



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

January 19, 2021

Sabres visit the Flyers after Lazar's 2-goal game

Associated Press

January 19, 2021

Buffalo Sabres (1-2-0, seventh in the East Division) vs. Philadelphia Flyers (2-1-0, second in the East Division)

Philadelphia; Tuesday, 7 p.m. EST

BOTTOM LINE: The Philadelphia Flyers host Buffalo after Curtis Lazar scored two goals in the Sabres' 6-1 victory against the Flyers.

Philadelphia went 16-4-4 in division action and 25-6-4 at home in the 2019-20 season. The Flyers recorded 382 assists on 227 total goals last season.

Buffalo went 10-12-2 in division action and 10-20-4 on the road a season ago. Goalies for the Sabres allowed 2.9 goals on 30.9 shots per game last season.

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The teams meet for the second straight game.

INJURIES: Flyers: Shayne Gostisbehere: out (health protocols), Sean Couturier: out (chest).

Sabres: None listed.

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Reinhart, Lazar score twice in Sabres' 6-1 win over Flyers

By Dan Gelston
Associated Press
January 19, 2021

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Making a surprise start in net, Carter Hutton was backed by the scoring burst Buffalo needed to get in the win column.

Sam Reinhart and Curtis Lazar each scored two goals to lead the Buffalo Sabres to their first win of the season, 6-1 over the Philadelphia Flyers on Monday night.

"We just kind of played relentless," Hutton said. "We just kept pounding it. And even when we had the lead, we didn't stop."

Hutton stopped 21 shots in a light night of work against a Flyers team that had scored 11 goals as they won their first two games. Nicolas Aube-Kubel spoiled the shutout bid with 2:05 left.

"Hutton really has been in a good zone lately," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "We like the way he has been playing in practice. He came in here in really good shape. He has a good attitude and a freshness about him."

Minus injured No. 1 center Sean Couturier (ribs), the Flyers played with little energy and failed to create many scoring chances. The Sabres scored four goals before the midpoint of the second period and chased Carter Hart after he faced 22 shots.

"If I'm a player and if I'm part of the coaching staff, which I am, I'm embarrassed by how we played tonight and I'm happy we can get right back at it tomorrow and prove what kind of team we are," Flyers coach Alain Vigneault said.

Buffalo goalie Linus Ullmark sat out for personal reasons and that opened the door for Hutton to get his second start this season. Hutton went 12-14-4 last season and endured an 0-8-4 midseason stretch while dealing with an eyesight issue that required treatment to correct.

Reinhart and Lazar did enough to help the Sabres accomplish a couple of things they haven't done well of late: win on the road, and win in Philly. The Sabres went 10-20-4 on the road last season, and were 0-6-1 in their last seven games in Philadelphia since 2014.

"We're just really pleased to get a confirmation of the process," Krueger said.

Taylor Hall, the NHL's 2018 MVP and a six-time 20-goal-scorer, had three assists for the Sabres. Hall signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with Buffalo and has quickly fit in on the top line centered by captain Jack Eichel.

Eichel also had three assists as the Sabres denied the Flyers their first 3-0 start since 2011.

The Sabres, an afterthought these days on the Buffalo sports scene behind the Bills, had scored only five goals in their first two games. Lazar's backhand shot over Hart in the first clanged off the pipes and reverberated throughout the mostly empty arena.

Reinhart went back-to-back in the second, scoring his first goal from one knee off a pass across the crease from Hall and his second alone in the slot. Reinhart had his 10th career multigoal game.

Lazar sparked the fourth line again when he pumped his second goal into an empty net with Hart's back turned for a 4-0 lead.

"We're a simple line but we're doing the dirty work and going to get pucks to the nets," Lazar said.

Henri Jokiharju made it 5-0 in the third and Victor Olofsson added a power-play goal in the final minute to cap the scoring.

HALL OF A START

Hall became the fifth player in the last 20 years to record a point in each of his first three games as a member of the Sabres.

GOSTISBEHERE OUT

Flyers D Shayne Gostisbehere was designated a non-roster player. Gostisbehere missed the first two games for COVID-related reasons. The Flyers recalled Connor Bunnaman from the taxi squad.

COOTS OUT

Couturier, who last season became the first Flyers player in 33 years to win the Selke Trophy as the NHL's top defensive forward, will miss about two weeks. He could miss two games each against Buffalo, New Jersey and Boston. Morgan Frost made his season debut at center.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Sabres and Flyers finish their two-game set on Tuesday. Brian Elliott, who replaced Hart in the second period, was scheduled to get his first start of the season.

"We know we haven't played our best games yet," Flyers forward James van Riemsdyk said. "We managed to win the first two games but it caught up with us tonight."

Sam Reinhart, Curtis Lazar score twice to send Sabres to impressive road win

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 19, 2021

PHILADELPHIA – Expletives were shouted, stick blades were slammed on the ice and then came the most notable sign of defeat from the Philadelphia Flyers.

Carter Hart, a 22-year-old goalie who is considered a future Vezina Trophy winner, skated to the Flyers' bench inside Wells Fargo Center on Monday night and was replaced by backup Brian Elliott after allowing four goals on 22 shots in less than two periods.

The Buffalo Sabres didn't stop, either. Shift after shift, each of coach Ralph Krueger's forwards and defensemen seemed to overwhelm the opposition with a blend of speed and physicality. Removing Hart made no difference, as Sam Reinhart and Curtis Lazar each scored two goals to help the Sabres secure their first win of the season, a 6-1 victory over the previously undefeated Flyers.

"That's the way we want to come out," proclaimed Reinhart, whose 10th career multi-goal game occurred in his reunion with Jack Eichel on the top line.

Eichel and Taylor Hall had three assists apiece, and are among the NHL's scoring leaders through three games. Carter Hutton, called into action when Linus Ullmark sat out the game for what the team called "personal reasons," delivered 21 saves and was less than three minutes away from securing his first shutout since Oct. 17, 2019.

The most important storyline, however, was the collective team game Krueger saw glimpses of during the Sabres back-to-back losses to Washington last week.

"We really, really were able to build off the second game against Washington and today we took our chances and used them," Krueger said. "More than anything, one of our best neutral-zone games since I've been here in both directions with the way we defended. The gapping of the defensemen, the tracking of the forwards was outstanding right through the game."

It started from puck drop with Eichel's line controlling possession and Hall zipping a shot from the right-wing circle. Then the Sabres' penalty kill, which ranked 30th in the NHL last season, generated momentum by allowing only one shot in two minutes.

Krueger's preferred style of play gradually emerged with each shift, as Eichel and Jeff Skinner almost connected on a 2-on-0 and Cody Eakin fed Tage Thompson with a centering pass from behind the net. A breakthrough occurred from an unlikely source at 15:52 into the first period, when Flyers defenseman Philippe Myers coughed up the puck at the Sabres' opposing blue line.

Lazar corralled the puck, bolted down the left wing and stunned the Flyers with a backhanded shot over Hart's left shoulder for a 1-0 lead.

"We probably should've gotten a different result for last game," Lazar said, referring to the 2-1 loss to Washington on Friday. "But to carry forward that effort into tonight, it speaks a lot about our character and our belief in our dressing room. That's what we need moving forward. We've got guys taking turns blocking shots, going to the net, doing all the dirty work that's necessary to win."

The "dirty work," as Lazar put it, was built around a strong presence on the forecheck. The Sabres routinely dumped the puck into the offensive zone and used their speed to overwhelm the Flyers' defensemen. It was the line of Lazar, Jeff Skinner and Riley Sheahan that drew a penalty to give Buffalo its first power play.

The Sabres' top unit capitalized with Reinhart scoring on a rebound created by Hall for a 2-0 lead at 3:35 into the second period. The tandem wasn't done.

Less than three minutes later, Hall chased down a loose puck in the corner and fended off two Flyers defenders before passing to Eichel, who fed Reinhart in front for a three-goal lead.

"It's incredible," Lazar said of watching the Sabres' top line. "We have the best seat in the house when those guys are zipping the puck around. Those are three world-class players and seeing them work in sync out there is pretty special. I'm glad they're on our team."

The Sabres' attack began in the neutral zone. Philadelphia rarely entered Buffalo's defensive zone with ease. Forced passes led to turnovers, which allowed Buffalo to return to offense. Another signature shift by Krueger's forwards ended with Sheahan's backhand pass through traffic to Lazar, who pushed the lead to 4-0 at 8:09 into the second period.

The Flyers outscored the Pittsburgh Penguins 11-5 in two wins to start the season and are expected to be among the top teams in the NHL this season. Yet, it was the Sabres who had four forward lines creating scoring chances and erupting for three second-period goals.

With Hart out of the game, Henri Jokiharju only needed a routine shot from the left boards to make it 5-0 at 10:47 into the third period.

"I thought we did a good job," Hutton said. "We just kind of played that relentless forechecking (style)."

The shutout was spoiled by Nicolas Aube-Kubel with 2:05 remaining in regulation, but the Sabres didn't stop. Following Aube-Kubel's high hit that sent Rasmus Dahlin to the dressing room, and drew the ire of Krueger, Victor Olofsson scored on the power play to punctuate the Sabres' impressive road win.

