



Buffalo Sabres

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Bruins bolster playoff push, acquire Taylor Hall from Sabres

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The banged-up Boston Bruins got a boost for their playoff push Monday by acquiring forward Taylor Hall in a trade Monday with the Buffalo Sabres.

The Bruins also added checking line forward Curtis Lazar, who has missed the past six games with an upper body injury. Buffalo acquired fourth-year forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in a deal completed before the NHL's trade deadline.

As part of the deal, the Sabres agreed to retain half the remainder of Hall's one-year, \$8 million salary. The NHL's 2018 MVP was deemed expendable by last-place Buffalo, which is already retooling for beyond this season.

"I still believe in myself as a player. I still feel like I can add things to a team. ... That's what makes me really excited," Hall said. "I really just want to be part of a winning team. However I can do that, I'm all-in."

The Bruins have lost two straight following an 8-1 loss to the Washington Capitals on Sunday. At 21-12-6, they hold the East Division's fourth and final playoff spot, and are four points ahead of the New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers.

Boston has four players on injured reserve, including forward Ondrej Kase and defenseman Brandon Carlo. In the meantime, defensemen Charlie McAvoy missed his fourth game with an upper body injury, and defenseman Matt Grzelcyk is also sidelined.

In a separate trade on Sunday, the Bruins also acquired defenseman Mike Reilly from the Ottawa Senators for a third-round pick.

The Sabres, by comparison, are in sell-off mode with the team all but assured of matching the NHL playoff drought record of 10 seasons. Buffalo traded defenseman Brandon Montour to Florida on Saturday, and previously traded veteran center Eric Staal to Montreal.

The Sabres began sitting out Hall for precautionary reasons since Tuesday in anticipation of a trade.

Hall was the key to the deal because he was considered one of the few remaining impact forwards still on the market. Questions, however, have been raised as to whether his drop in production is the result of the 29-year-old having lost a step or because he's playing on a struggling Sabres team that is 29th in goals-per-game.

Hall, the No. 1 pick in the 2010 draft, was limited to two goals and 17 assists for 19 points in 37 games, and is in the midst of a 16-game goal drought. That's a considerable drop from his 2017-18 MVP season in New Jersey, where he posted career-bests with 39 goals and 93 points in 76 games.

"It was such a whirlwind of a year. It went pretty badly, obviously," Hall said. "It wasn't the season I would have like to have, not even close. These last few days you do some soul-searching, look to what you could do better in the future."

Hall is on to his fourth team in two years. He was traded by New Jersey to Arizona last season, and then became a free agent after negotiations broke down with the Coyotes because of internal turmoil, which led Bill Armstrong taking over as general manager.

Buffalo acquired the 24-year-old Bjork, who had two goals and three assists in 30 games this season, a year after generating a career-best nine goals and 19 points in 58 games. Overall, the 2014 fifth-round draft pick out of Notre Dame has 16 goals and 39 points in 138 career games with Boston.

Little has gone right for Buffalo. Coach Ralph Krueger was fired on March 17, and the Sabres' season was undone by mounting injuries and a pause for two weeks following a COVID-19 outbreak in early February.

Hall was among the most sought forwards on the free agent market in October, and surprised many by signing with Buffalo. He was reunited with Krueger, who played a key role in mentoring Hall during his first three seasons in Edmonton.

Krueger pushed for the signing, making the case to management that Buffalo was one player away from being a contender despite coming off a season in which the team finished 13th in the Eastern Conference and one spot from qualifying for the expanded playoffs.

Hall was initially interested in staying in Buffalo upon signing with the team. His focus began changing by eventually acknowledging he was open to waiving his no-trade clause last month while the team was in the midst of an 18-game winless skid — the NHL's 14th longest.

AP Sports Writer Jimmy Golen contributed to this story from Boston.

Mike Harrington: The education of Kevyn Adams won't be a straight-line process

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

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Whether we like it or not, the Buffalo Sabres have a general manager undergoing on-the-job training. The education of Kevyn Adams took yet another twist the last couple of days.

What Adams takes from all the lessons of the last 10 months is really going to be a huge factor in whether or not this franchise can escape the abyss.

Adams has gone through a lot in his short tenure, probably an unprecedented amount of turmoil for any first-time GM in the league when you pile it all up.

This is a guy who had to fire more than 20 employees on his first day on the job at the whims of ownership. He had to navigate the first virtual draft in league history. He's made offseason moves that included the trade acquisition of a future Hall of Famer (Eric Staal) and the signing of an \$8 million free agent (Taylor Hall).

Then came the season. Jack Eichel, his \$10 million captain, wasn't ready for training camp and has two goals. Hall had just two goals. The team had a terrible Covid-19 outbreak. A silly run of injuries. A franchise-record winless streak that stretched 18 games and saw Staal get dealt to Montreal.

