



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 7, 2020*

## **Top scorers Panarin and Eichel meet in New York-Buffalo matchup**

Associated Press

February 7, 2020

Buffalo Sabres (23-23-8, sixth in the Atlantic Division) vs. New York Rangers (26-22-4, seventh in the Metropolitan Division)

New York; Friday, 7 p.m. EST

**BOTTOM LINE:** A pair of the NHL's best scorers, Artemi Panarin and Jack Eichel, meet when New York and Buffalo hit the ice. Panarin ranks fifth in the NHL with 71 points and Eichel ranks eighth in the league with 66 points.

The Rangers are 19-12-2 against conference opponents. New York has scored 171 goals and ranks eighth in the league averaging 3.3 per game. Panarin leads the team with 27.

The Sabres are 8-11-2 against opponents from the Atlantic Division. Buffalo has given up 40 power-play goals, killing 74.5% of opponent chances.

In their last meeting on Oct. 24, New York won 6-2. Ryan Strome totaled two goals for the Rangers.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Panarin leads the Rangers with 27 goals, adding 44 assists and totaling 71 points. Chris Kreider has six goals and four assists over the last 10 games for New York.

Eichel leads the Sabres with 35 total assists and has collected 66 points. Sam Reinhart has scored five goals over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Sabres: 4-5-1, averaging 2.6 goals, 4.1 assists, 2.7 penalties and 5.6 penalty minutes while allowing 2.6 goals per game with a .909 save percentage.

Rangers: 6-4-0, averaging 3.3 goals, 5.5 assists, 4.1 penalties and 13.4 penalty minutes while giving up 2.8 goals per game with a .910 save percentage.

**INJURIES:** Rangers: None listed.

Sabres: Curtis Lazar: day to day (illness), Rasmus Dahlin: day to day (upper body), Kyle Okposo: out (upper body).

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## **Red Wings snap 9-game skid with 4-3 shootout win over Sabres**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

February 6, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Dylan Larkin scored twice and converted one of Detroit's two shootout goals, and the Red Wings snapped a nine-game skid with a 4-3 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

Andreas Athanasiou sealed the victory by scoring on Detroit's second shootout opportunity after Jonathan Bernier stopped Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart on Buffalo's first two attempts.

Bernier finished with 29 saves through overtime and Tyler Bertuzzi also scored in a game the Red Wings rebounded after squandering a 2-0 third-period lead.

By improving to 1-8-1 their past 10 and winning for the first time since a 3-2 shootout victory at Ottawa on Jan. 10, the Red Wings avoided their second 10-game losing streak of the season. Detroit went 0-10-2 during a stretch spanning November and December.

"Whew, finally," said Larkin, who posted his ninth career two-goal game, and first since a 5-4 overtime victory over Buffalo on March 28.

"Just to come in the room and see smiles and listen to some music," Larkin said. "Just a total team win. Everybody feels good right now. We've got to keep this going."

Detroit also ended a nine-game road losing streak dating to a 2-1 win at Montreal on Dec. 14.

The Sabres earned a point when Evan Rodrigues tied it at 3 with 47 seconds remaining. That came some six minutes after his high-sticking penalty led to Bertuzzi's power-play goal putting Detroit up 3-2.

With Buffalo's net empty, Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen blocked Trevor Daley's clearing attempt. The puck bounced into the slot, where Rodrigues gathered it and flipped it into the open right side of the net over Bernier's out-stretched arms.

The Sabres erased a 2-0 third-period lead when Jimmy Vesey and Scott Wilson — in his first game after being called up from the minors — scored 2:41 apart in the third period to tie the game at 2 with 11:31 remaining.

The effort still wasn't good enough for a Sabres team that dropped to 1-4-1 in its past six.

"We definitely cannot be pleased with losing in penalty shots here today," coach Ralph Krueger said.

"It's the failed opportunities and the grit that we need to finish on those opportunities is definitely the reason for the loss today," he added. "It was a good reaction in the third, coming back from two down. It was a good reaction to score 6-on-5 to bring it into overtime under the circumstances. But we shouldn't have been in those circumstances."

Larkin's goal in the shootout was similar to the goal he scored to put Detroit up 2-0 in the final second of the first period to cap a 2-on-1 break.

Each time, Larkin sped in from the left wing and cut across the front of the net before backhanding a shot in behind Jonas Johansson, who was making his first career start.

Athanasiou then scored by firing a shot inside the left post.

"We weren't perfect tonight," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said, referring to the near-third-period collapse. "But I thought the effort level was great. It was good to get rewarded for a fairly good process."

Johansson finished with 18 saves.

The Sabres were booed off the ice after each of the first two periods. Their slump has dispirited a fanbase that's become familiar with late-season collapses and the team missing the playoffs.

Buffalo (23-23-8) is in jeopardy of extending the NHL's longest active playoff drought to a ninth season. And the Sabres, in Krueger's first year, spent much of this season vowing this year won't be a repeat of last season, which Buffalo closed by winning just 16 of its final 57 games.

Just last week, Eichel mentioned the wheels previously falling off before vowing: "That's not happening here."

Buffalo instead closed a five-game homestand with just one win.

"We waited too long to turn it on," Rodrigues said. "We weren't ready. We had our moments but we have to be more consistent. It seems like we're in a bit of a funk here. It's not where we want to be, simple as that."

Larkin's first goal 4:23 in ended Detroit's goal drought at 133:34 following consecutive shutout losses to the New York Rangers and Philadelphia.

The Sabres had a goal disallowed following a coaching challenge 6 1/2 minutes in. Officials ruled Wilson interfered with Bernier when deflecting in Lawrence Pilut's shot from the left point. Seconds before Pilut's shot, Wilson parked one foot inside the crease just behind Bernier.

NOTES: Red Wings D Gustav Lindstrom made his NHL debut. ... The game featured teams with a combined 35 wins, one fewer than Washington, which has a league-leading 36. ... Sabres D Rasmus Dahlin missed his second game with an upper-body injury.

UP NEXT

Red Wings: At the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday night.

Sabres: At the New York Rangers on Friday night.

## **Another day in Sabreland: No excuse to ever lose to Red Wings**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 6, 2020

Where do the Sabres go from here? In Ralph Krueger's small picture, they hopped a plane and headed to New York for Friday's game in Madison Square Garden against the Rangers.

But while the coach isn't entertaining any big-picture analysis of his season -- and he's right to play it that way -- the fact of the matter is the wheels are falling off to unspeakable levels again. Just as captain Jack Eichel insisted they wouldn't last week.

Losing to the Detroit Red Wings in any circumstance, for any reason, at any time is unacceptable.

The Wings are likely going to finish as the worst team in the NHL's salary cap era. Yes, worse than the Sabres' tank teams.

Even if the Sabres would have come back to win Thursday night, it would have felt like a loss.

They tried to play one period and get two points. Almost worked. But Detroit snapped its nine-game winless streak with a 4-3 shootout victory.

Where is the Buffalo team that beat Vegas and Dallas? That wasn't six months ago or last season. That was three weeks ago. That team didn't come back from the All-Star break. Is it on a beach somewhere?

"We were more desperate in those games," Eichel said softly. "I just think we need to find more desperation."

The Sabres, of course, are always going for the positives. They had a 55-30 edge in shot attempts and 32-21 advantage on goal. It was 14-4 in the third period, when they scored three goals. A 6-on-5 pull of Jonas Johansson worked as Evan Rodrigues scored the tying goal with 46 seconds left.

Shootouts are meh. Dylan Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou scored for Detroit. Eichel and Sam Reinhart didn't for Buffalo. Should we be celebrating a win if things went differently?

Fans spent the first two hours in the building booing the Sabres when they returned to the ice after the intermissions. Their play was so passionless that it was ridiculous.

Reinhart who correctly said teammates have to "step the hell up" after Tuesday's embarrassment against Colorado, openly loafed back on Larkin's goal in the final second of the first period.

He had spent a shift of 1 minute, 42 seconds and had just hit the post after some neat moves through the Detroit zone. But the Wings broke away and Reinhart played the clock. He wasn't saved by the bell.

Gassed or not, futile chase or not, there needed to be any sort of all-out effort and not a coast back in the play.

Pressed on the topic, Reinhart simply said, "I don't think I'm going to value that question right now." (I think he may have meant "validate" but the point is the same).

"Speaking to them coming into the room, they were pressing that one without respect for how much time was still left on the clock," Krueger said. "I do not see a lack of effort from Sam Reinhart."

Here's hoping that's a public stance and Krueger has something different to say privately.

The coach continues to bear responsibility. He seems to have lost Jeff Skinner, whose \$9 million contract sat on the bench for all of overtime and his 16th straight game without a goal.

Krueger pointed out how Rodrigues, Curtis Lazar and Colin Miller were going well in this game. He's not wrong. They were. But your stars have to play when it's winning time. Especially when your general manager has put a team together that's flat-out not good enough.

The hockey world is closing in on the Sabres. While the local media has said the same things many times the last few years, things are much worse elsewhere now.

There's no glad-handing of the Pegulas or GM Jason Botterill anymore by out-of-towners.

TSN insider Darren Dreger said Wednesday on radio in Toronto that it was time for the Pegulas to publicly acknowledge the fans and discuss what's going on with this team.

Good luck to Dreger on that one. Of course, he's only seven years late on making that point compared to the Buffalo media.

NBC discussed the Sabres Wednesday and all night Thursday. ESPN.com had a major feature on the team Thursday. TSN Radio in Toronto actually entertained the possibility of Eichel ever pondering a trade, a remote thought at best.

The fans are fed up. Krueger and Botterill have to prevent what happened here last March or they'll almost certainly face the same fate as Phil Housley. No one in this organization has any answers. There's little accountability.

"There's a bite in that room. They don't want this season to fall away," Krueger said. "They want to fight against this storm that we're fighting against. We have to stick together and we have to work together on solutions and that's all we can do in this adversity right now."

"No one is going to live with the result more than us," Eichel said. "That's the biggest thing we have to look at. I'm kind of sick and tired about everything else around. It's about us in the room. We have to do it and that's what we try to deal with on a day to day basis."

## **The Wraparound: Detroit Red Wings 4, Buffalo Sabres 3 (SO)**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 6, 2020

In a season full of lows, the Buffalo Sabres hit what has to rate as the lowest one of all Thursday night.

After Evan Rodrigues tied the game with 46.2 seconds left in regulation, the Sabres couldn't score in OT and Andreas Athanasiou's shootout winner gave the Detroit Red Wings -- by far the worst team in the NHL -- a 4-3 victory that ruined the NHL starting debut of Sabres goalie Jonas Johansson.

Detroit scored on both of its shots, by Dylan Larkin and Athanasiou, while Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart were stopped for Buffalo by Wings goalie Jonathan Bernier.

Buffalo lost for the fifth time in the last six games but the real indignity of the defeat came in the Red Wings' stats. Detroit entered the game just 12-38-4. The Wings were winless in their previous nine games overall (0-8-1) and had dropped nine straight on the road since their Dec. 14 win in Montreal. The win allowed them to avoid their first 10-game skid on the road since 1986.

The Sabres put up a thoroughly uninspired effort for the first 40 minutes and drew the ire of their fans as they trailed, 2-0. They bounced back with two goals in the first 8½ minutes of the third period to get even, fell behind on Tyler Bertuzzi's tally with 6:04 left and managed to get even with Johansson on the bench for an extra attacker.

Rodrigues' post-game thoughts: "We waited too long to turn it on. We clawed our way back but unfortunately didn't get the two points. We had chances but it just didn't go our way tonight."

Getting closer: After trailing by two goals at the second intermission, Jimmy Vesey pulled Buffalo within a goal on a backhand at 5:48 of the third, corralling a rebound of a Conor Sheary shot.