Though the Sabres' foundation is their defensive play at 5-on-5, it was their special teams that gave them momentum and frustrated the Flyers.

"That combination really, really launched the kind of game we want to play and build on and we're just really pleased to get a confirmation of the process like this here today in Philadelphia," Krueger said.

Wraparound: 3 second-period goals spark Sabres' 6-1 rout of Flyers

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 18, 2021

PHILADELPHIA – Jack Eichel did not think twice when he reached the opposing blue line Monday night.

The Sabres' captain dumped the puck into the offensive zone as soon as he saw Taylor Hall skating down the left wing. Hall, a former Hart Trophy winner known for his elite speed and playmaking ability, held off two Philadelphia Flyers defenders in the corner before dishing the puck back to Eichel.

The Flyers scattered as soon as they noticed Sam Reinhart was alone in front of the net. It was too late.

Reinhart's second goal of the game helped the Sabres pull away with a 6-1 win over the previously undefeated Flyers inside Wells Fargo Center. Buffalo, now 1-2-0, had not won a game in Philadelphia in regulation since March 5, 2011.

The second of Curtis Lazar's two goals chased Flyers goalie Carter Hart from the game with 11:51 remaining in the second period. Hart, among the top goalies in the East Division, allowed four goals on 22 shots.

Eichel and Hall assisted on both Reinhart goals, and Carter Hutton made 21 saves for the Sabres, who scored three times in the second period. Henri Jokiharju pushed the lead to 5-0 with a backhander from the left boards at 10:47 into the third period.

Nicolas Aube-Kubel spoiled Hutton's shutout bid with 2:05 remaining in regulation, but Victor Olofsson answered shortly thereafter with a power-play goal.

Slump ends: The Sabres' power-play meetings Monday morning yielded better results against Philadelphia, as Reinhart scored off a rebound created by Hall's shot for a 2-0 lead at 3:35 into the second period. Buffalo was previously 1 for 8 on the man advantage this season.

Reinhart's second goal of the game occurred at 6:28 into the second period. It was Reinhart's 10th career multi-goal game.

Game over: Hart wasn't to blame for the goal that ended his night. Riley Sheahan's backhanded pass through traffic found Lazar in front, and the Sabres' fourth-line center was left all alone to give Buffalo a 4-0 lead. This was Lazar's first two-goal game since Feb. 16, 2016.

History: With the primary assist on Reinhart's first goal, Hall became the 20th player to begin his Sabres career with a three-game point streak. He is the fourth to start his point streak in the team's first game of the season.

Missed opportunity: A Flyers neutral-zone turnover gave the Sabres a 2 on 0, with nothing separating Hart from Eichel and Skinner. With Eichel skating down the right wing, the Sabres captain attempted a pass to Skinner, who was not anticipating the puck coming to him. With Skinner bracing for a rebound, his shot attempt atop the crease went wide at 8:17 into the first period.

Wakeup call: Puck management nearly cost the Sabres when an Eric Staal turnover gave Travis Konecny the puck on the rush, but Hutton managed to make the save. Hutton faced only four shots in the first period, including one on a failed Philadelphia power play.

Opening salvo: A breakout by the Sabres ended up on the stick of Flyers defenseman Philippe Myers, who coughed up the puck while pressured by Skinner. Lazar gained possession, bolted down the left wing and fired a backhand shot over the left shoulder of Hart, who was positioned against the post, for a 1-0 Sabres lead at 15:52 into the first period.

It was the team's first lead of the season after playing 135 minutes, 52 seconds without one.

Momentum: The Sabres didn't stop there. Rasmus Dahlin's shot from the point created a rebound in front of Hart late in the first period, but the Flyers managed to clear it down the ice. Olofsson later fired a shot off Hart's blocker during a rush in the final minute.

Bounce back: Skinner again earned more ice time with a solid all-around game. The former 40-goal scorer had a plus-2 rating through two periods and came within inches of scoring twice in the second period. His backhanded shot from in front was stopped by Hart's leg pad.

Lineup: Right wing Kyle Okposo, who hasn't skated with the team since training camp ended, missed a third consecutive game with a lower-body injury. Defenseman Matt Irwin was also a healthy scratch for the Sabres.

Ullmark absent: Goalie Linus Ullmark appeared to be coach Ralph Krueger's pick to start in goal Monday night against the Flyers. However, Ullmark missed the game for what the team called "personal reasons," and the Sabres promoted goalie Jonas Johansson from the taxi squad.

It is unclear which goalie will start Tuesday night against the Flyers. Johansson, 26, had an .894 save percentage in six games with the Sabres last season.

Next: The Sabres complete their back-to-back series against the Flyers on Tuesday night, as puck drops on MSG at 7 p.m., Eastern.

Truncated schedule will cause Sabres to occasionally rest 'evolving' forwards

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 18, 2021

PHILADELPHIA – Tage Thompson was winded.

The physical reaction was to be expected in Thompson's first game action since suffering a season-ending shoulder injury in November 2019. Thompson, a 23-year-old winger, averaged 18:24 of ice time across the Sabres' two games against the Washington Capitals, both of which he began on the team's top forward line.

"Getting back in game shape, there's nothing like it," Thompson said after the morning skate Monday. "I'll start to get my legs here soon. I was a little winded there the first two games, but I'm starting to get my legs under me."

Regardless of performance, though, Thompson may not be in the Sabres' lineup every night. Coach Ralph Krueger plans to manage the workload of his young forwards during this 56-game season. Buffalo's series against the Philadelphia Flyers is the second of eight back-to-back games on the schedule.

Krueger will lean on his support staff, particularly those with a background in sports science, to determine if a player needs a night off. Thompson and Dylan Cozens are among the forwards who could be swapped out.

"The important thing is going to be to monitor the energy and use our depth appropriately," Krueger said. "So, if at any point in time Dylan plays two of three games or three of four, and we get a little rotation going – I've mentioned this to you already in the preseason that that could happen. Three forwards share two spots for a stretch. It's going to be very important to get that right, and then it's not easy because we've never quite been in this territory before. But a scratch of a Dylan in the future or of any of our other evolving players shouldn't be a surprise to anybody."

Krueger, of course, was referring to developing players on the roster. Though Cozens is in outstanding game shape following the IIHF World Junior Championship, the Sabres want to ensure that he doesn't wear down as the season progresses.

The team isn't carrying an extra healthy forward – right wing Kyle Okposo (lower body) is still day to day and did not travel with the team – but Krueger can promote someone from the taxi squad on a game day. The plan will vary from player to player. Thompson played 107 games in the NHL prior to this season, but he was limited to only 17 in 2019-20.

Krueger estimated that Cozens could play anywhere from 40 to 45 of the Sabres' games this season. The coaching staff will evaluate the roster and each player's workload at the start of every game day.

"We need to make sure we don't give anybody too much too quickly that they fall right off the cliff, and that's where sports science comes in," Krueger said. "That's where the communication between us comes in and you know the off-ice work that we do with (Cozens). But you know, we'll work hard to get that right. And it is a very valid point that you do not need to play him 56 games in a row here in the regular season. ... We're still in a day-to-day mode, we're still trying to learn as we go with taxi squad and all these things. Every morning a long discussion in the coach's room, but it's fine. And we will find our way."

First impressions

After watching the Sabres' two games against Washington to open the season. Flyers coach Alain Vigneault noted that the East Division is "very tough." One aspect of Buffalo's revamped roster stood out to Vigneault during the pre-scout: the dynamic pairing of Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall on the top line.

"That's probably one of the best duos as far as a skill set in the National Hockey League," said Vigneault. "You've got speed, you've got skill. They can beat you in a multitude of ways."

Another set of eyes

The Sabres have an additional coach joining them for every road trip this season.

Matt Ellis, the team's director of player development, will be on the ice for morning skates and post-skate skill sessions in which he will focus on keeping the taxi squad ready for competition. Following the skate Monday, Ellis put players, including Jack Quinn, through intense drills.

Ellis also will work with some NHL players, particularly focusing on inexperienced ones such as Cozens. Ellis, formerly the Academy of Hockey's director, played parts of nine seasons in the NHL, including seven with the Sabres.

Costantini's move

Matteo Costantini, a Buffalo Junior Sabres alumni and a recent Sabres draft pick, has made an immediate impact since joining the Sioux City Musketeers of the United States Hockey League.

Costantini, an 18-year-old forward, has one goal in three games since relocating from the British Columbia Hockey League, which faces an uncertain start date because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Costantini, who is committed to attending the University of North Dakota next fall, was selected by the Sabres in the fifth round, 131st overall, in October.

Local signing

Defenseman Dylan Blujus, a 26-year-old Buffalo native, signed a one-year, American Hockey League contract with the Rochester Americans.

Blujus was drafted in the second round by the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2012 and has spent most of the past three seasons with the Utica Comets. In 274 career games at the AHL level, Blujus has 20 goals and 62 assists. He also chipped in five assists in nine playoff games.

Sabres game day: All signs point to Sam Reinhart playing against Flyers

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

January 18, 2021

Matchup: Buffalo Sabres (0-2-0) vs. Philadelphia Flyers (2-0-0)

Where: Wells Fargo Center

When: 7:30 p.m.

