



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 15, 2021*

## **Washington puts road win streak on the line against Buffalo**

Associated Press

March 14, 2021

Washington Capitals (17-6-4, second in the East Division) vs. Buffalo Sabres (6-16-4, eighth in the East Division)

Buffalo, New York; Monday, 7 p.m. EDT

**BOTTOM LINE:** Washington visits Buffalo aiming to prolong its three-game road winning streak.

The Sabres are 6-16-4 against division opponents. Buffalo serves 5.7 penalty minutes per game, the least in the league. Taylor Hall leads them averaging 0.8.

The Capitals are 17-6-4 against East Division teams. Washington has scored 92 goals and ranks fourth in the NHL averaging 3.4 goals per game. Nicklas Backstrom leads the team with 10.

In their last meeting on Feb. 18, Washington won 3-1.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Sam Reinhart leads the Sabres with 11 goals, adding eight assists and totaling 19 points. Riley Sheahan has two goals and one assist over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

Backstrom leads the Capitals with 10 goals and has 30 points. Jakub Vrana has five goals and four assists over the last 10 games for Washington.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Sabres: 0-8-2, averaging 1.7 goals, 3.2 assists, 2.7 penalties and seven penalty minutes while giving up 3.6 goals per game with an .891 save percentage.

Capitals: 8-1-1, averaging 3.5 goals, 5.6 assists, 3.6 penalties and 8.4 penalty minutes while allowing 2.7 goals per game with a .906 save percentage.

**INJURIES:** Sabres: Dylan Cozens: day to day (head), Jake McCabe: out (knee), Will Borgen: out (forearm), Jack Eichel: out (upper body), Linus Ullmark: out (lower body).

Capitals: Michal Kempny: out (lower body).

## **DeSmith stops 24 in Penguins' 3-0 win over skidding Sabres**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 14, 2021

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)** — With goals at a premium Saturday night, the prolific Pittsburgh Penguins proved they can win with a low-scoring, tight-checking approach.

Casey DeSmith stopped 24 shots, and the Penguins handed Buffalo its 10th straight loss with a 3-0 victory over the lowly Sabres.

Jake Guentzel scored the go-ahead goal by batting in his own rebound with 3:23 remaining in the second period. Sidney Crosby, deep from his own end, and Mark Jankowski added empty-netters in the final minute.

"That's what we've got to be. We've got to be able to play this kind of game," said Guentzel, who scored his team-leading 10th goal. "It's good to find different ways to win. It's nice to know we can be low-scoring and defend hard."

The Penguins had scored four or more goals in five of their previous six games.

It was DeSmith's second shutout against Buffalo and No. 5 for his career. He made 26 stops for the Penguins in a 5-0 win over the Sabres on March 14, 2019.

Pittsburgh completed a two-game sweep of Buffalo following a 5-2 win on Thursday night. The Penguins have won five in a row overall, matching the team's longest win streak since Oct. 10-18, 2019.

The Sabres dropped to 0-8-2 in their past 10. The winless streak matches the fourth-worst in team history, and the longest since Buffalo dropped a franchise-worst 14 straight midway through the 2014-15 season.

"It's hard to describe right now, truthfully. I don't know what's going on," said Carter Hutton, who made 31 saves. "We're in this as a team, right? It's frustrating. I don't know if I've ever been in this kind of funk at this level. It's hard to take."

Buffalo was shut out for the fifth time this season. It has scored two or fewer goals in seven of its past eight.

The Sabres were without captain Jack Eichel, who missed his third straight game and is out for what coach Ralph Krueger called the "foreseeable future" with an upper-body injury.

Buffalo also was minus rookie center Dylan Cozens, who had been elevated to the top line in place of Eichel. Cozens is day to day with an upper-body injury after being checked awkwardly into the boards Thursday.

Guentzel scored 16 seconds after Buffalo's Colin Miller was sent off for hooking. The Penguins worked the puck to Malkin in the right circle, where he fed Guentzel alone in front.

Malkin has three goals and seven assists in a seven-game point streak.

Pittsburgh then clamped down on defense by limiting Buffalo to just six shots in the third period.

Bryan Rust made a key defensive play by rushing back to prevent Buffalo's Tobias Rieder from getting off a shot on a short-handed breakaway with 8:20 left.

DeSmith was grateful for Rust's hustle.

"He's one of the fastest guys in the league, and he showed it on that play," DeSmith said. "That was huge for us."

The Sabres stuck to a tight-checking, patient approach, while attempting to generate chances off transition in keeping the game scoreless.

It was much sharper defensive outing for Buffalo after the Penguins scored three of their four goals — not including an empty-netter — off odd-man rushes on Thursday.

Hutton, meanwhile, was sharp on the few chances the Penguins enjoyed Saturday. His best stop came 8 1/2 minutes into the second period when he closed his pads in time to stop Guentzel's snap shot from the left circle.

Generating offense, however, continues to be an issue for Buffalo, which entered the game ranked 30th in the NHL in averaging 2.24 goals a game and last in having scored 34 times in 5-on-5 situations.

#### STREAKS

The Penguins improved to 18-2-3 in their past 23 games against the Sabres. They are 12-0-2 in their past 14 visits to Buffalo since a 6-2 loss on Feb. 18, 2012.

The Sabres extended their home winless streak to 0-7-1, their longest skid since going 0-5-3 from Jan. 9 to Feb. 5, 2014.

#### SPECIAL TEAMS

The Penguins' penalty-killing unit went 2 for 2 and did not allow a power-play goal in two straight games for just the second time this season. The Sabres' power-play unit is 0 for 15 in its past nine games.

#### SCRATCHES

Penguins: D John Marino was a game-time decision before missing his second consecutive outing with an upper-body injury.

Sabres: D Brandon Davidson played after being activated off the taxi squad, and replaced Matt Irwin, who was a healthy scratch. D Henri Jokiharju was loaned to the taxi squad.

#### UP NEXT

Penguins: Open two-game home series against the Boston Bruins on Monday night.

Sabres: Host the Washington Capitals on Monday night.

## **Another blow to Sabres: Eichel out for `foreseeable future`**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 13, 2021

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)** — The Buffalo Sabres will be without captain Jack Eichel for what coach Ralph Krueger called “the foreseeable future” in delivering yet another blow to a team in the midst of a nine-game skid.

The injury is not considered season-ending, though Krueger on Saturday was unable to provide a fixed timetable on how much time Eichel will miss.

“An injury of this nature needs more assessment and more time to understand it,” he said. “We just know that it will be some time here from shorter all the way to what you’ve already mentioned (season-ending), but it’s somewhere in between that.”

The update came after Eichel traveled to see a specialist over the past two days to further determine the severity of the injury. Under the NHL’s COVID-19 protocol rules, Eichel is required to spend seven days in quarantine as a result of the trip, meaning he will miss at least Buffalo’s next four games.

He has already missed two games since he was checked into the end boards by Casey Cizikas in the closing minutes of a 5-2 loss at the New York Islanders on Sunday. Eichel went to the bench, where he was spotted wincing in pain while flexing his neck.

The Sabres, who host the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday night, are in free fall. Buffalo (6-15-4) ranks last in the league in wins and on an 0-7-2 skid, putting the team already in danger of extending its playoff drought to an NHL-record-matching 10th season.

Eichel’s latest injury is separate from the previous two that have severely hampered his production this season.

He missed the first week of training camp after sustaining an upper-body injury during a pre-camp on-ice workout at the Sabres’ practice facility.

A person with direct knowledge of what happened told The Associated Press on Saturday that Eichel sustained a rib injury during a workout with Matt Ellis, the team’s director of player development.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the nature and cause of the injury had not been disclosed by the team.

Eichel also missed two games last month with a lower-body injury.

A year after scoring a career-best 36 goals in 68 games, the five-time 20-plus goal-scorer has been limited to two goals and 16 assists in 21 games this year. He had not scored in 13 games before being hurt.

Eichel’s scoring troubles reflect that of the Sabres, who rank 30th in the 31-team league in averaging 2.24 goals a game, and last in having scored 34 times in five-on-five situations.

His extended absence represents the latest setback to a team that’s lurched from one crisis to another through the first two months of the season, and led to questions regarding Krueger’s job security two years into his job.

Buffalo’s schedule was placed on pause for two weeks after a COVID-19 outbreak struck the team in early February, during which seven players and Krueger were affected. The pause resulted in the Sabres facing a constricted schedule in which they are squeezing in their final 46 games over 83 days.

Injuries have become an issue.

Starting goalie Linus Ullmark is still weeks away from recovering from a lower-body injury last month. And the Sabres are also missing two key defensemen, including Jake McCabe, who sustained a season-ending knee injury last month.

Rookie center Dylan Cozens is the latest to be sidelined. Krueger said Cozens will not play Saturday and is listed day to day with an upper-body injury.

Cozens was hurt while crashing into the boards following a mid-ice check from Pittsburgh's Zach Anton-Reese early in the third period of a 5-2 loss to the Penguins on Thursday. Cozens had just released the puck and appeared to hit his head while striking the boards.

Cozens has three goals and two assists in 20 games, and had been elevated to playing on Buffalo's top line in place of Eichel.

## **Carter Hutton hoping to build off strong showing vs. Penguins in Sabres' net**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 15, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres have gone 10 games without a win. It's been almost two months for Carter Hutton, since Jan. 18 in Philadelphia.

The exasperation is clear on both fronts.

The next chance to forge some kind of positive feeling comes Monday in KeyBank Center against the Washington Capitals, with Hutton likely getting the call in goal against Alex Ovechkin and friends.

Hutton took the loss Saturday, falling to 1-8-1 in Buffalo's 3-0 loss to Pittsburgh. But it was probably his best effort of the season, stopping 31 of 32 shots in a game that saw the visitors pull away with two empty-net goals.

"I'm just trying to tighten my game up and honestly I thought I played well at times," said Hutton, who was beaten only on a power-play goal by Jake Guentzel. "A big save here or there puts me in a better position in games."

Hutton has been mostly pedestrian of late in place of Linus Ullmark, posting a save percentage of above .900 just twice in his previous six games. Among 63 NHL goalies to have played at least five games this year, Ullmark entered Sunday tied for eighth in the league with a 5-on-5 figure of .930, but Hutton was 57th at .890 and Jonas Johansson was 61st at .877. The Buffalo backups have combined to go just 1-12-2. Ullmark is 5-4-2.

What stood out in Hutton's game Saturday was he made three bailout saves to cover teammates' mistakes, the kind he and Johansson haven't made nearly enough of since Ullmark was knocked out of the lineup with a lower-body injury on Feb. 23.

The first came on a short-handed breakaway by Teddy Blueger in the first period. Then came a pad stop on Guentzel on a 2-on-1 in the second period after a Sidney Crosby pass. The final one was on defenseman Brian Dumoulin leaking into the slot in the final eight minutes with the Sabres still in range at 1-0.

"I need to be better, too, and I think the way Linus as played he's hid some of that when he was in there," Hutton said. "Since he's been out, 'JJ' and I have to be better and I think the group has to be better, too. I've just tried to chip away here. I know that I haven't been good enough lately. It's something that weighs on me. I'm a pro and I take pride in being good and competing."

Hutton put up a season-high .969 on Saturday but endured a fourth loss by shutout and all three were 3-0 scores.