Nifty tip: Scott Wilson, just up from Rochester, scored his first goal of the season at 8:29 by tipping home a Colin Miller shot from the right point. Miller had performed some nifty stick work to free himself for the shot in the right circle.

Falling behind: The Red Wings had been shut out in their previous two games but broke a scoreless streak of more than 133 minutes early in this one as Larkin beat Johansson with a screened shot from the left boards at 4:23. Detroit had been outscored, 37-12, during the previous nine games.

Double trouble: Larkin put the Sabres into a 2-0 hole by converting a 2-on-1 break with just two-tenths of a second left in the period. The play came as Detroit beat the clock after Sam Reinhart maneuvered through the Wings in the zone and then hit the goalpost.

Detroit broke back down the ice and Reinhart couldn't keep up with Larkin, clearly coasting before the horn as the Red Wings star beat Johansson.

Tough luck: The Sabres appeared to tie the game midway through the first period as Wilson tipped home a Lawrence Pilut shot but the goal was wiped out by goaltender interference, as it was ruled Wilson's stick impeded Bernier's ability to play the puck.

Johansson's shootout thoughts: "They scored both of them. They're good players for sure. I just tried to stay open mind to whatever the player's going to do. Just have to get back to work and be better."

The lineup: Rasmus Dahlin (upper body) missed his second straight game while Zach Bogosian and Rasmus Asplund were healthy scratches. Johan Larsson (lower body) and Curtis Lazar (flu) both returned after missing Tuesday's game against Colorado.

Counting the house: The Sabres announced there were 16,607 tickets sold for the game, the lowest total since Dec. 10. The in-house crowd was perhaps only a couple thousand smaller than that.

Next: The Sabres headed to New York immediately after the game to complete their back-to-back against the Rangers Friday night at 7 in Madison Square Garden. Buffalo hosts Anaheim here Sunday at 3.

## **Sabres game day: Jonas Johansson gets call with franchise pride on line against Detroit**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
February 6, 2020

Matchup: Buffalo Sabres (23-23-7) vs. Detroit Red Wings (12-38-4)  
Where: KeyBank Center  
When: 7 p.m.  
TV: NBC Sports Network  
Radio: WGR 550

It's hard to fathom a scenario where the Buffalo Sabres lose tonight. And while that sentence may seem out of touch in the wake of the team's current 1-4 slide and Tuesday's gruesome 6-1 loss to the Colorado Avalanche, it's the reality.

The Detroit Red Wings are in town and they are at least 15 points behind every other team in the NHL. They have lost nine games in a row, going 0-8-1 in that stretch. They have been shut out in the last two games, home losses to the New York Rangers (1-0) and Philadelphia (3-0).

And while the Sabres appear to have very little left to play for in terms of the postseason race, given that they're 11 points out of third in the Atlantic Division and 12 out in the wild-card hunt, franchise pride in the 50th anniversary season is certainly on the line.

"We need to get back to our game above all," coach Ralph Krueger said today. "It's important to understand you have to respect every team you play in this league. It doesn't matter where you are, at home or away. It doesn't matter where that team is in the standings. On any given night everybody can play to a certain level to earn themselves a win. We have to focus on ourselves.

"All of that other conversation right now doesn't help us to get back to our game and what makes us strong. And that's what we're focusing on here today, not franchise thoughts or bigger pictures beyond having a game where our home fans are really happy with what they see and we are proud of the performance."

On the air: Yes, you read that right above. This game is going national on NBCSN. And it's a big-name crew as well, with Kenny Albert and Pierre McGuire on the call. Remember, national TV schedules through February are made over the summer and the network can't flex out of games before March. Think NBC would rather be doing Pittsburgh at Tampa Bay tonight? Uh-huh.

A debut in net: As expected, Jonas Johansson will make his NHL debut in goal tonight for Buffalo. Called up from Rochester in the wake of Linus Ullmark's injury, Johansson played 29½ minutes Tuesday in relief of Carter Hutton and stopped the final 13 shots he faced after giving up a goal to Colorado's Mikko Rantanen. He was the Sabres' third-round pick in 2014.

"It's a great feeling. It's like any game, really. Just try to focus like it's any game," Johansson, 24, said today. "I'm just doing my habits, my routine, getting focused for tonight. I feel like if I would look at it from the outside, it would feel really huge – and it does feel big – but when you're in the middle of it you just try to focus on it like it's any game."

"He's coming to our space in a really good way, worked hard through the practices, also off-ice sessions," Krueger said. "He has a very good pro package that he brings with him. We're quite impressed with him."

Until the Colorado meltdown, goals-against had not been a problem for the Sabres as they had given up just 15 goals in the previous seven games. Protecting a young goalie in his first start might snap some of that defensive responsibility back into place.

"It's good for him. He was at the all-star game and was really doing well in the AHL so I think he deserves this," forward Zemgus Girgensons said. "He stepped in there last game and that's not an easy situation to step in and he did his job."

The Buffalo lineup: The Sabres will take the warmup with 13 forwards and dress 12. Defenseman Zach Bogosian will be a healthy scratch. Rasmus Dahlin (upper body) will miss his second straight game. Curtis Lazar (flu) is questionable while Johan Larsson, who sat out Tuesday's game, will return.

How bad is Detroit?: Since opening the season 3-1, the Wings are on a path that will make them the worst team of the salary cap era. And yes, that means worse than the Sabres' tank teams. They're on pace for 43 points – five fewer than what Colorado had in 2016-17. The Buffalo clubs of 2013-14 and 2014-15 had 52 and 54 points, respectively.

In addition to the current 0-8-1 stretch, Detroit has had winless stretches that include 0-7-1, 0-10-2 where the 10 regulation losses were consecutive and 0-6. That's four winless parts of the season totaling 0-31-4. Mind-boggling stuff.

The Wings have a minus-96 goal differential. The next worst is New Jersey – at only minus-49. Detroit is last in goals for (110/2.04 per game) and goals against (206/3.81). It is 30th on the power play overall and dead last on the road at just 9.9% (7 for 71). The Wings are 31st on the penalty kill at 73.2%.

Winger Andreas Athanasiou, a former 30-goal scorer, has just five goals in 37 games and an NHL-worst minus-38 rating. Goalie Jimmy Howard is 0-15-2 in his last 17 starts and has ghastly numbers on the season (2-20-2, 4.12/.884). Jonathan Bernier is starting tonight and has been pretty darn good (10-14-2, 2.89/.908) considering the play in front of him.

The Sabres, however, aren't going to be drawn into talk of the opponent. Especially after what happened here Tuesday.

"Coming off a game like last game, no matter who would have been our opponent, we would play the same way," Girgensons said. "There's going to be a fire in us to show something today."

Weird scheduling: The Wings will make both of their appearances in Buffalo in a six-day stretch. They'll also meet the Sabres here Tuesday night (why doesn't the NHL just do a few two-game series each year, right?). The Sabres won the two prior meetings this year in Little Caesars Arena, a 2-0 victory on Oct. 25 and a 5-1 win on Jan. 12.

## **Sabres could not shake a slow start**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 6, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres struggled to find an answer for the Detroit Red Wings over the first 40 minutes in their 4-3 shootout loss on Thursday night at KeyBank Center.

It did not look like the blue and gold were skating with any great sense of urgency in the opening 20 minutes. One thing that stood out the last few games was how quickly the Sabres started. The team did outshoot Detroit 8-7 in the first period and seemed to out chance the visitors without any success.

The lone goal Buffalo did score was wiped out due to goaltender interference. Scott Wilson crashed the net after an offensive zone faceoff win, and the shot from the point found the back of the net. Unfortunately for Buffalo, the Red Wings challenged the play and it was determined that Wilson interfered with Jonathan Bernier's ability to play the shot. Instead of the game being tied 1-1, it remained 1-0 Detroit.

Dylan Larkin's second goal of the period came with just 0.2 seconds to go in the opening frame. After missing on a golden opportunity at one end, the Sabres let the forward skate through the slot and beat Jonas Johansson to make it 2-0 Red Wings heading into the break. The goal came while the teams were skating 4-on-4 to end the period.

Shots on goal through two periods were 16-16, with Detroit holding a 9-8 edge in the second period. Once again, it looked like Buffalo would have a few good shifts here or there, but just could not sustain any pressure in the offensive end.

Buffalo was able to kill off the carry over penalty to Jack Eichel at the start of the second period. His double minor for high-sticking came with just over a minute to go in the first period, seconds after Darren Helm was whistled for hooking.

The energy and effort was noticeably better to start the third period, and it is no surprise that Eichel's line is the one that gets the home team on the scoreboard. Jimmy Vesey used a nice backhand shot on a rebound in front of the net to sweep the puck under Bernier and into the goal, cutting the deficit to 2-1.

The next shift also produced a power play, thanks to the jump that the goal gave Buffalo. While they did not score on the man advantage, you could tell they were starting to dominate the play. A Colin Miller shot from just inside the blue line was deflected by Wilson as he skated by the front of the net. This time, his re-direction counted and the Sabres tied things up at 2-2.

It was the veterans that helped lead to the comeback late in the third period. Even after the Red Wings rebuilt the lead to 3-2, the Sabres did not quit and were rewarded. Evan Rodrigues was able to find a loose puck in front of the net and tie the score at 3-3 with less than a minute to go in regulation. You can debate whether or not it should have gotten to that point, but Buffalo was able to salvage a point.

Once again, Curtis Lazar won a faceoff to start the 3-on-3 overtime and helped Eichel try to win the game like he did against the Columbus Blue Jackets. This time, however, the team would record two shots and Bernier was able to get his team to the shootout. Even though Jonas Johansson allowed goals to both of the shooters he faced in the shootout, I liked his game overall and his ability to not let two goals in the first period rattle him.

Buffalo has no time to sulk about the shootout loss as they are right back on the ice on Friday against the New York Rangers. The puck drops just after 7 p.m. on WGR with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog getting underway at 6 p.m.

## **Sabres fall in a shootout, 4-3 to the Red Wings**

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

February 6, 2020

It was a frustrating effort on Thursday night as the Buffalo Sabres fell to the lowly Detroit Red Wings, 4-3 in a shootout at KeyBank Center.

With the loss, the blue and gold grabbed only three points out of a possible 10 as their five-game homestand reached its end.

The Red Wings opened the scoring early against Sabres rookie goalie Jonas Johansson, making his first career start in the National Hockey League. Moments after the Sabres were unsuccessful on the game's first power play opportunity, Detroit forward Dylan Larkin took a tough-angle shot from the left-wing boards that snuck in between Johansson and the post. It was Larkin's 14th goal of the season and snapped a 133-minute scoreless streak for the visitors.

Shortly after the goal, it appeared as though Buffalo had tied the game, but after a Red Wings challenge for goaltender interference, the goal was waved off. Defenseman Lawrence Pilut snapped a shot towards goaltender Jonathan Bernier quickly after a faceoff and was deflected in by forward Scott Wilson. It was deemed after the review that his tip-in came too deep in Bernier's crease, hindering the veteran netminder from making the save.

Buffalo found itself on another power play with 1:15 left in the first period, but it was quickly negated by a high-sticking double-minor against Jack Eichel just seven seconds into the man advantage.

The teams skated 4-on-4 for the rest of the opening frame, and with just seconds left on the clock, Larkin scored his second goal of the night.

Moments after Sam Reinhart slipped a puck through a gaping goal crease, Larkin and Robby Fabbri broke loose on a 2-on-1 and Larkin was able to backhand his shot over the glove of Johansson to give the Red Wings a 2-0 lead.