TV: NBC Sports Network

Radio: WGR 550

PHILADELPHIA – All signs point to Sam Reinhart playing right wing on the Buffalo Sabres' top line tonight against the Flyers.

However, coach Ralph Krueger did not want to commit to the 25-year-old pushing through a lower-body injury suffered Friday night against the Washington Capitals.

Reinhart, who fell behind the net while chasing a loose puck against the Capitals, participated in the Sabres' morning skate and took line rushes alongside Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall. Reinhart did not appear limited and finished the skate. Casey Mittelstadt, who would replace Reinhart in the lineup, was on the ice for more than an hour, as he also participated in an intense skills session with Sabres director of player development Matt Ellis.

If all goes according to plan, Reinhart will reunite with Eichel on the top line, but Krueger described the four-time 20-goal scorer as "questionable."

Lineup watch: Tage Thompson's stay on the top line lasted less than two games. The 23-year-old winger is expected to skate with Cody Eakin and Tobias Rieder in what is essentially an energy line. They'll be expected to play sound defense and control possession in the offensive zone. Wearing down the Flyers will be essential, as Philadelphia coach Alain Vigneault said Monday morning he wants his players to be better at 5 on 5 than they were in their two wins against Pittsburgh.

"We play the same way," said Thompson. "I think it doesn't matter. We've got a lot of solid players throughout our lineup. We're pretty deep. Just trying to find the right combos. I like playing with those guys. We've had some good chemistry right off the hop here the last couple practices. Working hard, make sure we're wearing down their D and getting pucks and bodies to the net. Playing simple, especially early on in the game and the season. ... When you simplify the game, it makes it easier to get into a flow."

Here's a look at the Sabres' lines and pairings during the morning skate. With Reinhart moving up, Dylan Cozens has been placed with Eric Staal and Victor Olofsson:

Power-play changes: Expect some adjustments from the Sabres' power play after it went 0 for 5 in the 2-1 loss to Washington on Friday night. Krueger wasn't displeased with the structure deployed in the offensive zone against the Capitals' penalty kill.

A lack of scoring was the result of squandering opportunities. The Sabres did not show enough patience and skated themselves into trouble after entering the zone. A top unit of Eichel, Hall, Reinhart, Olofsson and Rasmus Dahlin has the potential to be among the NHL's best.

"We're not as concerned about the production as about the process," said Krueger. "We did like certain things. We thought the final component of creating net pressure and second opportunities was missing. We were getting control in the zone but forcing a little too quick to try to get scoring chances, versus having some calm and moving the puck and then working it to chances."

Goalie watch: Linus Ullmark will not play against the Flyers on Monday night because of "personal reasons," the Sabres announced.

Ullmark was the first goalie off the ice at the morning skate, indicating he was in line for the start. However, the team recalled Jonas Johansson from the taxi squad in response to Ullmark's status.

It's unclear if Ullmark will be available to play Tuesday.

Hutton has an .894 save percentage in seven career games against Philadelphia.

Carter Hart will start against the Sabres, with Brian Elliott handling the second game Tuesday. Hart, who has stopped 62 of 67 shots against this season, had a .964 save percentage in two wins against Buffalo in 2019-20.

Man down: Flyers winger Sean Couturier, the team's MVP in each of the past two seasons, will miss at least two weeks because of a rib injury. The 28-year-old has scored 86 goals across the past three regular seasons, including 22 in the coronavirus-shortened 2019-20, and in September won the Selke Trophy, which is awarded annually to the top defensive forward in the NHL.

Morgan Frost, a first-round draft pick in 2017, is expected to take Couturier's spot in the lineup.

"We're playing against a team that after watching both those games against Washington, they played extremely well," said Vigneault. "They had some real good looks. Could have possibly won one of the two, so it's going to be a tough game. I'm going to be saying this I don't know how many times throughout the season, but we're in a very tough division. You're going to have to be at your best every night."

Warm welcome: With a point Monday against Philadelphia, Hall will become the 11th player in franchise history to begin their Sabres career with a point in three or more consecutive games.

Hall would join Bob Sweeney (6 games), Randy Burridge (4), Jody Gage (4), Real Cloutier (4), Taylor Fedun (3), Casey Nelson (3), Calle Johansson (3), Bob Logan (3), Adam Creighton (3) and John Van Boxmeer (3).

History: Rasmus Ristolainen's goal Friday night was his 43rd with the Sabres, surpassing Bill Hajt for the 10th-most by a defenseman in team history. Ristolainen also tied Jim Schoenfeld for the seventh-most career points (228)

OPINION: Three observations: Sabres offense erupts in win over Flyers

By T.J. Luckman

WGR 550

January 18, 2021

After dropping the first couple of games this season to the Washington Capitals, the Buffalo Sabres were able to find their offensive footing on Monday, blitzing the Philadelphia Flyers for a 6-1 victory on Monday night at Wells Fargo Center.

Let's take a look at three observations from the Sabres' first win of the 2020-21 season:

1.) Sam Reinhart's line move pays off

Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger juggled some lines just before the third period of Friday night's game against the Capitals and found a combination he liked with forwards Sam Reinhart, Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall.

Reinhart continued that success he formed with them on Monday night, scoring two goals in the second period of Buffalo's romping of the Flyers. Reinhart also provided a good screen on Victor Olofsson's power play goal in the third period.

2.) Jeff Skinner continues to impress

Once again, Skinner was a noticeable offensive force who continued to contribute chances for the Sabres, resulting in a couple of goals for his line-mate, Curtis Lazar. While he didn't find the score sheet, Skinner managed a 66.6% shot attempts for percentage while he was on the ice.

3.) Power play returns after absence

The Sabres were coming off a game in which they couldn't score with the man advantage, going 0-for-5 against the Capitals. However, the Sabres got back in the groove of things with conversions from both Reinhart and Olofsson on the power play. Buffalo went 2-of-4 on the man advantage, and brought themselves up to 3-for-12 on the season.

The Sabres and the Flyers will take the night to regroup before they meet again on Tuesday night at Wells Fargo Center. Faceoff on Tuesday is set for 7 p.m. EST and can be heard on the Radio Home of the Sabres - WGR Sports Radio 550.

Also be sure to check back for more observations after each game this season available at WGR550.com.

Sabres trounce Flyers in Philadelphia

By Kyle Powell

WGR 550

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres moved to 1-2-0 on the 2020-21 season on Monday night as they throttled the upstart Philadelphia Flyers, 6-1 at Wells Fargo Center.

The Sabres got on the board late in the first period when from a tough angle, Curtis Lazar beat young, star netminder Carter Hart with a backhand up high.

It was the first time in 135:52 of game time in the young season that Buffalo jumped out to any sort of lead over their opponent.

The Sabres made it 2-0 early in the second when Sam Reinhart struck for his first goal of the year, and it came on the power play. After struggling on the man advantage to the tune of an 0-for-5 clip against the Washington Capitals on Friday night, the blue and gold wasted no time bouncing back.

Taylor Hall also registered an assist on the play, giving him points in all three games with the Sabres. It's the 20th time in team history a newcomer has begun their Sabres career with such a streak.

Just over three minutes later, Reinhart struck again when he was left alone in the slot. He picked up a loose puck and got a quick wrist shot off that just managed to get through Hart.

Lazar then decided he would not be outdone by Reinhart, as he scored his second goal of the night to make it a 4-0 contest. Lazar was left all alone in front of the goal crease and deposited a seeing-eye pass from Riley Sheahan into the back of the Philadelphia net.

That goal ended the night for Hart, who was then replaced by backup Brian Elliott.

Henri Jokiharju then got on the scoresheet in the third period, as his first goal of the season trickled harmlessly past Elliott for a 5-0 Sabres advantage. The lone assist on the goal went to veteran Eric Staal, his first in a Buffalo sweater.

The final two goals of the night were score in the final 2:05 of regulation.

The Flyers ended the shutout bid for Carter Hutton when Nicolas Aube-Kubel scored his first goal of the season. However, Hutton still played well for the Sabres, stopping 21 of 22 shots faced on the night.

Moments later, after Aube-Kubel took a double-minor penalty for high-sticking, Victor Olofsson capped the scoring with a power play tally for his second goal of the season.

GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 15:52 - Curtis Lazar (1) (Unassisted)

PHI: NONE

Second Period:

BUF: 3:35 - Sam Reinhart (1) PPG (Taylor Hall, Jack Eichel); 6:28 - Sam Reinhart (2) (Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall);

8:09 - Curtis Lazar (2) (Riley Sheahan, Brandon Montour)

PHI: NONE

Third Period:

BUF: 10:47 - Henri Jokiharju (1) (Eric Staal); 18:49 - Victor Olofsson (2) PPG (Taylor Hall, Jack Eichel)

PHI: 17:55 - Nicolas Aube-Kubel (1) (Michael Raffl)

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 2:34 - Brandon Montour (Hooking - 2 min.)

PHI: NONE

Second Period:

BUF: NONE

PHI: 2:21 - Carter Hart (Tripping - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: NONE

PHI: 13:20 - Phil Myers (Tripping - 2 min.); 18:01 - Nicolas Aube-Kubel (High-sticking - 4 min.)