Adams finally got the go-ahead to fire his coach, although Ralph Krueger lasted nine games too long. Then he had to coach one game himself when interim boss Don Granato landed in Covid-19 protocol. In Hall, he had the top forward rental on the trade market – something he might not have again if he's in this job for the next 20 years.

And when this is done, Adams will have to decide if Granato will be his coach, hire an assistant GM, keep building his scouting staff, get ready for an expansion draft before the regular entry draft and free agency period and make more trades. And you hope one them isn't because Eichel says he wants out.

It's exhausting reading the previous four paragraphs. Imagine living it 24/7.

"You learn a lot. There's so many conversations and so much work that's done behind the scenes to get to the point where decisions are actually made," Adams said Monday in the wake of the NHL trade deadline. "Then there's so much that goes on and then things don't happen. But that's part of the process, too. So that's certainly helped.

"We're going to have to earn our way to where we need to be. And that's going to be through building the team the right way. So I do feel comfortable that we have a plan. And we're going to work extremely hard to get there."

What is the plan? It better be more than soft perimeter players, which is what we see too much of now. Adams is stockpiling draft picks, which underwhelms me. He has 10 in hand for 2021 and that gives him quite a bit more flexibility than he had in October. He made just five picks in his first draft, the fewest the club has had since 1977.

Still, one of six he had was used to trade up with San Jose to get German J.J. Peterka at No. 34 overall, and that might be Adams' best move to date. Peterka had first-round pedigree and looked solid at the World Juniors. That was a good trade. At his first trade deadline, Adams was a disappointment.

The New York Islanders were in on Hall but opted for Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac of New Jersey. Toronto didn't want Hall. Pittsburgh president Brian Burke said Monday live on Sportsnet the Penguins weren't involved either. Vegas got involved too late.

Hall had all the leverage here and wanted Boston. Adams should have been able to take this deeper into Monday afternoon and not make a deal 15 hours before the deadline. But the no-movement clause in Hall's contract was absolute. He could nix anything. The goof here was to not have a modified no-move clause where Hall could submit a list of teams he would accept a trade to.

That's when Adams could have potentially prompted a bidding war. This is a frustrating return for a former Hart Trophy winner.

Yes, Hall's two goals in 37 games and minus-21 rating was out of Adams' control. But it still stinks that Columbus got a first from Toronto for Nick Foligno and one from Tampa for David Savard, and Adams couldn't do likewise for Hall.

Chicago got a second- and third-rounder from Vegas for Mattias Janmark. Calgary essentially got two seconds for Sam Bennett, Florida's real one and prospect Emil Heineman, taken second last year. And the Sabres only get a second and a bottom-6 level prospect for Hall?

Hall explained earlier in the day how he almost signed with the Bruins but a few things didn't work out and he instead landed in Buffalo. He was effusive in his praise of Adams. Of course. That precious contract clause was massive.

"Contractually, he'd earned that right to make that call," Adams said. "So we focused our attention there and obviously were able to get a deal done and be excited about it."

Adams gets a player for right now, although Anders Bjork has just 16 goals in 138 games and the word out of Boston is he has a third-line ceiling. Frankly, I'd still rather have Curtis Lazar.

Adams retained half of Hall's salary and swapped Lazar for Bjork, who is twice as expensive with a contract that runs twice as long. With that kind of hospitality, I'd expect Bruins GM Don Sweeney to call Adams back this summer – and have a line of GMs behind him.

One other item: Adams needs to do better on the information front with Eichel. The silence is troubling. Injured players are unavailable to the media and Eichel thus hasn't been seen in more than a month, clearly choosing to rehab what's believed to be a neck issue elsewhere. The GM gave the first signs Monday that the captain might not be back this season. If he's damaged, you can't trade him now and sell super low on the face of the franchise.

Adams promised he'll be "completely transparent" with reporters when the Sabres have clear information on Eichel. We're holding him to that. Another potential minefield for the rookie GM to navigate. Hope he's taking good notes.

Sabres GM Kevyn Adams: Don Granato 'in the mix' to be full-time head coach

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

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Don Granato isn't behind the bench to simply oversee the Buffalo Sabres playing out the string on a 10th consecutive season outside the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The 53-year-old coach is amid an extended interview to remove the interim title and run the team in a full-time capacity for the 2021-22 season. Sabres General Manager Kevyn Adams confirmed to reporters in the aftermath of the trade deadline Monday that Granato is a legitimate candidate to remain in the job.

"I think from the beginning, I always thought that Donnie should be part of this conversation, regardless of what happens exactly on the wins and losses of our team," Adams said. "But yeah, this is an amazing opportunity for Donnie to implement how he sees things and what he would do and not just talking about it, but actually doing it. ... Donnie Granato is a person that I absolutely think is in the mix for this and should be. He's a great hockey guy, he's a great person, and I think the important thing is the players do have a lot of respect for him and that goes a long way as well."

