wide.

The Buffalo Sabres could be a team that will be somewhat active as sellers leading up to the deadline with a number of pieces on expiring contracts heading into the offseason. Players like forwards Conor Sheary, Jimmy Vesey, Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson and Michael Frolik are all set to become unrestricted free agents as of July 1, while other players like forward Evan Rodrigues or defenseman Brandon Montour will be restricted free agents at the season's end.

The team currently sits on the outside looking in of the playoff picture in the Atlantic Division, trailing the Toronto Maple Leafs by 10 points for the third and final playoff spot. In the Wild Card picture, Buffalo currently sits 10 points back of the Carolina Hurricanes for the final playoff spot and 11 points back of the Columbus Blue Jackets for the top Wild Card spot in the Eastern Conference.

With Buffalo's current outlook for the rest of the season, it is likely that the team will miss the postseason for a ninth consecutive year, extending the franchise-long drought another year.

The current build of the Sabres' roster lacks in a number of different ways, including a lack of a second-line center, as well as some quality depth scorers. Sabres general manager Jason Botterill has reportedly been active trying to make something happen on the trade market all season, but has been unsuccessful in making his team a better product on the ice.

TSN hockey insider Darren Dreger has been keyed in on the Sabres for a majority of the 2019-20 season, and has been tracking Buffalo's efforts of making that coveted trade throughout the year. He joined Andrew Peters and Martin Biron on The Instigators for his weekly Friday visit on WGR to talk about Buffalo's plans heading into Monday's deadline, about the move to place defenseman Zach Bogosian on unconditional waivers to terminate his contract, and more.

Here is some of what he had to say:

### **Dreger on Botterill's wants to improve the Sabres:**

"He still wants to add a player, a forward with term. He's had so many conversations with a number of different clubs, and we've speculated on the possibility of [Vincent] Trocheck of the Florida [Panthers] or maybe Kyle Palmieri of [the New Jersey Devils]. That makes more sense, to me, in the offseason than it does right now, but I still think Botterill needs that financial flexibility (with terminating Bogosian's contract). If something surfaces between now and Monday, he's going to want to be in a position, from a cap perspective, to be able to do it."

### **Dreger on the team's plans heading into the trade deadline:**

"It's a tough read on the Buffalo Sabres right now. How disappointed would the fanbase be if Jason Botterill didn't do much of anything? If the answer to that is very disappointed, then I think the fans are missing the bigger picture here.

"I can tell you that Botterill has no interest in rental players. That would make no sense. Why would you spend assets? It's pretty much a forgone conclusion for this season anyway. The best time annually to make a meaningful, impactful organizational deal is always in the offseason, and normally on the draft floor.

"If he does a couple of little things, that's not going to appease the market, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't have a bigger picture of what he wants to do. I think, frankly, that if he doesn't do something impactful between now and Monday, the Buffalo Sabres team that we're talking about today is not going to be the same team we're talking about next year. He is going to do something, if not between now and the deadline then in the offseason, that is going to shake up this organization in some way, shape or form."

### **Dreger on the Sabres terminating the contract of Bogosian:**

"The Buffalo Sabres were trying to utilize as much time as possible to trade Zach Bogosian. That's what Zach Bogosian wanted. He wanted to be traded, and in fact, my sources indicate that the Buffalo Sabres were willing

to retain as much as 50% of his remaining salary to make that happen. That's a fairly significant enticement from Jason Botterill's perspective. So you want to wait until the last second. By doing that, also his salary eventually drags down to a point where maybe a team says, 'Ok. We'll give you an asset for Zach Bogosian as long as you're willing to retain and we can live with the rest. It's not that big of a deal.' But even though the Sabres were willing to do that, there still wasn't enough interest to close on a trade with another club."

**Botterill on the implications of the contract termination for Bogosian:**

"It's best case scenario because there are teams looking for right-shot defensemen, even depth guys like Zach Bogosian. I'd be surprised if a team like the Calgary Flames isn't looking for depth there. I'd be surprised if Carolina [Hurricanes] isn't looking for depth. Maybe the Toronto Maple Leafs. Rather than blow out an asset like Kasper Kapanen, if you can get a player like Zach Bogosian who you still believe has at least some game left and can help you on that right side, why wouldn't you do it?"

## **Sabres terminate Bogosian's contract after clearing unconditional waivers**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

February 21, 2020

After clearing unconditional waivers on Saturday at noon, the Buffalo Sabres were able to terminate the contract of defenseman Zach Bogosian, making him an unrestricted free agent.

Bogosian was placed on unconditional waivers on Friday after he failed to report to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League last weekend. Now his contract will come off the books, which will give the Sabres a little more than \$8.441 million of cap space, according to CapFriendly.com.

Bogosian was in the final year of a contract with his cap hit of \$5.142 million, and was going to be an unrestricted free agent this summer. He signed his contract while with the Winnipeg Jets during the 2013-14 season, and it carried over to the Sabres when he was traded to Buffalo five years ago.

The 12-year veteran defenseman had only appeared in 19 games this season for the Sabres with a goal and four assists since returning to the lineup in November from offseason hip surgery.

Back in December, Bogosian reportedly requested a trade out of Buffalo, but never got into the details as to why he wanted out of the organization. Since his request back on Dec. 12, Bogosian had only played in nine games, scoring a goal and picking up an assist.

In 243 career games with the Sabres, Bogosian has scored 13 goals and registered 54 assists for 67 points, but has missed a total of 170 games as a healthy scratch or due to a number of injuries suffered throughout his entire career.

Bogosian will have until 3 p.m. on Monday to sign with a new team in order for him to be eligible to play during the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

## **A gritty — and rare — victory in Pittsburgh marks the Sabres' growth**

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH —If there's something we've learned over the past decade or so, it's that the Sabres going into Pittsburgh and having success is not a common occurrence. But if there's something else we've learned about the Sabres this season, it's that right when you think you have all the answers about them, they go ahead and change the questions.

In a matchup of teams that were coming off disheartening losses, asking the Sabres to pull out a win in Pittsburgh seemed like asking a lot. After all, Pittsburgh was 11-4-1 against Buffalo at home since PPG Paints Arena opened in 2010. Still, the Sabres rolled out to an early 3-0 lead and cruised to a 5-2 win on the strength of two power-play goals from Jack Eichel as well as tallies from Zemgus Girgensons, Sam Reinhart and — for the first time in 23 games — Jeff Skinner.

The game was physical, nasty at points and fraught with opportunities for the Penguins to steal their way back into it. But the Sabres resisted and pushed back with their own physical play and solid special-teams work — all things that were missing in a rotten 7-4 loss in Ottawa on Tuesday.

"It's a good way to play them. We smothered them, we back-pressured, we played a good team-game on the road," Eichel said.

The effort was reminiscent of the Sabres' season-opening 3-1 win against the Penguins. In that game, they used an aggressive forecheck to frustrate Pittsburgh into making turnovers and helping the Sabres produce scoring chances. If you're going to do a throwback effort, that's the right game to replicate.

"I think when we come here in this building we understand what we're up against and the way we need to play, and I don't think we deviate from that and I think that's what makes us successful," Eichel said. "It's important that you come in with that same mindset no matter who you're playing or where you are. It seems like when we go on the road and play against some of these top teams in the league, we really respect the opponent and we respect our game, and I think we try and execute as well as we can. You've seen that in some of our good road wins this year."

Eichel's brilliance came with a peculiar stat line. Yes, there were two goals, but there were also zero faceoffs taken by the all-star center. Reinhart and Lazar (in the defensive zone) took all draws on that line. Eichel missed Thursday's practice with a maintenance day and did play through the middle of the ice in the game, but he still took no draws.

"There's really no conversation around it," coach Ralph Krueger said. "We know that Jack had a maintenance day. We know that it's that time of year. We're just playing it safe. We got Sam who can take draws really well and Curtis. But Jack's fine, Jack's feeling good. We're pleased that he and Okie were back in here today."

Regarding Eichel's health, John Vogl shared this:

*Source says it's a midsection ailment for Jack Eichel, which would be why Sabres don't want him bending over for draws.*

*Since he scored twice, it's obviously something he can fight through otherwise.*

As for Reinhart's ability on the dot, he took 14 faceoffs and won five of them (35.7 percent). Lazar, who also centered his own line, won seven of 13 (53.8 percent). In Reinhart's career, he's won 36.5 percent of his faceoffs, so the results were almost perfectly in line. For those reading who are more willing to lean into conspiracy theories, no, it doesn't look like it's a chance for Reinhart to audition for a center job again, but don't let me be the Debbie Downer for your collective imaginations.