STATS OF THE GAME

Losi and Gangi Three Stars of the Game:

1.) Sam Reinhart - BUF

2.) Curtis Lazar - BUF

3.) Jack Eichel - BUF

What's Next:

It'll be another Sabres game night on Tuesday, as they wrap up the two-game mini series in Philadelphia.

Coverage on WGR begins with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 6 p.m. EST with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog. Opening faceoff is set for 7 p.m. EST along the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

Reinhart still questionable for Monday against Flyers

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres play their first road game of the 2020-21 season in Philadelphia on Monday against the Flyers.

Buffalo has already put itself in an early season hole, losing its first two games at home to the Washington Capitals.

The Flyers are at the other end of the spectrum, winning its first two games against the Pittsburgh Penguins. That puts Philadelphia four points ahead of Buffalo in the East Division, and has the Sabres five points behind Washington.

The Flyers will be without their best player as Sean Couturier is out at least two weeks with a rib injury.

For the Sabres, Sam Reinhart is a game-time decision with a lower-body injury. Kyle Okposo didn't make the trip and is skating in Buffalo, also with a lower-body injury.

Reinhart took part in the morning skate, but Ralph Krueger wouldn't give any more details about his game status.

"Sam is still questionable and we'll make the final decision in the preactivation tonight," Krueger said.

If he can't go, Casey Mittelstadt will fill in from the taxi squad.

The Sabres didn't play very well in their 6-4 opening night loss to the Capitals, but in Game 2, they dominated, but still lost 2-1. They couldn't get key saves from Linus Ullmark, or key goals from their key players when most-needed.

In a shortened season, playing well isn't going to be good enough, as they need goals from Reinhart, Jack Eichel, Eric Staal and Jeff Skinner. None of them have scored yet this season.

Staal didn't get the benefit of playing in preseason games with his new teammates.

"I'd be lying if I said it's not an adjustment at all," Staal said on Sunday. "I think anytime you're with new guys, it takes a little bit, especially with the time we've had off. I thought there was good progress in Game 2, and there are some things we can take from it and keep building on, but it's going to take a little time."

The time they need is to get familiar with each other, and Staal's strength is playing with instinct.

"It's that familiarity, that comfort, that knowing where guys are and trusting each other's abilities is going to take a little time and that's just the reality," Staal said.

The Sabres will likely have Ullmark in goal. He only had to face 21 shots in the loss to the Capitals on Friday.

To start the season, Krueger said that they would likely spilt most of the back-to-back situations, but he has now changed his mind.

"We've made a decision to truly go day-by-day now," Krueger said. "No plan for tomorrow in place until tonight's game is over, so [in back-to-backs] it won't always mean both goalies playing."

Buffalo's special teams have, again, been dismal. The power play is 1-for-8 through the first two games, while the penalty kill has only killed off one of two opportunities.

The Flyers scored 11 goals in their first two games, led by Travis Konecny, who has three goals and two assists for five points. At 5.50 goals per-game, the Flyers lead the NHL, while Buffalo sits in 19th at 2.50 goals per-game.

Carter Hart will be in goal on Monday for the Flyers, while Brian Elliott gets the call on Tuesday. Hart is 2-0-0 with a 2.51 goals-against average and .925 save percentage.

Monday's projected lines:

Forwards:

Hall - Eichel - Reinhart (Mittelstadt)

Olofsson - Staal - Cozens

Rieder - Eakin - Thompson

Skinner - Lazar - Sheahan

Defense:

McCabe - Ristolainen

Dahlin - Montour

Miller - Jokiharju

Join Mike Schopp and the Bulldog at 6:30 p.m. EST for the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show, as they'll be joined by Krueger, Staal and Dylan Cozens. A reminder that Monday's game will be televised on NBCSN, so the only place to hear Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on the call is WGR Sports Radio 550.

NHL announces time change for Sunday's Sabres-Capitals matchup

By Brayton J. Wilson

WGR 550

January 18, 2021

The National Hockey League announced on Sunday that the Buffalo Sabres' matchup with the Capitals on Sunday, Jan. 24 in Washington has been moved up from 7 p.m. EST to 3 p.m. EST.

Sunday's game at Capital One Arena was originally scheduled for 7 p.m. EST, but with the Buffalo Bills playing at 6:40 p.m. EST in the AFC Championship Game against the Kansas City Chiefs, the time of the Sabres' game was moved up to accommodate the football schedule.

The Sabres will be in Washington on Sunday for their second game of their two-game set beginning Friday. Buffalo is currently in Philadelphia, getting set for a back-to-back two-game set with the Flyers on Monday and Tuesday night.

As for the Bills, they advance to their first AFC Championship Game since the 1993 season after their 17-3 win in the AFC Divisional Round on Saturday night in Orchard Park. The last time the Bills were in the AFC title game, it was in January of 1994 when they beat the Chiefs, 30-13, to advance to Super Bowl XVIII.

With WGR having wall-to-wall coverage of the AFC Championship Game on Sunday, you can hear the Sabres take on the Capitals over on our sister station, ESPN 1520, with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show getting underway at 2 p.m. EST.

'We just kept pounding it': Sabres' glowing report card after drubbing Flyers

By John Vogl

The Athletic

January 19, 2021

Jeff Skinner's line placement has been the No. 1 talking point of Sabres fans, with good reason. The former 40-goal scorer is skating in Buffalo's bottom six and could legitimately be pegged as a fourth-liner.

Skinner and his linemates had something to say about that in Buffalo's first victory of the season.

Curtis Lazar scored twice, Riley Sheahan created a dazzling assist and Skinner had five shots as Buffalo blitzed the Flyers 6-1 on Monday. The teams have played 182 regular-season games since 1970, and Monday was Buffalo's second-biggest beatdown, trailing only the team's 9-1 win on Oct. 17, 2006.

"That's the way we want to come out," right wing Sam Reinhart said from Wells Fargo Center.

Here's the report card, based on Game Score by The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn.

Great

This is a crowded category with eight players, which should be expected for such a historic dismantling.

Curtis Lazar: The center had the second two-goal game of his career, matching his night against Toronto on Feb. 6, 2016. Coach Ralph Krueger said he expected more offense from Lazar this season, and the seventh-year veteran is already just four goals shy of matching his career high of six.

"Honestly, a big part of it's just trust," Lazar said. "Ralph's allowed me to grow within the system, play through my mistakes, and you're kind of seeing that growth as a player."

Rasmus Dahlin: After getting buried in his own zone during the first two games, Dahlin was able to fire seven shots at Flyers goalies Carter Hart and Brian Elliott. The bad news was he didn't get to finish the game because of a cheap shot to the face from Nicolas Aube-Kubel with two minutes to go.

"The hit on Dahlin is a forearm to the head that I'm sure the league is taking a deep look at right now," Krueger said. "That's not the kind of physicality we need to see, especially with the score the way it was. ... Let's trust the league to make the right decision."

Taylor Hall: With three assists, the left winger became just the fourth player to join the Sabres and have points in his opening three games. Hall matched Real Cloutier (1983-84), Calle Johansson (1987-88) and John Van Boxmeer (1979-80). Two of Hall's assists came on the power play as the Sabres ended an 0-for-7 slide with a 2-for-4 night.

Jack Eichel: The center also had three assists. He and Hall lead the Sabres with six points apiece. The blowout allowed the captain to catch a breather before Tuesday's rematch. Eichel averaged 22:47 of ice time during the first two games but skated just 18:36 against the Flyers, including more than three minutes on the power play.

Brandon Montour: Partnered with Dahlin, Montour was a force in his own right. He earned his first assist of the season and took five shots, the third-highest total in his Sabres career.

Sam Reinhart: The Sabres have been a new team since Reinhart joined Eichel and Hall on the top line midway through Friday's loss to Washington. The three stars have dominated their opponents, creating a confidence that has carried over to the other lines.

"It's incredible," Lazar said. "We've got the best seat in the house when those guys are zipping the puck around. Those are three world-class players, and seeing them work in sync out there is pretty special."

Riley Sheahan: Sheahan went 5-1 on faceoffs and had a between-the-legs pass that was so nifty that the NHL originally tweeted out credit to Eichel, believing the All-Star captain (and former No. 15) made the play.

Jeff Skinner: Skinner's still looking for his first point of the season, but his team-high eight shot attempts Monday put him on the doorstep numerous times.

Good

Victor Olofsson: The sniper scored his second goal of the season with just over a minute left, picking the corner to make Aube-Kubel regret his cheap shot on Dahlin.

Henri Jokiharju: The defenseman made it 5-0 midway through the third period simply by sending the puck toward the net. It was this kind of night for the Sabres.

Eric Staal: The center's first point with the Sabres and No. 1,022 for his career was an assist on Jokiharju's goal. All Staal did was win the faceoff. Still, after a rough opening two games, he'll certainly take it.

Carter Hutton: The goalie, who got the start when Linus Ullmark missed the game for personal reasons, had an easy night. He turned aside 21 of 22 shots, including all four he faced in the first period. Hutton lost the shutout with 2:05 to play.

(Regarding Ullmark, Krueger said: "It's going to be up to Linus when he wants to speak. At the moment, there is a private matter where we're going to let him have a good sleep tonight. ... I'll be able to give you all more information tomorrow.")