The Sabres have gone 4-2-2 since snapping a franchise-record 18-game winless streak. Granato, who came to Buffalo in June 2019 as an assistant coach, quickly revamped the way the Sabres practice and play by implementing a system that allows talented defensemen to contribute offensively and creates space for forwards to have success in transition.

Granato has prioritized the development of young players, rewarding forwards Casey Mittelstadt, Tage Thompson and Rasmus Asplund with prominent roles. Defensemen Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju also are having success since Granato took over.

Adams is not in a rush to hire anyone. It appears his plan is to continue the search into the offseason, but Granato has brought a style of play and structure that fit Adams' vision for the Sabres.

Here are five additional takeaways from Adams' press conference Monday:

1. The Sabres are preparing for Jack Eichel to miss the final 15 games of the season. Adams tried to strike an optimistic tone Monday when discussing Eichel's status, saying that the 24-year-old captain showed progress during a recent checkup as he works his way back from an upper-body injury that has kept him out of the Sabres' lineup since March 7.

Yet, this was the first time anyone in the organization mentioned the possibility that Eichel may not return for the regular-season finale in Pittsburgh on May 8.

"In terms of Jack, the update, he was recently again looked at by the doctors and a slight improvement from where he was at before," Adams said. "I don't want to go too much further than that, but it does look like he's still going to be out for a while, so where that puts him in terms of return, we'll have to see. It would be great get him in, even if it was late in the season, but I'm just not sure. So, we're going to have some more conversations over the next couple days, bring everybody on the same page with our doctors."

Eichel was stricken by struggles with finishing scoring chances, as he totaled two goals with 16 assists while averaging 20:29 of ice time in 21 games prior to the injury. His name will inevitably come up as a possible trade target for contenders this summer, but Adams has prioritized building a relationship with the face of the franchise. The two spoke in detail after Ralph Krueger was fired March 17.

2. Acquiring draft picks was part of the plan. Adams discovered during the draft in October that fewer picks limit a general manager's options. The Sabres had only five selections across seven rounds, beginning with winger Jack Quinn at eighth overall.

Buffalo had additional picks when the virtual draft began, but Adams used those assets to move up for players his staff targeted, particularly winger J.J. Peterka in the second round. The Sabres acquired five 2021 draft picks ahead of this trade deadline, including selections in the second and third rounds.

Not only will this give Adams ammunition to potentially move up in the draft, he can also use these to barter with the Seattle Kraken to not select a specific player in the expansion draft. Although CapFriendly.com projects the Sabres will have \$32.5 million in salary-cap space for next season, it is unlikely Adams will be active in unrestricted free agency. Trades are an easier way to improve the roster, and draft picks will help.

Buffalo owns 10 picks across seven rounds, including the best odds to select first overall. The draft is scheduled for July 23-24.

"Draft picks are currency, and besides building your pipeline, which I think has been lacking, you can also use that currency in other ways," Adams said. "You can package picks together to potentially acquire players. You can package picks together to move up in the draft. Maybe we need some pick for expansion reasons to help yourself."

3. Adams' search for an assistant general manager will continue: Expiring contracts, particularly those for Taylor Hall and Brandon Montour, made the trade deadline a priority for Adams. His discussions with candidates for the assistant general manager opening continued, though.

Adams told reporters he's had "very, very serious conversations" with one potential candidate over the past week and has spoken with several people about the vacancy. Those talks will continue, as Adams plans to prioritize replenishing a department that lost 21 employees in the hours after former General Manager Jason Botterill was fired in June.

"It's a priority," Adams said. "It's a huge hire in terms of how we're putting together the hockey department and structure and, like I said before, we need to build the front office back up. We need to hire more scouts, we need to make sure that we're putting the pieces in place from our front office right through the scouting department, player development department and just make sure that as we move forward, we're having the right people in the right positions."

4. The Sabres weren't eager to part with Curtis Lazar. The 26-year-old center was under contract through next season with a \$800,000 cap hit and was a key cog on the Sabres' penalty kill during his two seasons in Buffalo. He also brought secondary scoring in a bottom-six, checking line role.

However, the Bruins insisted on Lazar being included in the deal, and the Sabres preferred Anders Bjork's offensive upside over the Lazar's strengths defensively. Bjork, 24, is under contract through 2022-23 with an annual cap hit of \$1.6 million and has scored 16 goals across 168 regular-season games in Boston, but he averaged only 12:30 ice time per game during that span.

"He's a good hockey player and plays his role well," Adams said of Lazar. "So, yeah, it's the hard part of this business, especially when you're talking about quality people and having to make hard decisions. I think from our perspective, we feel that we had a chance with a player like Bjork to have a bigger impact on the offensive side of the game with an expanded role than maybe where Curtis' role was."