Neither team was able to find the back of the net in the second period of play. Each team took a penalty in the period, while they also created some feeble chances and played some lackluster hockey. The Red Wings went on to outshoot the Sabres, 9-8 during the middle stanza.

Buffalo finally got on the board with 5:48 gone in the third period when forward Jimmy Vesey deposited a rebound off a shot from Conor Sheary into the back of the net. Vesey's seventh goal of the season, and his first since Jan. 16 against the Dallas Stars, cut the deficit in half to 2-1.

The Sabres found the equalizer less than three minutes later as defenseman Colin Miller skated down towards the right-wing circle and let a shot loose on Bernier. Wilson was able to get a piece of the wrist shot in flight and tipped it past the Red Wings netminder, much like his overturned goal in the opening period. This time, the goal stood as clean and it tied the game at 2-2.

It was Wilson's first goal of the 2019-20 campaign in just his third game, as his season debut with the team did not come until the turn of the new year.

Detroit re-claimed their lead with just 6:04 left in regulation while on the man advantage when forward Tyler Bertuzzi beat Johansson for his 18th goal of the season.

With their net empty with less than three minutes remaining, the Sabres went to work and applied late pressure in an effort to tie the game up.

With 47 seconds left to play, Rasmus Ristolainen makes a play to pinch and avoid the Red Wings from clearing the puck out of their zone. He ended up corraling the puck and fanned on a shot attempt on Bernier, but Evan Rodrigues ended up collecting the loose puck and snuck it past a sprawling Bernier to tie the game at 3-3 and force overtime.

Each team was able to generate a couple of chances in the overtime period, but neither team was able to find the back of the net.

In the shootout, both Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart were denied by Bernier, while Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou both scored at the other end on their attempts against Johansson. Detroit earned the win on the road, earned just their 13th win of the season and ended their nine-game losing streak along the way.

## GAME SUMMARY

### Scoring Summary:

#### First Period:

BUF: NONE

DET: 4:23 - Dylan Larkin (14) (Trevor Daley, Robby Fabbri); 19:59 - Dylan Larkin (15) (Robby Fabbri, Filip Hronek)

#### Second Period:

BUF: NONE

DET: NONE

#### Third Period:

BUF: 5:48 - Jimmy Vesey (7) (Conor Sheary, Brandon Montour); 8:29 - Scott Wilson (1) (Colin Miller); 19:13 - Evan Rodrigues (4) (Rasmus Ristolainen)

DET: 13:56 - Tyler Bertuzzi (18) PPG (Valtteri Filppula, Madison Bowey)

#### Overtime:

BUF: NONE

DET: NONE

### Shootout:

#### Round 1:

BUF: Jack Eichel - Save

DET: Dylan Larkin - GOAL

#### Round 2:

BUF: Sam Reinhart - Miss

DET: Andreas Athanasiou - GOAL

### Penalty Summary:

#### First Period:

BUF: 18:52 - Jack Eichel (High-sticking - 4 min.)

DET: 1:56 - Justin Abdelkader (Interference - 2 min.); 18:45 - Darren Helm (Hooking - 2 min.)

#### Second Period:

BUF: 12:59 - Jake McCabe (High-sticking - 2 min.)

DET: 9:29 - Gustav Lindstrom (Tripping - 2 min.)

#### Third Period:

BUF: 3:03 - Jimmy Vesey (Slashing - 2 min.); 12:13 - Evan Rodrigues (High-sticking - 2 min.)

DET: 3:03 - Alex Biega (Cross-checking - 2 min.); 6:00 - Givani Smith (Slashing - 2 min.)

#### Overtime:

BUF: NONE

DET: NONE

Strategic Financial Solutions Complete Stats Of The Game  
Strategic Financial Solutions Stats of the Game:

Shots:

BUF: 32 (8, 8, 14, 2)

DET: 21 (7, 9, 4, 1)

Goalies:

BUF: Jonas Johansson - 18 saves

DET: Jonathan Bernier - 29 saves

Power Plays:

BUF: 0 for 4 (0%)

DET: 1 for 4 (25%)

Three Stars presented by Losi and Gangi:

Dylan Larkin - DET

Robby Fabbri - DET

Jimmy Vesey - DET

What's Next:

The Sabres hit the road for the first time since the All-Star Break on Friday as they travel to the Big Apple to take on the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden. Faceoff is set for 7 p.m. with the Paul William Beltz Pre-Game Show kicking off on WGR at 6 p.m. with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog.

## **Trying hasn't been enough for the Sabres in the trade market**

By Joe Dibiase

WGR 550

February 6, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres have needed to make a trade since July 1, 2018.

The moment general manager Jason Botterill traded Ryan O'Reilly to the St. Louis Blues, they needed a second line center.

That's not where their needs begin and end. Scoring, in general, has been a weakness for the team in Botterill's time as general manager.

TSN hockey insider Darren Dreger joined Howard Simon and Jeremy White on Wednesday morning and said that Botterill has been trying to make a trade for a long time. The worrisome thing about that is that plenty of good scorers that could've helped the Sabres this season have been dealt elsewhere around the league.

Feb. 20, 2019: Boston Bruins acquires center Charlie Coyle from the Minnesota Wild for forward Ryan Donato and a fifth round pick

Coyle has been a very good third line center for the Bruins since being acquired before last year's trade deadline. Coyle was a player that was talked about in Buffalo as an idea for the Sabres long before he was traded to Boston.

Coyle only has 29 points this season for the Bruins, but with expanded ice time in Buffalo, he would've been an upgrade to the Sabres' top-six and their depth at center.

Feb. 25, 2019: Nashville Predators acquire center Mikael Granlund from the Minnesota Wild for forward Kevin Fiala

The Granlund side of this deal is the bigger missed opportunity for the Sabres, but both he and Fiala have been productive in their careers.

This season, Granlund has just 11 goals and seven assists, but is only 27-years-old and has been between 40-70 points every year of his career. He's the best center that's been traded in the time that's passed between the O'Reilly trade and now.

Fiala is only 23-years-old and has 30 points in 47 games this season.

This probably would've been the toughest one for the Sabres to get involved in. The Predators needed a center, and the Wild got a good young winger. Obviously though, both players were available.

June 22, 2019: Vancouver Canucks acquire center J.T. Miller from the Tampa Bay Lightning for goalie Marek Mazanec, a 2019 third round pick, and a 2020 conditional first round pick

Miller has been phenomenal on the Canucks' top line with Elias Pettersson and Brock Boeser. He has 53 points in 54 games, and has four years remaining on his contract at a \$5.25 million cap hit.

The Sabres had an extra first round pick and two highly drafted goalie prospects in the system. That deal was there and, cap wise, could've been more production for the money than Marcus Johansson.

June 27, 2019: Carolina Hurricanes acquire center Erik Haula from the Vegas Golden Knights for forward Nicholas Roy and a 2021 fifth round pick

Haula got dealt for pretty much nothing. This one would've been incredibly easy for the Sabres. A nothing draft pick and a low-level prospect for a 28-year-old scorer with one year left on his contract at , \$2.75 million.

Haula has been injured, but has produced with 11 goals in 33 games for the Hurricanes. Injuries was the risk here as he also missed 67 games last season. In his last full season in 2017-18, Haula had 29 goals for Vegas.

June 28, 2019: Colorado Avalanche acquire forward Andre Burakovsky from the Washington Capitals for forward Scott Kosmachuk, a 2020 second round pick and a 2020 third pick

A low risk acquisition for the Avalanche, Burakovsky has flourished in an expanded role this season. The former first round pick set his career-high in points against the Sabres on Tuesday. He has 17 goals and 39 points in 48 games.

Burakovsky, who's only 24-year-old, wouldn't have been very expensive on the cap either. His contract is just a one-year deal worth \$3.25 million before he becomes a restricted free agent again this offseason.

July 29, 2019: New Jersey Devils acquire forward Nikita Gusev from the Vegas Golden Knights for a 2020 third round pick and a 2021 second round pick

Gusev carried risk as he is 27-years-old and never played in the NHL before this season. He was playing great in Russia as one of the best players in the Kontinental Hockey League. Gusev was always going to be traded because he wanted more money than Vegas could afford.

The Devils stepped up and gave him a two-year deal worth \$4.5 million per-year. In 49 games this season, Gusev has 31 points.

Oct. 7, 2019: Ottawa Senators acquire center Vladislav Namestnikov from the New York Rangers for defenseman Nick Ebert and a 2021 fourth round pick

Namestnikov could've been another scorer down the middle for the Sabres this season for basically nothing. Ebert is just an AHL defenseman, and the Senators gave up a fourth round pick.

This has been Namestnikov's most challenging season as of late. He has just 22 points in 48 games. He had 31 points in 2019 and 48 points in 2018.

Namestnikov's contract is just for the rest of this season at a \$3.25 million cap hit.

Dec. 16, 2019: Arizona Coyotes acquires forward Taylor Hall from the New Jersey Devils for center Nick Merkley, defenseman Kevin Bahl, center Nate Schnarr, a 2020 conditional first round pick and a 2021 conditional third round pick

This is the largest deal that was made in the NHL since the O'Reilly trade, and maybe the most risky. I made my case for the Sabres making this deal way back in the summer. You can read what I had to say here.

Other players dealt since the Ryan O'Reilly trade:

Alex Kerfoot (TOR)  
Nazem Kadri (COL)  
Robby Fabbri (DET)  
Andrew Shaw (CHI)  
Mark Stone (VGK)  
Max Pacioretty (VGK)  
Victor Rask (MIN)  
Ryan Strome (NYR)

All this to say, that Botterill may very well be trying to get a deal done. My hope would be that "trying" doesn't simply mean looking for the next Jeff Skinner trade. You're not going to find teams that give you talented players like that on the cheap very often.

"Trying", as Dreger stated, doesn't appear to be enough lately, so maybe it's Botterill's idea of what value is that needs to change for the Sabres to get the trade they need.

## **Sabres look to take advantage of the abysmal Red Wings**

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

February 6, 2020

After a 6-1 drubbing at the hands of the Colorado Avalanche on Tuesday, the Buffalo Sabres will wrap up their five-game homestand on Thursday night when the team welcomes the Detroit Red Wings to KeyBank Center.

The Sabres suffered one of the worst losses of the season on Tuesday against Colorado, where they completely imploded in the second period while trailing 2-1. After Sam Reinhart had scored with 0.9 seconds remaining in the first period to cut the deficit to 2-1, the Avalanche responded with four goals in the opening 13 minutes of the second to put the game far out of reach to the Sabres.

Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger had called the second period 20 of the most disappointing minutes of the entire season.

However, the Sabres can take advantage of their opponent on Thursday night as the Red Wings enter the game as, by far, the worst team in the National Hockey League.

This season has been an abysmal one for the Red Wings this season as the team has gone 12-38-4 in 54 games played. Their 28 points is 15 points behind the Los Angeles Kings for 30th in the overall NHL standings, while 15 teams in the league have as many or more wins this season than the Red Wings currently have in points.

The team is currently on pace to finish the 2019-20 season with an 18-58-6 record, which would be good for 42 points and the worst season in the NHL's salary cap era. The 2016-17 Avalanche currently holds that place as the worst NHL team in the salary cap era, finishing the season with a 22-56-4 record and 48 points.

Detroit ranks at the bottom of almost every major statistical category from a team perspective, ranking dead-last in goals-for (110), goals-against (206), penalty kill (73.2%) and shots-for per-game (27.9), while ranking 30th on the power play (14.5%) and 26th in shots-against per-game (32.7). The Red Wings also provide the worst goal differential in the league at minus-96, which is 47 goals worse than the New Jersey Devils in 30th place. The Red Wings also boast the worst road record in the NHL at 4-20-2.