A lot of criticism of the Sabres this season has been prompted by their apparent lack of physical play, and that was tested Saturday. After the Penguins landed in a big hole early, they began throwing their bodies around a lot more, looking for a spark.

"It's one of those games, I think it was 3-0 when (Patric) Hornqvist hit (Marcus) Johansson, too, and that's when we had the penalty kill," goalie Carter Hutton said. "And then, I think after that, (Rasmus) Ristolainen was all over Hornqvist the whole game and I think later in the third, Johansson hit him, so it was just kind of one of those pushback games. I've played with Horny, I know how he plays. He understands they're down three, he's trying to set the tone and get something going, and I think our guys responded really well — not by getting out of our realm but just staying with it and playing a tough hockey game."

If it wasn't the two Swedes coming together often, it was Ristolainen and Jake McCabe mixing it up. McCabe was able to goad Brandon Tanev into a retaliatory cross-check in the third period that turned into Eichel's second power-play goal. That goal came after Eichel was annoyed by a shove in his back by Jack Johnson. Rather than respond physically, he did so with his 35th goal of the season, making him the 44th Sabres player in history to score that many. Hey, not all paybacks look the same.

As for Skinner, the mild-mannered-off-the-ice star forward was his usual "aw, shucks" self about finally ending his goal drought. After all, he hadn't potted a goal since Dec. 2. It's a long time, and it could've worn out most players to answer about that for so long. Instead, his 12th of the season was the goal that essentially iced the game and gave the Sabres a three-goal cushion again. It might not outwardly mean a lot to Skinner to finally break the streak, but it's a moment for the rest of the team to celebrate.

"I feel like I scored a few times and usually it feels pretty good," Skinner said. "I don't know. You can use 'relief,' I guess, if that sort of fits the storyline because of how long it's been. I don't know. I just feel happy to get another goal and add to the lead a little bit more."

In an offensive show like that, it's easy to neglect Hutton's efforts, which shouldn't be lost. A first-period shoulder stop against Sidney Crosby, who was held without a point for just the fifth time in 41 games against the Sabres, provided an early sign Hutton was on his game.

It's late in the season and toward the end of the rope when it comes to talking about improvements and how those can affect where the Sabres are in the playoff standings, but a win like the one in Pittsburgh on Saturday afternoon is one that Buffalo teams in the recent past probably don't get. With the talent and pressure the Penguins provided, those teams don't hold that lead, never mind build on it. Growing and learning are still important, even if those lessons don't bear fruit this season.

"A year ago, I don't think we would've had an effort like that in this situation," Eichel said. "I think we've all grown up a little bit. It's just about that consistency. We play again (Sunday against Winnipeg) at 3, and it's important to just come back with another great effort."

## **As trade deadline approaches, Sabres' future unrestricted free agents remain calm**

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH — The mood around a team that's most likely bound to miss the playoffs can run high and low. It can be tense as players wait to see if they'll be moved to contenders or forced to ride out the storm of a losing season. It can be relaxed as players are resigned to whatever their fates may be.

In Buffalo, we've seen all things. You think of the sadness of Ryan Miller in 2014 the night he was dealt (along with Steve Ott) to St. Louis — the face off the franchise for so many years turning the page and moving on to a playoff-bound Blues team. There was Drew Stafford, who was part of the megadeal with Winnipeg in 2015. Stafford, like Miller, was an unrestricted free agent to be on a very bad Sabres team. He knew he was going elsewhere and kept it his usual cool self knowing he no longer be bound to the worst team in the NHL.

Evander Kane, who arrived in that megadeal, knew he was going from Buffalo at the deadline two years ago. Whether it was going to be Pittsburgh or San Jose, he knew he was going to wind up with a contender. He was relaxed but anxious after his time in Buffalo and eager to get the weight of never having gone to the playoffs off his back.

Which brings us to this year's Sabres. It would be easy to have a locker room on edge with the number of soon-to-be UFAs they have and a schedule that has back-to-back games ahead of Monday's deadline.

But it's not outwardly like that due to the focus Ralph Krueger has instilled in the team.

"The trade world is part of the National Hockey League and it exists and it's been in topic here in the media room multiple times this season," Krueger said. "Of course it concentrates a lot more, the focus of everybody gets concentrated in that little space ahead of what's going to happen before the deadline. We all know when that deadline is done it's over. It exists but we don't feel it in our room, we don't feel it, it's not a conversation really. I have my daily catch-ups with Jason. We're always in conversation about what we can do and how we can get better. But it doesn't feel like anything distracting us from the task at hand right now, which is really important."

For the UFAs to be, the reality they might be somewhere else soon has been there and is just part of the business.

"I don't think it's hard at all (to focus)," forward Conor Sheary said. "It's actually easy to get to the rink and just work hard and play for my teammates. I can't control what's going to happen. I'm just going to focus on the present, focus on the now, and worry about the next practice, the next game."

Keeping rumors and trade chatter away can be difficult. Players all have smart phones and some variety of social media. They have family and friends more tuned into what's being talked about and it can be tough to not discuss matters when their name comes up associated with other teams.

"It's just speculation, you know," Sheary said. "It could just be anyone saying anything at this point. It's just where I am with my contract, that's why my name is floating around... I see what you guys see out there. That's pretty much my knowledge, too."

The impact it can have on the coach is out there too. After all, the lineup can change at a moment's notice whether it's on an off-day or right before a game. Lineup management is a thing this time of year and even the best laid lineup plans can be blown to smithereens at a moment's notice.

"It's like everything — I'm very good at compartmentalizing my life so when I'm here I walk through the doors of the arena today, I'm all here 'til the last second of the game," Krueger said at PPG Paints Arena. "And after we're done with the media, then you release and you start to look at the bigger pictures again. I'm really good at doing that so while I'm here now, nothing — absolutely nothing — will distract me except for the things I can influence and can control. Then you step out and you do your job that you need to do with management and look at the other picture."

## **Sabres have a model for stretch-run success, but circumstances have changed**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

February 22, 2020

Nine years later, Nathan Gerbe remembers the feeling well.

"I remember every game was just so important," the forward said. "You just live for each game."

The Sabres were sitting outside a playoff spot on Feb. 22, 2011, but they could feel a surge coming. Gerbe and the rest of the players had a good vibe in the dressing room. The city of Buffalo was buoyed by billionaire fan Terry Pegula's purchase of the team.

With the sale complete, the Sabres went on a 16-4-4 run to finish seventh in the Eastern Conference and earn a postseason berth.

"You don't look ahead in a run like that," said Gerbe, who now plays for Columbus. "Obviously, we felt we had a team to make the playoffs, but when you just focus on a game at a time and everybody plays together, magical things can happen."

Which brings us to this season. The Sabres need to replicate the run of 2011 just to have a chance at the playoffs.

"Let's be honest," coach Ralph Krueger said. "We know the margin for error is very, very small."

Heading into Saturday's game in Pittsburgh, the Sabres can pick up 44 points in their final 22 games. To reach 95 points (a typical postseason figure), the Sabres have to earn 33. That's playing at a .750 points percentage — which is exactly what the 2011 team did down the stretch.

"It's hard — very hard," Gerbe said. "It takes a lot of sacrifice and dedication from each guy and trusting and cheering on each guy in that room. The one thing I remember about that time, there were really no egos. Everybody just kept contributing and playing hard."

The blueprint is there for Buffalo to make the postseason.

"There's not much time or margin for mistakes right now," defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen said. "We all know that. I kind of take it as a new challenge, you know? We need to put some wins together and see where we end up."

Now for the dose of reality:

- On Feb. 22, 2011, the Sabres were in ninth place. They were five points out of a postseason position and had three games in hand on eighth-place Carolina.
- The Sabres entered this weekend in 13th place. They were 10 points out of a playoff spot with two games in hand.

The Sabres have to not only win but also hope other teams lose. Otherwise, that 2011 team will remain the last Buffalo squad to make the playoffs.

"That was the last playoff round for the Sabres? Wow," said retired Sabres captain Daniel Briere. "I knew the last few years were tough. I didn't realize that was the last time.

"Yeah, it's hard to imagine almost."

Briere, who works for the Flyers and hasn't played in Buffalo since 2007, can be excused for not knowing exactly how long the drought has stretched. But the NHL's worst slide becomes a talking point whenever alumni visit Buffalo during this 50th anniversary season.

"You definitely feel like they should have had more success maybe in the last 10 years," retired defenseman Brian Campbell said. "But we're always hoping that they can get it back and get a team that can win a playoff series and hopefully win a Stanley Cup."