"He was outstanding today. We're excited to see that happen," said coach Ralph Krueger. "And he looked to be in a good groove. The break he had (playing only once in the previous 11 days) seemed to increase his energy. We've got to give him some goals. ... We're pleased with that performance. It's good to talk about things that were good about the game and that was certainly at the top of the list.

At 35, Hutton is playing out the string in the final year of his contract with the Sabres. He had to wait things out while Johansson started four of the previous five games, including Thursday's against Pittsburgh. Hutton entered Saturday 5-1, 1.95/.940 in his career against the Penguins but Johansson still got the call.

"I've been on both sides of it. I've been the guy that was getting games over a guy, too," Hutton said. "So I take it as it is. I'm a pro and I'm going to support JJ and I've been pretty clear with him and even (goalie coach Mike Bales). There's times where, of course, I want to play but I'm going to show that I'm not going to pout.

"I'm just going to go come back to work and work harder. And when I do get a chance to play try to show that I'm competing and ready to play. In this sport, you never know when it's your time."

Hutton is at 3.15 and .893 for the season. No matter what the numbers show, what's any goalie supposed to do if his team doesn't score?

"It's got to get in the net somehow," said defenseman Brandon Montour. "You can make excuses, bad bounces, posts, whatnot. But especially in this little stretch, how many games have we got shut out? 'Hutts' played really good for us there. And we've just got to help him out."

"It's hard. Honestly, it wears on us," Hutton said. "I think now I'm 35 years old and you think, 'Oh boy, you're always gonna win or be part of something like that.' And you can't take it for granted. I think that's my biggest thing is trying to get guys willing to buy in here. It's not up to anybody else but the players. We're the ones that play the game, Lots of people take different heat for it but it's up to us as a collective group. It's just not happening and it's really frustrating."

Ovechkin shoots for 717

The Capitals hit town on a four-game win streak and 8-1-1 in their last 10. There will be heavy focus on Ovechkin in Monday's game as the Great Eight scored career goal No. 716 in Saturday's win at Philadelphia, and is one away from tying Phil Esposito for sixth on the NHL's all-time list.

Washington remains without rugged forward Tom Wilson, who still is serving a seven-game suspension for boarding last week against Boston's Brandon Carlo.

## **Inside the NHL: Imagine the Leafs winning the Stanley Cup ... in Buffalo**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 14, 2021

As if this season hasn't been bad enough, here comes a new wrinkle. Of all the hideous things Sabres fans have had to endure in 2021, one possibility looms about four months in the distance that's almost unspeakable.

It's not a given, but it's not a ridiculous thought either, given the state of the NHL and the world at large.

Just imagine how you'd feel if the Toronto Maple Leafs – yes, the Toronto Maple Leafs – won the Stanley Cup for the first time since 1967.

And did it in KeyBank Center.

Picture captain John Tavares taking the Cup and holding it high with at least a few thousand of those rambunctious blue-and-white-clad fans roaring their approval. Then most likely handing it first to 42-year-old Joe Thornton for a moment the Giant Bearded One has spent 23 seasons chasing.

Picture Auston Matthews (drafted No. 1 overall in the same place five years earlier), Morgan Rielly, Mitch Marner (taken two picks after Jack Eichel in 2015) and William Nylander having their turn. And the same for former Sabres Zach Bogosian, Jimmy Vesey and Wayne Simmonds.

Ponder the fact that as rough as Bogosian's Buffalo career was, leading to his contract termination 13 months ago, he has a legit chance to win two Cups in a span of 10 months after winning with Tampa Bay in the Edmonton bubble in September. That's crazy.

There's a lot of maybes here, but this much is clear: One Canadian team will emerge from the North Division after the first two rounds of the Stanley Cup playoffs. And unless the border is opened come June, that team is not going to be able to play in its home arena.

The NHL knows this. The league's public stance is it's hopeful the speed of vaccinations in the United States will influence the Canadian government to open the border. Or at least approve travel of a team for playoff games.

But privately, the NHL is concerned. Things are in the very preliminary stages, but the league knows it might have to ponder alternate sites for at least part of its final two playoff rounds, and multiple sources expect the Sabres to have an interest in hosting. The semifinal round would begin in mid-June.

"We are engaged, are in the process of engaging with respect to the playoffs," deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Thursday in a video call with reporters when asked about talks with the Canadian government. "We've got a little bit of time to deal with this. I believe there will be a process. I can't certainly promise any result, and we'll work through the process and we'll see what the result is and we'll respond appropriately."

The Sabres talked to the league last year about being the site of one of the playoff bubbles, which were eventually held in Toronto and Edmonton. And prior to this season, when it seemed like division bubbles could be in the offing, the Sabres again told the NHL they would like to be considered.

And remember, the Sabres gave a tour of their facilities to the Toronto Blue Jays last summer and offered their assistance to them during the team's stay in Buffalo. The organization knows events such as this could put people back to work and fill up rooms in the Buffalo Marriott at LECOM Harborcenter.

As for talks with Canadian officials about the border, Daly simply said, "We're engaged, they're engaged, and we'll get an answer when we get an answer."

Added Commissioner Gary Bettman: "We're going to try and maintain our flexibility and our agility, and we will be respectful of the process."

Bettman said he hoped the Canadian government will have faith in the NHL's ability to execute playoffs in Canada based on the huge success of last summer's bubbles. The league waited until the last minute to choose those cities and Bettman said that experience would allow the league to take things to the wire again, if necessary.

Just like the Blue Jays' desire to play in Toronto but prepare for other possibilities such as Sahlen Field, the NHL wants these games in home sites. But it can't be left unprepared, either. To date, the Canadian government has given no leeway to the NHL, the Blue Jays or the NBA's Toronto Raptors.

With no conferences this year, the final four teams are being reseeded by regular season records. So you could have a semifinal or final between, say, Toronto and Boston. Or Washington and Tampa Bay (wow!). Or Vegas and Pittsburgh. The possibilities are endless. Because they clearly rate as one of the favorites, the Leafs winning the Cup on American soil – and maybe even in Buffalo – can't be discounted.

Pens' Angello makes Buffalo dream a reality

You probably didn't give a second of thought to the goal Penguins fourth-liner Anthony Angello scored here Thursday night. Nice wrist shot, albeit one Jonas Johansson should have stopped. First of the season, second of the career for Angello, a 25-year-old lifelong New Yorker. He was born in Albany, grew up in Syracuse and played college hockey at Cornell after the Penguins took him in the fifth round in 2014.

And he was a Sabres fan all the way. The goal you didn't notice meant everything to him.

"It was awesome. Obviously playing in Buffalo is a little bit surreal especially because this is close to home, to where I grew up and these are the NHL games I came to," Angello said. "So finally playing in the building was awesome. And then scoring, honestly, was, even more surreal if that's even possible."

Angello was friends growing up with Vegas winger Alex Tuch, who lived in the Syracuse suburb of Baldwinsville next door to the parents of former Sabres center Tim Connolly. That made Connolly, along with speedy winger Maxim Afinogenov, instant choices to be his favorite Sabres.

Angello said he always pictured himself on the ice at KeyBank Center like Connolly and Afinogenov, trying to react to different situations.

"I envisioned scoring goals here," Angello said. "And I'd say I was pretty spot-on as to how I envisioned it."

Around the boards

- Go ahead, admit it. You've gone to YouTube and played the ESPN "NHL Tonight" theme music a hundred times since last week's announcement that the league has brokered a new contract with the Worldwide Leader starting next season. After a 17-year hiatus, SportsCenter will finally give hockey some respect again. The real palace intrigue, however, is who gets the rest of the TV deal and the three up-for-grabs Stanley Cup finals between now and 2027.

You would think the NHL would stay with NBC, providing NBC still wants in, but there's no question Fox is lurking. Either way, the league is going to derive much more television revenue than it has been getting just when owners need it coming out of the pandemic.

- If you're thinking ahead to the trade deadline next month, Tampa Bay might have the best acquisition already in hand. GM Julien BriseBois told reporters Friday that Nikita Kucherov started skating last week and is on track to be ready for the playoffs after hip surgery Dec. 29.

Kucherov, the 2019 Hart Trophy winner, had 32 goals and 85 points last season. His goal, assist and point totals for the three previous campaigns were 40-45-85, 39-61-100, and 41-87-128, respectively.

"I fully expect that he'll be able to contribute come playoff time and hopefully add a little oomph to our team," BriseBois said. "I don't know there is anything that any team can do at the deadline that would be as impactful as adding Nikita Kucherov to our group."

- Penguins captain Sidney Crosby entered Saturday's game with 64 points in 43 career games against the Sabres, an average of 1.49 points per game against Buffalo. According to the Penguins PR department, that's only the

sixth-best against Buffalo (minimum 15 games played). The leader is current Pittsburgh owner Mario Lemieux (70 points, 40 games, 1.75). He's followed by Steve Yzerman (67/41, 1.63), Pavel Bure (35/22, 1.59), Bobby Orr (44/29, 1.52) and Wayne Gretzky (83/55, 1.51).

#### Sabre points

- Something you never heard in the Sabres' dressing room was Leafs defenseman Travis Dermott's comment Friday on Bogosian: "I feel like he is making me into a way better player."
- Philadelphia's shutout streak of 185 minutes, 44 seconds against the Sabres that was broken by Sam Reinhart's first-period goal Tuesday set a franchise record for the longest against one opponent. The Flyers were born in 1967.

Philly had shut out the Sabres in three consecutive games until Reinhart's goal 4:33 into the game. By getting into the second minute of play, the Flyers broke their mark of 182:42, set against New Jersey in the 1983-84 season.

- Casey Mittelstadt's 8-for-8 night in the faceoff circle Thursday against Pittsburgh was the best by a Sabres player since Drew Stafford moved over from the wing to go 8 for 8 against the New York Islanders on March 15, 2014.

## **Mike Harrington: On 10th anniversary of Rick Martin's death, Sabres' fall remains shocking**

By Mike Harrington  
The Buffalo News  
March 13, 2021

Forgive me for getting a little sentimental. When it comes to the Sabres, there's a lot more on my mind right now than Saturday's snoozer against Pittsburgh that extended their winless streak to 10 games.

The story doesn't need repeating. Too many of these players have checked out. The coach should have been fired two weeks ago but the owners don't want to pay him to go away and they don't have anyone else to hire anyway.

Another season is lost. The tradition of this franchise as a whole is lost. It didn't used to be like this, but 10 years of nothing makes it feel like it was always this way.

When you look in the KeyBank Center rafters and you see the retired numbers, you remember the roars. Hard not to give a quick double-take Saturday when you saw No. 7.

It was a significant day for those of us who lived the good times. It was the 10-year anniversary of the death of French Connection left winger Rick Martin, gone far too soon at 59. Martin had a heart attack on a Sunday morning while driving and crashed his car into a utility pole on Main Street in Clarence on March 13, 2011, a few hours prior to a late-afternoon home game against the Ottawa Senators.

Known as "Rico" to everyone in the organization, Martin was a ball of life to the team and its alumni. The stories of him on the golf course with his omnipresent cigar are legendary. The stories of him on the ice are, too. That wicked slapshot that whizzed by goalies throughout the 1970s took out more than a few defensemen -- and sometimes as a bit of retribution if the case called for it.