The Red Wings enter Thursday night's game riding a nine-game losing streak, dating back to the last time these two teams faced off on Jan. 12 in Detroit at Little Caesars Arena. Since this losing streak began, the Red Wings have gone 0-8-1 while being outscored 37-12 and being shut out in the last two games against the New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers at home.

Overall this season, Detroit has endured five losing streaks of at least four games, which includes a 12-game losing streak from Nov. 14 to Dec. 10 that was part of a stretch of losses in 18 of 20 games.

Despite their recent struggles, the Sabres cannot take a desperate team like the Red Wings lightly.

"We have a lot of respect for the potential of [the Red Wings]," Krueger said Thursday morning. "They've had a tough run of late, but what we do see is that there is a danger in their game, and in their ability to take advantage of teams if you give them that space. You need to play a really good defensive game, but we need to get back to our game above all. It's important to understand that you have to respect every team that you play in this league. It doesn't matter where you are, [whether it's] at home or away. It doesn't matter where that team is in the standings on a given night, everybody can play to a certain level to earn themselves a win. We have to focus on ourselves. All of that other conversation right now doesn't help us get back to our game and what makes us stronger. That's what we're focusing on here today."

"They're a fast team," Sabres forward Zemgus Girgensons said of Thursday's opponent. "As we saw when we played them in Detroit, they gave a heavy push in the second for us. Any team in this league you have to respect them. Any team can win on any given night. We just have to bring our A-game effort tonight."

"We have to play our game. We have our gameplan and it's up to the guys to execute it and to give it our best effort. If we do that, we'll be fine."

The Red Wings this season have been led by six players, all under the age of 25, who lead the team in scoring.

Starting at the top is by 23-year-old Dylan Larkin, who leads the team in scoring with 13 goals and 24 assists for 37 points in 54 games. Tyler Bertuzzi, 24, is just one point back of Larkin with 36 points, but he does lead the team with 17 goals. Filip Hronek (26 points), Robby Fabbri (26 points), Anthony Mantha (24 points) and Andreas Athanasiou (19 points) are also under the age of 25 and follow suit with the offensive production.

Some of Detroit's better players have been injured for a good portion of the season, including Mantha who has not played since Dec. 21 with an upper-body injury. Also out and on injured reserve for Detroit includes forwards Filip Zadina and Frans Nielsen, and defensemen Mike Green and Danny DeKeyser.

On Wednesday, the Red Wings called up defenseman Gustav Lindstrom, who will make his NHL debut against the Sabres on Thursday.

Where the Red Wings have gotten little contribution from this season is in their goaltending with Jimmy Howard and Jonathan Bernier.

Howard has been downright awful this year with a 2-20-2 record, a 4.12 goals-against average and a .884 save percentage. He has gone winless in 17 straight appearances, going 0-15-2 in that stretch.

Bernier has been the better of the two netminders as of late, posting a 1.98 goals-against average and a .939 save percentage in 11 starts since Dec. 12. Overall this season, he's posted a 10-14-2 record with a 2.89 goals-against average and a .908 save percentage.

It was Bernier who has gotten the last two starts in goal for the Red Wings, including a 28-save performance in Monday's 3-0 loss to the Flyers. He will likely get the start against the Sabres on Thursday.

As for the Sabres, they have beaten the Red Wings in three consecutive games, while also winning 10 of the last 14 matchups dating back to the start of the 2016-17 season. In that span, Buffalo is 10-1-3, while the Red Wings have gone 4-8-2.

Buffalo is 2-0-0 against the Red Wings this season with both games being played in Detroit. The first win came back on Oct. 25 with a 2-0 decision over the Red Wings, while the most recent victory came in a 5-1 game on Jan. 12.

Jack Eichel continues to score and put up points. He picked up an assist on Tuesday night to extend his latest point streak to four games, and upped his point total on the season to 66, which is tied for eighth place in league scoring. In 12 games against the Red Wings since the start of the 16-17 season, Eichel has 14 points (4+10), and has recorded a point in seven consecutive matchups with Detroit.

Reinhart was able to add on to his impressive run as of late with his goal on Tuesday. The 24-year-old now has 14 points (7+7) over his last 14 games, and is on pace to set career-high totals in goals (29) and points (68).

Outside of Eichel and Reinhart, Buffalo has gotten no other goal production throughout the lineup with the exception of Evan Rodrigues on Saturday against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Here are some notable goal droughts with the Sabres:

Jeff Skinner: 0 goals in 15 games

Jimmy Vesey: 1 goal in his last 11 games

Johan Larsson: 0 goals and 0 points in 18 games

Conor Sheary: 0 goals in 10 games, 2 goals in his last 22 games

Michael Frolik: 1 goal in his last 10 games with the Sabres

Marcus Johansson: 0 goals in 12 games, 2 goals in his last 23 games

Rasmus Asplund: 1 goal in 29 games this season

As for the power play that currently ranks 18th in the NHL, they have only scored twice on their last 14 attempts.

The Sabres will turn to Jonas Johansson on Thursday for his first career NHL start. The 24-year-old came in relief of Carter Hutton in the second period on Tuesday, giving up just one goal on 14 Avalanche shots.

Krueger has been very impressed with that he has seen from his rookie netminder in the short time he has been up from the Rochester Americans.

"He's come in to our space in a really good way," Krueger said. "He's worked hard through the practices, and also the off-ice sessions. He has a very good pro package that he brings with him. We're quite impressed with him."

"There's some excitement, for sure," Johansson said following Wednesday's practice about potentially starting at some point over the next two games. "It would be really awesome to play some more up here, but I feel prepared and I feel confident, so I'm just feeling ready and prepared if the opportunity comes."

In the earlier portion of the season with the Amerks, Johansson played very well, posting a 13-3-3 record with a 2.19 goals-against average, a .925 save percentage and two shutouts in 20 games played. At the time of his call up last week Wednesday, Johansson had ranked third in the American Hockey League in goals-against average, while his save percentage had him ranked fourth in the league.

Krueger also confirmed on Thursday that forward Johan Larsson will return to the lineup after his one-game absence from a lower-body injury, while defenseman Rasmus Dahlin will miss his second consecutive game with an upper-body injury.

Meanwhile, Curtis Lazar, who missed Tuesday's game and Wednesday's practice due to an illness, is still being evaluated and his game-time status is to be determined.

Zach Bogosian will serve as the healthy scratch on Thursday as Krueger said that he will skate six defensemen on the blue line and 13 forwards for the pregame warmup.

Be sure to tune in for the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 6 p.m. with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog, where you will hear more from Krueger, Girgensons and Johansson.

A reminder that Thursday's game will be televised on NBCSN, so the only place to catch Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on the call of all the action is on WGR.

## **'We have no excuse here today': Sabres' fading playoff hopes take another hit**

By Joe Yerdon

The Athletic

February 6, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. — There's a lot to say but there's also nothing to say when it comes to the Sabres since returning from the All-Star break.

There's a lot because with a schedule (nine home games in their first 10 after the break) that was favorable for a last-gasp effort to get back into the playoff picture, they had to come away with as many wins as possible.

There's nothing to say because in the first five games of that stretch they've come away with three points of a possible 10. After all, what can be said about that?

A loss to Ottawa got things off to a very bad start. A loss to Montreal, which was neck-and-neck with the Sabres in that fight for hope, a thorough whooping by Colorado and now a 4-3 shootout defeat against the Detroit Red Wings — who have garnered comparisons to the Sabres from 2013-2015 — all but put an end the Sabres' playoff hopes.

There are 28 games to go and the reality that this will be the ninth straight playoff-free season in Buffalo should be obvious.

After the loss to Ottawa, captain Jack Eichel said, "If you overlook things, it'll bite you in the ass kind of like it did tonight. Maybe we overlooked this game." On Thursday morning, as the Sabres prepared for Detroit, coach Ralph Krueger was asked how overlooking teams in worse situations can be prevented.

"The most important thing is the language we're using," Krueger said. "We just had a team meeting where the language has to be about today and about the execution shift by shift tonight. You set that tone automatically as a leader. 'What's your language? Where are you taking these guys? On what journey are you taking them?' And we've done the same from Game 1 until today is that on the game day, we try to live within that space and understand our responsibility and — especially when you're at home — the responsibility to our fans, which we've disappointed them of late here at home, and we want to give them something to feel good about and that is only by respecting Detroit and by playing our game. You speak within the small picture, you stay within the small picture and that's what we are doing."

In a game in which rookie goalie Jonas Johansson made his first NHL start, it was an opportune moment for the Sabres to buckle down and make sure his night was as stress-free as possible. For the most part, that was taken care of — but the lapses were harsh.

Dylan Larkin scored twice in the first period and gave the Red Wings the first goals since 10:59 of the third period of a 4-2 loss to the New York Rangers on Jan. 31. Detroit was shut out in two consecutive games after that loss, but 4:23 into the first, Larkin's shot from the circle got through a screen by Luke Glendening and eluded Johansson. The rookie goalie went to peek around Glendening only to have the shot beat him on the short side.

The second goal was scored with .2 seconds remaining and instantly caused a ferocious debate.

During a four-on-four situation, the Sabres' opportunity in the waning seconds was blocked and sent Larkin and Robby Fabbri on a two-on-one against Rasmus Ristolainen. Fabbri dished the puck to Larkin after Ristolainen attempted to poke it away and force the issue. Meanwhile, Sam Reinhart was in pursuit of Larkin and his feet stopped moving.

"On that one, it's actually our D jumping in there could've killed it all," Krueger said. "The opportunity that (Reinhart) just had, the scoring chance they had, speaking to them coming in the room they were pressing that one without a respect to how much time was still left on the clock, but I do not see a lack of effort in Sam Reinhart here today."

Whether you choose to believe he gave up on the play or was dead tired after racing 170 feet to try to reach Larkin at the end of a shift that went beyond 1:40 is up to you. The result wound up behind Johansson and sent the Sabres to the locker room to boos by the home fans.

"I don't think it's a lack of respect at all," Reinhart said. "It's a night-to-night league. You have to give your best every night to give yourself an opportunity."

In a vacuum, the effort the Sabres gave in the third period to tie the score 2-2 on goals by Jimmy Vesey and Scott Wilson would've shown the kind of heart that can make you excuse a couple of bad periods.

That they came back again in the final minute to tie it 3-3 with a goal by Evan Rodrigues after allowing a power-play goal to Tyler Bertuzzi could've been a rallying point to jump off of into overtime. It didn't play out that way. Instead, it's a loss to a team that was 0-8-1 with 12 goals scored in the nine previous games and is destined to be last this season.

"We had moments in the first and second that were positive and we did the right things, but we didn't do it consistently enough," Rodrigues said. "We waited too long to turn it on. We fought our way back. Unfortunately, we don't get the two points, but we had chances and it just didn't go our way tonight."

Krueger has made it a point to keep the picture small when working on matters with the team. That makes sense because, in theory, it prevents matters from snowballing and things getting really bad. When the small picture is distorted by a lack of offense, even the small picture starts to look very big.

"The end result says we didn't do the things we needed to do here," Krueger said. "For me, quite clearly, you look at the whole game they would've deserved a couple of goals, but we had opportunity for much more and it's just, right now, the failed opportunity not finishing on chances when the games are at their critical points. But I'm not going to sit here a few minutes after a game and do anything but honestly summarize this game, look at it hard now before we get some sleep in New York tonight and come back fighting tomorrow. That's what we have to do right now. This isn't a time to do any type of big-picture analysis and it's important that we fight out of this. Things just aren't coming easy right now and that means you have to work that much harder, you've got to fight that much harder when you're getting these kind of results off of games where opportunity was there but you just don't take it, so what's the reason? We have to look at it — we have no excuse here today."