Fine

Rasmus Ristolainen: The defenseman made his mark on the physical side, delivering a game-high eight hits.

Dylan Cozens: The rookie, who skated with Staal and Olofsson for the first time, had two shot attempts in a career-high 14:29 of ice time.

Jake McCabe: The defenseman had three hits and two blocked shots.

Colin Miller: The defenseman had four hits and was plus-2 in even-strength goal differential.

Poor

Tobias Rieder, Cody Eakin and Tage Thompson: On a night when the Sabres peppered the Flyers with 37 shots, the linemates combined for just three. The Flyers had a 16-6 advantage in shot attempts against them.

Rieder and Eakin did help Buffalo kill its only penalty, so nearly everyone had a reason to smile after the game.

"We just played kind of relentless," Hutton said. "We just kept pounding it."

Curtis Lazar, fourth line help Sabres annihilate Flyers, earn first win

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 19, 2021

Late in the first period Monday, Buffalo Sabres center Curtis Lazar grabbed the puck at the blue line, skated into the left circle and backhanded a shot underneath the crossbar.

Then after the Sabres grabbed a commanding 3-0 lead over the Philadelphia Flyers, Lazar sealed the Sabres' first win in the second period, connecting on a nifty pass from linemate Riley Sheahan in front of the net.

When the Sabres, NHL lightweights for nearly a decade, started 0-2 last week, the team's rabid fan base felt another long season could be materializing.

But Monday's 6-1 annihilation of the Flyers should extinguish any fears those losses to the Washington Capitals generated. The victory, their first in Philadelphia in eight tries, was arguably the Sabres' most complete effort under second-year coach Ralph Krueger.

"That's definitely the style we're looking for," Sabres winger Sam Reinhart said on a Zoom call from Wells Fargo Center.

The depth the Sabres possess makes the 2021 edition different than past seasons. Yes, the top line of Reinhart, captain Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall buoyed them. Reinhart scored twice on slick feeds from Hall, including a power-play goal. Eichel and Hall each recorded three assists.

That line could morph into one of the NHL's best.

On Monday, however, the fourth line of Lazar, Sheahan and Jeff Skinner also wreaked havoc all night, generating offense while clamping down defensively.

"We need everybody to be able to participate, especially on the road where we often had more of a two-line game going last year than a four-line," Krueger said. "Today was a classic four-line game with no forward going over 18 or 19 minutes. That just wasn't possible in the past.

"It's a confirmation of the depth and Lazar's line with Sheahan, unbelievable with faceoffs today and Skins creating a lot of opportunity just gives you that depth that we need."

Lazar said his line has "a lot of promise."

"We got a guy Jeff out there who's so dynamic offensively," he said. "When he heats up, he's one of the best goal scorers in the league. Riley and myself, we're kind of that defensive role, but that doesn't mean we're any slouches in the offensive zone, either. We're going to get our chances just from playing the right way and working hard."

Krueger said last week the Sabres' beefed-up depth makes any line capable of handling the opposition's best.

"You want to go against the best players each and every night, and to have that trust from Ralph, it speaks a lot but it also speaks to Riley and Jeff, too, and just the way we play," Lazar said. "We take care of our D-zone first and that's leading to the offensive chances. The best way to shut down the other team's top line is grinding them, making them play defense, and that's something I thought we did a lot tonight."

Lazar, a first-round pick by the Ottawa Senators in 2012, has rebuilt his career in Buffalo over the last year, morphing from an AHL player into an NHL regular.

"A big part of it's just trust," Lazar of his success with the Sabres. "I mean, every since I got here, I worked my way up from Rochester, Ralph's allowed me to grow within the system, play through the mistakes.

"You're kind of seeing that growth as a player I think a lot of people anticipated earlier in my career. But again, I'm still 25, I consider myself a younger guy still."

The genesis of Monday's victory started Friday, when the Sabres lost 2-1 to Washington but settled down and outplayed the Capitals.

"We probably should've gotten a different result for last game," Lazar said. "But to carry forward that effort into tonight, it speaks a lot about our character and our belief in our dressing room. That's what we need moving forward. We've got guys taking turns blocking shots, going to the net, doing all the dirty work that's necessary to win."

Defenseman Henri Jokiharju and winger Victor Olofsson scored the Sabres' other goals. Goalie Carter Hutton, who found out shortly before the game he would start in place of Linus Ullmark, made 21 saves. Ullmark had to attend to a personal matter.

Nicolas Aube-Kubel spoiled Hutton's shutout with 2:05 left in the game. Six seconds later, Aube-Kubel was penalized four minutes for high-sticking Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin.

Krueger said Aube-Kubel hit Dahlin with "a forearm to the head that I'm sure the league is taking a deep look at right now."

"That's not the kind of physicality we need to see, especially with the score at that point in the game," he said.

The Flyers host the Sabres again tonight.

Sabres recall goalie Jonas Johansson; Linus Ullmark out against Flyers

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres have recalled goalie Jonas Johansson from the taxi squad because Linus Ullmark is unavailable tonight for personal reasons, the team announced.

Carter Hutton will likely start tonight's game against the Philadelphia Flyers.

Ullmark left the ice first this morning, according to The Buffalo News, a sign he would possibly start tonight. The Sabres also play the Flyers on Tuesday.

The Swede played in Friday's 2-1 loss to the Washington Capitals. Hutton started Thursday's 6-4 loss to Capitals.

Johansson, 25, played his first six NHL games last season, compiling a 1-3-1 record with a 2.94 goals-against average and an .894 save percentage.

He enjoyed a terrific 2019-20 campaign with the Rochester Americans, posting a 14-4-3 mark with a 2.28 goals-against average and a .921 save percentage. He was also selected for the AHL All-Star Classic.

Sabres' Sam Reinhart to be game-time decision against Flyers

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 18, 2021

Buffalo Sabres winger Sam Reinhart is questionable for tonight's road game against the Philadelphia Flyers with the lower-body injury, coach Ralph Krueger said.

Reinhart skated this morning beside top center Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall inside Wells Fargo Center, according to The Buffalo News' Lance Lysowski, a sign he could play.

If Reinhart can't play, Krueger said Casey Mittelstadt, who's on the taxi squad, would replace him.

Reinhart was injured in a collision behind the net in Friday's 2-1 loss to the Washington Capitals.

In other lineup news, goalie Linus Ullmark left the ice first this morning, according to Lysowski, meaning he will likely start his second consecutive game. Krueger, however, wouldn't confirm tonight's goalie.

Update: The Sabres have recalled goalie Jonas Johansson from the taxi squad because Ullmark is unavailable tonight for personal reasons, the team announced.

The Sabres also play the Flyers on Tuesday. Krueger recently said the Sabres would likely split their back-to-back games between their goalies this season.

So does that mean Carter Hutton will start Tuesday? Not quite.

"I can tell you – and really honestly – we made a decision truly go day by day now," Krueger said on a Zoom call. "No plan for tomorrow in place until tonight's game is over and so on. So that will not necessarily always be both goalies playing."

Ullmark started Friday after Hutton played Thursday's season opener.

5 Observations: Sabres top Flyers 6-1 for first win of season

By Jenna Callari

WKBW

January 18, 2021

BUFFALO, NY (WKBW) — After dropping two straight games, the Buffalo Sabres have their first win of the season, topping the Philadelphia Flyers 6-1 Tuesday night to improve to 1-2-0.

Sam Reinhart and Curtis Lazar each had two goals in the win while Carter Hutton got the win in net. The Sabres will be back on the ice Tuesday night for another meeting with the Flyers.

5 Observations from Monday's game:

Right on their tails

The Sabres turned on the pressure right off the bat and it continually paid off. With minutes to go in the 1st period, Jeff Skinner forced the Flyers D to back up a little bit and, in the process, forced a turnover. Curtis Lazar grabbed hold of the puck, took his time, and gave the Sabres their first lead all season with a nice backhand shot.

Later in the 2nd period, Taylor Hall took control along the boards, got it to Jack Eichel, who in turn got it to a wide-open Sam Reinhart who netted the team's 3rd goal of the game. The Sabres played aggressive in this one from start to finish and it showed. They out-shot the Flyers 11-4 after the first 20 minutes, 26-15 after 40 minutes and 36-21 by the end of the game.

Sometimes change is good

The Sabres kicked off their first series with a top line of Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall, and Tage Thompson. Fans were a little uncertain about the pairing, wondering why Jeff Skinner or Sam Reinhart weren't plugged in there. Following their first series, coach Ralph Krueger said he was going to change things up and on Monday, we saw Reinhart finally join that top line.

Reinhart had a lot of success with Eichel last season and he got right to work, scoring two goals in the first two periods - both with assists from Eichel and Hall. Sometimes change can be good, and I think it's safe to say we can now let things be.

Next man up

The Sabres had every intention to start Linus Ullmark in net after a pretty good performance in the team's 2-1 loss to Washington last Friday. Instead, just a few hours before the game, the team announced Ullmark would not play due to "personal reasons". It was next man up as Carter Hutton got the call, trying to salvage his performance in the team's season opener in which he allowed five goals.