Martin scored the only goal in the first Sabres game I ever went to in the Aud, a 3-1 loss to Chicago on Dec. 9, 1971. I was in the Reds for his 50th of the season against Boston in 1975.

One of the highest privileges in this job is getting to meet many of this club's venerable alumni. It's been a pleasure to get to know Danny Gare and Mike Robitaille, Rob Ray, Brad May and Matthew Barnaby. Rene Robert has been a prince to chat with the last two years during Road Crew events in Las Vegas. Gilbert Perreault, too.

About the best moment you'll ever have in this gig was the NHL100 ceremony in Los Angeles in 2017 featuring Perreault, Dominik Hasek and Pat LaFontaine, who could have done great things here as team president but never got a real chance and is now, sadly, an outcast of the Pegulas.

In 2010, after The News published a centerspread of the top 40 players in franchise history to honor the 40th anniversary season, I was sitting in the arena press room the day before the season opener and Martin walked in. You see alumni every so often, especially at the start of a season (before many of them head to Florida). He headed right toward me. We had never met.

"Hi Mike, I'm Rick Martin," he said. "How's it going?"

Yeah, I know. No intro needed (I didn't say that, but that's what I was thinking). And it was going great.

He said he just wanted to thank me and, by extension, the paper for the time spent honoring alumni. We talked a little about the season -- the team was actual thinking Stanley Cup after winning its division the previous spring -- and then Martin went on his way. Great stuff.

It was the only time we ever talked. I won't forget it.

Martin, you might remember, was a centerpiece of Terry Pegula's 2011 introduction when he and Perreault and Robert skated out to surprise the owner on the ice prior to his first game in charge.

Three weeks later, Martin was gone. When the Sabres won their game later that day, they gathered at center ice to salute the fans and, led by Ryan Miller, pointed their sticks high to the rafters in the direction of Martin's number.

My sense the last couple of years with this current club is the history of this franchise doesn't resonate. There are no Stanley Cups here, but there were a lot of good times. When this era of players is gone, will anyone care to see most of them come back in 10 years? Or 20 years? Who are you going to cheer for?

That's what the daily calamity of losing hockey does. Saturday was yet another downer with the news that Jack Eichel is going to be out a while. Although the hope is his upper-body injury believed to be related to his neck is not season ending, what if it is? What if they trade him this summer and we never see him on the ice again here? Everything around this organization is broken.

What fans would buy tickets -- and pay for Covid tests -- to see this kind of hockey? The passion is gone. How do they get it back? Another coach? Is Toe Blake walking through the door? Another day in an empty arena. Covid times are tough. Even if it's only a few hundred of you, it will be good to hear people in here next week.

Now, there are some built-in excuses for this season and I almost get it. Take away the No. 1 goalie (Linus Ullmark), No. 1 center (Jack Eichel) and the No. 2 defenseman (Jake McCabe) from any team and see where they are.

And who got a worse shake in realignment than the Sabres? Seriously. Let's replace the Canadiens, Senators and Red Wings with a steady diet of the Islanders, Penguins and Capitals. See how your team would do. Throw in a Covid outbreak that was the worst in the league and you have another season down the drain.

But what's this going to be like in five years? Or 10 years? Or 15? Who is anybody going to cheer for at the 60th anniversary?

Just sad times Saturday. What in the world has happened to this franchise?

## **The Wraparound: Sabres' winless streak reaches 10 with 3-0 loss to Penguins**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 13, 2021

The expression of disbelief on Brandon Montour's face encapsulated all that's gone wrong for the Buffalo Sabres over the past month.

Montour, 26-year-old defenseman and the Sabres' leader in 5-on-5 ice time, had just scrambled to reach the front of the net, only to watch as the puck found its way over Carter Hutton's shoulder and into the net in the second period Saturday night.

All Montour could do was dig the puck out of the net as the Pittsburgh Penguins celebrated what would be the game-winning goal in a 3-0 victory over the Sabres in KeyBank Center.

"Obviously, it's tough here right now, but the only way to get out of it is the guys in the group right now and, I mean, no excuses," said Montour. "That's, what, 10 in a row now? Close or not, you know, they had two empty nets tonight, but we didn't score a goal. So we're not going to win games not scoring goals."

The winless streak reached 10 games – a first for the Sabres (6-16-4) since they lost 14 in a row during the tank season in 2014-15 – and Buffalo remains last in the National Hockey League with 16 points through 26 games.

The Sabres went a ninth consecutive game without registering at least 30 shots on goal and could not generate enough quality scoring chances to back Hutton, who was outstanding while making his first start in four games. The 35-year-old stopped 31 of 32 shots, including all 10 he faced in a scoreless first period.

"It's hard to describe right now, truthfully," said Hutton. "I don't know what's going on. Obviously I'm accountable too. We're in this as a team, right? It's frustrating. I don't know if I've ever been in this kind of funk at this level. It's hard to take. I'm a pro, we're gonna come to work. But we just can't seem to put it together. It's really frustrating."

With Montour positioned in front of the net, Jake Guentzel managed to swat his own rebound out of the air and over Hutton for a power-play goal to give the Penguins a 1-0 lead at 16:37 into the second period. The lead seemed insurmountable considering Buffalo entered the game with a 0-14-1 record when trailing after two.

The Penguins (17-9-1) added two empty-net goals to extend their winning streak to five games.

Sabres captain Jack Eichel missed a third straight game with an upper-body injury that will keep him out for the "foreseeable future," according to coach Ralph Krueger, and rookie Dylan Cozens is day to day with the upper-body injury he suffered on a hit by Penguins winger Zach Aston-Reese in the third period Thursday night.

Buffalo owns a 2-12-2 record since returning from a two-week Covid-19 pause on Feb. 15. The Sabres have scored two or fewer goals in eight of their last nine games and are 16 points out of the East Division's fourth playoff spot.

"We need to be able to make plays," said Krueger. "We've got a lot of guys who have a higher level offensively in them, and we've got to continue to push for that to show itself in the games."

Broken power play: The only shot on goal during a first period Sabres power play occurred when a turnover at the opposing blue line gave Penguins center Teddy Blueger a shorthanded breakaway, but Hutton kept the score tied with a save.

Pittsburgh had a 10-6 edge in shots on goal after 20 minutes. Buffalo had only one shot on goal over the final six minutes. Entering Saturday, the Sabres were 2-5-2 when tied at the end of the first period.

Personnel change: With Eichel out, forward Casey Mittelstadt centered the Sabres' top power-play unit, skating alongside Rasmus Dahlin, Sam Reinhart, Taylor Hall and Victor Olofsson.

Better start: The Sabres were the better team in the opening moments of the second period, as Olofsson, Eric Staal and Colin Miller each had a shot on goal in the first 1:12. However, it was Pittsburgh that earned the first quality chance, as Hutton was forced to stop a wraparound by Penguins winger Zach Aston-Reese.

Less than two minutes later, Hutton made a save on Guentzel on a 2-on-1 after Sidney Crosby made a perfect on-the-tape pass to create space in the offensive zone.

Strong showing: Tage Thompson had an impressive second period. He forced a turnover in the defensive zone but the Penguins recovered in time to prevent a shot on goal. Thompson later sped through the right-wing circle and protected the puck before releasing a shot that was stopped by Pittsburgh goalie Casey DeSmith.

Shots in the second period were 12-12 – only the second time in four games the Sabres managed to record double-digit shots in a period.

Close calls: Tobias Rieder had a shorthanded breakaway spoiled in the third period when Penguins winger Bryan Rust broke up the play with a backcheck. Rust used his stick to prevent Rieder from getting a shot on goal.

Olofsson's one-timer from the right circle on a power play was gloved by DeSmith with 5:56 remaining in regulation.

Lineup: Prior to the game, the Sabres assigned defenseman Henri Jokiharju to the taxi squad and added defenseman Brandon Davidson to the active roster. Jokiharju, 21, has been out of the lineup in four of the past five games. He appeared in each of the Sabres' 69 games last season, totaling four goals with 11 assists for 15 points and a minus-7 rating.

Sabres defenseman Matt Irwin was a healthy scratch after logging 19:05 of ice time Thursday night.

Next: The Sabres will hold a morning skate Monday in preparation for their game that night against the Washington Capitals. Puck drop is scheduled for 7 p.m., Eastern.

## **Sabres aim to 'persevere' with Jack Eichel out for the 'foreseeable future'**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 13, 2021

Ralph Krueger left his spot behind the Buffalo Sabres' bench during a first-period TV timeout and walked over to Jeff Skinner, the \$9-million-per-season winger who was visibly frustrated after another shift that did not end with a goal.

Krueger leaned forward, motioned to the defensive zone with his right index finger while talking to Skinner and tapped the two-time all-star on the right knee as a gesture of encouragement.

Krueger, the Sabres' embattled coach amid a trying second season in Buffalo, remains undeterred in his pursuit to the lead his team out of last place in the NHL without five notable players in the lineup.

No strategic or personnel adjustments could fill the void created by the Sabres' most notable absence: Jack Eichel, the 24-year-old captain, top-line center and face of the franchise. An upper-body injury will keep Eichel out of the lineup for the "foreseeable future," according to Krueger, and the Sabres' 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday night in KeyBank Center illustrated why improvement won't be easily attainable.

"I really enjoy challenges as a leader, but this is one of the toughest that I've seen," said Krueger. "We need to dig deep and continue to persevere. It is truly a test for us all right now."

The winless streak is now at 10 – a first for the Sabres (6-16-4) since they lost 14 in a row during the 2014-15 tank season – and Buffalo's 16 points remain the fewest in the NHL. Veteran forward Riley Sheahan, a 29-year-old who arrived at training camp on a professional tryout, centered the top line.

A once formidable power play has been punchless without Eichel, now amid a 0-for-15 skid over the last nine games. Eichel was not there to slash through lines of the Penguins' defense, further weakening a Sabres offense that ranks last in the NHL in 5-on-5 goals. Buffalo managed 24 shots on goal and has scored two or fewer goals in eight of the last nine games. They have been shut out five times – including on three occasions during the winless streak -- after failing to score only twice in 69 games last season.

The Sabres are 16 points out of the East Division's fourth playoff spot with 30 games remaining.

Eichel will miss at least three more games because the NHL's Covid-19 protocols required him to serve a seven-day quarantine upon returning to Buffalo from an out-of-state consultation with a doctor.

Krueger has declined to say how the injury occurred or if Eichel's recovery will require surgery. The Sabres aren't sure when Eichel will return, but there remains optimism that he can return sometime this season. He has not skated with the team since a 5-2 loss to the New York Islanders last Sunday in Nassau Coliseum.

"An injury of this nature just needs more assessment and more time to understand it," Krueger said. "I'm being honest with you, we don't know for certain the timeframe on it. We just know that it will be some time here from shorter all the way to (season ending), but it's somewhere in between that."

The Sabres' string of bad injury luck began in training camp when forward Zemgus Girgensons suffered a season-ending hamstring injury during an intrasquad scrimmage. Will Borgen emerged as a reliable defenseman, only to suffer a fracture in his right forearm that is expected to keep him out until at least early April.

