



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 18, 2021*

## **Sabres have zero players on Covid protocol list for first time since Feb. 1**

Lance Lysowski  
The Buffalo News  
February 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres do not have a player on the Covid protocol list for the first time since Feb. 1.

Casey Mittelstadt, a 22-year-old forward, became the ninth Sabres player removed from the protocol list Wednesday, as the Buffalo roster is finally at full strength ahead of its game Thursday night against the Capitals in Washington.

It's unclear if Mittelstadt will be available to coach Ralph Krueger in Washington, but he is the ninth player to rejoin the team across the past week. A player can only be removed from the protocol list after serving a mandatory minimum quarantine and producing negative Covid-19 tests.

Taylor Hall, Rasmus Ristolainen, Brandon Montour, Tobias Rieder, Jake McCabe, Curtis Lazar, Rasmus Dahlin and Dylan Cozens have either rejoined the team or skated separately in recent days.

Hall and Ristolainen were the first Sabres added to the Covid protocol list when the team's season was paused temporarily Feb. 2. Hall, Montour, Rieder and McCabe have since told the media they tested positive for Covid-19. Only Hall was asymptomatic.

Dahlin was deemed a close contact. Additionally, Krueger experienced symptoms after testing positive for Covid-19. The 61-year-old was behind the bench for the Sabres' games Monday and Tuesday, their first since Jan. 31.

Lazar, Ristolainen and Cozens have yet to speak to the media since rejoining the team. Hall and Rieder played in each of the Sabres' two games against the New York Islanders this week, while McCabe returned to the lineup Tuesday night in KeyBank Center.

The Sabres did not practice Wednesday, but Krueger told reporters before puck drop Tuesday that Lazar and Cozens had participated in rehab skates. Montour was held out of the lineup despite being cleared for game action.

The Covid-19 outbreak on the Sabres occurred following a two-game series against the New Jersey Devils on Jan. 30-31. Prior to each game, the Devils added a player to the protocol list, including winger Kyle Palmieri, who has since told New Jersey media that he tested positive for Covid-19 and experienced symptoms.

The NHL has since enhanced its safety protocols, including the increased use of rapid testing.

## **Rangers' plan to allow fans provides clues for what to expect at KeyBank Center for Sabres**

By Lance Lysowski  
The Buffalo News  
February 17, 2021

Season ticket holders for the Buffalo Sabres have yet to receive details on the plan to reopen KeyBank Center to fans this season.

Aside from a statement last week, the Sabres' only public communication came in the form of a survey in which season ticket holders were asked to provide contact information, age, whether they would want to attend games and employment status.

The Sabres are awaiting approval on their plan that follows the guidelines announced last week by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Citing what he called "unparalleled success" of fans attending Bills playoff games in January, Cuomo revealed that arenas seating 10,000 or more people will be able to reopen to 10% capacity starting Feb. 23, given that they meet the provided guidelines, including Covid-19 testing of all attendees.

The Sabres have 20 home games remaining on their schedule, beginning with a matchup against Lindy Ruff's New Jersey Devils on Feb. 25.

With a capacity of 19,200 for Sabres games, KeyBank Center will be able to seat approximately 2,000 fans under the current guidelines. While the arena is outfitted with signage in preparation for a socially distanced crowd to return, it's not exactly clear what the game day experience will look like for fans.

A few clues could be found in a detailed plan released Tuesday by the New York Knicks and Rangers. Madison Square Garden unveiled its plans to host approximately 2,000 fans for NBA and NHL games.

The initial announcement included only three games for each team, as Knicks tickets went on sale Tuesday and tickets to the Rangers, including a March 2 game against the Sabres, will be available Thursday. However, for now, only season ticket members and suite holders will be able to attend games at a minimum cost of \$50. Both teams plan to host and recognize essential workers at every game.

The guidelines are similar to what fans experienced at Bills Stadium last month:

- Each attendee must present confirmation from a health care provider of a negative PCR Covid-19 test taken within 72 hours of the day of the event, as well as identification matching the name on the test. Results can be presented via smartphone or hard copy.
- Fans 18 or older must present government-issued identification such as a driver's license or passport. Anyone younger than 18 may use a government-issued ID, birth certificate, Social Security card or school identification.
- Admission is contingent upon each fan passing a health survey, which must be filled out via the MSG venue app on smartphones. Fans are urged to fill out the survey prior to arriving at the arena. Temperature checks also will be conducted at the entrance, as fans must register below 100.4.
- Doors open 90 minutes prior to the event and each ticket holder is assigned to a specific entrance based on seat location.
- Face covering must always be worn, except when actively eating or drinking in their assigned seat.
- All in-venue purchases, including merchandise and concessions, are cashless.
- Season ticket holders can buy one two-seat, socially distanced pod for one of three games.
- Only digital tickets are being accepted and all guests must download the MSG venue application.
- Refunds will be processed for guests who test positive on their PCR Covid-19 test or exhibit symptoms/don't feel well before arriving at the arena.