I'm sure fans were moaning and groaning before puck drop but by the end, they had to be pleased. The defense played a huge part but also give Hutton credit for not only stopping 21 shots but allowing just one [late] goal from a team that scored a combined 11 in their first two games.

Don't be so nice

Fans went crazy on social media when the Sabres had their best first chance of the game and blew it. Midway through the 1st period, Eichel had a clear shot on net during a 2-on-0 but instead of taking the shot, he sent the puck to Skinner who couldn't handle the pass. What should've been an easy goal for the Captain turned into nothing. I know Eichel likes to spread the love, I know he prides himself on assists just as much as he likes to score, but he should've handled that one on his own. Sometimes it's okay to not be so nice, and just shoot.

Finding their mojo

How many people asked, "Who is this team and where did the Buffalo Sabres go"? You weren't alone. In the team's first game of the season, we saw a sluggish-looking squad who couldn't really do much. The second game

showed signs of what "could be". This third game is what Sabres fans have been hoping for and fans should be excited about what's to come, based on their progress from that first game a few days ago.

They're playing with fire, they're starting to gel, they're capitalizing, and they look like a team. I say this with caution since we've seen sparks like this in the past, but for now, I'm going to be optimistic and say, "keep it coming".

Reinhart, Lazar net two, Hutton solid in net as Sabres earn first win with thrashing of Flyers

By Alex Brasky
Batavia Daily News
January 18, 2021

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Perhaps Buffalo goaltender Carter Hutton said it best following the Sabres' 6-1 win over the Philadelphia Flyers on Monday night.

"We just kind of played relentless," said Hutton postgame. "We just kept pounding it and... didn't stop. Where I think sometimes we would get away from it, we stuck to it, which is nice to see."

The Sabres took the lead 15:52 into the first period on an unassisted goal from Curtis Lazar, who finished the night with two goals, as did Sam Reinhart. Just 3:35 into the second, Reinhart made it 2-0 on the power play and added another tally just 2:53 later to make it 3-0 Buffalo. Assisting on both Reinhart goals were Taylor Hall and Jack Eichel, who each finished with three assists.

Hall and Eichel began the year playing alongside Tage Thompson, but midway through the Sabres' loss to the Washington Capitals last Friday night, Buffalo head coach Ralph Krueger moved Reinhart to the team's top-line, and it paid off in spades against Philly.

"They are constantly in movement there. They're finding each other with laser passes," said Krueger of the Hall-Eichel-Reinhart combination. "They just have so much natural cohesiveness already. Like they've been playing together for a long time."

Lazar scored his second with just over 10 minutes to go in the second period on assists from Riley Sheahan and Brandon Montour, which pushed the Sabres lead to 4-0. Lazar now has seven goals in 41 games with the Sabres, which is an uptick from what he produced in his previous two stops, in Calgary and Ottawa. With the Senators from '14-'17, he netted 12 goals in 176 contests, and Lazar scored only three goals in 70 games with the Flames from '17-'19.

Now, in Buffalo, Lazar says he is finally in his comfort zone.

"Honestly, a big part of it's just trust," said Lazar on what has led to his success in Buffalo. "Ralph's allowed me to grow within the system, play through my mistakes, and you're kind of seeing that growth as a player."

Not just Lazar, the play from the Sabres' entire fourth line, including Jeff Skinner and Sheahan, was key to their success against the Flyers.

"It's something I mentioned, I think to everybody on the call here today, that our need for having four lines that can be effective in both directions," said Krueger on his postgame Zoom session. "It's going to be, in our division, with the depth of the teams we're playing and the bravado that a lot of these teams have, we need everybody to be able to participate - especially on the road."

The Sabres did just that as they received contributions from up and down the lineup, with nine different players recording at least one point. The Sabres rounded out the scoring in the third period, when Henri Jokiharju made it 5-0 on an assist from Eric Staal with 10:47 remaining, and then after the Flyers' lone tally, Victor Oloffson scored his second goal of the season on the power play on Hall and Eichel's third assist.

"That's the way we want to come out, and we stayed pretty disciplined with our systems throughout the whole game," said Reinhart. "That's definitely the style we're looking for."

On the back end, Buffalo got solid goaltending from Hutton, who got the unexpected start after Linus Ullmark was scratched due to personal reasons.

"It's obviously horrible news, and you feel for him. That's my first thought," said Hutton, who made 21 saves and just missed his first shutout since Oct. '19. "But for me, I have been playing long enough. I'm always kind of prepared to play."

Coming off a tough loss to the Washington Capitals last week, a game in which Hutton says he believes the Sabres played well, Monday's win was rewarding for Buffalo.

"It's obviously nice to get rewarded because I think that game against Washington wasn't the result we wanted," said Hutton. "I thought we played really well (in that game)."

Through three games, the Sabres are 1-2 and Krueger is starting to like what he sees.

"We really were able to build off of the second game against Washington and today we took our chances and used them," said the Sabres head coach. "We're just really pleased to get a confirmation of the process like this here today in Philadelphia."

The Sabres and Flyers will square off again tonight before Buffalo hits the road for Washington for another two-game set with the Caps.

Takeaways after Sabres flatten Flyers, chase Carter Hart

By James O'Brien

NBC Sports

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres beat the Philadelphia Flyers 6-1 on Monday, a game that looked pretty much over halfway in. Here are some takeaways from the Sabres' one-sided win against the Flyers.

Hart will suffer nights like these as the Flyers' workhorse
Through the first two games of the season, Carter Hart generated a .925 save percentage. His save percentage is ... no longer that high after the Sabres flattened the Flyers.

After Curtis Lazar scored his second goal of the game to make it 4-0, Hart got the hook. His night ended a little bit before the halfway point of that game.

(Aside: remember when Lazar seemed like a big deal?)

Unfortunately for the Flyers, they couldn't just chalk this loss up to a tough night for Hart. Instead, the Sabres really took it to the Flyers, and Philly never really put up much of a fight.

That said, the Flyers might ask Hart to steal games here and there. The promising young netminder has that potential, but he couldn't bail his teammates out this time around.

By giving Hart that early hook, at least Alain Vigneault can comfortably turn to Hart as these two teams close off their back-to-back on Tuesday.

At the other end of the rink, Carter Hutton fell just short of a shutout, stopping 21 out of 22 shots.

Sabres benefit from loading up

To start the season, the Sabres went with the Meatloafian two-out-of-three star top line of Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall, and ... Tage Thompson. Apologies to large human Tage Thompson, but one could picture the towering forward biffing the occasional layup chance from those two.

In Tuesday's case, the Sabres stuck Sam Reinhart with Eichel and Hall. Even though Reinhart wasn't a sure thing to even suit up, he was healthy enough to take advantage of some great chances. Reinhart scored two goals, with Hall and Eichel collecting assists on both tallies.

As impressive as that trio was, the Flyers also made it pretty easy for them at times:

Flyers searching for answers without Sean Couturier

To little surprise, the Flyers missed Sean Couturier as the Sabres dominated them. Having someone who could slow down that top line sure would have been nice. (If Carter Hart didn't appreciate Couturier already, he likely gained some gratitude after playing without that security blanket of a center.)

The Flyers were still searching for answers late in that lopsided affair. Maybe they'll find better ones on Tuesday?

Considering the questionable hit delivered on Rasmus Dahlin with the game well out of hand, these two teams probably won't need to dig too deep to find reasons for hard feelings going forward ...

NHL on NBCSN: Taylor Hall hopes Buffalo move ‘turns into something longer’

By Sean Leahy

NBC Sports

January 18, 2021

Jack Eichel was caught by surprise when he heard the Taylor Hall news.

After processing the addition of an elite talent to his team, the Sabres captain understood the relationship between Hall and head coach Ralph Krueger played a big factor in the stunning move.

“It made sense,” Eichel said. “And for a guy to come in here and have a big impact on our group, it’s huge. It’s a big opportunity for him and our team. And obviously it’s awesome for our city and excited to see him play this year.”

Eichel wasn’t alone in his surprise. The one-year, \$8M deal caught everyone off guard. While the COVID-19 pandemic forced a flat salary cap ceiling and only a small number of NHL teams could court Hall, no one saw the 29-year-old winger ending up in Buffalo.

Hall could have signed elsewhere with more term, but he’s gambling on himself and gambling that the 2021 free agent market is better for unrestricted free agents. It’s also a bet on how the Sabres will do in a crucial year. Buffalo hasn’t made the postseason since 2011 and Eichel has expressed his desire to end their losing ways. In year two under Krueger, and adding Hall, steps could finally be taken in the right direction. If that’s the case, that would allow new general manager Kevyn Adams some hope in convincing Hall to stay.

Krueger’s influence

The relationship between coach and player, which dates back to the lockout-shortened 2013 season when they were in Edmonton, will be mutually beneficial. There is respect and admiration from both sides, and Hall knows first-hand just how effective Krueger is in dealing with a mixed group of players.

“I think communication’s probably the biggest strength of his,” Hall said. “I think in today’s day and age, that’s what you need from a coach. I think he’s got the ability to connect with his assistant coaches, upper management, but he’s also got the ability to connect with an 18-year-old, a 20-year-old, a 25-year-old or a veteran guy. And I think that’s really hard to do.