Jake McCabe, unquestionably the team's top defenseman, suffered a season-ending knee injury on Feb. 20. Goalie Linus Ullmark has missed nine straight games with a lower body injury and is weeks away from returning. The most recent loss was rookie forward Dylan Cozens, who is day to day with an upper-body injury suffered on a hit Thursday night against the Penguins.

There was also the two-week Covid-19 pause in which nine players landed on the league's protocol list, including defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who was bedridden while enduring several symptoms.

"It (stinks) losing," defenseman Brandon Montour. "Obviously it's tough here right now."

This was supposed to be the season Eichel made a legitimate run at the Hart Trophy. The former second overall draft pick scored a career-high 36 goals in 2019-20 and was expected to skate alongside Taylor Hall, a former league MVP who signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with Buffalo in October.

However, Eichel missed the start of training camp with an upper-body injury and a lower-body injury kept him out of the lineup for consecutive games last month. According to a report from the Associated Press, Eichel suffered a rib injury during an on-ice workout at LECOM Harborcenter shortly before training camp.

A message left with Eichel's agent, Peter Fish, went unanswered.

The rib injury could explain Eichel shooting a career-low 3.3% this season. He was also stricken by bad puck luck and did not have stable linemates like he did in previous seasons.

Yet, at the time of this latest setback, Eichel had two goals with 16 assists for 18 points in 21 games. He quarterbacked one of the league's top power plays and started to attack opposing defenses with his elite speed.

Then one play altered the course of Eichel's season. During the third period of the third straight loss on Long Island last Sunday, Islanders winger Casey Cizikas shoved Eichel in the back behind the net. Eichel was in pain on the bench and flexing his neck while talking to a team trainer. Krueger declined to say if the hit was the source of Eichel's latest injury trouble.

"My focus, 100%, is always on the players that are here and the lineup that is available to us as coaches and we are excited about the challenge that we have and believe we have a strong lineup to deal with the adversity," said Krueger. "Of course, Jack Eichel is an absolute elite player in this league who drives when he's healthy a lot of the power that makes the Sabres a threat to other teams on a given night. Now we need to work together."

Even without Eichel this team should have enough forward depth to create more offensively. Skinner has one goal in 23 games, Hall's 16 points in 26 games have included only two goals and Eric Staal has three goals in 25 games.

The Sabres are making life easy on goalies, as we saw again Saturday with the Penguins' Casey DeSmith facing only six shots in the third period.

Krueger is 7-22-4 in his last 33 games as coach, and the Sabres are well on their way to missing the playoffs for a 10th consecutive season.

"It's not ideal," Sheahan said about the state of the Sabres. "I know we have better. I think there's a level of skill and talent in the locker room that could contend with any team in the league. We just kind of have to put it together."

## **OPINION: Sabres waste a spectacular game by Carter Hutton**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 14, 2021

Buffalo, N.Y. (WGR 550) – The Buffalo Sabres had to live with just another horrible coaching decision by Ralph Krueger and it may have cost them a game.

Carter Hutton was lights out on Saturday against the Pittsburgh Penguins, stopping 31 of 32 shots en route to the Sabres' 10th-straight loss. The final score was 3-0, but the last two goals were empty netters by Sidney Crosby and Mark Jankowski.

Hutton made numerous big saves to keep the game at a one goal deficit, but the Sabres, once again, made a backup goalie look like Dominik Hasek.

The mistake Krueger made is Hutton is now 5-2-0 against the Penguins with a 1.83 goals-against average and a .943 save percentage. He went with an AHL caliber goalie in Jonas Johansson on Thursday, who let in three goals he would want back and the Sabres lost to the Pens, 5-2.

In the first period on the power play, Rasmus Dahlin turned the puck over to Brandon Tanev, who sent in Teddy Blueger all alone. Hutton bailed out Dahlin, which is something he's had trouble with this season.

Hutton was especially good in close. Pittsburgh caused numerous schmozels around the crease, but Hutton found ways to stop the puck whether he was on his feet or sprawled.

One of his nicest saves was when Crosby led a 2-on-1 down the right wing. He sent a perfect pass over to Jake Guentzel for, what looked like, a layup goal, but Hutton read the play beautifully and came across the crease to rob him.

He stole another goal away from Guentzel in the third period from the side of the net.

Guentzel did wind up being the only Penguins player to beat Hutton. It came on the power play when Evgeni Malkin found an open Guentzel at the top of the crease. Hutton made a great save on the original shot, but Brandon Montour failed to pick him up and Guentzel hit the puck out of the air for his 10th of the season.

What makes this loss even worse is the Sabres did a terrific job 5-on-5 against both Crosby and Malkin. Malkin wasn't even noticeable, while Crosby made the pass on the 2-on-1 and shot wide when left alone in front. Other than that, he was very quiet.

On the night, Sam Reinhart had numerous good chances on DeSmith, but was either stopped or he shot wide. Montour was also active and had some great scoring chances. Victor Olofsson was stopped twice from the slot and once from the right faceoff circle on a one-timer.

Without Jack Eichel on the power play, Dahlin has gotten the yips. The kid had a wide-open lane down the slot. He took a few steps towards the net and instead of ripping one through the open shot lane with Sabres in front screening, he elected to pass the puck, which got knocked away. Buffalo has now gone nine games without a power play goal.

Buffalo is now back to last place in the NHL with a .308 points percentage. It is also the worst record in Sabres history. The previous record was .317 for the 2013-14 team that tanked to get the first or second overall pick in the draft.

They got the second pick and took Reinhart, instead of the NHL's second-leading scorer this year in Leon Draisaitl.

The Edmonton Oilers forward led the league in scoring last season, picking up 43 goals and 67 assists for 110 points in 71 games. Reinhart had 22 goals and 28 assists for 50 points in 69 games. This year, Draisaitl has 16 goals and 29 assists for 45 points in 30 games. In 24 games, Reinhart has 11 goals and eight assists for 19 points.

It was April 29, 2013 when Darcy Regier said:

"The vision started last season at the trade deadline. We began moving in the direction of having to acquire more top players. This is about building for the Stanley Cup, not a playoff run."

The trades Regier was talking about were, Jason Pominville to the Minnesota Wild, Jordan Leopold went to the St. Louis Blues and Robyn Regehr to the Los Angeles Kings.

He went on to say:

"You could go to the bottom of the league for five years and hope you land on a Crosby or a Malkin."

And then came the most famous line of all that has had this franchise on the downward swing since.

"It probably needs an understanding from our fan base that what Terry is asking of us is to try a lot of things. He is in search of creating a Stanley Cup champion and it may require some suffering."

In the 2013-14 campaign, Thomas Vanek was sent to the New York Islanders, Steve Ott and Ryan Miller were traded to the Blues, Matt Moulson and Cody McCormick were sent to the Wild and Corey Tropp was traded to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Getting back to Saturday's game, DeSmith did have to make some decent saves for Pittsburgh, but he now has two shutouts in three career games against Buffalo. DeSmith gave up five goals in the other game he faced the Sabres.

The Sabres are 30th in the NHL, scoring 2.15 goals per-game. The Anaheim Ducks are last, averaging 2.14 goals per-game.

Buffalo has been shutout five times this season, and only have three or more goals in 11 games out of 26 games. Four of those games came in the season's first six. Since then, they've scored three or more goals in just seven games.

The team has Sunday off and will host the Washington Capitals on Monday night.

## **OPINION: Three observations: Carter Hutton strong in return to net, but it's not enough**

By TJ Luckman

WGR 550

March 13, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres were hoping to come out with some energy after a couple of questionable hits to their young players on Thursday night.

Saturday night at KeyBank Center, the Sabres didn't bring much more in terms of physicality to the Pittsburgh Penguins. Whether they increased it or not, the game of hockey is not measured by the amount of hits.

Ultimately, the Sabres needed goals, and they couldn't get any in a 3-0 loss.

Let's take a look at three observations from Saturday's game:

### 1.) Hutton strong in net as usual against Penguins

Our own Paul Hamilton remarked on Thursday night during the Paul William Beltz Postgame Show by asking the rationale of starting Sabres goaltender Jonas Johansson.

Goalie Carter Hutton has had a pretty good career, in terms of playing, against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Coming into the game, he had played in eight games against Pittsburgh, posting a record of 5-1-0 with a save percentage of .940.

Hutton brought more of that luck to his game on Saturday, stopping 31 of the 32 shots he faced. The Sabres also did a pretty good job at 5-on-5 to limit the Penguins' high-danger chances. The Penguins had nine high-danger chances at 5-on-5 according to Natural Stat Trick.

### 2.) Power play shut out for the ninth-straight game

Ever since Sabres captain Jack Eichel picked up an injury against the New Jersey Devils on Feb. 23 that held him out of the next game, the Sabres' power play simply hasn't been the same.

The Sabres carried the No. 1 unit with the man advantage for a good portion of the season, but after Saturday night's game, Buffalo still finds themselves ranked fifth with a 27.1% conversion rate.

Buffalo was able to contribute at even strength on Thursday night, but they had no such luck on Saturday night. The Sabres were shut out all the way around.

### 3.) Down 1-0 in the third period, Sabres lacked desperation to tie the game

Six shots.

That's all the Sabres were able to muster in the third period. In all strengths, Buffalo attempted just 11 shots, and only six found Penguins netminder, Casey DeSmith.

In the last few "Three observations" articles I've written, I've frequently pointed out that Buffalo has lacked the desperation of a team that has absolutely nothing to lose, at this point, when it comes to playing the game.

With a one-goal deficit heading into the third, the Sabres did not look like a team fighting to tie the game. Natural Stat Trick tabs them with just two high-dangers chances in the third period. They never really threatened, including on a late power play chance after a slashing call for Penguins forward Anthony Angello on Rasmus Ristolainen.

There's no singular issue as to what this team needs to do to get back into the win column.

---

The Sabres will get one more chance on their homestand to snag a point or two before they hit the road again. Buffalo will face the Washington Capitals back at KeyBank Center on Monday night.

We'll get things started at 6 p.m. ET, as Schopp and the Bulldog take you through the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show. Puck drop is slated for just after 7 p.m. ET on the radio flagship of the Sabres - WGR Sports Radio 550.

## Losing streak reaches 10 for Sabres in loss to Pittsburgh

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

March 13, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres and Pittsburgh Penguins met for the second-straight game at KeyBank Center on Saturday night. Buffalo was on the wrong end of a 5-2 score on Thursday night.

The outcome for the Sabres on Saturday was much of the same, with the Penguins shutting out Buffalo by a 3-0 score, and sending them to a 10th-straight loss.

Buffalo had the first power play chance of the game thanks to a Kris Letang hooking penalty nearly halfway through the first period. The team failed to register a shot on goal during their power play, while the Penguins had one shorthanded opportunity.

The Penguins outshot Buffalo in the first period, with Carter Hutton stopping all 10 Pittsburgh shots on goal. Meanwhile, Casey DeSmith made six saves against the Sabres.

Pittsburgh took advantage of their first power play chance of the night late in the second period to take a 1-0 lead. Jake Guentzel scored his 10th goal of the season after a pass from Evgeni Malkin along the half wall. The game's first goal came with Colin Miller in the penalty box for hooking.

Miller was penalized for high sticking midway through the third period to give Pittsburgh their second power play of the game. However, the Sabres were able to kill off the shorthanded opportunity with Tobias Rieder being credited with a scoring chance.