The issues are recognized, and the solutions are apparently not as easy to come by to correct another season without a chance to win the Stanley Cup. Even though their playoff chances are minuscule and it might not always (or often) feel as if there's care for how things are going, there's one voice demanding to be heard.

"I just want to be clear: I feel and I hear the fans," Krueger said. "But I live in the middle of Buffalo and I love this city and I love the passion of the people. And I go out and eat here in the streets and I walk the streets and I talk to people. And that's what I'm saying. They're not happy with what we're doing, but they're supporting us and they're giving me personally a lot of energy. So if they boo during a game when they're unhappy, that's their right. If we're not winning, that's their right. But I don't feel it in the city — they love the Sabres and they're hungry for this to turn and we are fighting and working hard to get the habits here to be a competitive team on a regular basis, and we will continue to fight and we will continue to work hard. We'll get some bodies back here in the next few games. We'll get some energy back and we will improve."

## **Sabres suffer awful shootout loss to hapless Red Wings**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 7, 2020

BUFFALO – The 4-3 shootout loss was even hard for Ralph Krueger to spin. The coach explained the Sabres' inability to convert their chances doomed them Thursday against the hapless Detroit Red Wings. He insisted his reeling team's effort remained high.

But there's no getting around the Sabres suffered a humiliating defeat. The Red Wings, the NHL's worst team, are on pace for the worst season since the NHL implemented the salary cap in 2005.

They began Thursday on a nine-game losing streak. They hadn't won a road contest since Dec. 14, a nine-game skid.

The Red Wings are worse than the Sabres' two tank teams.

Still, the Red Wings grabbed an early two-goal lead Thursday before eking out just their 13th win all season.

"Quite clearly, if you look at the whole game, they would've deserved a couple of goals, but we had opportunity for much more, and it's just right now, with the failed opportunity not finishing on chances when the games are at their critical points," Krueger said.

The Sabres erased two third-period deficits – 2-0 and 3-2 – just to force overtime.

"We waited too long to turn it on," said Sabres winger Evan Rodrigues, who scored the tying goal with 46.2 seconds left in the third period and goalie Jonas Johansson on the bench.

Sabres winger Sam Reinhart said: "I don't think it's a lack of respect at all (for Detroit). I think it's a night-to-night league. You have to be your best on any given night to give yourself an opportunity."

The announced crowd of 16,607 inside KeyBank Bank booed the Sabres at every opportunity. How many fans will keep showing up over the next two months?

When the Sabres lost to another feeble opponent, the Ottawa Senators, on Jan. 28, captain Jack Eichel acknowledged the team overlooked the game.

That clearly happened again. The Sabres looked uninterested most of the night.

To wit: As Red Wings center Dylan Larkin zoomed in on a two-on-one late in the first period, Reinhart trailed the play appeared to give up on it.

Yes, the Sabres had just generated a scoring opportunity at the other end. Yes, Reinhart was probably winded at the end of a marathon shift.

But he allowed Larkin to roof a shot past Johansson unfettered with 0.2 seconds left, his second goal of the period.

Reinhart bristled following the game when asked if he stopped on the play, saying, "I don't think I'm going to value that question right now."

Krueger said his defensemen could've killed the play.

"The opportunity that (Reinhart) just had, the scoring chance they had, speaking to them coming in the room, they were pressing that one without a respect for how much time was still left on the clock," he said. "But I do not see a lack of effort in Sam Reinhart here today."

Late goals from winger Jimmy Vesey and Scott Wilson helped the Sabres tie it before winger Tyler Bertuzzi's power-play goal put the Red Wings up again.

Larkin and winger Andreas Athanasiou scored in the shootout, securing the Sabres' fourth loss in five outings. So much for that five-game home stand helping them get back in the playoff hunt.

"I do not see these guys quitting," Krueger said. "There's a bite in that room, they don't want this season to fall away, they want to fight against this storm that we're fighting against right now."

The Sabres play a road game tonight against the New York Rangers.

## **Sabres notes: Jonas Johansson looks solid in first NHL start**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 7, 2020

**BUFFALO** – In the midst of an awful stretch during another lost season, goalie Jonas Johansson's first NHL start Thursday should've given the Sabres a spark.

Johansson's arrival has created some excitement and intrigue. The Swede, 24, has enjoyed a terrific season with the Rochester Americans, winning 13 of his 20 appearances and receiving AHL All-Star honors.

While Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen has been tabbed the Sabres' goalie of the future, Johansson, a third-round pick in 2014, has developed into a strong prospect.

On Thursday morning, coach Ralph Krueger said he hoped Johansson's presence against the Detroit Red Wings could help the Sabres settle down and "think about our game ... play within that game more consistently."

Well, that certainly did not happen. The Sabres fell behind 2-0 early to the hapless Red Wings and lost a 4-3 shootout inside KeyBank Center, suffering one of their most embarrassing defeats in recent memory.

The Red Wings began Thursday on a nine-game losing streak (0-8-1) and with just 12 wins all season.

Center Dylan Larkin scored 4:23 into the game on the Red Wings' third shot, beating a screened Johansson from the far edge of the left circle. Larkin scored again with 0.2 seconds left in the period, roofing a shot past Johansson on a two-on-one after winger Sam Reinhart coasted up the ice.

Johansson wasn't beaten again until winger Tyler Bertuzzi's power-play goal in front of the net 13:56 into the third period.

The rookie did not make any spectacular stops, but he looked comfortable throughout the night, making 18 saves before Larkin and winger Andreas Athanasiou scored in the shootout.

"I felt comfortable," Johansson said. "It's a faster pace, for sure – it's the fastest pace I've ever experienced."

Johansson said he felt some nerves during the day but they disappeared when he got to the rink and the game started.

"I just tried to enjoy it and have fun out there," he said.

Johansson relieved Carter Hutton in Tuesday's ugly 6-1 home loss to the Colorado Avalanche, stopping 13 of the 14 shots he faced in his NHL debut.

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An upper-body injury sidelined Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin for the second straight game. The Swede is day-to-day.

Meanwhile, centers Johan Larsson (upper body) and Curtis Lazar (illness) returned after missing Tuesday's game.

The Sabres dressed six defensemen and 12 forwards against the Red Wings. They scratched forward Rasmus Asplund and defenseman Zach Bogosian.

Winger Scott Wilson, who was recalled from the Amerks on Wednesday, skated at left wing beside Larsson and Zemgus Girgensons.

Wilson, 27, recorded three goals and four points in five contests after the Sabres sent him down following a two-game recall last month.

He tied the game at 2 8:29 into the third period, tipping defenseman Colin Miller's shot past goalie Jonathan Bernier, his first goal since March 8, 2018.

Wilson appeared to score in the first period Thursday before Detroit challenged and officials ruled he interfered with goalie Jonathan Bernier.

The Sabres returned forward Jean-Sebastien Dea to the Amerks when they summoned Wilson.

"It was more what Wilson has been doing in Rochester, he's really on a hot streak right now," Krueger said of the move. "Just the way he has been playing has really impressed us. We sent him down with a to-do list, and it was less against J-S than we don't have a lot of movement right now here within the guys that are set here, and we just feel that he has the potential to be a spark plug for us right now."

## **In dreary season, Jonas Johansson's first NHL start offers Sabres freshness**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 6, 2020

**BUFFALO** – In what has become another dreary season, goalie Jonas Johansson's first NHL start tonight offers the Sabres some freshness.

Johansson's arrival has created some excitement and intrigue. The Swede, 24, has enjoyed a terrific season with the Rochester Americans, winning 13 of his 20 appearances and receiving AHL All-Star honors.

While Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen has been tabbed the Sabres' goalie of the future, Johansson has developed into a strong prospect.

The former third-round pick earned tonight's game against the Detroit Red Wings.

Coach Ralph Krueger said he hopes Johansson's presence helps the Sabres settle down and "think about our game tonight and to play within that game more consistently."

"Often when you have a young player starting his first National Hockey League game, it's definitely an opportunity for us to work hard to stay consistent with that game, which is what we've been lacking since the break, is just consistency within the game which makes us strong, which makes us difficult to play against, which takes away the space of teams," he said inside KeyBank Center.

"Detroit has a lot of speed, they work hard as a group. We need that game here today, and hopefully with Johansson in goal the guys just tighten that game up right through from the first to the last minute."

Johansson relieved Carter Hutton in Tuesday's ugly home loss to the Colorado Avalanche, stopping 13 of the 14 shots he faced in his NHL debut.

After Colorado scored on its first shot, Johansson settled down.

"I got a taste of it a little bit, so it's a positive thing, for sure," Johansson said. "But that's in the past now, too, it's a new game today, new performance that we got to have. So I just left that game behind and focused on the next one."

The Red Wings are downright awful, perhaps the worst team since the NHL implemented the salary cap in 2005.

Imagine how surly the crowd could become tonight if the Sabres fall behind or lose.

Having mustered only 28 points (12-38-4) through 54 games, the Red Wings are on pace for a 43- point season, which would be the lowest of the cap era. The 2016-17 Avalanche endured a brutal 48-point campaign.

The Red Wings have lost nine straight games (0-8-1). They have a minus-96 goal differential!

"We have a lot of respect for the potential of the group," Krueger said. "They've had a tough run of late. But what we do see if there's a danger in their game and in their ability to take advantage of teams if you give them that space."

In lineup news, Krueger said an upper-body injury will sideline defenseman Rasmus Dahlin a second straight game. Dahlin is day-to-day.

Meanwhile, center Johan Larsson will return after an upper-body injury shelved him for Tuesday's 6-1 loss to the Colorado.

Krueger said the Sabres will dress 12 forwards and six defensemen tonight. Defenseman Zach Bogosian will be a healthy scratch.

Thirteen forwards will warm up, including Scott Wilson, who was recalled from the Rochester Americans on Wednesday. Wilson, 27, recorded three goals and four points in five contests after the Sabres sent him down following a two-game recall last month.

Krueger said center Curtis Lazar, who has been out sick, was being evaluating this morning.

The Sabres returned forward Jean-Sebastien Dea to the Amerks when they summoned Wilson.

"It was more what Wilson has been doing in Rochester, he's really on a hot streak right now," Krueger said. "Just the way he has been playing has really impressed us. We sent him down with a to-do list, and it was less against J-S than we don't have a lot of movement right now here within the guys that are set here, and we just feel that he has the potential to be a spark plug for us right now."

## **5 Observations: Red Wings top Sabres 4-3 in OT**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

February 6, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Despite rallying from behind and scoring three goals in the third period, the Sabres fell 4-3 in a shootout to the lowly Red Wings, dropping their fourth game since returning from the All-Star break. Jonas Johansson made his first career start, stopping 18 of Detroit's 21 shots in the loss.

Five observations from Thursday's loss:

### Embarrassment

Entering Thursday's matchup, the Red Wings had only won four games on the road this season. In their last 10 games, they had just one win. Then they played the Sabres and their fortune changed.

Of all the Sabres losses this season, this might be the most frustrating. After folding like a cheap table on Tuesday, this is how the home responded against the historically bad Red Wings? So much for using the adversity as motivation. If it weren't for a strong effort in the third period, this game would've been the worst performance of the season for the Sabres.

### Good seats available

Over the last four years, I've covered more than 100 Sabres home games. I can't remember the atmosphere in the arena ever being as bad as it is now. Every night there are hundreds, if not thousands, of empty seats in the lifeless building that the Sabres call home. And who can blame fans for staying home? The team is playing terrible, the game presentation is predictable and games just aren't fun. Unless a Canadian team is in the building, this is likely going to be the new norm for the remainder of the season.