- Only certain concession areas are open and pop-up merchandise stands will be placed around Madison Square Garden.

More Knicks and Rangers games are expected to be available for purchase later. The Knicks' first game with fans will be against the Golden State Warriors on Feb. 23, and the Rangers' will have fans in the MSG seats Feb. 26 against the Boston Bruins.

The Sabres could choose to host fans for only certain games, such as those against marquee opponents in the temporarily constructed East Division, which features the Bruins, Rangers, Islanders, Devils, Pittsburgh Penguins, Philadelphia Flyers and Washington Capitals.

The main concourse at KeyBank Center has been outfitted with various digital signage to remind fans that food and beverage must be consumed at assigned seats, as well as messages to maintain social distancing and to cheer from home if feeling unwell.

It's possible fans may not be seated in certain sections of the 100 level because the glass has been removed from behind the team benches in response to the NHL's new protocols.

The NBA's Brooklyn Nets plan to host fans beginning Feb. 23 at Barclays Center, while the Islanders have yet to announce details on reopening Nassau Coliseum.

#### Returners

Since the Sabres (4-6-2) did not practice Wednesday, we do not have any clues as to which players previously on the Covid protocol list will join the team for its four-game road trip, which begins Thursday night in Washington.

However, all signs point to defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen and forwards Dylan Cozens and Curtis Lazar nearing a return. All three were removed from the protocol list before puck drop Tuesday, hours after Cozens and Lazar participated in a rehab skate in KeyBank Center. It's likely that at least both forwards will be in the lineup against the Capitals.

Forward Casey Mittelstadt was also removed from the list Wednesday, meaning the Sabres have every player available for the first time since Feb. 1.

#### A look ahead

The Capitals (7-4-3) snapped a four-game losing streak Tuesday with a 7-4 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins. Washington is finally near full strength with Evgeny Kuznetsov's return from the Covid protocol list last Sunday.

It's likely the Sabres will again face goalie Vitek Vanecek, who has made 11 consecutive starts for the Capitals. Vanecek, a 25-year-old rookie, is 6-3-2 with a .906 save percentage. He has started three games against the Sabres this season, allowing seven goals on 106 shots for a .934 save percentage and two wins.

#### Roster moves

With the Sabres adding NHL regulars to their lineup, the team loaned defenseman Will Borgen and forward Rasmus Asplund to the taxi squad Wednesday.

Forwards Steven Fogarty, C.J. Smith, Andrew Oglevie and defenseman Jacob Bryson were assigned from the taxi squad to Rochester. The Amerks host Utica in Rochester on Thursday night in Blue Cross Arena.

Winger Jack Quinn, the Sabres' most recent first-round draft pick, is expected to make his professional debut for the Amerks.

## **Casey Mittelstadt no longer on NHL's COVID-19 list**

By Joe DiBiase

WGR 550

February 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres' COVID-19 list is finally empty.

Forward Casey Mittelstadt was the final name on the list heading into Wednesday, and he has since been taken off.

Mittelstadt joins Rasmus Ristolainen, Brandon Montour, Dylan Cozens, and Curtis Lazar as those just off the NHL's COVID-19 Protocols list, now on the path to potentially re-entering the lineup.

It is hard to know the timeline for return for any of these players, as it depends on the effects COVID-19 has made on a case-by-case basis.

As for Mittelstadt, he has spent much of the season on the team's taxi squad, but had some nice moments in the two games he got into.

In the first few years of his career, Mittelstadt has often been easily pushed off the puck, has struggled to create any offense, and has been a disaster in his own end.

In his two games in the 2020-21 season, Mittelstadt looked bigger, was much more effective using his angles along the boards, and showed the vision on his passes that helped get him drafted eighth overall in the 2017 NHL Draft.

Mittelstadt has made a strong case for re-entering the lineup upon his return.

The Sabres will return to game action on Thursday night against the Washington Capitals at Capital One Arena in the nation's capital. Faceoff is set for 7 p.m. EST with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 6 p.m. EST on WGR with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog.