General manager Jason Botterill can take steps before Monday's trade deadline. While he needs to improve this year's team, the focus should be on next season and the following years. There are holes and there are assets. It's a matter of using the latter to fill the former.

Left wing Jeff Skinner needs a true second-line center and a complementary player on the right side. Whoever serves as the No. 3 center next season will need wingers who can score.

"I look at their team, and there's a great base there to have a special team," Briere said. "I don't want to speculate what needs to be done — that's not my job — but you look at the top-end players that they have, and there's definitely a recipe to have a great team here."

Botterill has to build around the base of Jack Eichel and Rasmus Dahlin to make the playoffs and energize the fans and alumni.

"I would be back in a heartbeat," Campbell said of attending a postseason game. "I feel like they have some pieces here to get it done, and they've just got to find a way to get through it."

"If they get to be a team that contends again," Briere said, "I know the fan base will be ecstatic and will be there for them. That relationship is extremely special with them."

It's going to take a magical run to find postseason success this season. Things certainly don't feel the same as they did in 2011, when players bought in and Pegula bought the Sabres from B. Thomas Golisano.

"I feel bad for Terry because I know how much it means to him and obviously the coaches and the players," Golisano said. "I'm rooting for them, but I wish they could do better. But they probably eventually will."

## **How the Sabres' standoff with Zach Bogosian finally came to an end**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

February 21, 2020

Let's start from scratch.

That's where it all started anyway.

Buffalo scratched Zach Bogosian on Dec. 12. The insulted defenseman immediately requested a trade.

Two months, one demotion and zero suitors later, Buffalo has unexpected cap space because a player quit – again.

The untenable marriage between Bogosian and the Sabres ended in divorce Friday. The Sabres placed the defenseman on unconditional waivers, allowing them to terminate the remaining four months of his contract. That will make Bogosian an unrestricted free agent and clears the team of one of its worst deals.

What does it mean and where do they go next? Let's take a look.

### **Why did they agree to terminate the contract?**

Though the split brewed for more than 10 weeks, it ultimately finished in one.

After scratching Bogosian in eight of nine games following the All-Star break, the Sabres waived the defenseman last Friday. No team claimed him, so the Sabres assigned him to Rochester on Saturday. He declined to join the Amerks on Sunday or Monday, so Buffalo suspended him for failure to report.

Since Bogosian breached his contract, the Sabres were able to terminate it. The defenseman was aware the termination was coming if he didn't head to Rochester, so it's a mutual contract termination since he chose to stay away.

### **How does the money work?**

Bogosian forfeited the rest of his \$6 million salary, an estimated \$1.68 million. The seven-year, \$36 million contract he signed in 2013 was set to expire this summer.

Bogosian's \$5.14 million cap hit is erased from the Sabres' books. Buffalo has been over the cap for most of the season and was getting relief from long-term injured reserve (LTIR). Bogosian's departure brings needed space.

The Sabres' cap hit stands at \$80.75 million, ending their use of LTIR and bringing them under the \$81.5 million cap. They still want to shed salary to account for the year-end bonuses of Rasmus Dahlin, Henri Jokiharju, Victor Olofsson and other players on their entry-level deals, otherwise those bonuses will come off next season's salary cap.

But Buffalo has flexibility for the first time since the early days of the season, and it comes right before Monday's trade deadline.

### **Why is Bogosian unemployed?**

The 29-year-old hit the trifecta of an expensive contract, subpar play and lack of dependability.

The Sabres wanted to trade Bogosian. Teams didn't want to give up an asset to acquire the defenseman and his cap hit – even though Buffalo had the ability to retain 50 percent of his salary – so trades failed to materialize. Even when Bogosian was available for free through waivers, no one bit. Cap space is at a premium throughout the NHL, and \$5.14 million is tough to absorb.

That's especially true for a player with a history of injuries and zero playoff experience. As the book closes on Bogosian in Buffalo, he played in 243 games and didn't play in 170. That's more than 41 percent of Buffalo's games that he watched from the injured list or press box, a total that certainly scared potential suitors.

In Bogosian's 243 games with the Sabres, he had 13 goals, 54 assists, 10 fights, a minus-49 rating and a minus-464 Corsi.

### **Will he get a job?**

It's possible, if not probable. Contending teams always need extra defense depth – does 2006 ring a bell? – so someone may be interested in signing Bogosian to the league minimum of \$700,000 (or more). That yearly figure would be prorated for the remainder of the season.

The sides have to move quick. Only players who are signed by Monday's 3 p.m. trade deadline are eligible to play in the postseason.

### **Why didn't Bogosian report to Rochester?**

For the same reasons he requested a trade after getting scratched: pride and, to be frank, an overvaluation of his skills.

When the Sabres sat Bogosian for the initial time in December, he said it was the first healthy scratch of his 12-year career. It stung. Though Buffalo was carrying eight defensemen and had recently scratched Colin Miller and alternate captain Jake McCabe, Bogosian felt he was above a sit-down, especially during a contract year.

Coach Ralph Krueger disagreed. He said the defenseman's performance had slipped while playing 10 straight games following offseason surgery, which sidelined Bogosian until late November. Though the coach subsequently said he would dress the players who wanted to be in Buffalo, Bogosian skated in eight of the next 16 games, putting up one goal and one assist while averaging 14:23 a night – lowest among Buffalo's nine defensemen.

Once the Sabres returned from the All-Star break Jan. 28, Bogosian was the odd man out.

Bogosian joined the NHL right after getting drafted third overall by Atlanta in 2008. He has just five minor-league games on his résumé – and those were for a conditioning stint during his rookie season – so he had no desire to ride a bus at age 29 after believing he'd proved himself as an NHL player.

### **Did the Sabres have to terminate his contract?**

No. The suspension for failing to report erased his cap hit, and they could have let him sit at home without a paycheck. By doing so, the Sabres would have sent a message that it's not OK to demand trades after one scratch and it's not OK to decline minor-league assignments. By essentially agreeing to Bogosian's desire to be let out of his deal, the Sabres have given an exit strategy to future disgruntled players.

On the flip side, Bogosian had one more card to play. He could have eventually reported to the Amerks. His cap hit would have returned and the organization would have an angry player sitting in the same dressing room as its prospects. By terminating the deal, the situation comes to an end and the Sabres don't look spiteful.

### **Is it concerning that players keep quitting the Sabres and requesting trades?**

The short answer is yes. Players around the league talk to each other, so the occasional chat is sure to include how many people want out of Buffalo.

But each situation has been different. Bogosian's trade request and departure started with pride. Evan Rodrigues' trade request was a business decision, as he explained to The Athletic. Last season, Patrik Berglund forfeited \$12 million and returned to Sweden because of depression. Nathan Beaulieu requested a trade because of a lack of playing time.

So while it's concerning that these incidents keep occurring, there's no substantial link to each case. The one with Bogosian has finally come to an end.

## **Sabres throttle Penguins early, cruise to rare win in Pittsburgh**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 23, 2020

PITTSBURGH – The response was perhaps the Buffalo Sabres' most emphatic all year.

Four days after suffering a brutal loss, the Sabres throttled the Penguins early in Saturday afternoon's 5-2 victory, scoring 14 seconds into the game and opening up a 3-0 lead by the 10:55 mark.

When the Penguins scored about halfway through the game, the Sabres barely flinched.

"After the (3-1) goal there was a short little moment of wavering but we quickly got back to our game, and that was probably the critical moment of the game, that we shut them down ... and just got back to what we needed to do without the puck," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger inside PPG Paints Arena.

Early on, the game mirrored Tuesday's ugly 7-4 road loss, a game in which the Sabres imploded and allowed four goals in less than four minutes after going up 2-0.

That setback to the Ottawa Senators felt like a season-killer. The Sabres blew a splendid chance to inch closer to the Atlantic Division's final playoff spot.

But the Sabres roared back Saturday. In a city they traditionally struggle in – before beating the Penguins here last season, they hadn't won in Pittsburgh since 2013 – the Sabres enjoyed one of their best all-around efforts all year.

"Tuesday's long gone," Krueger said. "We really just came in here, regrouped and tried to get back to what we were doing in the games before. I'm just really pleased with the four-line, six-D, goaltending effort all the way through the lineup. Everybody contributed today.

"Yeah, it's an excellent reaction in a very tough building to react in."

Sabres captain Jack Eichel said: "I just thought we played really desperate and we got rewarded. That's a really good team. It's a good way to play there. We smothered them, we back pressured. We played a good team game on the road."

It can be tough because the Penguins possess so many elite talents. But superstar Sidney Crosby blended in most of the afternoon, getting outplayed by Eichel, who scored two power-play goals.