### Horrific Homestand

All season the Sabres have had a hard time scoring goals but these last five games have been especially bad. Since returning from the All-Star break the Sabres have just nine goals in five games. You aren't going to win many games when you're averaging less than two goals a game. Especially with a rookie goaltender in net.

### Decent Debut

Johansson was fine in his first NHL start. He wasn't great, he wasn't bad, he was just fine. Despite allowing two goals in the first period, Johansson played better as the game moved along, making some nice saves in the second period to keep the Sabres within striking distance. In the shootout he struggled, allowing two goals on two shots. Overall it wasn't Johansson's fault the Sabres lost Thursday and I'd imagine he gets another start this weekend.

### No Skinner?

I don't understand why Jeff Skinner didn't get a single shift in overtime. Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger danced around the question when asked about it afterward, saying he thought Skinner had a strong game but wasn't part of the overtime plan.

### HE'S THE SECOND HIGHEST PAID PLAYER ON THE TEAM!

I rarely use all caps -- but you get my point. Sure, he's having a hard time finding the back of the net but he's without question the Sabres second most dangerous player. He should be on the ice in OT.

## **Sabres Fall To Red Wings 4-3 In Shootout**

By Jenna Harner

WIVB

February 6, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres pulled off a two goal comeback in the third period, and scored late to force overtime, but were unable to defeat the last place Detroit Red Wings Thursday night.

Detroit took a 2-0 lead after the first period as Dylan Larkin tallied both goals for Detroit. His second came on a 2 on 1 opportunity, with just .2 seconds remaining in the period.

The score remained the same until Jimmy Vesey jump started the scoring for the Sabres just past the five minute mark of the third period.

Less than three minutes later, Buffalo knotted things up when Scott Wilson redirected a shot in front from Colin Miller.

The Red Wings jumped back out in front to take a 3-2 lead, and held on until the Sabres pulled Jonas Johansson late in the period. It looked like the puck was going to be cleared out of the Detroit zone, but Evan Rodrigues would keep Buffalo alive as he finished off a nifty move in front of the net to tie the game with less than one minute to play.

Overtime wasn't enough to decide a winner in this one, so both teams would head to a shootout. Detroit would score the first two goals to earn their first road victory since December 14th. After the game, Head Coach Ralph Krueger was asked about the support from fans, especially as of recently.

"I just want to be clear," said Krueger. "I feel and I hear the fans. But I live in the middle of Buffalo and I love this city, and I love the passion of the people. And I go out and eat here on the streets, and I walk the streets and I talk to people, and that's what I'm saying. They're not happy with what we're doing, but they're supporting us, and they're giving me personally a lot of energy. If they boo during a game when they're unhappy, that's their right. if we're not winning, that's their right. but I don't feel this in the city. they love the Sabres and they're hungry for this to turn and we are fighting and working hard to get the habits here to be a competitive team on a regular basis. And we will continue to fight, and we will continue to work hard and we'll get some bodies back here in the next few games and we'll get some energy back and we will improve.

The Sabres look to bounce back when they travel to face the Rangers Friday night.

## **Another night of empty seats as Sabres fans' frustration continues**

By Heather A. Prusak

WGRZ

February 6, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. — "When you lose your fan base in a city like this, it's a real problem."

Sean Stutzman could not have summed it better. That's what it's like to be a Sabres fan these days, and it shows in the arena as empty seats are everywhere just moments before puck drop.

Thursday's game against the Red Wings was another example.

Talking with some fans who were at the game, they said they were season ticket holders and couldn't sell them. Others said they bought tickets way in advance and didn't want them to go to waste.

Whatever the reasons for going, one common theme with the fans is they are fed up and frustrated with the way things are going, as this year will make nine straight seasons without a playoff appearance.

And some fans want to take it a step further when it comes to expressing their frustration. There is a protest rally set up for Saturday morning outside of the arena called "Pack the Plaza," with the hope of getting their message across to owners Kim and Terry Pegula.

The latest meltdown came Thursday night with a 4-3 shootout loss to the Red Wings, the worst team in the NHL.

Up next, they're at Madison Square Garden on Friday night to face the New York Rangers.

## Red Wings top Sabres in shootout, get first win in 10 games

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

February 6, 2020

BUFFALO -- Dylan Larkin scored twice and in the shootout, and the Detroit Red Wings got their first win in 10 games with a 4-3 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou scored in the shootout for Detroit after Buffalo forward Evan Rodrigues tied it 3-3 with 47 seconds left in the third period.

"It feels good," Larkin said. "We had a good start, good first two periods, and then I think we just let our foot off the gas there a little bit in the third. ... Wish we made it a little bit easier for us tonight and little easier on [goalie Jonathan Bernier] there, but we stuck it out, played good defensively in overtime, and won it in a shootout. Two points is two points right now for us."

Tyler Bertuzzi scored, and Bernier made 29 saves for the Red Wings (13-38-4), who were 0-8-1 in their previous nine games.

Jonas Johansson made 18 saves in his first NHL start for the Sabres (23-23-8), who have lost two straight and are 1-4-1 in their past six games.

"We definitely cannot be pleased with losing in [a shootout] here today," Buffalo coach Ralph Krueger said. "The storyline was against the opportunities that we had; we had a lot of opportunities in the first two periods where we were unable to finish. ... It's the failed opportunities, the grit we need to finish on those opportunities, that is definitely the reason for this loss today.

"It was a good reaction in the third coming back from two down, it was a good reaction to score 6-on-5 to bring it into overtime under the circumstances, but we shouldn't have been in those circumstances."

Larkin gave Detroit a 1-0 lead at 4:23 of the first period when his shot from along the left boards went through the legs of Luke Glendening, who was screening Johansson.

Larkin made it 2-0 with 0.2 seconds left in the first, converting on a backhand off a 2-on-1.

"I heard the guys yelling, 'Shoot it'," Larkin said. "When [Sabres forward Sam Reinhart] beat me, I looked up and it was about 12, 13 seconds so I knew there wasn't much, but I thought I'd go for it and [Robby Fabbri] made a great play over. It was a big goal for our team."

Jimmy Vesey scored on the rebound of his redirection under Bernier's left pad to make it 2-1 at 5:48 of the third period, and Scott Wilson scored his first of the season to tie it 2-2 at 8:29 with a redirection of Colin Miller's pass in the slot.

"We waited too long to turn it on," Rodrigues said. "We fought our way back, unfortunately don't get the two points, but we had chances."

Bertuzzi put the Red Wings ahead 3-2 at 13:56 with a one-timer in front on the power play.

"If you never get rewarded, it's hard to keep your confidence," Detroit coach Jeff Blashill said. "It's hard to believe in what you're doing, it's hard to do those things. It's really important to be able to get rewarded. That's one of the hardest challenges we've had this year. Even when we've done things right, we haven't gotten rewarded.

"We weren't perfect tonight, we've got lots to work on, lots to get better at, but I thought the effort level was great. It was good to get rewarded for a fairly good process."

They said it

"Just to come in the room and see smiles and listen to some music. ... We've got a guy playing his first game tonight (defenseman Gustav Lindstrom) and I thought he did really well, and [Bernier's] been so big for us lately and he played another solid game, made the saves he had to and kept us in it, really. Just a total team win, everyone feels good right now. We've got to keep that going." -- Red Wings center Dylan Larkin

"It's never easy. We didn't do our job that we set out to do when we woke up this morning, so it's disappointing."  
-- Sabres forward Sam Reinhart

#### Need to know

Lindstrom was minus-1 in 12:07 of ice time in his NHL debut. ... Fabbri had two assists to reach 100 points in his 202nd NHL game. ... Sabres forward Jack Eichel's point streak ended at four games.

#### What's next

Red Wings: At the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday (7 p.m. ET; ESPN+, FS-O, FS-D, NHL.TV)

Sabres: At the New York Rangers on Friday (7 p.m. ET; ESPN+, TVAS, MSG, MSG-B, NHL.TV)

## Red Wings at Sabres preview

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

February 6, 2020

RED WINGS (12-38-4) at SABRES (23-23-7)

7 p.m. ET; NBCSN, NHL.TV

### The Game

Jonas Johansson will start his first NHL game for the Buffalo Sabres when they play the Detroit Red Wings at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

The 24-year-old goalie made his NHL debut with 13 saves in relief of Carter Hutton in a 6-1 loss to the Colorado Avalanche on Tuesday. He's 13-3-3 with a 2.19 goals-against average and .925 save percentage in 20 games for Rochester of the American Hockey League this season.

Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin will miss his second straight game with an upper-body injury.

The Red Wings have been shut out in two straight games and are winless in their past nine (0-8-1) while being outscored 37-12.

### Players to watch

Red Wings center Dylan Larkin has 13 points (four goals, nine assists) in his past 14 games.

Sabres center Jack Eichel has 15 points (seven goals, eight assists) in his past 14 games, including three goals and one assist in a four-game point streak.

### They said it

"Just play your game. Playing his game is what got him the opportunity to get called up, so come in and play your game. He seems to be a fairly unflappable young guy, pretty easygoing. Doesn't seem like much affects him, doesn't seem to get too nervous." -- Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill on defenseman Gustav Lindstrom

"I feel like if I would look at it from the outside, it would feel really huge, and it does feel big. But when you're in the middle of it, I try to focus on it like it's any game. It feels great." -- Sabres goalie Jonas Johansson

### Red Wings projected lineup

Darren Helm -- Dylan Larkin -- Robby Fabbri  
Tyler Bertuzzi -- Valteri Filppula -- Justin Abdelkader  
Taro Hirose -- Luke Glendening -- Andreas Athanasiou  
Givani Smith -- Christoffer Ehn -- Adam Erne

Patrik Nemeth -- Alex Biega  
Trevor Daley -- Gustav Lindstrom  
Dennis Cholowski -- Filip Hronek

Jonathan Bernier

Jimmy Howard

Scratched: Jonathan Ericsson, Madison Bowey

Injured: Danny DeKeyser (back), Anthony Mantha (upper body), Filip Zadina (lower body), Mike Green (finger), Frans Nielsen (upper body)

### Sabres projected lineup

Jimmy Vesey -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart  
Jeff Skinner -- Evan Rodrigues -- Rasmus Asplund

Conor Sheary -- Marcus Johansson -- Michael Frolik  
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Scott Wilson

Lawrence Pilut -- Rasmus Ristolainen  
Colin Miller -- Henri Jokiharju  
Jake McCabe -- Brandon Montour

Jonas Johansson  
Carter Hutton

Scratched: Zach Bogosian

Injured: Curtis Lazar (illness), Rasmus Dahlin (upper body), Kyle Okposo (upper body), Linus Ullmark (lower body), Victor Olofsson (lower body), Tage Thompson (upper body), Vladimir Sobotka (lower body)

#### Status report

Lazar, a forward, is a game-time decision. ... The Sabres will warm up with 13 forwards before deciding on a lineup. ... Lindstrom will make his NHL debut for the Red Wings.

#### Stat pack

Fabbri is two points from 100 in the NHL. ... Reinhart has 13 points (seven goals, six assists) in his past 12 games.

## Why the Buffalo Sabres are the NHL's biggest disaster

By Greg Wyshynski

ESPN

February 6, 2020

Peter Tripi is a passionate Buffalo Sabres fan, something increasingly rare for the moribund franchise.

The kind of fan who shouts "Buffalo's on the rise!" because it fires up other people, and because it's what he inherently believed about his team. His family used to have season tickets before the resale market dried up like the Sahara; he said "tickets were selling for half the price of a slice of pizza in the arena" for Buffalo's 6-1 embarrassment at the hands of the Colorado Avalanche this week. No doubt the pizza was more satisfying, even at double the price.