## **Sabres' Will Borgen looks impressive in first game action in nearly year**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 17, 2021

**BUFFALO** – In his first shifts in nearly a year, Sabres defenseman Will Borgen said he was breathing heavy.

Nothing, of course, can replicate game action, and Borgen, 24, hadn't experienced any since March 11 as a member of the Rochester Americans.

"Just not used to the speed, controlling my energy," Borgen said of the early moments of Monday's 3-1 loss to the New York Islanders at KeyBank Center.

But Borgen, who had spent the entire season on the taxi squad, settled in and said he "felt pretty dang good out there."

"Matt Ellis has helped me out a lot so far getting ready," Borgen said of the Sabres' director of player development, who runs the taxi-squad sessions.

The Sabres reassigned Borgen to the taxi squad Wednesday following his first two NHL appearances since a four-game stint late in 2018-19. Based on his performance and the team's rigorous schedule – the Sabres have 44 games scheduled for 79-day stretch – he could earn another look soon.

On Monday, the 6-foot-3, 205-pound Borgen formed a solid defense tandem beside veteran Brandon Davidson, who was also making his season debut.

"They've put a healthy pressure on our D corps," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said of Borgen and Davidson on a Zoom call Tuesday morning. "They keep you honest. When you watch them step in and play a game like they did last night, that does give us confidence in our depth. We didn't know what we had. Certainly a healthier depth than what many might perceive from the outside.

"Both of them, what they did (Monday) is a compliment to the work ethic they've had in practices. The attention they have to detail and how we want them to play, they stepped right into the system as if they had played all 11 games."

The Sabres sent Davidson back to the taxi squad prior to Tuesday's 3-0 loss to the Islanders, so Borgen played beside Jake McCabe.

After playing 14 minutes, 43 seconds Monday, Borgen skated 17:26 on Tuesday.

Borgen, a fourth-round pick in 2015, 92nd overall, has spent most of his pro career in Rochester since leaving St. Cloud State following his junior season in 2017-18. In 140 AHL games, he has scored four goals and 25 points.

The Minnesota native takes pride in showcasing a simple style.

"Ever since I got to college there's forwards and stuff that are way more skilled than me," he said. "I just try to make the simple plays and let them do the work up front, because I don't want to over-complicate things, especially first game in.

"I just try to keep it simple make good passes and work hard on doing my job on the defensive side."

The Sabres, who had Wednesday off, play a road game Thursday against the Washington Capitals.

In addition to Borgen, the Sabres also reassigned forward Rasmus Asplund, who played Tuesday, to the taxi squad and sent four players from the taxi squad to the AHL.

Defenseman Jacob Bryson and forwards Steven Fogarty, Andrew Oglevie and C.J. Smith moved from the practice group to the Amerks.

Amerks coach Seth Appert said on a Zoom call Wednesday that Sabres prospect Jack Quinn, 19, should make his pro debut Thursday against the Utica Comets at Blue Cross Arena.

The Sabres drafted Quinn eighth overall last year. The winger spent the early portion of the season on the taxi squad before the Sabres sent him to Rochester.

Quinn had to quarantine following his arrival because he was in Buffalo when the Sabres began dealing with COVID-19 problems.

It was believed Quinn would make his debut last week.

In a normal year, Quinn would likely be playing with his junior team, the Ontario Hockey League's Ottawa 67s. Junior-age players can play in the AHL if their leagues are paused.

Quinn scored 52 goals and 89 points in 62 games with Ottawa last season.

## **Casey Mittelstadt final Sabres player removed COVID-19 absences list**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 17, 2021

Forward Casey Mittelstadt late this afternoon was the final Sabres player removed from the NHL's COVID-19 protocol-related absences list.

The Sabres, who had nine players on the list last week, have no one on it for the first time since Feb. 1.

Four Sabres who landed on the absences list – defensemen Rasmus Dahlin and Jake McCabe and wingers Taylor Hall and Tobias Rieder – played at least one game against the New York Islanders earlier this week.

The Sabres, who had today off, play a road game Thursday against the Washington Capitals.

Mittelstadt, 22, was added to the absences list Feb. 7. The American has played two games this season, recording one assist. He has spent most of the year on the taxi squad.

## **Sabres send two players to taxi squad, four others to Amerks**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres this morning assigned forward Rasmus Asplund and defenseman Will Borgen to the taxi squad and also sent three players from the taxi squad to the AHL.