Sabres' Jack Eichel will 'still be out for a while,' GM says

The Buffalo News

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Sabres captain Jack Eichel will "still be out for a while," general manager Kevyn Adams told reporters Monday after the trade deadline.

"He was again recently looked at by the doctors. There's been a slight improvement from before," Adams said. "That's as far as I want to go. Where that puts him in terms of return, we'll have to see. We'd love to have him even if it's just for the end of the season. It still looks like he's going to be out for a while."

Adams said there was "more clarity last week" and added that more should be coming in the next few days after continuing discussions with doctors on next steps.

"When we have the proper information to share and how we're moving forward, we'll be completely transparent," Adams said. "The reason he's not playing is he's not healthy enough to play. We need to do everything we can as an organization to help him get healthy."

Eichel has not played since March 7, when he suffered an apparent neck injury in a loss to the New York Islanders. However, the Sabres have not issued specifics on the nature of the injury. The Sabres have 15 games left in the season.

Curtis Lazar gets a surprise playoff chance with Sabres' deal to Bruins

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 12, 2021

It was obvious the Buffalo Sabres were trading Brandon Montour and Taylor Hall before Monday's deadline. Center Curtis Lazar, on the other hand, had no expectation that he was moving but he is also joining Hall with the Boston Bruins.

"It completely caught me off guard. I got the phone call last night about 11 p.m. and when you see the GM's name pop up the day before the deadline, you kind of know what's going to happen," Lazar said Monday on a video call with Boston media. "So my first thought was, where am I going? My wife and I actually had our first kid a week ago. So a lot of moving parts right there, but I couldn't be happier with Boston.

"Obviously, they see something in me that they liked to include me in that deal. And I'm ready to prove it and show it. I kind of hit my stride in Buffalo and I want to go off what I learned there and continue that with the Bruins."

Lazar had 10 goals in 71 games over the last two years with the Sabres. He had five goals and nine points in 33 games this season, including the first score in the 6-1 win over Philadelphia that snapped the club's winless streak at a franchise-record 18 games on March 31. But he suffered a lower-body injury in that game and has not played since.

Lazar said he's healthy and was planning on joining the Sabres on their road trip, which continues Tuesday in Boston and Thursday in Washington.

"I stayed back to get some conditioning skates in, but I'm pretty much good to go now," he said. "So it's kind of perfect timing there. I got some extra work in the gym, but I'm definitely an option pretty much right away. ... I guess I kind of am meeting Buffalo in Boston. This time I'm just playing for the other team."

Lazar said he's particularly pumped to be joining the Bruins with Hall.

"His numbers aren't what he wants to be, but he's fired up and ready to go," Lazar said. "He's gonna put the work in to get the results. And for both of us, that chance to play some competitive hockey and be in that playoff races, it's exciting. That's where every player wants to be.

"I've always loved playing Boston just because it's going to be high-paced. It's going to be gritty. They can have that swagger and that physicality, which is one thing I really pride myself in taking the body and setting the tone that way. I kind of see myself as a perfect fit on that team just in that regard."

Lazar was averaging 13 minutes, 37 seconds per game this season, but his ice time had increased under interim coach Don Granato, peaking at 19:12 in the March 19 overtime loss to Philadelphia that was the final game of the winless streak.

"It was some tough sledding. There's no other way around it," Lazar said. "We found some creative ways to lose games, but you look at the way they're playing now, it's pretty exciting. Especially the game in Philly (Sunday's 5-3 win). I wish that team all the best. They have a very bright future with all those young guys that are playing the right way right now. Now you can see that confidence growing. So I look forward to sticking it to them tomorrow or next week."

For the record, Lazar was smiling when he uttered that last sentence. The Sabres and Bruins have six more meetings this season, starting Tuesday in TD Garden.

"That fits in just with how this season's been going," Lazar said. "It's been strange in all aspects."

Taylor Hall says Boston was his No. 1 choice and he's thrilled for chance with Bruins

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
April 12, 2021

For Taylor Hall, this is all about a fresh start.

The most disastrous season in the career of the former No. 1 overall pick and ex-Hart Trophy winner took a huge turn Monday when Hall was dealt from the Buffalo Sabres to the Boston Bruins. Thrilled by the move, Hall said he was driving from Buffalo to Boston to avoid quarantine and should be available to play for the Bruins Tuesday night – when they host the Sabres in TD Garden in one of six remaining matchups between the teams.

Hall said his move to Boston was what he hoped for after all the troubles with the Sabres that included the team's Covid-19 outbreak, the firing of coach Ralph Krueger and its franchise-record 18-game winless streak.

"There's been a lot of distractions this year, a lot of things that really haven't gone well and confidence-wise the team here in Buffalo just never got off on the right foot," Hall said on a video call with Boston media. "So I think the best way to get confidence is to be a part of a winning team and to make yourself part of the bigger solution. That's what I'm looking forward to doing."