"When we come in this building we understand what we're up against and the way we need to play," Eichel said. "I don't think we deviate from that and I think that's what makes us successful. It's important that you come in with that mindset no matter who you're playing or where you are. It seems like when we go on the road and play against some of these top teams in the league we really respect the opponent and we respect our game.

When Crosby generated a prime chance on the power play late in the first period, Sabres goalie Carter Hutton stymied him, one of 41 saves he made.

"It's just a matter of just battling no matter who I'm playing against over my career," Hutton said. "I don't think there's one certain team that I do good or bad against."

The Sabres held Crosby pointless for only the fifth time in 41 career games. Hutton, meanwhile, improved to 5-0-0 in seven outings at PPG Paints Arena.

"We were trading chances through the first two periods, it was about even chances," Krueger said. "So, of course, a big compliment goes out to Carter Hutton. We're up 3-1 instead of down. ... Carter made some critical saves at the right moment."

Contributions up and down the lineup buoyed the Sabres before the standing-room crowd 18,620.

Winger Zemgus Girgensons scored on the opening shift. Winger Sam Reinhart followed at 6:48, intercepting a pass intended for Crosby before zooming in and beating goalie Tristan Jarry.

Eichel scored both of his goals from the left circle, unleashing lethal wrist shots. After Penguins superstar Evgeni Malkin scored the first of his two goals, Sabres winger Jeff Skinner scored 5:22 into the third period, ending a 22-game drought. He hadn't scored since Dec. 2.

The Sabres also showcased a physical response against the Penguins, something they'll need while they play their next five games against Western Conference opponents.

After this afternoon's home contest against the Winnipeg Jets, the Sabres start a four-game road trip.

"We've been tested, and we've got a lot of road hockey coming up here," Krueger said. "And we enjoy playing on the road and we're not afraid of it, but we weren't getting the results we should've earlier in the season. ...

"We definitely need to be ready to play physical, and we know teams will be coming at us. So the reaction today was excellent. We can be physical and push back as a team. We will definitely take that with us."

## **Sabres notes: Jeff Skinner scores goal against Penguins, ends long slump**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH – After ending his career-long 23-game goal drought, Buffalo Sabres winger Jeff Skinner said he did not really feel a sense of relief.

"I felt pretty good," Skinner said after scoring 5:39 into the third period of Saturday afternoon's 5-2 win over the Penguins. "I don't know. I feel like I scored a few times and usually it feels pretty good. I don't know.

"You can use 'relief,' I guess, if that sort of fits the story line because of how long it's been. I don't know. I just feel happy to get another goal and add to the lead a little bit more."

In good times and bad, Skinner, 27, usually showcases the same demeanor, rarely getting too high or low. While discussing his first goal since in 82 days, he sounded the same as he did a year ago talking about his exploits during his first 40-goal season.

"It's been a while for me, obviously," Skinner said inside PPG Paints Arena. "Whenever it's been a while it's nice to get one. I'm just happy I could contribute to the win."

Skinner hasn't contributed much lately.

Fresh off a career season, Skinner enjoyed a terrific start. After scoring his 11th goal in his 28th appearance on Dec. 2, Skinner was on pace for a 32-goal season.

Then he suddenly stopped scoring.

Remember, Sabres coach Ralph Krueger has kept Skinner and captain Jack Eichel, his center a year ago, separated all season. Even as the marathon slump hit months, Krueger refused to reunite them.

Skinner played with center Curtis Lazar on Saturday. However, Marcus Johansson, his center most of the season, fed him the puck in the third period, allowing him to redirect the puck past goalie Tristan Jarry.

Krueger said the entire team celebrated Skinner's goal.

"This group really cheers for each other," he said. "You could see the faces. Jeff's beaming but everybody else, too, and cheering loud. So let that be the beginning of some momentum for him."

Eichel said of Skinner's goal: "It was huge. It seems like he was all over it tonight and he had a couple good chances. It's really big for our team."

An upper-body injury sidelined Skinner, who's in the first year of an eight-year, \$72 million contract, 10 games during his slump.

–

Eichel, who had a maintenance day from practice Thursday, is clearly nursing an injury. He did not take any faceoffs against the Penguins.

Instead, linemate Sam Reinhart replaced him, winning only five of 14 draws.

Is Eichel's absence in the faceoff circle related to his maintenance day?

"There's really no conversation around it," Krueger said. "We know that Jack had a maintenance day. We know that it's that time of year. We're just playing it safe. We got Sam who can take draws really well and Curtis.

"But Jack's fine, Jack's feeling good."

**Notes:** Eichel, who scored twice Saturday, is the sixth Sabre in the last 40 years to hit the 35-goal mark in 60 games or fewer. Saturday was Eichel's 60th appearance. ... Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, who assisted on Eichel's second goal, has compiled one goal and seven points during a career-long six game-point streak. ... The Sabres scratched defenseman John Gilmour and forward Evan Rodrigues (both healthy).

## **Former Sabre Zach Bogosian clears waivers, becomes free agent**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH – Defenseman Zach Bogosian cleared waivers today, making the 12-year NHL veteran a free agent.

The Buffalo Sabres placed Bogosian on unconditional waivers Friday with the intention of terminating his contract.

Bogosian refused to report to the Rochester Americans after the Sabres assigned him to their AHL affiliate on Feb. 15, a day after waiving him.

The Massena native must sign with a new team before Monday's trade deadline to be eligible for the NHL playoffs.

The contract termination will cost Bogosian the final portion of his \$6 million salary. This is the final season of his deal.

The Sabres, meanwhile, are freed from the rest of his \$5.4 million salary cap hit. They now have \$8,441,190 of cap space, according to capfriendly.com.

## **Sabres' Evan Rodrigues stepping up game after trade request**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 22, 2020

**BUFFALO** – After playing 10 straight games, Sabres forward Evan Rodrigues will likely be scratched this afternoon against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Sabres winger Michael Frolik has recovered from a nasty bout with the flu and is set to return, meaning one forward must sit out.

Based on Friday's practice lines, Rodrigues will be a healthy scratch for the first time since Jan. 28.

Rodrigues, 26, sat out regularly over the first two months, often serving as the Sabres' 13th forward. For the past six weeks, however – shortly after he reportedly requested a trade – he has played regularly, only getting scratched twice.

"He has definitely stepped up within the game we want to see and the habits are becoming more natural to him," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said following Friday's practice inside KeyBank Center.

Rodrigues has started producing a bit, scoring three goals in the last eight contests. Remember, he scored his first goal this season on Jan. 12, his 26th appearance.

The speedy Boston University product's versatility has also helped buoy him. He can play every forward position and all over the lineup. He recently subbed for Victor Olofsson at left wing on the top line beside center Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart.

Rodrigues has performed well in limited ice time. A team looking for depth up front could be interested in him before Monday's trade deadline.

But these days, Rodrigues sounds happier. Does he see a future with the Sabres?

"As a player, anywhere you go you just want to play and play consistently and get the opportunities," Rodrigues said. "That's what I've wanted. I've gotten that the past month or so. You just want to continue to get those opportunities."

Rodrigues, who received a one-year, \$2 million arbitration award in July, still oozes confidence. A trying season hasn't sapped much.

"It's just harder to make plays when you don't have the puck on your stick as much and you're getting out there every five, 10 minutes," said Rodrigues, whose ice time has dropped from 15 minutes, 49 seconds a game last season to 11:19 this year. "It's hard to stay in a rhythm, stay confident. You believe in yourself that you have the ability, but when you don't get the touches, it's a little bit tougher to make those plays."

During the preseason, Rodrigues talked about how he believed he had solidified his game and could play with anyone in the NHL.

Barely a week later, he began the season as a healthy scratch.

"It's obviously not a good feeling," Rodrigues said. "So, yeah, it was a little difficult. I thought I bounced back well."

So what has changed since early January?

Krueger said Rodrigues has started adjusting to the Sabres' new system and set of expectations.

"I believe I have the whole year," Rodrigues said. "I think it's just feeling more confident with the puck on my stick and making plays. I think that's the biggest difference and just letting the game come to me."

What about his scoring surge? He has scored five times in his last 14 outings.

"It started going in, I think," said Rodrigues, who has compiled nine points in 38 games. "I don't think I've done anything different or changed anything. They just started to find the back of the net. It's a weird game. Things like that happen and they don't go in for a while.

"Then you get one and they just start coming. It's just the way it's been. The puck's starting to go in. That's pretty much it."

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Eichel, Frolik and Sabres winger Kyle Okposo will likely play this afternoon.