Defenseman Jacob Bryson and forwards Steven Fogarty, Andrew Oglevie and C.J. Smith moved from the practice group to the Rochester Americans.

Asplund and Borgen both played in Tuesday's 3-0 loss to the New York Islanders at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres have today off. They play a road game against the Washington Capitals on Thursday.

The Amerks host the Utica Comets on Thursday.

## **Sabres forward Casey Mittelstadt removed from COVID-19 list; zero Sabres on list**

By Paul Ross

WKBW

February 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — For the first time in over two weeks, there are zero Buffalo Sabres players or coaches on the NHL's COVID-19 list.

Forward Casey Mittelstadt was removed from the COVID-19 list on Wednesday.

Mittelstadt, 22, has one assist in two games with the Sabres this season.

The 4-6-2 Sabres take on the Washington Capitals in the nation's capital on Thursday.

## **Hamilton TAKE2: Sabres top talent not producing**

By Paul Hamilton

WGRZ

February 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Sabres started off the season playing six pretty good games, but then they came home for six games and they haven't played well since.

In the beginning of the season they were second in the NHL with shots on goal and they had amazing scoring opportunities, but they missed on many of them. Now the chances have dried up and they're floundering in the East Division.

I find it interesting how every single time things go wrong with this team, a good number of people want to blame and fire the coach immediately. For some reason the nine-year drought of no playoffs is all on Lindy Ruff, Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley and Ralph Krueger.

Around here if you don't agree with a coach's line combination, you're right, and he should be fired.

The only two players that join the coaches in being blamed for everything are Carter Hutton and Rasmus Dahlin. None of the rest of the players are responsible for their poor play.

Krueger's being crucified for being too soft. Housley was ripped for being too hard, so which is it? Housley was ripped for having very little structure. Krueger is being ripped for too much structure. Again, which is it?

Jeff Skinner has scored three goals since December of 2019. Until the last three games where he played with Jack Eichel and Eric Staal, Skinner was getting amazing scoring chances and missing on each and every one of them.

How is it when a former 40-goal scorer misses on all of his Grade-A chances it's the coach's fault? The last three games with Eichel and Staal have been Skinner's worst. He was pretty much invisible.

Now, are there things that Krueger is teaching not working? I would think yes, there are, but if you watch the game do you really think Krueger is telling Skinner when he's one-on-one with the goaltender to try to pass through two New York Islanders to Eichel?

Do you think Krueger is telling the players to go offside with the goaltender pulled and a minute left in the game? Do you think Krueger is telling the players to stay away from the crease and in front of the net and play on the perimeter? I know for a fact he's begging them to get where goals are scored, but he's stuck with too many players that it's not in their nature.

Do you think Krueger is telling the players not to play with any emotion when things go bad?

This is a season where the Sabres' best players aren't even close to their best players. You've heard me on the radio saying that for years. It's so simple but so true. This team is going nowhere with Eichel, Taylor Hall and Skinner combining for three goals.

Playing good or saying they're playing better isn't good enough. Those players have to produce and they're paid the type of money where they must produce.

This isn't all on Eichel, but he has to be better. This is his team. He performed like a superstar last season, and it's his responsibility to put this team on his back and to get them through it. He's that good and very capable of doing it.

By putting their trust in the wrong people, the Pegula's continue to get stuck with free agent contracts that just strangle this franchise. Matt Moulson, Kyle Okposo, Skinner. I talk about July 1 free agency being stupid time for the NHL and teams wind up regretting the majority of the contracts signed.

This team is stuck with Okposo and Skinner's deals. They're a few years from being out from under Okposo's contract, but I don't have an answer for getting out of Skinner's. There's zero chance that you can trade that contract. I was warned by many in Carolina that there would be buyer's remorse with him.

He showed up and scored a career-high 40 goals, and it looked like the Hurricanes would have egg on their face, but now it's Carolina having the last laugh. They knew the Sabres severely overpaid this player and are just laughing.

In the beginning you'd wonder why did Carolina accept so little for Skinner, and now we know why, they just wanted him gone.

Now, don't get me wrong. He's not a bad guy, and from everything I've heard, he is a very good person and a very good teammate. He works very hard in the offseason to try to better himself, but right now he has no confidence and it just seems to be getting worse.

I'd be tempted to start sitting him out since he's not contributing, but this organization is so thin at forward, there really isn't a better option.

They would need Tage Thompson or Casey Mittelstadt to start developing to be able to do that.