Hall signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with the Sabres last fall but revealed Monday he was very close to signing with the Bruins in the offseason. He is expected to be Boston's second-line winger on a line with veteran center David Krejci. And he said he's absolutely interested in talking with the Bruins about staying on past this season.

"I'd love to be a Bruin for a few years," he said. "So obviously it's been a bad year for me personally, and I need to play well, I need to contribute. And most of all, I want to be a part of a team that wins games and I really believe that we can do that here."

Hall had a full no-movement clause and would not discuss how many possibilities the Sabres presented to him. But he made it clear he told Buffalo General Manager Kevyn Adams that Boston was his top choice.

"Kevyn Adams was just fantastic in the way that he treated me and the way that he went about the situation, knowing that I wanted to play for a chance to win the Stanley Cup," Hall said. "And he worked it out to a team that I really wanted to go to and I'll always be thankful for him for that. As a hockey guy, and as a person, I have a lot of respect for him."

The season, in Buffalo, of course, was a disaster for Hall. He scored just two goals in 37 games and had a minus-21 rating. He spent time on the Covid protocol list, one of the first players ensnared in the club's outbreak in the wake of its January games against New Jersey.

He even made blooper reels by falling on a breakaway at the end of a long shift of the March 7 loss to the New York Islanders.

"It was such a whirlwind of a year that went pretty badly, obviously," Hall said. "We started off our first 10 games, we're about .500 (at 4-4-3) and then we had the Covid outbreak, and we just couldn't get our footing after that. And for myself, obviously, it wasn't the season that I would have liked to have had, not even close. These last few days you do some soul searching and you look back on what you could do better and look forward to the future."

Pressed on the issues in Buffalo, Hall acknowledged he was thinking about playing for the Sabres in the future and using this season as a building-block year.

"I think everyone came into this season with expectations that we would do a lot better than we did," Hall said. "I don't think anyone expected us to win a Stanley Cup, but I thought that we would be maybe flirting with a playoff spot – probably ultimately end up on the outside looking in – but I thought we could really build something maybe for the upcoming years. And then around trade deadline, I would have to make a decision on if I wanted to stay or go. Ultimately, things didn't go as well as I would have liked."

Hall has only appeared in 14 playoff games in his career and has largely been the marquee player on his team when he was in Edmonton, New Jersey and Arizona. Meshing in with Boston forwards Krejci, Brad Marchand, Patrice Bergeron and David Pastrnak appealed to him, much like his thinking in signing with the Sabres.

"The first chance that I got in free agency, I went to Buffalo, a team that had Jack Eichel, a player that I think is better than myself," Hall said. "I just wanted to be one of the guys. I wanted to be on a successful team. Ultimately, it didn't work out here in Buffalo. Going to Boston, there's so many great players on that team, Hall of Famers, guys that have had just amazing careers. If I had anything like that in my career, I'd be super happy with.

"I'm 29 years old, but I still feel that you can learn stuff about the game at this age. You can better yourself as a player and as a leader and seeing these guys, I'm really excited to be a part of that group. ... I still believe in myself a lot. As a player, I feel like I can add things to a team. I still feel like I can really do that. So that's what makes me most excited."

New contract for goalie Linus Ullmark a 'priority' for Sabres GM Kevyn Adams

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

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Linus Ullmark is remaining with the Buffalo Sabres. At least through the end of the regular season.

Ullmark, the Sabres' 27-year-old starting goaltender, was not traded ahead of the deadline Monday as his agent, Joakim Persson, and General Manager Kevyn Adams continue to negotiate a new contract for the pending unrestricted free agent.

Ullmark was thought to be among one of the top goalies potentially available via trade. A sixth-round draft pick of the Sabres in 2012, Ullmark has emerged as a possible franchise goaltender over the past two years, posting a .917 save percentage and 2.64 goals-against average while compiling a 9-6-3 record in 19 games this season.

Though there is risk involved in potentially losing Ullmark for nothing when unrestricted free agency begins July 28, he is viewed by Adams as a centerpiece for the Sabres.

"We said all along we want Linus to be a Buffalo Sabre, and we really feel good about where his game is at," Adams said during his post-deadline via news conference with reporters. "We've had great conversations. Been ongoing. Continue to talk right now. I've spent time with Linus just one-on-one having conversations about philosophically where we're at and where we're looking to get to and what he's looking for. That's my style.

"I think that's an important relationship to have with your players. It's not about dollars and cents. It's more about vision and where are we headed and why. We've had those conversations and we'll continue to work at it, but priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus and he and his agent both know that."