Anthony Angello was penalized for slashing, allowing the Sabres their second man advantage of the game. However, Buffalo recorded just one shot on goal and failed to score.

A pair of empty net goals by the Penguins helped seal the victory.

First, Sidney Crosby scored his 10th goal of the season on a shot from his own defensive zone that made it 2-0 with less than a minute remaining in regulation. Letang was credited with the only assist on the score.

Mark Jankowski scored his second goal of the season with just seconds left to finish the scoring at 3-0 for Pittsburgh.

---

### GAME SUMMARY

Goal Summary:

First Period:

BUF: NONE

PIT: NONE

Second Period

BUF: NONE

PIT: 16:37 - Jake Guentzel (10) PPG (Evgeni Malkin, Kris Letang)

Third Period

BUF: NONE

PIT: 19:07 - Sidney Crosby (10) ENG (Kris Letang); 19:44 - Mark Jankowski (2) ENG (Unassisted)

---

## Penalty Summary:

### First Period:

BUF: NONE

PIT: 8:40 - Kris Letang (Hooking - 2 min.)

### Second Period:

BUF: 16:24 - Colin Miller (Hooking - 2 min.)

PIT: NONE

### Third Period

BUF: 10:21 - Colin Miller (High sticking - 2 min.)

PIT: 12:07 - Anthony Angello (Slashing - 2 min.)

---

## STATS OF THE GAME:

---

### Losi and Gangi Three Stars of the Game:

- 1.) Jake Guentzel - PIT
- 2.) Casey DeSmith - PIT
- 3.) Carter Hutton - BUF

---

## What's Next

The Sabres remain at home on Monday night when they welcome the Washington Capitals to downtown Buffalo. The puck drops just after 7p.m. ET on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sports Radio 550. Mike Schopp and the Bulldog will bring you the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 6 p.m. ET.

## **Sabres do more line shuffling due to injuries**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 13, 2021

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) – The Buffalo Sabres bring a nine-game losing streak into Saturday's game against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Yes, Buffalo has lost nine in a row, but the NHL recognizes it as only one loss because Buffalo got a shootout point in Philadelphia on Tuesday against the Flyers. The NHL calls it a nine game winless streak.

With Jack Eichel out for the "foreseeable future" and Dylan Cozens day-to-day, Riley Sheahan centered the line with Taylor Hall and Sam Reinhart in Friday's practice.

After Cozens was hit by Zach Aston-Reese and Rasmus Dahlin went down briefly with a dirty knee-on-knee hit from former Sabres defenseman Chad Ruhwedel, Ralph Krueger declared war for this game.

"We need to prepare ourselves for a reaction," the Sabres head coach said following Thursday night's loss. "We've got Pittsburgh again in two days. The hits on Dylan and Rasmus, they're boiling the blood right now. We just need to show a reaction."

Rasmus Ristolainen missed Friday with a maintenance day and will play. With Ristolainen still weakened from his bout with COVID-19, Krueger was asked if it would be better to give him a game off instead of playing him the 23 minutes he got in each of the last two games.

"You tell him that," Krueger joked. "No way, not with 'Risto'. He's such a competitor, and as a coach, we leave that up to him. He's a leader on this team now. He's evolved over the last two years to an important leader, a voice in the locker room, and with Jake McCabe out of the lineup, I can't imagine 'Risto' not being there."

Despite going eight straight games without a power play goal, which covers an 0-for-13 stretch, Buffalo is still fifth in the NHL at 27.9%. The penalty killing had gone six straight games with giving up a goal, but has given up one in each of the last two games. The Sabres rank 12th in the league at 80.7%.

By the way, those numbers should have the Sabres fighting for a playoff spot, not 30th with a points percentage of .320.

The Sabres haven't made the playoffs in nine years. Only the 2013-14 team had a worse point percentage at .317. That was the first year of the tank, which netted them Sam Reinhart with the second overall pick.

The Sabres have given up five goals in each of its last five games.

Carter Hutton gets the call in net. He's 5-1-0 against the Penguins with a 1.95 goals-against average and a .940 save percentage. This season, Hutton's overall numbers are 1-7-1 with a 3.40 goals-against average and a .883 save percentage.

Over 43 games, Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin have killed the Sabres, and Thursday was no different when they combined for three points. Crosby has 21 goals and 43 assists for 64 points against the blue and gold, while Malkin has netted 19 goals and 38 assists for 57 points.

Overall, Malkin has points in six-straight games, picking up nine points. Crosby has points in five in a row, picking up seven points.

Jake Guentzel has four goals and seven assists for 11 points in 11 games. Kasperii Kapanen has five goals and seven assists for 12 points in his last 12 games.

The Penguins' special teams are usually pretty mediocre, but they were very good on Thursday. Overall, they're 23rd in both the power play and the penalty kill.

Pittsburgh has four-straight wins and has five wins in six games. The only game they didn't score four or five goals was in the loss to the Flyers.

Casey DeSmith gets the call in goal for Pittsburgh. He's 5-2-0 with a 2.52 goals-against average and a .901 save percentage. He's played two games against the Sabres and one was a shutout.

He's only played in one of the Pens' last six games, giving up one goal in a win over the New York Rangers.

Join Brian Koziol and me at 6 p.m. EST for pregame coverage on WGR when we'll have Krueger, Sheahan, Casey Mittelstadt and Tage Thompson.

## **Jack Eichel out 'for the foreseeable future' with upper-body injury**

By Brayton J. Wilson

WGR 550

March 13, 2021

The injury news for the Buffalo Sabres went from bad to worse on Saturday just hours before the team's evening matchup with the Pittsburgh Penguins at KeyBank Center.

While addressing the media Saturday morning, Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger gave an update on team captain Jack Eichel, who has missed the past two games with an upper-body injury.

"I would say he's out for the foreseeable future, and because of the nature of the injury, we can't put a fixed date on that. We're expecting it to go on a little longer."

Krueger also added that the team does not know for certain what the timeframe is on Eichel's recovery.

Eichel was in a puck battle along the end-boards on Sunday afternoon in the third period against the Islanders when he awkwardly got his head caught along the glass, causing him some discomfort in his neck area.

While the nature of his injury has not been categorized, he was unable to finish the team's road trip in Philadelphia just two days later against the Flyers. He then sought a second opinion from outside New York State, which then put his timeline for a possible return at the minimum of 7-10 days.

Former TSN hockey analyst and NHL defenseman Aaron Ward tweeted shortly after the Krueger conference call on Saturday that he's hearing Eichel is expected to miss around eight weeks of action. If that timeline is correct and the team expects Eichel to return eight weeks from now, that would put his return on the final day of the regular season, May 8, when Buffalo wraps up the 2020-21 campaign against the Penguins.

The 2020-21 season has been a struggle for the 24-year-old centerman. Eichel has just two goals this season after being on a 43-goal pace the year before. Eichel's 16 assists this season still lead the team, but he has been hampered with a pair of other injuries throughout the season, dating as far back as before training camp.

Saturday's news is tough for the Sabres with injuries continuing to pile up for a team that has lost nine-consecutive games.

Buffalo has already been without Zemgus Girgensons (hamstring) for the entirety of the season, while defenseman Jake McCabe (knee) and Will Borgen (arm), as well as goalie Linus Ullmark (lower-body injury) have also been dealt longer-term injuries.

The Sabres will also be without 20-year-old rookie forward Dylan Cozens on Saturday. He suffered an injury in the third period of Thursday's game against the Penguins when taking a hit from forward Zach Aston-Reese.

"Dylan Cozens remains day-to-day, he will not be able to play today," Krueger said Saturday morning. "Because of the nature of the injury, we'll be looking at that day-to-day."

Cozens' first season in the NHL has been an impressive one with three goals and two assists for five points in 20 games played. He took Eichel's spot on the top line on Tuesday between Taylor Hall on the left wing and Sam Reinhart on the right side.

Faceoff on Saturday is set for 7 p.m. EST with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show set for 6 p.m. EST with Brian Koziol on WGR Sports Radio 550.

## **Sabres want to find out what they have in goalie Jonas Johansson**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 14, 2021

BUFFALO – Instead of relying on veteran goalie Carter Hutton last week, the Sabres turned to Jonas Johansson, starting the rookie three straight games.

Johansson even played against the Pittsburgh Penguins, a heavyweight team Hutton has dominated over his eight-year career.

With starting goalie Linus Ullmark injured, the Sabres wanted Johansson, a third-round pick in 2014, to experience a heavy NHL workload.

"It was good for him to see a few games in a row and also to see different opposition and get used to that, playing on the road, playing at home, dealing with everything that it takes to be a goalie in the National Hockey League," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said on a Zoom call Friday. "I know he'll come out richer for this experience."

Johansson, 25, lost all three games, posting a 3.93 goals-against average and an .864 save percentage. Still, the Swede, an AHL All-Star with the Rochester Americans last season, liked being thrown into the fire.

"This is a pretty tight schedule, but I like the challenge," Johansson said Friday. "I feel ready for it. I feel strong and capable of doing it. It's a good test. ... I'm embracing it. I'm liking it."

Despite some struggles this season, Johansson possesses a strong upside. He could have a future with the hapless Sabres, who have lost 10 straight games entering Monday's contest against the Washington Capitals at KeyBank Center. The graying Hutton, 35, likely won't be re-signed following this season.

Hutton, who played in Saturday's 3-0 loss to the Penguins, understands why the Sabres want to examine Johansson.

"I've been the guy that was getting games over a guy too, right?" said Hutton, who stopped 31 of the 32 shots he faced Saturday. "So I take it as it is. I'm a pro and I'm gonna support J.J."

Johansson said he enjoys the relationship he and Hutton have developed over the past year.

"Hutts has been just terrific," said Johansson, who played his first six NHL games last season. "I love being a goalie partner with him. He's an experienced guy, funny guy. He makes me feel confident and feel good. He supports me and I support him. I think we go really well together and I enjoy working and playing with him. I think he does the same with me. It's just positive being with Hutts."

Hutton said he has been "pretty clear" in relaying his expectations to Johansson and assistant coach Mike Bales, who's in charge of the goaltenders.

"There's times where, of course, I want to play and I'm gonna show that," Hutton said. "I'm not going to pout, I'm just going to come back to work and work harder and when I do get a chance to play, try to show that I'm competing and ready to play."

Krueger said the Sabres planned to split goaltending duties against the Penguins and "evaluate out of that."

So Hutton, who owns an awful 1-8-1 record this season, could earn more playing time. He looked sharp throughout Saturday's game, his first start in a week. The Sabres play four times this week, including a road game Tuesday against the New Jersey Devils.

Johansson looked shaky while stopping 24 shots in Thursday's 5-2 loss, allowing a soft breakaway goal to Brandon Tanev. He was also deep in his net when Jake Guentzel converted Sidney Crosby's pass from behind the next from the left circle.

Long before Friday's practice started, Johansson was on the ice with Bales, Hutton and Sabres center Curtis Lazar working on a similar situation.

"We took the opportunity today to grow with that," said Johansson, who has a 0-4-1 mark in six games this season. "Take those moments when we have them to grow and be better."

At the same time, Johansson knows he can't let subpar outings torment him.