"At the moment, everybody's available," Krueger said after all three players practiced Friday.

Eichel and Okposo had maintenance days Thursday. Frolik, meanwhile, skated on his own Thursday after the flu sidelined him two games.

"Kind of finally back to normal, I guess," Frolik said. "That really knocked me out. I don't know what it is. I can't remember when I missed that much time with the flu."

Frolik said he was bedridden for a few days.

"It's just the fever kind of stuck around," he said.

—

The Sabres sent winger Scott Wilson back to the Americans on Friday.

## **Sabres place Zach Bogosian on waivers to terminate contract**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 21, 2020

BUFFALO – Defenseman Zach Bogosian’s five-year career with the Sabres is over.

The Sabres placed Bogosian on unconditional waivers today with the intention of terminating his contract.

Bogosian refused to report to the Rochester Americans after the Sabres assigned him to their AHL affiliate on Saturday, a day after waiving him.

The Massena native must sign with a new team before Monday’s trade deadline to be eligible for the NHL playoffs.

The contract termination will cost Bogosian the final portion of his \$6 million salary.

## **Sabres' Michael Frolik set to return from flu**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 21, 2020

**BUFFALO** – Sabres forwards Jack Eichel, Michael Frolik and Kyle Okposo will likely play in Saturday afternoon's road game against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"At the moment, everybody's available," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said after the three players practiced this morning inside KeyBank Center.

Eichel and Okposo had maintenance days Thursday. The flu, meanwhile, sidelined Frolik the last two games.

"Kind of finally back to normal, I guess," said Frolik, who skated on his own Thursday. "That really knocked me out. I don't know what it is. I can't remember when I missed that much time with the flu."

Frolik said was he was bedridden for a few days.

"It's just the fever kind of stuck around," he said.

**Update:** The Sabres sent winger Scott Wilson back to the Rochester Americans this afternoon.

## **Buffalo Sabres make move to terminate Zach Bogosian's contract**

By Kim DeGeorge

WGRZ

February 21, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Zach Bogosian's time with the Sabres has officially come to an end as the team has him on unconditional waivers with the intention of terminating his contract.

The team suspended Bogosian February 17 for failing to report to the Rochester Americans in the AHL.

Bogosian was placed on waivers February 14. The Sabres assigned him to Rochester when he cleared waivers.

Injuries have been an issue for Bogosian during his career, especially with the Sabres. Most recently he had hip surgery this past offseason that caused him to miss the first 22 games of the season.

He reportedly requested a trade and was a healthy scratch for 17 of his past 26 games with the Sabres.

Once he clears waivers, Bogosian's cap hit will be at zero with this move. At first, he was costing the team just over \$5 million but sending him to Rochester reduced that to \$3.9 million.

## **Sabres Shut Down Penguins, 5-2**

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

February 22, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres scored just :14 seconds in Saturday afternoon against Pittsburgh, and never looked back as they defeated the Penguins 5-2.

Zemgus Girgensons lit the lamp in the opening seconds as Kyle Okposo found him wide open in front of the net. Buffalo added to their lead midway through the period when Sam Reinhart deflected the puck back into the zone as the Pens were trying to clear. Reinhart gloved the puck down and beat Tristan Jarry 1-on-1. The goal was Reinhart's 22nd of the season.

Less than four minutes later, Pittsburgh learned the hard way if you give Jack Eichel space, he'll make you pay. Eichel tallied his 34th on the season with the man up opportunity to put Buffalo up 3-0

The Penguins tallied the only goal of the second period from Evgeni Malkin to pull within two.

Jeff Skinner snapped his scoring drought in the opening minutes of the third period on a tip in from Marcus Johansson. The goal was Skinner's first since December 2nd, 2019.

Eichel hit the 35 goal mark on the year when he tallied his second of the afternoon on a late game power play. Malkin would add another goal for the Penguins late in the period, but it would be too late as Buffalo skated to their second road win in three games.

The Sabres look to continue to gain ground in the standings when they host Winnipeg Sunday afternoon.

## **Jeff Skinner scores first goal since December, Sabres defeat Penguins 5-2**

By Anthony Reyes

WKBW

February 22, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres bounced back from a tough loss against the Ottawa Senators earlier in the week with a win against the Pittsburgh Penguins Saturday.

Forward Jeff Skinner scored his first goal since December 2nd and captain Jack Eichel scored two power play goals on the way to a 5-2 Sabres win.

The Sabres got off to a hot start with Zemgus Girgensons scoring 14 seconds into the game.

Buffalo added two more first period goals and took a 3-0 lead into the first intermission.

Following a goal from Penguins forward Evgeni Malkin the teams headed to the third period with the score 3-1 in favor of the Sabres.

Skinner scored his first goal since December 2nd and Eichel added his second power play goal to finish off the scoring for the Sabres and give Buffalo a 5-2 win.

Sabres goalie Carter Hutton made 41 saves on the afternoon.

Buffalo is back on the ice Sunday at the KeyBank Center for a 3 p.m. faceoff with the Winnipeg Jets.

## **Sabres attempt to terminate Bogosian's contract**

By Anthony Reyes

WKBW

February 21, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres announced Friday defenseman Zach Bogosian has been placed on unconditional waivers with the intention of terminating his contract.

This is the latest in a series of transactions by the Sabres involving the veteran defenseman.

Bogosian was placed on waivers February 14th.

He cleared waivers and was assigned to the Rochester Americans February 15th.

He was then suspended by the Sabres February 17th for failure to report to the Americans.

## **Sabres terminate Bogosian's contract – and now the veteran defender will have options**

By Jared Clinton  
The Hockey News  
February 21, 2020

When reports surfaced in December that Zach Bogosian had requested a trade, it seemed, one way or another, his time with the Sabres would come to an end this season. But few would have expected his tenure in Buffalo to end like this.

Placed on waivers by the Sabres last week, and subsequently passed over by the rest of the NHL's franchises, Bogosian was suspended by Buffalo earlier this week for failing to report to the AHL's Rochester Americans. But the Sabres went one step further Friday, placing the 29-year-old rearguard on unconditional waivers for the purpose of terminating his contract. Currently in the final season of a seven-year, \$36-million pact with a \$5.14-million cap hit, Bogosian will become an unrestricted free agent upon the termination of his deal and be free to sign with any club.

It's an odd final chapter in what has been a turbulent time for Bogosian with the Sabres. Once one of the main pieces in the blockbuster eight-player swap that brought him and Evander Kane to Buffalo and sent Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford and Joel Armia, among other pieces, to the Winnipeg Jets, Bogosian failed to really become the effective top-pairing replacement he was projected to be. To be sure, the Sabres gave him the minutes. He averaged more than 26 minutes in the 21 games he played in Buffalo after the trade in 2014-15 and remained a 20-minute-plus player in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

But repeated injuries led to stops and starts. Take the 2017-18 campaign. After missing 44 games across the two prior seasons, Bogosian missed all but 18 games due to a hip injury that later required surgery. He was back the following season, but missed 17 games with a variety of lower-body ailments. That led to this season. Bogosian started on injured reserve and has missed more games than he's played.

The result is that Bogosian, who was on the fringes of the Calder Trophy conversation as a rookie and had some highs during his time in Winnipeg, not least of which was a career-best 30-point season in 2011-12, wasn't able to discover that same form in Buffalo. He exceeded 20 points only once, his ice time fluctuated regularly and his underlying numbers were hardly sparkling. This season, he had the worst expected goals against per 60 minutes mark (2.48) of any Sabres defender. Granted, he logged heavy own-zone minutes and his starts leaned heavily towards the defensive side of the ice, but that can only go so far in explaining his poor advanced stats.

The question now, though, is what comes next for Bogosian. It's clear his intention wasn't to stay in Buffalo beyond this season and, if he had his way, it seems he wouldn't even have been with the Sabres this long. But what is also clear is there's not a single team in the NHL who believed he was worth picking up at his \$5 million-plus cap hit, nor seemingly a team who wanted him at half that price. TSN's Darren Dreger reported the Sabres tried "hard to trade (Bogosian) and was willing to retain 50 percent" of his cap hit.

But the interest in Bogosian should pick up now that he's a free agent.

With the trade deadline on the horizon, there will be teams seeking blueline depth and most will be looking to do so on a budget. And despite his injury struggles, Bogosian is certainly an NHL-caliber defender, even if only on the third pairing with a contending team. When teams swing and miss on those they're after – or if they balk at the prices – Bogosian will be an available option. The bonus? He can ink a deal at a reasonable cap hit and any team signing him won't need to give up an asset to bring Bogosian aboard. It seems incredibly unlikely that he goes unsigned through the deadline. For teams that can afford it, which should be every single contending team, Bogosian stands to be the lowest of low-risk additions.