“There’s a lot of hockey guys that really only assimilate with their peer group and Ralph’s got the ability to connect with a lot of different people and get the best out of them.”

The fan base is ready to finally embrace a winning team. They’re eager for an entertaining product again on the ice. While the external pressures are great, Krueger is fueled by his own desires to guide the franchise back into the playoffs.

“I don’t feel that type of pressure anymore at my age,” he said. “It’s more pressure you put on yourself to get the most out of the people that you lead. The potential of the group is what my goal is and I believe if we find that potential and stay healthy in the process, anything is possible with us this season. It’s my level of pressure, but it’s healthy and I love to put that kind of pressure on myself.

“Nobody can put more pressure on me than I already do and already have and it’s my fuel, I love it. Otherwise, you shouldn’t be in a role like this.”

Hall and Eichel will provide a strong one-two punch on the Sabres’ top line. Victor Olofsson, Eric Staal, Jeff Skinner, and Sam Reinhart will help up front with rookie Dylan Cozens hoping to also make an impact. The duo won’t have to feel the burden of carrying the entire offense, but the pressure will be increased if another down season plays out.

Hall said that the 2019-20 campaign, where he started with the Devils and was dealt to the Coyotes in December, taught him to “roll with the punches” and to “relax and kind of go with the flow.” New Jersey struggled out of the gate, prompting the trade. Then just after he arrived in Arizona, Darcy Kuemper got injured and the team struggled before the March pause, only making the postseason due to the expanded format. Those bumps, he says, affected his play, forcing him to do too much.

That's all in the background now, and Hall is focused on getting the Sabres back to where the entire city wants them to be.

"At the end of the day, I did my best and I'm here now and it was not where I expected," he said. "I thought I'd be somewhere on a longer-term deal but I think when I looked at my options, this was the best one for my future for now. And like I said, I hope it turns into something longer. I hope we can make a run at the playoffs and have a bright future and I can be a part of that growth."

Lazar, Reinhart power Sabres past Flyers for first win of season

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

January 19, 2021

PHILADELPHIA -- Curtis Lazar and Sam Reinhart each scored two goals for the Buffalo Sabres in their first win of the season, 6-1 against the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center on Monday.

Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall each had three assists for Buffalo (1-2-0), and Carter Hutton made 21 saves.

"That's the way we want to come out," Reinhart said. "We stayed pretty disciplined with our systems the whole game."

It was the first full game Eichel, Hall and Reinhart played as a line. Tage Thompson had been at right wing with Eichel and Hall during the first two games of the season.

"The way the three of them use the whole ice surface, they are constantly in movement, they're finding each other with laser passes," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "And Taylor just brings such an exciting element to our team, and it's something that we need to continue to build on. Not only on the power play, but 5-on-5 they just have so much natural cohesiveness already, like they've been playing together for a long time."

Nicolas Aube-Kubel scored late in the third period for the Flyers (2-1-0), and Brian Elliott made 13 saves in relief of Carter Hart, who was pulled in the second period after allowing four goals on 22 shots.

The teams will play again in Philadelphia on Tuesday.

"I think if I'm a player, and if I'm part of the coaching staff, which I am, I'm embarrassed by how we played tonight and I'm happy that we can get right back at it tomorrow and prove what type of team we are," Flyers coach Alain Vigneault said.

Lazar gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead at 15:52 of the first period, and then Buffalo's top line took over.

A tripping call on Hart at 2:21 of the second period put the Sabres on the power play, and they took advantage when Hall got the puck to the right of the net, drew two Flyers to him, and passed it through the crease to Reinhart at the bottom of the left face-off circle for a 2-0 lead at 3:35.

"He's a world-class player," Reinhart said of Hall, who has scored six points (one goal, five assists) in his first three games with Buffalo. "I think having everyone that can kind of read and react and play every position (on the power play) is a pretty lethal combo. I think we moved the puck better. ... For him to come and kind of settle the unit down and be able to distribute the puck like that makes a huge difference for us."

Hall and Eichel then set up Reinhart for a goal from the slot to make it 3-0 at 6:28.

Lazar made it 4-0 at 8:09 of the second when Riley Sheahan was first on the rebound of a Brandon Montour shot and passed the puck between his skates through the crease to Lazar at the left post. Elliott replaced Hart after the goal.

Henri Jokiharju made it 5-0 at 10:47 of the third when his shot from the left boards went in off the skate of defenseman Erik Gustafsson.

"It felt like tonight we were too stretched out a lot of the game, and I think that kind of forced us to chase the game a bit," Flyers forward James van Riemsdyk said. "Obviously not a good night for us."

Aube-Kubel scored at 17:55 to make it 5-1.

Victor Olofsson scored a power-play goal for the Sabres at 18:49 to make it 6-1.

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark missed the game because of personal reasons. Jonas Johansson was recalled from the taxi squad to back up Hutton. Krueger said he was unsure if Ullmark would be available Tuesday.

NOTES: Forward Eric Staal had an assist on Jokiharju's goal for his first point with the Sabres. ... It was Reinhart's 10th multigoal NHL game, and first since he scored two against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Nov. 8, 2019. ... It was Lazar's second two-goal game in the NHL (also Feb. 6, 2016, for the Ottawa Senators against the Toronto Maple Leafs).

'A confirmation of the process' | 5 takeaways from Monday's win in Philly

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 19, 2021

This was what Sabres hockey is supposed to look like.

Three days removed from a loss to Washington in which they played well but went unrewarded, the Sabres turned in a complete effort to earn their first victory of the season, 6-1, over the Philadelphia Flyers inside Wells Fargo Center on Monday.

Contributions came from all throughout the lineup. Sam Reinhart and Curtis Lazar scored two goals apiece. Taylor Hall and Jack Eichel each had three assists. The power play rebounded from an 0-for-5 evening on Friday with a pair of goals, while the penalty kill was successful on its only attempt.

Perhaps most importantly, the Sabres stuck to the aggressive brand of hockey they have been working toward since the start of last season under Ralph Krueger. The coach said it was one of the best performances of his tenure in terms of the way they closed gaps and tracked defensively.

"We're just really pleased to get a confirmation of the process like this here today in Philadelphia," Krueger said.

Here are five takeaways from the victory.

1. Hall-Eichel-Reinhart shines again

Krueger moved Reinhart to a line with Hall and Eichel during the second period against Washington on Friday and saw instant results, with the trio helping set up Buffalo's lone goal in that game. He kept the line intact against the Flyers and the highly skilled trio picked up where they left off.

Hall, Eichel, and Reinhart went to work on the forecheck right from the opening faceoff, spending over a minute in the Philadelphia zone. Their play led to a pair of second-period goals for Reinhart, one on the power play and the other at even strength.

The power-play goal began with a pass from Eichel to Hall, who was stationed below the goal line. Hall drew the attention of two defenders as he drove to the net before slipping a pass between the legs of Flyers defenseman Justin Braun and through the crease to a wide-open Reinhart.

Hall kicked off the next goal, driving with speed through the neutral zone to recover a puck rimmed into the Flyers' end by Eichel. Hall was being sandwiched into the boards by defenseman Philippe Myers as he delivered a backhand pass toward the left circle, where Eichel then one-touched a pass to Reinhart in the slot.

"They are constantly in movement," Krueger said. "They're finding each other with laser passes. Taylor just brings such an exciting element to our team. It's something that we need to continue to build on.

"Not only on the power play but 5-on-5, they just have ... a natural cohesiveness already, like they've been playing together for a long time. We're all really excited and look forward to where this could all go with that group."

Hall has six points (1+5) through his first three games with the Sabres, tied with Eichel (0+6) for the team lead.

2. A rebound for the power play

The 0-for-5 night on the power play had been the difference Friday, spoiling the strong even-strength performance that allowed the Sabres to draw five penalties in the first place.

The Sabres scored on two of their four opportunities Monday, with Hall in the middle of the action. After setting up Reinhart's goal in the second period, Hall delivered a no-look pass to set up Olofsson's one-time marker with 1:11 remaining.

Hall has described his role on the power play as adding support wherever needed as the other four members work in their familiar spots: Rasmus Dahlin at the point, Olofsson and Eichel on the half walls, and Reinhart at the

net front. Hall previously scored a power-play goal in the season opener, when he pounced on a crossing pass in the slot.

"And that's a new spot for him, in the middle," Reinhart said. "For him to come and kind of settle the unit down and be able to distribute the puck like that makes a huge difference for us."

3. "A classic four-line game"

Krueger and general manager Kevyn Adams have spoken since the offseason about their emphasis on creating a lineup more capable of matching up with top teams on the road, where opposing coaches can dictate matchups in their favor. Monday marked the first test.

The first goal of the game was a pretty good sign. The line of Jeff Skinner, Curtis Lazar, and Riley Sheahan lined up for an offensive-zone faceoff against Philadelphia's top trio of Claude Giroux, Kevin Hayes, and Joel Farabee. Thirty seconds later, Lazar skated into the offensive zone with speed and sent a backhand shot in off the far side of the crossbar.

The line connected once again on Lazar's goal in the second period, which made it a 4-0 game. This time, all three forwards collapsed on the net as Brandon Montour shot from the point. Sheahan corralled the rebound and sent a spin-o-rama pass to Lazar at the back door.