"It's important to analyze the game and then just let it go," he said. "Take the positives with you, take the learners with you and when we have the opportunity to practice on the ice – whether it's a morning skate or a practice day like today – just be really sharp and do what I need to do to be prepared."

## **Sabres continue tailspin, lose 10th straight: 'It's just not happening'**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 14, 2021

BUFFALO – At some point, whether it's Monday, Tuesday or even May 8, when their disastrous season will mercifully end, the hapless Sabres should win another game.

But right now, the thought of the Sabres earning a victory almost seems preposterous.

Saturday's 3-0 defeat to the Pittsburgh Penguins extended their losing streak to 10 games. Incredibly, they've lost 14 of their 16 outings since their COVID-19 pause ended.

"I don't know if I've ever been in this kind of funk at this level," Sabres goalie Carter Hutton said on a Zoom call.

Overall, the NHL's worst team has compiled a wretched 6-15-4 record this season.

"It's really frustrating," Hutton said. "You play this game and it's short, right? I think now I'm 35 years old and you think about, 'Oh, you're always gonna win or be part of something like that.' ...

"My biggest thing is trying to get guys just to buy in here. It's not up to anybody else but the players. We're the ones that play the game. Lots of people take different heat for it but it's up to us as a collective group and it's just not happening."

The Sabres, an awful five-on-five team most nights, actually played well at even strength, limiting the Penguins' chances. But their special teams, about their only bright spots this season, betrayed them inside KeyBank Center.

Their power play couldn't convert its two chances and their penalty killing allowed Jake Guentzel's goal 16:37 into the second period, the only score before the Penguins added two late empty-netters.

"What was really strong and our strongest side, actually, over most of the season has cost us the game tonight," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said.

He added: "The five-on-five game, just purely with the effort and the way we played, I'm quite pleased, but, of course, with the end result not."

The Sabres also wasted a terrific effort from Hutton, who made 31 saves in his first start in a week.

"He was outstanding today," Krueger said. "We're excited to see that happen and he looked to be in a good groove. The break here he had seemed to increase his energy. We got to give him some goals. I see a few of Carter's games like this where we just didn't create anything offensively. He's got to be frustrated by that, but we're pleased with that performance."

Hutton and Jonas Johansson, the Sabres' backup goalies this season, have earned just one win between them. Hutton won way back on Jan. 18.

"It (stinks) losing, everyone knows it," Sabres defenseman Brandon Montour said. "Obviously, it's tough here right now, but the only way to get out of it is the guys in the group right now and, I mean, no excuses. That's, what, 10 in a row now?"

"Close or not, you know, they had two empty nets tonight, but we didn't score a goal. So we're not going to win games not scoring goals."

The Sabres have been shut out four times during their 16-game tailspin.

## **Injuries to Dylan Cozens, Jack Eichel force Sabres to promote Riley Sheahan**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 14, 2021

BUFFALO – The Sabres' center depth has become so thin that Riley Sheahan, a fourth-line winger most of the season, centered the top line in Saturday's 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Sheahan, 29, played center almost exclusively before joining the Sabres this season. When he pivoted the No. 1 trio on short notice after captain Jack Eichel was a late scratch Feb. 25, he scored just minutes into the game.

So Sheahan, the 21st overall pick by the Detroit Red Wings in 2010, feels comfortable in the role. But less than halfway through the season, the hapless Sabres have a checker they brought to training camp on a tryout centering Taylor Hall and Sam Reinhart.

It's not exactly ideal, especially for a team that lost its 10th straight game Saturday.

The upper-body injury Eichel suffered Sunday afternoon will sideline him for "the foreseeable future," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. Meanwhile, rookie Dylan Cozens, who subbed for Eichel, suffered an upper-body injury Thursday and is day to day, Krueger said.

Sheahan, who has compiled three goals and five points in 25 games this season, knows he must adapt when he moves up to the top line. At the same time, he wants to showcase the style that has made him an effective.

"It's important to try to keep your game consistent," Sheahan said on a Zoom call Saturday morning from KeyBank Center. "I mean, I know what I have to do, but I think just being a little bit more aware of making plays and trying to sort of feed off them, get to open areas and think a little more offensively is something that's fun.

"But just being conscious of the D-zone, being on the right side of the puck and winning my battles try to get the puck into their hands because they're so dynamic."

Sheahan has morphed into one of the Sabres' most reliable and versatile forwards. His checking prowess has helped transform their penalty killing. The Sabres rank fifth in the NHL after finishing 30th last year.

"Riley coming up the lineup, it's one of the beauties of Riley Sheahan," Krueger said. "He's just such a good team player, solid, strong skater with a good vision of the game and he definitely helps solidify the defensive side of any line he plays with but he can add to the offense. He's been a real pleasant surprise and a utility kind of forward that every team needs a few of."

Sheahan's time in Buffalo could be brief. He signed a one-year, \$700,000 contract following his impressive camp. He might draw interest from a contender before the April 12 trade deadline or as an unrestricted free agent following the season.

The native of nearby St. Catharines, Ontario, has played for five teams in the last four seasons. He spent last year with the Edmonton Oilers.

"It wasn't the ideal offseason in terms of signing and whatnot, but I just try to come in here and do what I can and sort of build on the stuff that I did last year on the PK and things like that, try to take it to next level," Sheahan said. "We got a great group, you're playing with great players every night. Just try to bring energy ... and obviously things aren't ideal right now, but I just try to do what I can do bring positivity to the room."

—

The Sabres recalled defenseman Brandon Davidson from the taxi squad prior to the game and sent defensemen Henri Jokiharju to the taxi squad for the second time in a week.

Jokiharju, who played all 69 games last season, has sat out four of the last five games.

Davidson played his fifth game this season, mostly skating beside Colin Miller.

—

Sabres winger Tobias Rieder returned after being scratched for Thursday's 5-2 loss to the Penguins. The German skated at right wing beside center Eric Staal and Victor Olofsson.

## **Sabres captain Jack Eichel to be out for ‘foreseeable future’**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 13, 2021

Captain Jack Eichel’s upper-body injury will sideline him for “the foreseeable future,” Buffalo Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said this morning.

“Because of the nature of the injury, we can’t put a fixed date,” Krueger said on a Zoom call. “We’re expecting it to, yeah, go on a little longer.”

Krueger said earlier this week Eichel, 24, would miss a minimum of seven to 10 days.

Eichel appeared to hurt his neck when Casey Cizikas hit him behind the net late in Sunday afternoon’s 5-2 loss to the New York Islanders. The NBC broadcast showed him in discomfort on the bench moments later.

Krueger wouldn’t say if Eichel, who has missed the last two games, needs rest or surgery to recover.

“I’d rather not speak on it,” Krueger said.

When a lower-body injury forced the Sabres to scratch Eichel minutes before their game Feb. 25, Krueger said the center hurt himself in the warm-up. Eichel, however, later revealed he was injured Feb. 23 in the Sabres’ 4-1 win over the New Jersey Devils.

“I think we had some misunderstandings the last time around,” Krueger said. “I’ll be honest with you, there was a lot of misunderstandings in the way we spoke about injuries so far this season. I always tell you the truth and what I know or I don’t tell you. And in this case, I don’t tell you.”

Losing Eichel, the Sabres’ leading scorer with 18 points in 21 games, for an extended period of time would be a massive blow.

The Sabres have fallen apart over the last three weeks, losing nine straight games and 13 of 15 since their COVID-19 pause ended.

Is Krueger concerned Eichel’s injury could be season-ending?

“My focus 100 percent is always on the players that are here and the lineup that is available to us as coaches,” he said. “We are excited about the challenge that we have and believe we have a strong lineup to deal with the adversity. Of course, Jack Eichel is an absolute elite player in this league who drives, when he’s healthy, a lot of the power that makes the Sabres a threat to the other teams on a given night. Now, we need to work together.”

In other news, Krueger said the upper-body injury center Dylan Cozens suffered in Thursday’s 5-2 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins will keep him out of tonight’s rematch at KeyBank Center. The rookie filled in for Eichel on the No. 1 line earlier this week.

Krueger also said defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen had a maintenance day Friday and will play tonight. The Finn has played eight straight games after recovering from a difficult battle with COVID-19.

“There’s no way we could take him out of a game,” Krueger said. “He is too competitive for that. But it was good for him to have a day of rest and we’re just taking care of his body and making sure that his batteries are loaded up for tonight.”

Update: The Sabres this afternoon recalled defenseman Brandon Davidson from the taxi squad and sent defensemen Henri Jokiharju to the practice group. Jokiharju has played only one of the last four games.

## **Three Observations: Sabres blanked by Penguins 3-0**

By Adam Unger

WKBW

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres' winless streak continued on Saturday night. The Penguins picked up two empty netters on the way to a 3-0 win. The lone goal scored against Carter Hutton was credited to Jake Guentzel on a Pittsburgh power play. The Sabres' next game is on Monday against the Washington Capitals.

Three Observations from Saturday's game:

### Double digits

When the Sabres got out to a slow start following their COVID-19 pause, I don't think anyone expected them to reach a skid of nearly unprecedented proportions. It's been 10 games since Buffalo won. They've gone 0-8-2 in that span. No amount of bite, fight, or grit has been able to turn things around for the blue & gold.

The injury bug only makes things worse; Jack Eichel's extended absence, along with no Dylan Cozens, forces the Sabres to run incredibly shallow up the middle. The injury report at center is nearly as extensive as their blue line. It's hard to imagine a circumstance in which things could actually get worse after a 10-game skid. But that's the territory they're entering.

### Make a decision on Mittelstadt

The 2021 campaign has been a surprisingly solid one for Casey Mittelstadt. Any chance he's gotten, he's seized it. The former first round pick should continue to see time with Jack Eichel out, and quite frankly, should've become a mainstay a while ago. The issue now is where he plays at even strength as opposed to the power play.

Head coach Ralph Krueger has reiterated that Mittelstadt's trajectory is on the wing instead of at center. The strength and sound defensive play were both traits that he lacked, which led to him ending his 2019-20 season in Rochester. And yet, he's at the dot for special teams situations. It doesn't make any sense.

### Special teams slump

Before the wheels completely fell off, Buffalo could at least hang its hat on both its power play and its penalty kill. Pittsburgh packs a lot of firepower on their top two lines, and a lot of grit on their bottom two lines. But both of Buffalo's special teams units appear to have gone cold.

You could attribute a part of that to the aforementioned injuries both on the blue line and up the middle. But earlier in the season when either Taylor Hall or Jack Eichel was briefly absent, the Sabres could still hum with the man advantage. It wasn't enough to get the Sabres many wins before. But this team's lone strength seems to have gone away.

## **Krueger: Jack Eichel 'out for the foreseeable future'; Dylan Cozens day-to-day**

By Paul Ross

WKBW

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Buffalo Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger says captain Jack Eichel is out for the foreseeable future.

Krueger also added that Sabres forward Dylan Cozens is out day-to-day.

Eichel has missed the last two games after he got hurt last Sunday in a game against the New York Islanders.

Cozens got hurt in Thursday night's game against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Krueger also added on Saturday that defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen will be back in the lineup for their game against the Penguins.

The Sabres are 0-7-2 in their last nine games.