Playing for a cut rate can be beneficial for Bogosian, as well, if for no other reason than giving him the chance to finally experience the post-season. He's played 636 NHL games, but not a single one in the post-season. He wasn't going to get there in Buffalo, not this season. Now that he might have the chance to pick between a few clubs, though, maybe he finally gets a taste of playoff action.

When colleague Steven Ellis wrote Thursday about struggling players who could benefit from a change of scenery at the deadline, Bogosian didn't land on the list. But he very well could have. He's relatively young. Though injuries have slowed him, he moves fairly well for a 6-foot-3 defender. He can shoot. He can move the puck. In the right situation, he could become a versatile and useful fourth, fifth or sixth defenseman. And assuming he signs somewhere prior to Monday's deadline, Bogosian could have the opportunity to showcase that before the season is through.

## **Jets at Sabres preview**

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

February 22, 2020

### **JETS (32-26-5) at SABRES (28-25-8)**

**3 p.m. ET; MSG-B, TSN3, NHL.TV**

#### **The Game**

Cody Eakin will make his Winnipeg Jets debut when they play the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Sunday.

Eakin, a center, was traded from the Vegas Golden Knights for a conditional fourth-round pick in the 2020 NHL Draft on Friday.

The Jets had their three-game winning streak end in a 4-2 loss at the Philadelphia Flyers on Saturday. They are 6-3-1 in their past 10 games.

The Sabres, who won 5-2 at the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday, are 4-1-0 in their past five games and have scored at least three goals in each. They are 6-3-1 in their past 10.

#### **Players to watch**

Jets center Mark Scheifele has three goals and four assists during a three-game point streak.

Sabres center Jack Eichel has a seven-game point streak (four goals, seven assists).

#### **They said it**

"He's one of those, I would not say grinders, but he gets under your skin. He's not a dirty player. He plays hard, kind of probably chirps everyone once and a while. He'll be a good guy for our team. He'll fit the way we play hockey. He's very welcomed here." -- Jets forward Patrik Laine on center Cody Eakin

"A year ago, I don't think we would have had an effort like that in this situation, and I think we've all grown up a little bit. It's just about that consistency. Obviously, we play again [Sunday] at 3 [o'clock]. It's important to come back with another great effort." -- Sabres captain Jack Eichel

#### **Jets projected lineup**

Nikolaj Ehlers -- Mark Scheifele -- Blake Wheeler  
Kyle Connor -- Andrew Copp -- Patrik Laine  
Jansen Harkins -- Jack Roslovic -- Mason Appleton  
Gabriel Bourque -- Cody Eakin -- Logan Shaw

Josh Morrissey -- Tucker Poolman  
Dmitry Kulikov -- Neal Pionk  
Nathan Beaulieu -- Dylan DeMelo

Laurent Brossoit  
Connor Hellebuyck

**Scratched:** Anthony Bitetto, Sami Niku, Nicholas Shore

**Injured:** Bryan Little (head), Mathieu Perreault (upper body), Adam Lowry (upper body), Carl Dahlstrom (broken hand), Mark Letestu (heart virus), Luca Sbisa (upper body)

#### **Sabres projected lineup**

Victor Olofsson -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart  
Jeff Skinner -- Curtis Lazar -- Michael Frolik  
Jimmy Vesey -- Marcus Johansson -- Conor Sheary  
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Kyle Okposo

Brandon Montour -- Rasmus Ristolainen

Rasmus Dahlin -- Colin Miller  
Jake McCabe -- Henri Jokiharju

Jonas Johansson  
Carter Hutton

**Scratched:** John Gilmour, Evan Rodrigues

**Injured:** Linus Ullmark (lower body), Tage Thompson (upper body), Vladimir Sobotka (lower body)

### **Status report**

Beaulieu will play his first game against the Sabres since being traded to the Jets prior to the 2019 NHL Trade Deadline; he played 89 games for Buffalo from 2017-19. ... Winnipeg coach Paul Maurice said he has not decided on a starting goalie. ... Johansson is expected to make his first start for the Sabres since Feb. 9.

### **Stat pack**

Dahlin has one goal and six assists in a six-game point streak, an NHL career high. ... Jokiharju will play his 100th NHL game. ... Laine has six points (two goals, four assists) in a four-game point streak; Wheeler has seven points (three goals, four assists) in his past five games.

## Eichel's two goals help Sabres top Penguins

By Wes Crosby

NHL.com

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH -- Jack Eichel scored two power-play goals, and Carter Hutton made 41 saves for the Buffalo Sabres in a 5-2 win against the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG Paints Arena on Saturday.

Jeff Skinner ended his 22-game goal drought for the Sabres (28-25-8), who are 4-1-0 in their past five games. Buffalo is 10 points behind the New York Islanders, Carolina Hurricanes and Columbus Blue Jackets for the first wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

"Just really pleased with the four lines, six [defensemen], goaltending effort," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "All the way through the lineup, everybody contributed today. It's an excellent reaction in a very tough building to react in. We're really pleased with the way the game went."

Evgeni Malkin scored two goals, and Tristan Jarry made 21 saves for Pittsburgh (37-17-6), which has been outscored 9-2 in two losses after winning its previous three by a combined 14-4. The Penguins and Washington Capitals, who lost 3-2 at the New Jersey Devils, remained tied for first place in the Metropolitan Division; they play Sunday at Capital One Arena.

"I'm both disappointed and concerned," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "I think we're saying the right things, but our actions have to follow our words. We come out in the first period, we play a high-risk game. You can't win in this league if you play a high-risk game. We were high-risk tonight."

Zemgus Girgensons put the Sabres ahead 1-0 on the second shot of the game, 14 seconds into the first period. Kyle Okposo stopped the puck behind the Penguins net before passing to Girgensons for a wrist shot from the slot.

Sam Reinhart made it 2-0 at 6:48 on a wrist shot past Jarry's blocker after he intercepted a pass by defenseman Kris Letang.

Eichel scored a power-play goal on a wrist shot, extending the lead to 3-0 at 10:51.

Malkin cut it to 3-1 with a wrist shot from the slot at 11:10 of the second period.

Skinner redirected a pass from Marcus Johansson past Jarry to make it 4-1 at 5:39 of the third period. His 12th goal of the season was his first since Dec. 2 against the Devils.

"It's been awhile for me, obviously," the forward said. "Whenever it's been awhile, it's good to get one. So just happy I could contribute to the win."

Eichel scored his second goal at 12:17 during another power play for a 5-1 lead. He is tied for fourth in the NHL with 35 goals and has 11 points (four goals, seven assists) during a seven-game point streak.

"I thought we came out hard," Eichel said. "I thought we had a good start. Penalty kill was good. [Hutton] was stellar. I thought we played really desperate. We got rewarded. That's a really good team. It's a good way to play there. We smothered them, we backpressured. We played a good team game on the road."

Malkin made it 5-2 when he scored with 2:03 remaining.

"We weren't ready," Malkin said. "We haven't played great the last, I think, 10 games. Same mistakes. ... We try to play easy. It's not the right way. It's like 20 games left, everyone is trying to fight to the playoffs."

### They said it

"If you don't bring your game, it's kind of feast or famine out there. So you have to find a way to battle every night and I thought the guys responded here tonight." -- Sabres goalie Carter Hutton

"You see earlier on in the season how well we played and how well the team played together. So I think it's just getting back to that." -- Penguins goalie Tristan Jarry

### **Need to know**

Sabres forward Michael Frolik had one assist in 14:35 after missing two games with an illness. ... Penguins forward Dominik Kahun did not play after using his left leg to block a shot by Toronto Maple Leafs forward Denis Malgin in a 4-0 loss Thursday. He is day to day. ... Girgensons' goal was the fastest from the beginning of a game for Buffalo since Feb. 20, 2015, when Matt Moulson scored 14 seconds into a 3-1 loss to the New York Rangers. ... Penguins center Sidney Crosby was held without a point in a second straight game for the first time since returning from core muscle surgery. He has 23 points (seven goals, 16 assists) in his 15 games back. ... Malkin's second goal was his 20th of the season. He has scored at least 20 goals in 12 of his 14 NHL seasons, including each of his past seven. The center joined Mario Lemieux and Crosby as the only players in Penguins history to score at least 20 goals in 12 seasons.