## **BITTER PILL: Coming off shutout loss to Islanders, Sabres find themselves at a crossroads**

By Alex Brasky  
The Batavia Daily News  
February 18, 2021

BUFFALO — The Sabres find themselves at a crossroads following two-straight losses to the New York Islanders, which came on the heels of a two-week stoppage due to COVID-19. With 44 games remaining in an abbreviated regular season, Buffalo currently sits at 4-6-2 and in last place of the East Division.

If they hope to end their near-decade-long playoff drought, the Sabres must begin to turn things around soon. Good news for them, though, they'll have the opportunity to do so tonight as they get back on the horse and head to Washington for a standalone game against the Capitals.

The biggest reason for Buffalo's early struggles has been a lack of offense, and it showed up once again on Tuesday when they were shut out by the Islanders, 3-0. The Sabres currently rank 26th in the NHL in goals per game, with star forwards Jack Eichel and Taylor Hall combining to score just three goals through 12 games. Buffalo is currently fifth in the league in power play percentage (30.2%) but has struggled mightily in 5-on-5 situations.

"Defensively, we've been strong enough to be in games," said Hall after Tuesday's loss to the Islanders. "Offensively, we have one goal in the last 120 minutes. So that's probably your answer right there."

Hall has taken the Sabres' struggles on offense personally. The Sabres signed the former Hart Trophy winner (MVP) in hopes that he would provide a boost to the team's top-line, and he's well aware of that. Hall has had plenty of scoring chances and has recorded eight assists through Buffalo's first 12 games, but one goal during that span is not exactly what the team envisioned when it brought him in.

"It's been a struggle for me personally," said Hall. "It's tough, but I have to keep chugging along to see what I can do better to score and produce offense because that's what I was brought here to do."

Had he produced more in the early going, the Sabres' fate may have been different through the first quarter of the season, says Hall.

"I can't lie to you. If I have four or five goals right now, you don't know what our season looks like," said the Sabres winger. "Especially with how close of games we've had and how much we've been in games right until the very end."

Buffalo has lost three one-goal games, another in overtime and one more in a shootout.

"I feel like I've had some bad luck a bit," added Hall. "But at the same time, when you're not scoring, you've gotta change something and you've got to find whatever it is in your game that's not allowing you to put the puck in the net."

Another Sabre who's had his fair share of difficulties on the offensive end, Jeff Skinner, was in a surly mood when he spoke with reporters after Tuesday's loss. Skinner remains without a goal this season.

"If you don't score, you can't win," said Skinner postgame. "That's it."

The anniversary of Skinner's last goal is coming up a couple of weeks from now, as the Buffalo forward last lit the lamp on Feb. 29 of last year. As frustrated as he appeared with his inability to find the back of the net, Skinner seemed equally upset with the team's lack of success.

"You're in this league to win, and we haven't won," said Skinner. "So it's frustrating."

Buffalo head coach Ralph Krueger was a bit more expansive regarding the Sabres' recent offensive woes.

"A lot of work and a lot of energy was invested in the game today. To come out empty, it's a bitter pill to swallow," said Krueger after Tuesday's shutout loss. "It's truly painful to experience a game like this where so

much of what was asked was carried out. And defensively, two games in a row, we gave up quite little, but (have had) a lack of success up front.

"It's a storyline we need to stop ... It wasn't for a lack of trying, but a lack of success is unacceptable. We need to work through it."

It won't take long for things to start snowballing on the Sabres, who have six games over the next 10 days. With this season resembling more of a sprint than a marathon, Buffalo needs to turn things around quickly before it's too late.

"There's no question that we are in a league where results matter and results count," said Kruger. "No one is going to feel sorry for us here in the situation that we're in. And we need to show our character right now. We need to step up and deal with this pain in a constructive way. It's the way we're built and the way we need to react now - very quickly."

Puck-drop of Caps-Sabres is set for 7 p.m. tonight from Capital One Arena. The Sabres are 1-3-1 against Washington this season.

## **Sabres looking to sharpen offense vs. Capitals**

Sports Illustrated  
February 18, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres look to get their offense on track when they begin a four-game road trip by visiting the Washington Capitals on Thursday.

The Sabres are on a three-game losing streak that reaches back to Jan. 31, after a COVID-19 outbreak put the team on a two-week schedule hiatus. Returning to action for back-to-back home dates against the New York Islanders, the Sabres recorded their two lowest shot totals of the season -- 21 shots in a 3-1 defeat on Monday, then 20 shots in a 3-0 shutout on Tuesday.