The Sabres can ill afford to lose Ullmark. The organization already lacks goaltending depth, as prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen is still one to two years away from being ready for a full-time job in the NHL. Luukkonen, a 22-year-old chosen by the Sabres in the second round of the 2017 draft, has an .888 save percentage in 14 games with the Rochester Americans this season.

Buffalo's other promising goalie prospect, Erik Portillo, had an outstanding debut season at the University of Michigan, but the 20-year-old was the primary backup behind an established upperclassman. Portillo appeared in only seven games for the Wolverines, though he had a .935 save percentage.

The Sabres' other goalies to appear in at least one NHL game this season – Carter Hutton, Dustin Tokarski and Jonas Johansson – have combined for a 1-19-3 record.

Although the Sabres are playing out the string on a 10th consecutive non-playoff season, there is value in trying to win the final 15 games, beginning Tuesday night in Boston against Taylor Hall and the Bruins. Under interim coach Don Granato, Buffalo is prioritizing the development of its young players, including Casey Mittelstadt, Tage Thompson, Dylan Cozens, Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju, among others.

Losing games can impact confidence, and forging an identity post-Ralph Krueger would be challenging with spotty goaltending. Hutton, a 35-year-old pending unrestricted free agent, has missed the past 11 games with a lower-body injury. He's expected to return sometime before the regular-season finale on May 8.

Tokarski, 31, played mostly well in spot duty up until a 4-3 loss to the Washington Capitals on Friday night in KeyBank Center. He has an .899 save percentage in five appearances with Buffalo and is under contract through next season. Johansson, a former third-round pick of the Sabres, was traded to Colorado last month.

With Ullmark, a new contract could be like the one signed recently by Vancouver Canucks goalie Thatcher Demko, who received a five-year deal with a \$5 million average annual value. There is risk involved in giving Ullmark term.

Ullmark has missed time with unrelated lower-body injuries in each of the past two seasons, including 15 games this season from Feb. 27 through March 25. He has made a significant impact when in goal, as illustrated by his .917 save percentage in seven starts since returning to the lineup on March 27.

Ullmark's .936 save percentage at 5-on-5 this season ranks sixth among all NHL goalies to appear in at least 10 games. His .932 save percentage at 5-on-5 the past two seasons is fourth among all goalies to appear in at least 40 games.

If money isn't an issue, as Adams stated, then Ullmark may want a better idea how the Sabres plan to approach the offseason. Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart are among the core players who will likely generate trade interest. Adams may plan to continue a youth movement in Buffalo, prioritizing development over adding established veterans to fill prominent spots in the lineup.

The coaching decision may also impact Ullmark, who has formed a successful relationship with goalie coach Mike Bales. Across 112 games in the NHL, Ullmark has compiled a .912 save percentage.

Montour reflects

Brandon Montour is ready to return to the playoffs. The 27-year-old right-shot defenseman is preparing to join the Florida Panthers after the trade that brought a third-round draft pick to the Sabres.

Montour hasn't experienced much success the past three seasons. The Sabres' record since the February trade that brought Montour to Buffalo: 43-71-16. Montour played under three coaches, dealt with two injuries, never received a clear role, didn't get enough touches on the power play and was often asked to play on his offside.

"Trying to find my role, left side, right side," Montour said. "I know Ralph was trying to find ways to get wins and then another firing there, which doesn't help anyone. I think once Donny came in again that's another fresh start and I played more on my right side. Of course, no power-play time, which is up to the coaches. I think that's one of my strengths, but you can't do much about that. I'm a player. My job is to be on the ice and do whatever I can, so that's not a big deal.

"Trying to find my game again and right now I think I'm in a good place. Hopefully it transitions here and I'm just looking forward to it. Buffalo was great to me. The record didn't show much, but great staff and great players. I'm going to miss a lot of those memories, relationships I had."

Iafallo stays

Los Angeles Kings winger Alex Iafallo, an Eden native, received a four-year contract with a \$4 million average annual value ahead of the deadline Monday. Iafallo, 27, has 11 goals with 14 assists for 25 points while averaging a career-high 20:09 ice time over 39 games this season.

Across four seasons with the Kings, Iafallo has totaled 52 goals and 74 assists in 266 regular-season games.

Boston was only team Taylor Hall would waive no-movement clause for

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 12, 2021

Buffalo, N.Y. (WGR 550) – When the Buffalo Sabres signed Taylor Hall this past offseason, they gave him a no-movement clause, and the winger used it. In exchange for giving the Sabres a one-year deal, Hall got the no-movement in return.

General manager Kevyn Adams made it clear that by Sunday, the Boston Bruins were the only team that Hall would go to in a trade.

"That's fair to say," the first-year general manager said during his conference call on Monday. "The message from Taylor and his agent was if there was a way, put him on a Stanley Cup contending team, so I went to work."

Adams said things got really specific by Sunday.

"As we got to yesterday, it got to a point where Taylor felt that Boston was the team that he wanted to go to, so we focused our attention there."