"In our division, with the depth of the teams we're playing and the bravado that a lot of these teams have, we need everybody to be able to participate especially on the road where we often had more of a two-line game going last year than a four-line," Krueger said. "Today was a classic four-line game."

The Sabres generated a 60-percent share of shot attempts (12-8) with the Lazar line on the ice at 5-on-5, according to Natural Stat Trick.

"We take care of our D-zone first, and that's leading to the offensive chances," Lazar said. "The best way to shut down the other team's top line is grinding them, making them play defense, and that's something I thought we did a lot tonight."

4. Hutton steps up in Ullmark's absence

Linus Ullmark did not dress for the game due to a personal matter. Carter Hutton took the start on short notice with Jonas Johansson activated from the taxi squad to serve as his backup.

Facing a Flyers team that scored more than any other in the NHL through its first two games, Hutton did his part behind a strong defensive performance and preserved a shutout into the late stages of the third period. The Flyers finally scored with 2:05 remaining, when Michael Raffl sent a pass across the net to Nicolas Aube-Kubel.

"Hutton really has been in a good zone lately," Krueger said. "We like the way he's been in practice. He's coming here in really good shape and has a good attitude and freshness to him. Getting the call late, his experience helps in those situations."

5. Krueger addresses hit on Dahlin

On the ensuing shift after scoring Philadelphia's lone goal, Aube-Kubel delivered what amounted to a punch to the face of Rasmus Dahlin as he sought to chase a puck into the Buffalo zone. Aube-Kubel was assessed a double-minor for high-sticking, prompting Olofsson's power-play goal.

With the teams set to conclude their two-game set Tuesday night, Krueger suggested the Department of Player Safety should examine the hit.

"The hit on Dahlin, a forearm to the head that I'm sure the league is taking a deep look at right now," he said. "That's not the kind of physicality we need to see, especially with the score at that point in the game."

At The Final Horn: Sabres 6 - Flyers 1

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres came out strong Monday night and didn't take their foot off the pedal in their 6-1 win over the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center.

Buffalo picked up its first win of the 2020-21 season with a convincing road victory that saw Sam Reinhart and Curtis Lazar each score twice and Carter Hutton make 21 saves in net. Henri Jokiharju and Victor Olofsson also netted ones for Buffalo.

Reinhart, who was questionable entering the game with a lower-body injury, skated 18:38 on a line with Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall. Eichel and Hall each recorded three assists.

Nicolas Aube-Kubel spoiled Hutton's shutout bid when he scored the Flyers' only goal with 2:05 remaining in regulation.

Carter Hart made 18 saves on 22 shots for Philadelphia before he was replaced by Brian Elliott midway through the second period.

The Sabres rebounded from their opening series loss to the Capitals in a big way. Their three-goal second period set the stage for a convincing victory, their first in Philadelphia since Oct. 27, 2015.

What happened

Buffalo pushed the pace early and was finally rewarded with the first goal of the game. Lazar picked up a loose puck outside the Flyers blue line and raced in down the left wing to lift a backhand up and past Hart with 4:08 remaining in the opening period. The Sabres outshot Philadelphia 11-4 in the first.

They went up 2-0 when Reinhart tallied 3:35 into the second period on the man advantage. After Lazar drew a tripping penalty, Buffalo's top power-play unit went to work. Eichel worked the puck to Hall, who sent a cross-ice pass to Reinhart. The winger then took his shot and found the back of the net.

Then 2:53 later, Reinhart struck again. Hall won a battle in the corner and was able to get the puck out into the slot. Eichel touched the puck over to Reinhart who buried it to make it 3-0.

Lazar scored his second of the game at the 8:09 mark of the second. He found himself uncovered in front of the net when Riley Sheahan sent the puck over to him and made no mistake.

At that point, Elliott entered the crease for Hart.

Jokiharju potted his first of the year when a long backhand from the left halfway beat Elliott through traffic with 9:13 remaining in regulation.

After Philadelphia scored, Buffalo went back on the power play, where Olofsson went top shelf with 1:11 left for his second goal of the season.

Roll the highlight film

Lots to choose from, but let's go with Reinhart's second of the night:

Worthy of a mention

- A few hours before the game, the Sabres called up goaltender Jonas Johansson from their taxi squad. Linus Ullmark missed the game for personal reasons.
- With the primary assist on Reinhart's power-play goal, Hall became the 20th player to begin his Sabres career with a three-game point streak.
- Hall is the fourth to do so beginning with the team's first game of the season, joining Real Cloutier (1983-84), Calle Johansson (1987-88) and John Van Boxmeer (1979-80).
- He has six points (1+5) this season.

- Eichel extended his point streak to three games (0+6) after assisting on both of Reinhart's goals as well as Olofsson's tally.

Tonight's game marked the debut of the Sabres' new white jersey with royal blue and gold trim.

Up next

These two clubs will play each other once again on Tuesday in Philadelphia. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. Pregame coverage begins at 6:30 on MSG. Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will have the call on MSG and WGR 550.

Sabres recall Johansson from taxi squad

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres announced Monday evening that goaltender Jonas Johansson has been recalled from the taxi squad. Linus Ullmark will miss tonight's game against the Philadelphia Flyers for personal reasons.

Johansson, 25, made his NHL debut last season, playing in six games for Buffalo. He was also an AHL All-Star, posting a 14-4-3 record in Rochester with a .921 save percentage and a 2.28 goals-against average in 22 games.

Carter Hutton started opening night for the Sabres on Thursday and made 22 saves on 27 shots in a 6-4 loss to Washington. Sabres coach Ralph Krueger did not publicly name a starting goaltender against Philadelphia after the team's morning skate.

Tonight's game can be seen nationally at 7:30 p.m. on NBCSN. Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will have the radio call on WGR 550.

Morning Skate | Reinhart questionable against Flyers

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 18, 2021

Sam Reinhart will be a game-time decision for the Sabres' opener of a two-game series in Philadelphia on Monday.

Reinhart sustained a lower-body injury during the second period against Washington on Friday, causing him to briefly head to the dressing room before returning to finish the game. He moved to a line with Taylor Hall and Jack Eichel later that night, sparking Buffalo's lone goal of the contest.

Reinhart remained alongside Hall and Eichel during the team's skate this morning.

"Sam is questionable," Krueger said. "We'll make the final decision in the pre-activation tonight. Still questionable to play."

In the event Reinhart is unable to play, Krueger said Casey Mittelstadt would be activated from the taxi squad to take his place in the lineup. The 22-year-old last appeared in an NHL game on Dec. 10 of last season, after which he was sent to continue his development with AHL Rochester.

"Casey had a really strong finish in Rochester last year," Krueger said during training camp. "First of all, he went back to the minors to learn and to grow and develop and after some bumps at the very beginning, he really embraced that opportunity.

"Now, we have to see how that transfers into the National Hockey League and into our roster. He will be an important part of our group this season. I love his competitiveness; I love his spirt. He gives us a lot of options."

The lineup

Here are the lines from the morning skate, according to The Buffalo News' Lance Lysowski.

4 Taylor Hall - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
68 Victor Olofsson - 12 Eric Staal - 24 Dylan Cozens
13 Tobias Rieder - 20 Cody Eakin - 72 Tage Thompson
53 Jeff Skinner - 27 Curtis Lazar - 15 Riley Sheahan

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 62 Brandon Montour
33 Colin Miller - 10 Henri Jokiharju

Dylan Cozens moves up to the second line alongside Victor Olofsson and Eric Staal following a strong first two games, which we detailed Sunday. Tage Thompson, who started the season alongside Hall and Eichel, has moved to a line with Tobias Rieder and Cody Eakin.

"I think we play the same way," Thompson said. "It doesn't matter. We've got a lot of solid players throughout our lineup. We're pretty deep, so I think just trying to find the right combos. I like playing with those guys. We've had some good [chemistry] right off the hop here."

Linus Ullmark was the first goaltender off the ice, which typically signifies the starter. Ullmark is coming off a 19-save outing in the loss to the Capitals on Friday.

UPDATE (5:25 p.m.) - Ullmark will miss tonight's game for personal reasons. The team has recalled goaltender Jonas Johansson from the taxi squad.

Scouting the Flyers

Philadelphia scored 11 goals during its two-game sweep of Pittsburgh, the most for any NHL team through its first two games this season. Travis Konecny led the way with a hat trick on Friday.

Carter Hart earned the victory in both contests, allowing five goals on 67 shots for a save percentage of .925. Hart will get the start in tonight's contest.

The Flyers will be without center Sean Couturier, their second-leading point scorer last season and the reigning Selke Trophy winner. Couturier is expected to miss at least two weeks after sustaining a Costochondral separation - a separation of the rib from the breastbone - on Friday.

Celebrating equality

The Sabres will join the rest of the NHL in wearing "Celebrate Equality" decals on their helmets tonight through the end of Black History Month as a tribute to Willie O'Ree, who broke the NHL's color barrier with the Boston Bruins on Jan. 18, 1958. The achievement coincides with Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the United States.

Tune in

The game will be nationally televised on NBCSN. The puck drops at 7:30 p.m.