## **Sabres offense struggles in 3-0 loss to Penguins**

By Paul Stockman

WIVB

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Make it ten straight losses for the Buffalo Sabres. They were blanked once again thanks in part to good goaltending and in part to a struggling offense.

Carter Hutton did his job. The Sabres goaltender stood on his head at certain points in a game where the team was once again outshot by the opponent. On paper, the numbers don't look as bad. The Penguins only shot the puck four more times than Buffalo, but things still didn't seem to come together offensively as the Sabres were shut out for the third time in the last ten games.

"It sucks losing," Brandon Montour said. "Everyone knows it. Obviously it's tough here now. The only way to get out of it is with the guys here right now and no excuses. That's what, 10 in a row right now? Close or not, they had two empty nets tonight, we didn't score a goal so we're not going to win a game not scoring goals."

Buffalo held them off the board for the entire first period, and the Penguins only scored thanks to a Power Play goal in the 2nd. They added two empty net goals in the final minutes to increase the lead.

"We're in this as a team, it's just, it's frustrating," Hutton said. "I don't know if I've ever been in this kind of funk at this level. It's hard to take. I'm a pro. We are going to come to work, but we can't seem to put it together and it's really frustrating."

Buffalo moves to 6-16-4 and they face the Washington Capitals on Monday night at 7.

## **Eichel out for the foreseeable future, Cozens remains day-to-day**

By Troy Licastro

WIVB

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) — Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger started this morning's press conference with an injury update on two of the team's key players.

Krueger said captain Jack Eichel will be out for the foreseeable future and center Dylan Cozens remains day-to-day.

Due to the nature of both their injuries, Krueger told members of the media there is no fixed date when either will return.

When asked what his level of concern is regarding Eichel's return this season, Krueger said, "of course, Jack Eichel is an absolute elite player in this league who drives, when he's healthy, a lot of the power that makes the Sabres a threat to other teams on a given night. Now we need to work together, but my focus is truly from here forward is on the group that's here."

## **Sabres' Cozens still day-to-day; Amerks unavailable to Sabres due to COVID-19 issues**

By Julianne Pelusi

WGRZ

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sabres rookie forward Dylan Cozens is still considered "day-to-day" and was still being evaluated on Friday, according to coach Ralph Krueger.

Cozens is dealing with an upper body injury after a hit by forward Zach Aston-Reese when the Sabres lost to the Pittsburgh Penguins 5-2 on Thursday night.

Sabres defenseman Colin Miller fought Aston-Reese following the hit, which Krueger and forward Victor Olofsson expressed they thought was dirty after the game.

"Looking at it now it's a push in the numbers in a real vulnerable dangerous spot. I think it has to be a penalty," Krueger said on Thursday night.

"[It's] really difficult when when you see a player exposed like that and you give them a push right in the numbers at that distance. You know the danger of that as a player."

Olofsson added: "It was kind of a bad hit. [Cozens] was in a vulnerable place and it was a really unnecessary and dangerous play. I don't know what the status, with Dylan, but it didn't look good."

Krueger added captain Jack Eichel, who appeared to injure his neck on Sunday against the New York Islanders, is still on a minimum seven to ten day time table for a return.

Eichel has missed two games since Sunday, and Cozens has replaced him, centering the top line both Tuesday against the Philadelphia Flyers and Thursday against the Penguins, flanked by Taylor Hall and Sam Reinhart.

No players from the Rochester Americans will be available for the Sabres, as the team is dealing with COVID-19 issues. The Amerks game against the Utica Comets, scheduled for Saturday, has been postponed "out of an abundance of caution in regard to league COVID-19 protocols," the team posted on its Twitter account on Friday.

"They are not available to us. But they're going through the same protocol that we did here just, you know, we hope it doesn't affect the whole team," Krueger said.

The Sabres return to action, hosting the Penguins again, at 7 p.m. Saturday.

## DeSmith gets shutout, Penguins send Sabres to 10th straight loss

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

March 13, 2021

**BUFFALO** -- Casey DeSmith made 24 saves for the Pittsburgh Penguins, who handed the Buffalo Sabres their 10th straight loss, 3-0 at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

"It feels good," DeSmith said. "Obviously the win is most important, but the shutout's even better."

It was DeSmith's first shutout of the season and fifth in the NHL.

Jake Guentzel, Sidney Crosby and Mark Jankowski scored, and Kris Letang had two assists for the Penguins (17-9-1), who swept the two-game set with their fifth straight win. Pittsburgh defeated Buffalo 5-2 on Thursday.

"We're definitely trending in the right direction," Penguins defenseman Brian Dumoulin said. "We've been playing good hockey and putting ourselves in good spots ... As you can see, we've been in every game, and a couple of these have been some tight games going into the third period. I think we've been getting better in the third period, trying to attack them, play with the lead."

Carter Hutton made 31 saves for the Sabres (6-16-4), who are 0-8-2 in their past 10 games.

"It's hard to describe right now, truthfully," Hutton said. "I don't know what's going on. Obviously I'm accountable too. We're in this as a team, right? It's frustrating. I don't know if I've ever been in this kind of funk at this level. It's hard to take. I'm a pro, we're going to come to work, but we just can't seem to put it together. It's really frustrating."

The Sabres have been shut out three times and outscored 40-17 during the streak.

"I thought we lost our opportunity early in the second period," Buffalo coach Ralph Krueger said. "They seemed to fall back a little on their heels. That's when we got the majority of our shots and were not able to feel and capture that moment. I'm pleased with the defensive effort, but offensively, and with the puck at times, we seemed to just be too complicated, and I'm not pleased with that part of our game. We need to be able to make plays. We've got a lot of guys who have a higher level offensively in them, and we've got to continue to push for that to show itself in the games."

Guentzel gave the Penguins a 1-0 lead on the power play when he swatted in the rebound of his shot in front of the net at 16:37 of the second period.

"That's what we've got to be. We've got to be able to play in this kind of game, these low-scoring games," Guentzel said. "You've got to be able to stay patient, not be high-risk. It's good to find different ways to win. It's nice to know we can be low-scoring and defend hard. And obviously Casey played a great game tonight."

Crosby scored into an empty net at 19:07 to make it 2-0, and Jankowski scored an empty-net goal at 19:44 for the 3-0 final.

"It [stinks] losing, everyone knows it," Sabres defenseman Brandon Montour said. "Obviously it's tough here right now, but the only way to get out of it is the guys in the group right now and, I mean, no excuses. That's what, 10 in a row now? Close or not, you know, they had two empty nets tonight, but we didn't score a goal. We're not going to win games not scoring goals."

NOTES: Evgeni Malkin had an assist on Guentzel's goal, extending his point streak to seven games (three goals, seven assists), his first seven-game streak since Nov. 13-24, 2018 (two goals, eight assists). ... The Penguins have a 14-game point streak in Buffalo (12-0-2). ... The Sabres are 0-for-15 on the power play in their past nine games.

## **Eichel out for 'foreseeable future' for Sabres with upper-body injury**

NHL.com

March 13, 2021

Jack Eichel will be "out for the foreseeable future" for the Buffalo Sabres because of an upper-body injury.

Eichel was reevaluated after not playing in a 5-4 shootout loss to the Philadelphia Flyers on Tuesday. The center was expected to be out at least 7-10 days.

"I would say he is out for the foreseeable future, and because of the nature of the injury we can't put a fixed date on that," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said Saturday. "We're expecting it to go on a little longer."

Eichel previously missed two games with a lower-body injury Feb. 25 and Feb. 27. The Buffalo captain was third on the Sabres with 18 points, one behind forwards Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson, and scored two goals in 21 games, the fewest to start his six-season NHL career.

Asked if the injury could keep Eichel out for the rest of the season, Krueger said he wasn't sure.

"I'm being honest with you, we do not know for certain the time frame on it," he said. "We just know that it will be some time here from shorter all the way to what you've already mentioned. Nobody in the National Hockey League speaks specifically about injuries unless they're season-ending, and if it did become that we would be able to address it in a different way."

The Sabres (6-16-4) have been outscored 40-17 during a 10-game losing streak (0-8-2), including a 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday.

Buffalo is 2-12-2 since Feb. 15, when it returned after having six games postponed due to NHL COVID-19 protocols.

"Of course Jack Eichel is an absolute elite player in this league who drives, when he's healthy, a lot of the power that makes the Sabres a threat to other teams on a given night," Krueger said. "Now we need to work together. But my focus truly, truly, from here forward is on the group that's here, on continued growth within this group, and on us playing a really connected game."

NHL.com independent correspondent Heather Engel contributed to this report

## **Buffalo Sabres' Jack Eichel out for 'foreseeable future'; injury not season-ending**

ESPN

March 13, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Buffalo Sabres will be without captain Jack Eichel for what coach Ralph Krueger called "the foreseeable future" in delivering yet another blow to a team in the midst of a nine-game skid.

The injury is not considered season-ending, though Krueger on Saturday was unable to provide a fixed timetable on how much time Eichel will miss.

"An injury of this nature needs more assessment and more time to understand it," he said. "We just know that it will be some time here from shorter all the way to what you've already mentioned [season-ending], but it's somewhere in between that."

The update came after Eichel traveled to see a specialist over the past two days to further determine the severity of the injury. Under the NHL's COVID-19 protocol rules, Eichel is required to spend seven days in quarantine as a result of the trip, meaning he will miss at least Buffalo's next four games.

He has already missed two games since he was checked into the end boards by Casey Cizikas in the closing minutes of a 5-2 loss at the New York Islanders on Sunday. Eichel went to the bench, where he was spotted wincing in pain while flexing his neck.

The Sabres, who host the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday night, are in free fall. Buffalo (6-15-4) ranks last in the league in wins and on an 0-7-2 skid, putting the team already in danger of extending its playoff drought to an NHL-record-matching 10th season.

Eichel's latest injury is separate from the previous two that have severely hampered his production this season.

He missed the first week of training camp after suffering an upper-body injury during a precamp on-ice workout at the Sabres' practice facility. A person with direct knowledge of what happened told The Associated Press on Saturday that Eichel sustained a rib injury during a workout with Matt Ellis, the team's director of player development.

Eichel also missed two games last month with a lower-body injury.

A year after scoring a career-best 36 goals in 68 games, the five-time 20-plus goal-scorer has been limited to two goals and 16 assists in 21 games this year. He had not scored in 13 games before being hurt.

Eichel's scoring troubles reflect that of the Sabres, who rank 30th in the 31-team league in averaging 2.24 goals a game, and last in having scored 34 times in five-on-five situations.

His extended absence represents the latest setback to a team that's lurched from one crisis to another through the first two months of the season, and led to questions regarding Krueger's job security two years into his job.

Buffalo's schedule was placed on pause for two weeks after a COVID-19 outbreak struck the team in early February, during which seven players and Krueger were affected. The pause resulted in the Sabres facing a constricted schedule in which they are squeezing in their final 46 games over 83 days.

Injuries have become an issue.

Starting goalie Linus Ullmark is still weeks away from recovering from a lower-body injury last month. And the Sabres are also missing two key defensemen, including Jake McCabe, who sustained a season-ending knee injury last month.

Rookie center Dylan Cozens is the latest to be sidelined. Krueger said Cozens will not play Saturday and is listed day to day with an upper-body injury.