### **What's next**

Sabres: Host the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday (3 p.m. ET; MSG-B, TSN3, NHL.TV)

Penguins: At the Washington Capitals on Sunday (12 p.m. ET; NBC, TVAS)

## Sabres at Penguins preview

By Wes Crosby

NHL.com

February 21, 2020

### **SABRES (27-25-8) at PENGUINS (37-16-6)**

**1 p.m. ET; ATTSN-PT, MSG-B, NHL.TV**

#### **The Game**

The Pittsburgh Penguins will try for their 13th win in 18 games when they host the Buffalo Sabres at PPG Paints Arena on Saturday.

Pittsburgh is 12-4-1 in its past 17 games, and 20-6-2 in its past 28. The Penguins are tied with the Washington Capitals, who host Pittsburgh at Capital One Arena on Sunday, for first place in the Metropolitan Division.

Forward Dominik Kahun will be a game-time decision for the Penguins after a shot from Toronto Maple Leafs forward Denis Malgin hit his left leg in a 4-0 loss on Thursday. He did not practice Friday.

The Sabres have won three of their past four games and are 5-3-1 in their past nine after going 3-5-0 in their previous eight. The teams haven't played since Buffalo won 3-1 in Pittsburgh on Oct. 3 in the season opener for each.

#### **Players to watch**

Sabres center Jack Eichel has two goals and seven assists during a six-game point streak.

Penguins center Sidney Crosby has 23 points (seven goals, 16 assists) in 14 games since returning from core muscle surgery. He needs two assists for 800 in the NHL.

#### **They said it**

"The margin for error, I agree, it's very, very small. What we need to do is just take care of details." -- Sabres coach Ralph Krueger

"We need to be stingier. ... I don't think we've controlled territory as much as we're capable of over the last few weeks." -- Penguins coach Mike Sullivan

#### **Sabres projected lineup**

Victor Olofsson -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart  
Jeff Skinner -- Curtis Lazar -- Michael Frolik  
Jimmy Vesey -- Marcus Johansson -- Conor Sheary  
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Kyle Okposo

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

Carter Hutton  
Jonas Johansson

**Scratched:** John Gilmour, Scott Wilson, Evan Rodrigues

**Injured:** Linus Ullmark (lower body), Tage Thompson (shoulder), Vladimir Sobotka (knee)

#### **Penguins projected lineup**

Jason Zucker -- Sidney Crosby -- Dominik Simon  
Anthony Angello -- Evgeni Malkin -- Bryan Rust  
Jared McCann -- Andrew Agozzino -- Patric Hornqvist  
Brandon Tanev -- Teddy Blueger -- Sam Lafferty

Jack Johnson -- Kris Letang

Marcus Pettersson -- Justin Schultz  
Juuso Riihola -- Chad Ruhwedel

Tristan Jarry  
Matt Murray

**Scratched:** Zach Trotman

**Injured:** Nick Bjugstad (core muscle surgery), Brian Dumoulin (ankle surgery), Jake Guentzel (shoulder surgery), John Marino (facial surgery), Zach Aston-Reese (lower body), Dominik Kahun (undisclosed)

**Status report**

Frolik is expected to play after missing the past two games with an illness. ... The Sabres placed defenseman Zach Bogosian on unconditional waivers Friday with the intention of terminating his contract. ... Angello replaced Kahun at second-line left wing during practice Friday.

**Stat pack**

Dahlin has one goal and five assists during a five-game point streak. ... Olofsson has three goals and three assists during a four-game point streak. ... Jarry is 13-3-1 with a 2.27 goals-against average and .926 save percentage in his past 17 starts.

## **Sabres play strong from start to finish in win over Pittsburgh**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH - For the second straight game, the Buffalo Sabres jumped out to an early 2-0 lead on the road. Then they added to it.

Buffalo maintained a strong defensive structure to come away with a 5-2 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday at PPG Paints Arena.

Unlike Tuesday's game in Ottawa, where the Sabres saw a 2-0 lead evaporate when the Senators scored four goals in 3:29 at the end of the first period in a 7-4 Senators victory, the Sabres didn't panic Saturday afternoon.

Their penalty kill was strong, going 2-for-2. Carter Hutton made 41 saves in net, including six while shorthanded.

The power play went 2-for-3 with captain Jack Eichel scoring both man-advantage markers for his 34th and 35th goals of the season.

And the Sabres received offensive contributions from up and down the lineup, including Jeff Skinner's first goal since Dec. 2. Zemgus Girgensons opened the scoring 14 seconds into the game and Sam Reinhart added another at the 6:46 mark of the first period.

"Jeez, I thought we came out hard. I thought we had a good start, the penalty kill good, Hutts was stellar," Eichel said. "I thought we played really desperate and we got rewarded. It's a really good team. It's a good way to play there. We smothered them, we back pressured. We played a good team game on the road."

Up 3-0 midway through the first period, the Sabres were able to focus on what they needed to do in order to hold off Pittsburgh's lethal attack.

"Tuesday's long gone. We really just came in here, regrouped and tried to get back to what we've been doing in the games before," head coach Ralph Krueger said.

### **Limiting offensive chances**

When Pittsburgh finally got on the board with 8:50 remaining in the second period, Buffalo did not falter.

"They never stop coming at you," Krueger said. "They never stop believing they can score or change the score. They're not daunted by a 3-0 hole and you can feel that in their game. It was important for us to psychologically just stay with the game today.

"I thought after the 1-3 goal, there was a short little moment of wavering, but we quickly got back to our game," Krueger said. "That was probably the critical moment of the game - that we shut them down after the 1-3 and got back to what we needed to do without the puck.

"The pressure was great all night long, everybody working for each other. We spread the minutes out like probably no game this season and overall, just a really good team effort, but more than anything defensively. And the offense just profited and grew out of the structure that we showed tonight."

That defensive effort snapped Penguins captain Sidney Crosby's seven-game point streak against Buffalo. Crosby's best chance came on the power play, and when he tried to beat Hutton high shortside, the Sabres netminder was able to literally shrug it off with a shoulder save.

"We were trading chances through the first two periods. It was about even chances. So of course, a big compliment goes out to Carter Hutton," Krueger said. "We're up 3-1 instead of down and we created a lot of chances. We could've had a few more too possibly. Of course, Carter made some critical saves at the right moment."

Buffalo is 2-0-0 in Pittsburgh this year. They defeated the Penguins 3-1 in the season opener. The two clubs will meet again on March 5 in Buffalo.

"When we come here in this building, we understand what we're up against and the way we need to play. I don't think we deviate from that. That's what makes us successful," Eichel said. "It's important that you come in with that same mindset no matter who you're playing or where you are.

"It seems like when we go on the road and play against some of these top teams in the league, we really respect the opponent and respect our game. I think we try and execute it as well as we can. We've seen that with some of our good road wins this year."

### **Skinner lights the lamp**

Skinner deflected in a Marcus Johansson pass in front 5:39 into the third period to put Buffalo ahead 4-1. It was Skinner's first tally since Dec. 2, a drought that lasted 22 games for the winger.

"It's been awhile for me obviously and whenever it's been awhile, it's nice to get one. I'm just happy I could contribute to the win," he said. "...You can use 'relief,' I guess, if that sort of fits the storyline because of how long it's been. I don't know. I just feel happy that we got another goal and we're in the lead a little bit more."

The goal came on his third shot of the game and fifth attempt. He now has 12 goals in 51 games this season.

"They were really celebrating. This group really cheers for each other. You could see the faces. Jeff's beaming, but everybody else too and cheering loud," Krueger said. "Let that be the beginning of some momentum for him."

### **Streaks continue**

Eichel is now on a seven-game point streak with four goals and seven assists in that stretch.

Eichel also has eight points (5+3) in seven games against the Penguins since the beginning of the 2017-18 season, including seven points (4+3) in five road games.

With an assist on Eichel's second goal, Rasmus Dahlin extended his point streak to six games (1+6). Rasmus Ristolainen extended his to four games (0+6) with two assists.

Kyle Okposo (2+1) is also on a three-game point streak.

Hutton is now 5-0-0 with two shutouts in six career visits to Pittsburgh.

### **Up next**

The Sabres will be back in action Sunday afternoon when the Winnipeg Jets come to Buffalo. Tickets are on sale now.

The team is hoping that they can carry the lessons of this win into the next stretch of games.

"A year ago, I don't think we would've had an effort like that in this situation. I think we've all grown up a little bit. It's all about that consistency," Eichel said. "We play again tomorrow at 3 and it's important to come back with another great effort."

Pregame coverage will begin at 2:30 p.m. on MSG. Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray will call the action among the people; They'll be set up in Section 108 all game long.

The Sabres will then be on the road for the next little bit. Following the NHL Trade Deadline on Monday, the team will embark on a five-game road trip through Colorado, Arizona, Vegas and Winnipeg.