According to CapFriendly, the Bruins only have \$29,769 of cap space left. That means they couldn't take on any more than half of Hall's \$8 million salary, and they got to that point by trading Anders Bjork for Curtis Lazar.

Adams insists that the Sabres targeted Bjork and wanted him.

"We really like Anders Bjork," he said. "He's got speed, he's got compete and we see an offensive upside with a roll that could expand. So he was a guy that we identified. ... We got down to the wire, where we're negotiating with one team, and I feel strongly in the situation we were in that we did the best that we could possibly do."

Many around the league are saying that Boston was only offering a third round pick until they got pasted on Sunday, 8-1, by the Washington Capitals. That's when Don Sweeney upped it to a second round pick.

The Sabres have been negotiating with goalie Linus Ullmark, trying to get a contract done before he becomes an unrestricted free agent this July.

"We want Linus to be a Buffalo Sabre, and we really feel good about where his game is at," Adams said of his No. 1 goalie. "We've had great conversations that have been ongoing, and we continue to talk right now. The priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus and he knows that."

The team has shown definite improvement since Don Granato took over as interim head coach, and Adams has seen the same thing.

"I see more purpose in our game," Adams said. "We needed to raise our level in practice and we've had better tempo. We've had better compete, and that's translated into a team that can skate and compete hard."

With all those factors in mind, it only makes sense that Adams has Granato in the mix to be the full-time head coach after this season.

"For sure 'Donnie' [Don] Granato is a person that I absolutely think is in the mix for this, and should be."

The team has been extremely secretive about Jack Eichel's injury. Adams provided a little more information on Monday.

"He was recently looked at by the doctors and there was a slight improvement from where he was at," he said. "I don't want to go too much further than that, but it does look like he still going to be out for a while."

When Adams was pressed on the subject of his captain, he did say more.

"When we have the proper information to share, we'll be completely transparent. As we move forward in the coming days, there will be more clarity, because in the next couple of days, we'll have more conversations with the doctors to see what are the next steps and why, and then be transparent with that information."

It seems like it's taking a very long time for Adams to decide on an assistant general manager. Adams does seem to have a person he wants picked, but they're still talking.

"I've been in very, very serious conversations in the last week with one potential candidate, and we'll see where that one goes, and it's a priority," Adams said. "It's a huge hire, in terms of how we're putting together the hockey department and structure, and we need to build the front office back up and need to hire more scouts. We need to make sure we're putting the pieces in place."

Adams said rosters are limited to four call ups from the American Hockey League, so not everybody is going to be able to get a game in from the Rochester Americans. However, he did mention defenseman Mattias Samuelsson and his improvement ever since training camp. Many feel he's improved enough to be playing in the NHL now.

The Sabres are in Boston for a game on Tuesday. Hall is driving to Boston, so he won't have to quarantine and will be in the Bruins' lineup against the Sabres.

Lazar said he's over his lower-body injury, and is ready whenever the Bruins want to use him.

Sabres satisfied to acquire draft ‘currency’ as key questions loom over where to go from here

By John Vogl
The Athletic
April 12, 2021

Taylor Hall hoped things would go well in Buffalo, but he certainly wasn't convinced.

"I thought that we would be maybe flirting with a playoff spot, probably ultimately end up on the outside looking in," Hall said Monday.

Since he wanted to play in the postseason, the left winger negotiated a no-movement clause into his one-year, \$8 million contract. If the marriage went worse than planned — and, boy, did it — Hall would have the final say in his next home.

"I thought we could really build something maybe for the upcoming years," Hall said, "and then around the trade deadline, like I am right now, I'd have to make a decision on if I wanted to stay or go."

He decided to go. Not only that, but he decided to go to Boston, limiting the Sabres to just one trade partner.

"Yeah, that's fair to say," general manager Kevyn Adams said. "The reality of the situation is back in the offseason when we signed Taylor, we felt strongly that we needed to have a one-year deal to make sure that we were being disciplined and remain flexible moving forward. Part of the agreement was to be able to offer him a no-move clause.

"Taylor felt that Boston was the team that he wanted to go to. That was where he felt was the best fit, and contractually he had earned that right to make that call. So, we focused our attention there and obviously were able to get a deal done."

Understandably, the deal may seem underwhelming. The Sabres sent a former MVP plus contributing bottom-six center Curtis Lazar to the Bruins for a second-round pick and left wing Anders Bjork, whose lack of production had rendered him a healthy scratch. Buffalo retained half of Hall's salary and added two years of Bjork at \$1.6 million compared to one more year of Lazar at \$800,000.

But after weeks of conversations with multiple teams, Adams was forced to make a deal with one. He could have sat idly and let Hall stay in Buffalo, but that wouldn't have benefited anyone, especially a first-year GM who will have another free-agent class to negotiate with this summer.