The kind of fan who isn't as long-suffering as some but has suffered enough, having fallen in love with the Sabres right before the humbling exodus of stars Daniel Briere and Chris Drury in free agency in 2007. "I thought that was the worst thing to happen in the city," Tripi said. "But now, after nearly nine years with zero important games here, I realize we are living in the worst period of the Buffalo Sabres."

As Lizzo sang, truth hurts: With a 1.1% chance of qualifying for the playoffs (per Money Puck), this will be the ninth consecutive season without the Buffalo Sabres in the Eastern Conference playoffs, despite the third-largest current salary-cap hit in the NHL. They've had six coaches and three general managers in those nine years. They've had one generational talent, Jack Eichel, who has yet to appear in a playoff game. They've had only two primary owners, Terry and Kim Pegula, who took over the Sabres in February 2011 to much fanfare and optimism.

"Starting today," Terry Pegula said at his introductory news conference, "the Buffalo Sabres' reason for existence will be to win a Stanley Cup."

Talk about your existential crisis ...

There might not be a bigger disaster as an organization in the NHL right now than the Sabres, when you combine a lack of postseason appearances, organizational turmoil, wasted assets and opportunity, and a growing revolution among the fans. Consider that the Ottawa Senators have had roster sell-offs and sexual harassment scandals and cyberbullying scandals and players caught on a hidden camera badmouthing coaches and an owner with an outright adversarial relationship with his own fans ... and they still have a clearer path back to contention than do the Sabres.

That's really saying something.

The toxicity of the Sabres' lack of success is beginning to seep into the marketplace. Buffalo's average tickets distributed per game is 17,146 (90.8% capacity), down from 17,908 (93.9%) last season. In the Pegulas' first full season as owner, it was 18,550 (99.9%).

Some of the passionate supporters are becoming dispassionate, while others like Peter Tripi are just downright angry. And he believes it's time to show ownership and management how angry they are.

On Saturday at 11 a.m. ET, Tripi is organizing a Sabres fan protest called Pack The Plaza. It's a protest with a scattershot of gripes, but one in particular the Buffalo fans appear to share: the public absenteeism of owners Terry and Kim Pegula.

"There has been zero acknowledgment from the Pegulas in response to the state of play, over what is almost a nine-year drought. From this protest, we want an acknowledgement from the management that they know what's happening and that they are trying to fix it," said Tripi, whose Sabres haven't made the playoffs since a first-round exit in 2011.

"And we want the players to know we support them. We love Jack Eichel and this roster, no matter the record. But the inaction of this management [group] and the disinterest of ownership has wasted every single season with him on the roster."

The Sabres are wasting years of superstar Jack Eichel's career. Timothy T. Ludwig/USA TODAY Sports  
Duane Steinel is also a passionate Sabres fan. You might not have heard of him, but you might have heard him. He's the "Duane" who called in to WGR-AM 550 in Buffalo on Jan. 29 and unleashed a rant that made news around the NHL, lamenting the lack of public participation from the Pegulas.

"I don't need a Jerry Jones type of owner. I need [an] owner who's going to answer the fans when they misspell names on jerseys and have ... knockoffs on alumni! What is going on? What are we doing? ... Have they ever sucked the passion out of you like they have me?" he asked as his voice hit a crescendo.

(The "knockoffs" is in reference to the jersey worn by the venerable Danny Gare for an alumni event. The misspellings were a reference to the goofs on jerseys for Mike Robitaille and Dave Andreychuk. While the optics are bad, Gare's jersey was one he purchased on his own, Robitaille's was also his own and the team caught its misspelling of "Andreychuk" and replaced the jersey at that event.)

"I don't need a damn camera in front of Terry Pegula every single day, but address our concerns! Be there when you screw up! Answer for the mistakes! Be accountable!" Steinel bellowed.

Where are the owners on all of this? Sabres general manager Jason Botterill told WGR this week that the Pegulas are "frustrated" with the path of the team: "To put it bluntly, my conversations with Terry and Kim, they're frustrated with the results. They want better results, and the dialogue goes to, 'What are the solutions? What are we doing to get better?'"

Great question.

Botterill was hired in May 2017 after helping to build three Stanley Cup champions as part of Pittsburgh Penguins management. He inherited a rebuild from Tim Murray, the first general manager the Pegulas hired, and essentially the Sabres entered this bizarre, "Inception"-like rebuild inside a rebuild. Botterill hired head coach Phil Housley, a well-respected assistant from the Nashville Predators who didn't have the stuff to handle the bigger gig. Botterill then hired Ralph Krueger as head coach, and he's the best thing about the 2019-20 Sabres not named "Jack Eichel," but even he can't spin gold out of raw sewage.

Botterill's transaction history has not helped the Sabres get better:

His first lottery pick was Casey Mittelstadt, No. 8 in 2017, currently in the AHL.

He acquired defenseman Marco Scandella from the Minnesota Wild for two players and a third-round pick, and got no players and a fourth-round pick in trading him to Montreal two years later.

He got virtually nothing for trading Evander Kane.

He traded Ryan O'Reilly for Patrik Berglund, who quit the team; Tage Thompson, who has 12 points in 66 games with the Sabres; veteran depth center Vladimir Sobotka; and draft pick Ryan Johnson ... who was 31st overall because O'Reilly won the Selke, the Stanley Cup and the Conn Smythe in his first season with the St. Louis Blues.

He lucked out because Jeff Skinner made a geographically influenced choice to accept a trade to Buffalo, and then Botterill inexplicably handed Skinner \$9 million annually over eight seasons, with a full no-movement clause, despite having the reputation as a salary-cap savant. Skinner has 11 goals in 42 games this season, after scoring 40 goals in 82 games in a contract year.

A little more than a year after impassioned comments that he'd lost his love for hockey while playing in Buffalo, Ryan O'Reilly won the Conn Smythe Trophy in St. Louis as MVP of the playoffs. Bruce Bennett/Getty Images  
I like Botterill. I've always felt he'd make a good general manager and still do, whether that's in Buffalo or somewhere else. But outside of having the lottery balls bounce to getting No. 1 overall pick Rasmus Dahlin in 2018, there hasn't been much dramatic improvement to the Sabres' roster on his watch -- and on some of the biggest swings he has taken, some haven't even left the infield. Some want to blame the players. I don't know how the general manager doesn't get a considerable amount of it as well.

But while some fans are wondering if his tenure should end, we have to ask: "To what end?" Another GM? Another, different rebuild, inside a rebuild that was already inside of another rebuild? There's an argument to be made that the best thing for the Sabres right now is some semblance of consistency -- although that could end up being the dictionary definition of insanity, too.

Here's what I know, according to sources: The Sabres were looking for a president of hockey operations-type last season. They never hired one, and seemingly cooled to the idea. If Botterill comes back, I can't see a scenario in which he doesn't have someone above him to help facilitate this turnaround, or at least sign off on his plans. Perhaps even someone to be the public face and voice of ownership/management, like Ted Black was back in the day.

(Botterill, however, didn't exactly seem down with the idea of having a new boss between himself and the Pegulas, saying to WGR: "I feel comfortable with the management group we have, and we understand that we have to continue to be better.")

If they don't retain Botterill, there are two other directions in which I'd support the Sabres going.

Scenario No. 1: If the New York Rangers ever allowed Chris Drury to take another job, I think Buffalo hires him in a millisecond as its Joe Sakic/Steve Yzerman conquering hero.

Scenario No. 2: Krueger becomes coach/general manager, which we haven't had since Darryl Sutter in Calgary. Look, if anyone could do it, it's that guy.

Whatever the next remedy is for their decade of ills, the Sabres being this bad absolutely sucks for the NHL -- and not just because we're seriously considering sending SEAL Team 6 in to rescue Eichel from this disaster zone. We're always talking about this or that franchise "needing" to be good for the betterment of the league. Well, look at the local ratings from Buffalo for, like, the past two decades. The moment the Sabres become a relevant, championship-contending team is the moment every Western New York expat who ever wore a buffalo head on their bodies comes out of the shadows to support the team. It would be like that energy we felt in Washington and St. Louis, only with 10 times the catharsis and fans jumping through burning tables.

But that possibility seems delusional at this point, not just when glancing at the standings, but in the hearts and minds of Sabres fans. Not unless things change.

I asked Tripi what he would say if his protest ended with him having earned an audience with Terry and Kim Pegula.

"The message would be this: Kim, Terry, I want to thank you for all you have done for this town, this city and this community. Keeping the Buffalo Bills and the Buffalo Sabres in Buffalo and being a part of the rebirth of our great city is something that we will always be thankful for. But whether it's you or the management under you, what is happening in this organization is not right by any means and you need to pay attention. The way the fans, the alumni and this franchise have been disrespected and neglected over the span of nine years is sickening," he said.

"We are a passionate fan base in a hardworking, blue-collar city and we don't deserve a billionaire owner if he refuses to listen or act. We are not content with the situation that you have created with this organization. And if you're upset about the reaction that the fans are giving, you shouldn't be. You should be happy that fans still care about this team. Please, for the sake of the franchise and the people of Buffalo, be better."

## **NHL On NBCSN: How do the Sabres fix this?**

By Adam Gretz

NBC Sports

February 6, 2020

This is not where the Buffalo Sabres were supposed to be at this point.

Not at this point of the season, and certainly not at this point of their rebuild that started seven years ago.

The Sabres enter Thursday's game against the Detroit Red Wings (7 p.m. ET, NBCSN) in 13th place in the Eastern Conference and 12 points out of a playoff spot. They are on track to miss the playoffs for the ninth consecutive season (a nearly unprecedented run in NHL history) and there seems to be little short-or long-term hope for significant improvement.

They have lost four out of their past five games, and could be on the verge of losing even diehards like caller Duane.

How bleak has it been over the past decade? Since the start of the 2011-12 season they have not finished higher than 19th in the league standings, and have averaged a 25th place finish over an eight-year stretch. During that time they have never finished in the top-half of the league in goals scored or goals against, and very rarely crack the top-20. They are on their sixth different head coach during that run and their third general manager. The names and faces change from the locker room, to the bench, to the front office, but results on the ice remain almost exactly the same.

It is almost as if the Sabres are in need of a new rebuild from their most recent rebuild.

It also might be a necessity.

They have almost no long-term commitments (or commitments of any kind beyond this season) outside of their top couple of players (Jack Eichel and Jeff Skinner), while they have seven pending unrestricted free agents after this season (Jimmy Vesey, Michael Frolik, Zach Bogosian, Conor Sheary, Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson, and Scott Wilson). There's not really a compelling argument to re-sign any of them right now.

Before you even get in to improving the roster, they are simply going to need to refill almost half of the roster just to put enough bodies on the bench next season. That's not an easy short-term overhaul, and you also have to trust that you have the right decision-makers in place to do it.

The problem with hitting the reset button on the franchise (again) with yet another fresh start is that they can't keep wasting the prime years of Eichel.

Eichel is a legitimate superstar talent. He is one of the league's best players, a cornerstone player that you can build around, and in a better situation with better talent around him would be in the thick of the MVP discussion this season.

Next year is already going to be his sixth year in the league and his age 24 season. By this point in his career he should be the focal point of a Stanley Cup contender, not a team that needs to overhaul half of its roster and has yet to finish in the top half of the league.

The Sabres have so many holes to fill and so many needs to address in the short-term that it's going to take nearly flawless roster decisions to make a significant short-term jump in the standings in the next year or two. Nothing in their roster decisions with the current management team suggest that is something that is likely, or even possible.