Some rust was to be expected after two weeks off, and the defensively solid Islanders are a challenge even for teams at full strength. However, Buffalo's scoring woes have persisted for much of the season, with only 31 goals in 12 games.

A red-hot power play (10-for-24 in six previous games) had been the source of much of Buffalo's recent offense, yet the Sabres were 0-for-2 with the man advantage on Tuesday. The Sabres rank last in the NHL with 15 goals scored this season in five-on-five play.

Buffalo head coach Ralph Krueger described the shutout loss as "a bitter pill to swallow" considering the Sabres performed well apart from their inability to score.

"The job of us here and myself and leadership is to maintain rigid focus on the process, working on solutions for what's not happening here and that's our inability to score five-on-five," Krueger said. "It's not just individuals, it's us as a team that needs to find that success quickly."

Some reinforcements could be on the way for Buffalo, as Brandon Montour, Rasmus Ristolainen, Dylan Cozens and Curtis Lazar have all been activated off the COVID-19 protocol list. Montour and Ristolainen are probably likeliest to return to action on Thursday.

The Capitals were also hampered by a COVID-19 breakout in late January that finally caught up to the club this month. After starting the season with a 6-0-3 record, the Capitals began February with multiple players sidelined, three postponed games and a 0-4-0 record when Washington did take the ice.

With much of their regular lineup finally back, the Capitals snapped their losing streak Tuesday with a 3-1 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins. Washington collected a season-high 42 shots in the victory while rookie goalie Vitek Vanecek stopped 26 of 27 shots.

"Defensively, offensively, special teams-wise, I think that's our most complete game of the year," forward T.J. Oshie said. "Something to be happy about and (to) build on going forward here."

Nicklas Backstrom recorded an assist for his team-leading 19th point of the season. The forward has two goals and four assists over the course of a four-game points streak.

Washington is 3-0-1 in four previous meetings with Buffalo this season.

Vanecek has delivered some of his best work against the Sabres, going 2-0-1 with a .934 save percentage and 2.21 goals against average in three games. Vanecek is likely to make his 12th consecutive start on Thursday, as Washington has relied on the rookie while Ilya Samsonov continues to recover from a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Linus Ullmark is Buffalo's probable starter in net. Ullmark has a .912 save percentage and 2.63 GAA in seven starts this season.

Dating back to the 2014-15 season, the Capitals hold a 15-3-2 record in their last 20 games against the Sabres.

## **Hall laments slow start with Sabres: 'It's been a struggle for me'**

By Matt Teague

The Score

February 17, 2021

WASHINGTON, DC - JANUARY 24: Taylor Hall #4 of the Buffalo Sabres skates on the ice in the first period against the Washington Capitals at Capital One Arena on January 24, 2021 in Washington, DC. Things haven't gone as planned for Taylor Hall and the Buffalo Sabres just over a month into the season.

Hall, who inked a one-year, \$8-million deal with the Sabres in October, scored in his debut with the club but hasn't hit the goal column in 11 games since as the team's losses pile up.

"It's been a struggle for me, personally," Hall said Tuesday following Buffalo's 3-0 loss to the New York Islanders, according to the Times Herald's Bill Hoppe.

"... I feel like I've had some bad luck a bit. But at the same time, when you're not scoring, you got to change something, you got to find whatever is in your game that's not allowing you to put the puck in the net."

The Sabres have scored just four times amid their current three-game losing streak and rank 26th in goals per game (2.42) this season. Hall has eight assists through 12 contests, but the 2018 Hart Trophy winner knows he needs to find his scoring ability to help Buffalo turn its season around.

"Right now, it's been tough," he said. "I can't lie to you. If I have four or five goals right now, you don't really know what our season looks like, especially with how close the games we had and how much we've been in games right until the very end."

The Sabres resumed their season Monday after a 14-day layoff due to COVID-19 concerns. The club sits seventh in points percentage in the East Division entering Wednesday's action and begins a four-game road trip Thursday against the Washington Capitals.

## **Sabres assign 4 players to Rochester**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres have loaned forward Rasmus Asplund and defenseman William Borgen to the team's taxi squad, the team announced Wednesday.

Forwards Steven Fogarty, Andrew Oglevie, and C.J. Smith and defenseman Jacob Bryson have been reassigned from the taxi squad to the Rochester Americans.

The Sabres visit Washington to open a four-game road trip on Thursday. Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m.

Rochester hosts Utica on Thursday at 7:05 p.m.