Cozens was hurt while crashing into the boards following a midice check from Pittsburgh's Zach Anton-Reese early in the third period of a 5-2 loss to the Penguins on Thursday. Cozens had just released the puck and appeared to hit his head while striking the boards.

Cozens has three goals and two assists in 20 games, and had been elevated to playing on Buffalo's top line in place of Eichel.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

## **Sabres captain Jack Eichel out for 'foreseeable future'**

By Hayley McGoldrick

Sportsnet

March 13, 2021

Buffalo Sabres captain Jack Eichel is out for the "foreseeable future" because of an upper-body injury, according to head coach Ralph Krueger.

Eichel last played Sunday against the New York Islanders, suffering the injury after being checked by Casey Cizikas.

"An injury of this nature just needs more assessment and more time to understand it. I'm being honest with you: We do not know for certain the time frame," Krueger said of Eichel's injury.

Dylan Cozens is also out against the Penguins on Saturday as the rookie is listed as day-to-day after an injury sustained from a hit by Pittsburgh's Zach Aston-Reese on Thursday night.

Cozens has three goals and two assists in 20 games played.

Eichel, who was in the midst of a 13-game scoring drought with just two goals this season, had netted an assist in each of his last four games played before suffering the injury.

## **Coach: Sabres' Jack Eichel out for 'foreseeable future'**

Yahoo! Sports

March 13, 2021

An upper-body injury will keep Buffalo Sabres captain Jack Eichel out for the "foreseeable future," coach Ralph Krueger said Saturday.

The 24-year-old Eichel last played Sunday in a 5-2 road loss to the New York Islanders. Krueger has declined to offer more specifics about the injury, but Eichel appeared to hurt his neck after a check into the boards by Casey Cizikas late in the third period.

Now, the Sabres, who have a league-low 16 points, are left to hope that Eichel will be able to return this season. A recent out-of-state medical visit upped the initial timeline from seven to 10 days to indefinite.

"An injury of this nature just needs more assessment and more time to understand it," Krueger said. "I'm being honest with you; we don't know for certain the timeframe on it. We just know that it will be some time here from shorter all the way to (season ending), but it's somewhere in between that. Nobody in the National Hockey League speaks specifically about injuries unless season ending and if it did become that we would be able to address it in a different way."

Eichel missed time in training camp with an upper-body injury and missed two games in February with a lower-body injury.

He has just two goals in 21 games, although his 16 assists are tops on the team.

Eichel recorded a career-high 36 goals to go along with team-best totals in assists (42) and points (78) in 68 games last season. He also pieced together a 17-game point streak during the campaign.

He is in the midst of the third season of an eight-year, \$80 million contract signed prior to the 2018-19 season.

Eichel has collected 355 points (139 goals, 216 assists) in 375 career games since being selected by the Sabres with the second overall pick of the 2015 NHL Draft.

The Sabres are set to host the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday night.

## 5 takeaways | Special teams falter in shutout loss to Penguins

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 13, 2021

Carter Hutton stopped all but one of the 31 shots he faced, but the Buffalo Sabres offense was shut out in a 3-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

The loss extended Buffalo's winless streak to 10 games (0-8-2). Hutton, who has started five of those games, said afterward that it may be as difficult a team stretch as he has experienced in the NHL.

"It's hard to describe right now, truthfully," Hutton said.

Sabres coach Ralph Krueger echoed the goaltender's sentiment.

"I really enjoy challenges as a leader, but this is one of the toughest that I've seen," Krueger said.

"We feel like we have a group that's extremely engaged and we come into a game day like today with a good spirit in the morning, we set the game up and somehow we're just not able to push it over the line offensively."

Here are five takeaways from the game.

### 1. Penguins win on special teams

The Sabres were able to keep pace with the Penguins in what was a low-event contest at even strength. The Penguins held slight edges in shot attempts (44-41) and scoring chances (19-18) at 5-on-5, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

Special teams were the difference. Jake Guentzel put the Penguins on the board just 10 seconds into their first power play of the night, batting in his own rebound with 3:23 remaining in the second period. The other two Penguins goals were scored into an empty net during the final minute of regulation.

Buffalo went 0-for-2 on the power play, falling to 0-for-15 over the past nine games.

"The power play, I thought, needed to create a lot more and was very impatient," Krueger said. "They were pressuring us and we were hurrying it."

### 2. DeSmith shuts the door

When the Sabres did generate chances, Casey DeSmith was there to shut the door. DeSmith made 24 saves for his first shutout of the season, including a swiping glove save on a put-back attempt by Brandon Montour that could have tied the game during the third period.

"It sucks losing, everyone knows it," Montour said. "Obviously, it's tough here right now, but the only way to get out of it is the guys in the group right now and, I mean, no excuses. That's, what, 10 in a row now? Close or not, you know, they had two empty nets tonight, but we didn't score a goal. So, we're not going to win games not scoring goals."

### 3. Hutton steps up in return

The Sabres had given three straight starts to goaltender Jonas Johansson, a decision Krueger said was made deliberately to get a look at the 25-year-old in a condensed setting. Hutton said he supported his younger counterpart while remaining competitive and eager to get back in the net.

The results were positive Saturday. Hutton stopped Teddy Blueger on a shorthanded breakaway during the first period and was steady throughout the 30-save performance.

"I just try to chip away here," Hutton said. "I know that I haven't been good enough lately and it's something that weighs on me, right? I'm a pro, I take pride in competing and hopefully it can just keep rolling forward here and find a way to just be better as a whole."

### 4. Lineup notes

Tobias Rieder stepped back into the lineup after being scratched on Thursday. He joined a line with Victor Olofsson and Eric Staal and tallied a team-high four shots in 13:34. The Sabres held an 11-7 edge in shot attempts with the trio of Rieder, Staal, and Olofsson on the ice at 5-on-5.

Brandon Davidson also joined the lineup on defense in place of Henri Jokiharju, who was loaned to the taxi squad. Davison skated 15:31 and played primarily on a defense pair with Colin Miller.

#### 5. The big picture

The Sabres get a breather on Sunday, then have another daunting week ahead. It begins with back-to-back games, at home against Washington on Monday and in New Jersey on Tuesday.

Coverage on Monday begins at 6:30 p.m. on MSG. Puck drop is scheduled for 7.

## **At The Final Horn: Penguins 3 - Sabres 0**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 13, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres kept it close until the end, but the Pittsburgh Penguins were the only team to find the back of the net as Pittsburgh handed Buffalo a 3-0 loss Saturday night at KeyBank Center.

Carter Hutton was steady in net for Buffalo, making 31 saves.

Jake Guentzel, Sidney Crosby and Mark Jankowski scored for Pittsburgh. Both Crosby and Jankowski scored on an empty net with under a minute remaining in the game. Casey DeSmith made 24 saves to earn his first shutout of the season.

The Sabres are 0-8-2 over their last 10 games and since returning from a two-week COVID-related hiatus on February 15, the team is 2-12-2.

### What happened

No goals were scored in the first period, but Hutton made perhaps the best play of the opening 20 minutes. While the Sabres were on the power play, Hutton stepped up to make a great pad save on Teddy Blueger, who was skating in on a 2-on-1 shorthanded chance with Zach-Aston Reese. Pittsburgh outshot Buffalo 10-6 in the period.

The Penguins scored on the power play with 3:23 left in the second period to make it 1-0. Evgeni Malkin found Guentzel in front, where he won a battle and put the puck in the back of the net.

Malkin has points in 14-consecutive games against Buffalo (7+14), and has 58 points (19+39) in 44 career games overall. He's riding a seven-game point streak (3+7).

Crosby added an empty netter with 52.3 seconds left in regulation and Jankowski added another with 15.3 seconds remaining.

Buffalo went 0-for-2 on the power play and 1-for-2 on the penalty kill.

### Worth mentioning

Before the game, Sabres coach Ralph Krueger announced that captain Jack Eichel will be out for "the foreseeable future" with an upper-body injury.

Eichel sustained the injury during Buffalo's loss to the New York Islanders on March 7. Krueger said Wednesday that Eichel had gone out of state for further assessments.

"Because of the nature of the injury, we can't put a fixed date on that," Krueger said. "We're expecting it to go on a little longer."

Dylan Cozens also missed the game after sustaining an upper-body injury during the third period of Buffalo's game against Pittsburgh on Thursday.

### Coming up

The Sabres' next game is Monday night at home against the Washington Capitals. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. on MSG and WGR 550 with pregame coverage starting at 6:30 on MSG.

That game will open up a back-to-back set for Buffalo. They'll face the New Jersey Devils on the road on Tuesday.

## **Sabres recall Davidson from taxi squad**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 13, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres have recalled defenseman Brandon Davidson from the taxi squad. Defenseman Henri Jokiharju has been loaned the taxi squad.

Davidson, 29, has appeared in four games this season and has recorded five shots on goal. He's averaging 14:56 of ice time per game.

The Sabres host the Pittsburgh Penguins tonight at KeyBank Center. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. on MSG and WGR 550 with pregame coverage on MSG kicking things off at 6:30.

## **Morning Skate | Eichel out for 'foreseeable future' with injury**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 13, 2021

Buffalo Sabres captain Jack Eichel will be out for "the foreseeable future" with an upper-body injury, coach Ralph Krueger announced Saturday.

Eichel sustained the injury during Buffalo's loss to the New York Islanders on March 7. Krueger said Wednesday that Eichel had gone out of state for further assessments.

"Because of the nature of the injury, we can't put a fixed date on that," Krueger said. "We're expecting it to go on a little longer."

The Sabres will also be without rookie forward Dylan Cozens for their game against the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday. Cozens sustained an upper-body injury after being checked into the boards by Penguins forward Zach Aston-Reese during the third period of a 5-2 Pittsburgh win on Thursday.

"He will not be able to play today," Krueger said. "Because of the nature of the injury, we'll be looking at that day to day."

Cozens had slotted in on a line with Taylor Hall and Sam Reinhart during Eichel's absence. Riley Sheahan is expected to jump into that role based on the lines at practice on Friday.

Sheahan attended training camp on a professional tryout and earned a contract thanks in large part to his defensive game and experience on the penalty kill. He has tallied five points (3+2) in 24 games and scored during his previous experience filling in for Eichel against New Jersey on Feb. 25.

"I think it's important to try to keep your game consistent," Sheahan said. "I mean, I know what I have to do, but I think just being a little bit more aware of making plays and trying to sort of feed off [Hall and Reinhart], get to open areas and think a little more offensively is something that's fun."

"But just being conscious of the D-zone, being on the right side of the puck and winning my battles try to get the puck into their hands because they're so dynamic."

The Sabres are looking to snap a nine-game winless streak (0-7-2). Carter Hutton will start in net.

### Scouting the Penguins

Evgeni Malkin extended his point streak to six games (3+6) with his one goal, one assist outing against the Sabres on Thursday. Malkin now has points in 13 straight games against the Sabres.

"I'd say he's up there with being one of the best players in the league, so when he's on, he's dangerous," Sheahan said. "I think just getting in front of him, trying to slow him down, not letting him pick up speed and keep him in the D-zone I think is huge for us. So, just got to focus on those things."

Pittsburgh has won four straight games.

### Tune in

Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m. You can also listen to the game on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.