"We've been tested and we've got a lot of road hockey coming up here. We enjoy playing on the road and we're not afraid of it," Krueger said.

"...We definitely need to be ready to play physical and we know teams will be coming at us so the reaction today was excellent. We can be physical and push back as a team. We'll definitely take that with us."

## **At the Horn: Sabres 5 - Penguins 2**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 22, 2020

Zemgus Girgensons opened the scoring 14 seconds into the contest and the Buffalo Sabres never looked back in a 5-2 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG Paints Arena on Saturday.

Sam Reinhart added to the lead in the first period, Jack Eichel scored a pair of goals on the power play, and Jeff Skinner put an end to his 22-game scoring drought with a goal in the third. Carter Hutton made 41 saves.

Evgeni Malkin both goals for the Penguins. Tristan Jarry stopped 21 of 26 shots.

### **What happened**

The trio of Girgensons, Johan Larsson, and Kyle Okposo got the start and promptly put the Sabres on the board. Larsson retrieved a loose puck in the corner and tossed it behind the Pittsburgh net to Okposo, who found Girgensons cutting into the slot.

Reinhart stole the puck from Kris Letang at the Pittsburgh blue line and beat Jarry to make it 2-0 at the 6:48 mark. Eichel added his first power-play goal at 10:51.

Malkin put the Penguins on the board in the second, but the Sabres continued to capitalize on offensive opportunities in the third. Skinner cut across the net and deflected a Marcus Johansson shot to add cushion at the 5:39 mark and Eichel added a second power-play goal to make it 5-1. Malkin's second goal, scored with 2:03 remaining, was too little, too late.

Hutton was on his game throughout, turning in a strong rebound performance after allowing six goals in Ottawa on Tuesday. He held the Penguins to two goals on a night they generated 36 scoring chances (according to Natural Stat Trick) and was crucial to Buffalo's 2-for-2 night on the penalty kill.

### **What it means**

The Sabres rebounded from their disappointing result in Ottawa and have now won four of their last five games. They are eight points behind the third-place Toronto Maple Leafs, who host Carolina tonight.

They benefitted once again from scoring throughout the lineup. Girgensons' goal was his 12th in 61 games this season, putting him on pace to surpass the career-high 15 he scored in 2014-15. Skinner, meanwhile, will hope his goal opens the floodgates for one of his trademark hot streaks.

Buffalo has now won three straight games in Pittsburgh dating back to last season, the team's first such streak since winning four in a row from Jan. 5, 1980 to Feb. 21, 1981.

### **Up next**

The Sabres return home to host the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday. Coverage on MSG begins at 2:30 p.m. or you can listen to the game on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 3.

## **Krueger: Sabres need 'very best defensive game to show up' vs. Penguins**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 22, 2020

PITTSBURGH - The Buffalo Sabres are ready for their afternoon tilt on Saturday against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Following a pair of practices at home, the Sabres enter their game at PPG Paints Arena with a focus on a strong defensive game.

Carter Hutton will start in goal and the team will warm up with 13 forwards and six defensemen, with the lineup set to be finalized after that. The Sabres are looking to bounce back from a 7-4 loss to the Ottawa Senators on Tuesday.

The Sabres are in the second game of a nine-game stretch that includes eight road games. The lone contest at home in that span will be played tomorrow afternoon against the Winnipeg Jets.

"We have a need for our very best defensive game to show up here and the work without the puck will be critical for us to set ourselves up for opportunities to win," Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger said. "That was a major focus here. It slipped slightly in the Ottawa game and by the time we got it back, it was too late.

"We need to - on the road - be extremely strong defensively and have a good penalty kill, which is our motor defensively. And from there, build our offense. That was kind of what the conversations in the last few days have been about."

Yesterday, the team welcomed three forwards back to practice, including Michael Frolik, who has missed the past two games due to an illness.

"We thought his last game was really strong. He had gotten away from being confident with the puck, but without the puck, he just continually does the right things," Krueger said. "He goes to the right spaces and he gave our penalty kill a completely different feel to it since he's been here. His ability and willingness to block shots and his reads defensively are outstanding.

"...He looked energy-wise really good yesterday so hopefully we can bring him into the game today."

Faceoff is scheduled for 1 p.m. with pregame coverage on MSG starting at 12:30. Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray will have the call on MSG and WGR 550.

### **Things to watch for**

Hutton is 4-0-0 with two shutouts in six career visits to Pittsburgh. In his seven total appearances against the Penguins, he has posted a .936 save percentage and a 1.94 goals-against average.

Jack Eichel has totaled six points (3+3) in six games against the Penguins since the beginning of the 2017-18 season, including five points (2+3) in four road games.

Conor Sheary has totaled six points (4+2) in his first four games against his former team, including a pair of goals in the first meeting between the two teams this season on opening night. Buffalo won that game 3-1.

Penguins captain Sidney Crosby is two assists away from recording 800 in his career. He's riding a seven-game point streak against the Sabres (5+7).

Evgeni Malkin has also had a lot of recent success against Buffalo. He's recorded at least a point (4+10) in 10-straight head-to-head matchups.

The two clubs will meet again on March 5 in Buffalo.

## **Trio of forwards return to practice**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 21, 2020

Michael Frolik feels ready to play after missing the last two games with an illness.

Frolik was back with the Sabres for practice at KeyBank Center on Friday along with fellow forwards Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo, both of whom took maintenance days Thursday. Coach Ralph Krueger said he expects all three players to be available for the team's game in Pittsburgh on Saturday.

"We'll see how the day goes, but at the moment everybody's available which gives us some good options for tomorrow," Krueger said.

Frolik said he was bedridden for the first few days of his illness, the symptoms of which included a sore throat, burning chest, and a high fever.

"I felt a little better, but I woke up every morning and the fever was still there," he said. "I was kind of getting frustrated but the doctors and everything, they gave me antibiotics and they slowed it down. They did a good job here."

With all three players healthy, the Sabres have 13 forwards available on their NHL roster. Frolik took first reps in line rushes alongside Jeff Skinner and Curtis Lazar, with Evan Rodrigues rotating in on ensuing repetitions. Scott Wilson was assigned to Rochester after practice.

"We have some depth right now in our roster if everybody wakes up healthy tomorrow morning," Krueger said. "It's an exciting situation for the coaches. We have that internal competition that I spoke about early in the season that we hunger for. We have that. It pushes the guys that are playing also."

"Whether Evan is playing or not tomorrow, he has definitely stepped up within the game that we want to see players play and the habits are becoming more natural to him. He's been a good addition. He can play wing, he can play up the middle, he can add to our PK and help on the power play. So, that's a versatile player that's good for our depth right now."

### **Onto Pittsburgh**

Tomorrow's game will conclude the Sabres' season series with the Penguins, which began with a 3-1 win in Pittsburgh on opening night.

Krueger revisited that game Thursday and saw the identity the Sabres are still looking to establish on a consistent basis.

"I went through that game yesterday and looked at a bunch of clips with the coaches this morning," Krueger said. "It was quite astounding out of training camp, the habits that we showed and the energy we had and the speed with which we played. That keeps popping up but, again, at least we have that picture in our heads. We feel when we're asking the players questions, they're giving us the right answers right now and that they see that game in their heads."

"We just need to continue to work on the execution behind it. It is hard work and it is grueling mentally and physically to stay in that game. That's what we continue to work on here. But that first game, truly going back and looking at it, was quite an amazing performance coming out of training camp and, yeah, it continues to be one of the benchmarks of the season was that one."

Coverage on MSG begins Saturday afternoon at 12:30. Puck drop is scheduled for 1.

### **Lines at Friday's practice**

68 Victor Olofsson - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart

13 Jimmy Vesey - 90 Marcus Johansson - 43 Conor Sheary

53 Jeff Skinner - 27 Curtis Lazar - 67 Michael Frolik / 71 Evan Rodrigues

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 21 Kyle Okposo

62 Brandon Montour - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

19 Jake McCabe - 10 Henri Jokiharju

26 Rasmus Dahlin - 33 Colin Miller

58 John Gilmour

40 Carter Hutton

34 Jonas Johansson

## **Sabres assign Wilson to Rochester**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 21, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres have assigned forward Scott Wilson to the Rochester Americans (AHL).

The move leaves the Sabres with 13 healthy forwards following Michael Frolik's return to practice from an illness on Friday. Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said he expects Frolik to play Saturday in Pittsburgh.

Wilson has tallied 19 points (9+10) in 29 games with the Amerks this season. The team hosts Lehigh Valley tonight at 7:05 p.m.