But they are also not in a position where they can start over from scratch because they run the risk of further alienating an already exhausted fan-base, and perhaps most importantly, the one building block player they still have.

## **Missed opportunities cost Sabres in shootout loss to Red Wings**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 6, 2020

Evan Rodrigues scored with 46.2 seconds remaining to send the game into overtime, but early missed opportunities cost the Sabres a point in the standings in what ended as a 3-2 shootout loss to the Detroit Red Wings at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

The Sabres erased deficits of 2-0 and 3-2 in the third period on goals from Jimmy Vesey, Scott Wilson, and Rodrigues. They were in that position, coach Ralph Krueger said, because of the chances they had been unable to capitalize on in the first two periods.

Buffalo held heavy advantages in both 5-on-5 scoring chances (15-4) and high-danger attempts (10-0) during the first 40 minutes, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

"It's the failed opportunities and the grit we need to finish on those opportunities that is definitely the reason for this loss today," Krueger said. "It was a good reaction in the third, coming back from two down. It was a good reaction scoring 6-on-5 to bring it into overtime under the circumstances, but we shouldn't have been in those circumstances."

Dylan Larkin scored twice for the Red Wings in the first period and Tyler Bertuzzi added a power-play goal in the third. Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou both buried their shootout attempts against rookie goaltender Jonas Johansson, who made his first NHL start for the Sabres.

The loss is Buffalo's fourth in five games since returning from the All-Star break, a string of poor results that Krueger feels has impacted their offense.

"When you just purely look at the game from scoring chances as we do as coaches, there is an effort to get the job done," Krueger said. "There is a lack of confidence right now, so what you're seeing sometimes is hesitation on scoring chances. You're seeing hesitation on puck movement when it can be a little bit quicker. But I do not see these guys quitting.

"I think there's a bite in that room. They don't want this season to fall away. They want to fight against this storm that we're fighting against right now and we have to stick together, and we have to work together on solutions. That's all we can do in this adversity right now."

The Red Wings took an early lead on a goal from Larkin, who utilized a screen from Luke Glendening and beat Johansson with a shot from the half wall. Larkin added another goal with two tenths of a second remaining in the period, the product of a 2-on-1 rush that was born out of overly aggressive play by the Sabres at the other end of the ice.

Vesey buried his own rebound to put the Sabres on the board at 5:48 of the third period, then Wilson deflected a shot from Colin Miller to tie the game less than three minutes later.

Rodrigues took the high-sticking penalty that preceded Bertuzzi's go-ahead goal but redeemed himself after Rasmus Ristolainen made an aggressive play to poke the puck free with the Buffalo net empty in the final minute. Rodrigues cut quickly through the middle of the ice, collected the puck and scored.

It was the last puck they got behind Red Wings goalie Jonathan Bernier, who stopped Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart in the shootout.

"We had moments in the first and second that were positive and we did the right things, but we didn't do it consistently enough," Rodrigues said. "We waited too long to turn it on. We fought our way back and unfortunately don't get the two points, but we had chances and it didn't go our way tonight."

Overtuned

The Sabres appeared to have tied the game in the first period on a goal from Wilson, who was recalled from Rochester on Wednesday. Wilson went to the net and deflected a point shot by Lawrence Pilut, but the goal was taken off the board after a challenge for goaltender interference.

The official explanation said the review determined that Wilson "impaired Bernier's ability to play his position in the crease prior to the goal."

Johansson's first start

Johansson finished the contest with 18 saves on 21 shots. The 24-year-old admitted it was the fastest pace he had ever experienced, though he said he felt comfortable as the game wore on.

"There were some butterflies the entire day, for sure," he said. "It's a big moment. But when I got to the rink and the game started, those things, they got away. I just tried to enjoy it and have fun out there."

Up next

The Sabres hit the road to play the New York Rangers on Friday. Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m., or you can listen to the game on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 7.

## **At the Horn: Red Wings 4 - Sabres 3 (SO)**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 6, 2020

Evan Rodrigues took a penalty that led to the Detroit Red Wings' go-ahead goal in the third period on Thursday, but he was the one who tied it up with 46.2 seconds remaining to force overtime.

However, the Detroit Red Wings scored twice in the shootout to beat Buffalo 4-3 at KeyBank Center.

Buffalo rallied back from a two-goal deficit thanks to goals from Jimmy Vesey and Scott Wilson 2:49 apart in the third period to tie the game, but Tyler Bertuzzi put Detroit ahead with a power-play goal while Rodrigues was in the box.

Jonas Johansson made the first start of his NHL career, stopping 18 of 21 shots through regulation and overtime.

Dylan Larkin scored twice for Detroit and Jonathan Bernier made 29 saves.

What happened

Larkin opened the scoring 4:23 into the contest when his shot from the left halfwall beat Johansson through traffic.

Buffalo thought they had tied the game at the 6:36 mark after Scott Wilson deflected the puck in past Jonathan Bernier. However, Detroit challenged for goaltender interference and it was deemed that Wilson obstructed Bernier from making the save, taking the goal off the board.

Detroit went up 2-0 with 0.2 seconds remaining during a sequence of 4-on-4 play when Larkin scored his second of the night. On a 2-on-1 with Robby Fabbri, Larkin accepted the pass and roofed a backhand shot into the back of the net.

Vesey knocked in his own rebound 5:48 into the third period to put Buffalo within one.

Then Wilson got his goal back to tie the game at the 8:29 mark. Colin Miller skated in from the blue line and threw the puck on goal where Wilson was able to tip it in.

With 6:04 remaining, Bertuzzi one-timed a shot in on the power play to put Detroit back on top.

In the final minute, Rodrigues collected a loose puck in front and was able to lift it over Bernier to tie the game.

In the shootout, both Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart were stopped while Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou both capitalized on their attempts.

What it means

The Sabres are now 23-23-8 on the season and 15-9-4 at home.

With his goal, Rodrigues has now scored three goals in three games against the Red Wings this season. Wilson, who was recalled from the Rochester Americans yesterday, scored his first goal of the season in his third NHL game of 2019-20.

Detroit snapped a nine-game losing streak with the shootout win. Buffalo is now 1-2 in shootouts this season.

Roll the highlight film

Here's Rodrigues' game-tying goal:

Coming up

The Sabres play Friday night against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden. It's a 7 p.m. faceoff with pregame coverage on MSG starting at 6:30.

## **What to expect on 2000s Night**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 6, 2020

A "Scary Good" playoff run. A Presidents' Trophy. The first Winter Classic in our own backyard.

2000s Night presented by KeyBank will honor those moments and more. Join us for the celebration on Thursday, Feb. 13 when the Buffalo Sabres take on the Columbus Blue Jackets at 7 p.m. at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres will hold a pregame ceremony to honor the ownership of B. Thomas Golisano, who purchased the team in 2003. The Sabres were operated by the NHL at the time and Golisano's commitment saved the franchise from relocating. Golisano will be joined on the ice by Larry Quinn and Dan DiPofi, who were part of his ownership group.

The Presidents' Trophy, which the team won after posting a League-best 113 points in 2006-07, will be on display on the 100 level concourse for fans to take photos with pregame.

The following alumni are expected to attend, and a number of them will greet fans the 100 level concourse and on the 200 level in the Seneca Sports Lounge before the game:

Martin Biron  
Eric Boulton  
Daniel Briere  
Brian Campbell  
Tim Connolly  
J-P Dumont  
Paul Gaustad  
Michal Grosek  
Patrick Kaleta  
Patrick Lalime  
Adam Mair  
Jay McKee  
Daniel Paille  
Andrew Peters  
Jason Pominville  
Michael Ryan  
Rhett Warrener

(Alumni appearances are subject to change)

Tickets are on sale now. The first 10,000 fans in attendance will receive a decade-themed pennant.

Be in your seats early as the alumni will be honored on the ice prior to a special 2000s video open.

During the game, alumni will meet with the Season Ticket Holder of the Game, take part in a T-shirt toss, and receive a warm welcome back with video features and live interviews. Fans should also be ready for 2000s-themed scoring graphics and music from the decade.

For those watching MSG's broadcast, Sabres Hall of Famer Danny Gare will return to the booth during the second period to provide guest color commentary with Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray.

## **Johansson to make 1st NHL start against Red Wings**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 6, 2020

Jonas Johansson will make his first NHL start for the Sabres when they host the Detroit Red Wings tonight at KeyBank Center.

Johansson made his debut in relief of Carter Hutton during the second period of Tuesday's loss to Colorado. He allowed a 2-on-1 goal to Mikko Rantanen on the first shot he faced, then settled in to stop the Avalanche's final 13 shots.

The 24-year-old reflected on his long journey to the NHL after practice Wednesday and said he felt prepared for his next opportunity. He expressed that same confidence this morning.

"I feel like if I would look at it from the outside, it would feel really huge - and it does feel big, but when you're in the middle of it I try to focus on it like it's any game," Johansson said. "It feels great."

On the injury front, Johan Larsson will be back in the lineup after missing Tuesday's game with a lower-body ailment. Rasmus Dahlin (upper body) will be out for the second straight game while Curtis Lazar (illness) will be a game-time decision.

Krueger said defenseman Zach Bogosian will be a healthy scratch, meaning the team will dress the traditional 12 forwards and six defensemen. The Sabres will warm up with 13 forwards and determine the scratch up front based on Lazar's availability.

Next home game: Sunday afternoon vs. Anaheim

The team recalled Scott Wilson from Rochester and sent down Jean-Sebastien Dea on Wednesday, which coach Ralph Krueger said was a testament to Wilson's recent play. He scored three goals in his last four games with the Amerks.

"He's really on a hot streak right now and just the way he's been playing has really impressed us," Krueger said. "We sent him down with a to-do list and it was less against J-S than we don't have a lot of movement right now here within the guys that are set here and we just feel that he has the potential to be a sparkplug for us."

Scouting the Red Wings

The Red Wings have lost nine straight games, beginning with their 5-1 loss to the Sabres on Jan. 12. They have scored more than two goals just once in that stretch and have been shut out in two straight contests.

They hold league-worst averages in both goals scored (2.04) and goals against (3.81). Their power play ranks 30th (14.5 percent) and their penalty kill ranks last (73.2 percent).

All of that being said, Krueger stressed the need for the Sabres to not overlook their opponent as they aim to rebound from their 6-1 loss to the Avalanche.

"First of all, we have a lot of respect for the potential of [Detroit]," he said. "They've had a tough run of late but what we do see is there is a danger in their game, in their ability to take advantage of teams if you give them that space. So, you need to play a really good defensive game."

"But we need to get back to our game above all. It's important to understand you have to respect every team you play in this league. It doesn't matter where you are, at home or away, it doesn't matter where that team is in the standings. On a given night, every team can play to a certain level to earn themselves a win and we have to focus on ourselves."

Detroit has been bit hard by the injury bug, with forwards Anthony Mantha, Frans Nielsen, and Filip Zadina and defensemen Danny DeKeyser and Mike Green all out. Andreas Athanasiou, who scored 30 goals last season, returned from a 13-game absence on Monday.

The bright spot has been the play of goaltender Jonathan Bernier, who ranks third in goals-against average (1.98) and save percentage (.939) since Dec. 12 (minimum 7 starts).

Number to know: 14

This one has double significance tonight. Jack Eichel, who enters the contest on a four-game point streak, has recorded 14 points in his last 12 games against the Red Wings. He has tallied at least one point in each of the last seven matchups between the two teams.

Sam Reinhart, meanwhile, has 14 points in his last 14 games overall after scoring the Sabres' lone goal on Tuesday. He's on pace to finish with 29 goals and 68 points, both of which would be career highs.

Tune in

The game can be seen live on NBCSN at 7 p.m. Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will have the call on WGR 550.