"Kevyn Adams was just fantastic in the way that he treated me and the way that he went about the situation, knowing that I wanted to play for a chance to win the Stanley Cup," Hall said. "He worked it out to a team that I really wanted to go to, and I'll always be thankful to him for that. As a hockey guy and as a person, I have a lot of respect for him."

Adams is happy with the return, especially given the circumstances.

"We really like Anders Bjork as a player," the GM said. "We think he's going to help our team. We think he's got speed, he's got compete. We see an offensive upside chance with a role that could expand in our team.

"We did the best we could possibly do in the short term and in terms of the longer term with the draft pick."

The trade was the Sabres' only move at Monday's deadline, but Adams made additional deals with Colorado, Montreal and Florida during the past month.

IN
Anders Bjork
Second-round pick
Two third-round picks
Fifth-round pick
Sixth-round pick

OUT

Taylor Hall
Curtis Lazar
Brandon Montour
Eric Staal
Jonas Johansson

Hall, Brandon Montour, Eric Staal and Jonas Johansson are pending unrestricted free agents who were not part of the future. In their place are draft picks. The Sabres have 10 selections in this year's draft, including five in the opening three rounds.

"Draft picks are currency," Adams said. "Besides building your pipeline, which I think has been lacking, you can also use that currency in other ways. You can package picks together to potentially acquire players. You could package picks together to move up in the draft. Maybe we need some picks for expansion reasons to help yourself.

"We had five picks heading into this draft a few weeks ago. I certainly feel better when I look at our draft and see we have that type of currency."

Sabres' 2021 draft picks

ROUND	PICKS	FROM
1	1	
2	2	Boston
3	2	Florida, Montreal
4	1	
5	1	Montreal
6	2	Colorado
7	1	

The Sabres didn't have a third-round pick after trading it to Carolina in the Jeff Skinner deal, so they plucked the picks belonging to Florida and Montreal. They didn't have a fifth-rounder after trading it to New Jersey for Wayne Simmonds, so Adams recouped one from Montreal.

The picks don't help the Sabres today, but that doesn't matter. This season has been over for a long, long time.

"It was some tough sledding," Lazar said. "I wish that team all the best. They have a very bright future with all those young guys that are playing the right way right now. You can see that confidence growing.

"Saying that, I look forward to sticking it to 'em."

The fun-loving Lazar was smiling, but he has a very real chance. Six of the Sabres' final 15 games are against the Bruins.

It's unlikely any of the games will feature Jack Eichel. The Sabres captain, who has been out with an upper-body injury since March 8, is not close to a return.

"He was again recently looked at by the doctors, and slight improvement from where he was at before," Adams said. "I don't want to go too much further than that, but it does look like he's still going to be out for a while. Where that puts him in terms of a return, we'll have to see. It'd be great to get him in even if it was late in the season, but I'm just not sure.

"As we move forward here in the coming days, there'll be more clarity. We had a little bit more information last week, and then here in the next couple of days (we're) going to have some more conversations with the doctors — what are the next steps and why? — and be transparent with that information."

Adams will also be looking to lock up this year's team MVP, goaltender Linus Ullmark. The 27-year-old is a pending UFA.

"We want Linus to be a Buffalo Sabre," Adams said. "I've spent time with Linus just one-on-one, having conversations about philosophically where we're at, where we're looking to get to and what is he looking for."

"The priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus, and he and his agent both know that."

Adams will also continue his search for an assistant GM — he had substantial talks with one candidate this past week — and will begin the search for a head coach after taking a breath to regroup. The team, meanwhile, moves on.

Unlike Hall, it doesn't have much say in the matter.

"It was such a whirlwind of a year," Hall said. "It went pretty badly, obviously."

"But I'll say that yeah, definitely, the no-move really helped me become a Bruin. Since I knew that I would be traded for the last few weeks, it was a team that I really wanted to join and really wanted to be a part of."

Kevyn Adams: Don Granato ‘absolutely ... in the mix’ for Sabres’ coaching job

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 12, 2021

Even before Don Granato started winning games and unlocking talent from struggling players, Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said he wanted the interim coach to be in the mix when he began pursuing a regular coach.

“From the beginning, I always thought that Donnie should be part of this conversation regardless of what happens exactly on the wins and losses of our team,” Adams said on a Zoom call Tuesday after the trade deadline.

In 13 games since replacing Ralph Krueger, Granato has compiled a 4-7-2 mark. The Sabres are 4-2-1 in their last seven entering Tuesday’s road game against the Boston Bruins.

Beyond wins and losses, Granato, 53, has transformed the Sabres into a competitive team. They no longer possess a feeble offense and a porous defense. They’ve also started responding to adversity and roaring back in games.

Adams might give strong consideration to removing Granato’s interim tag.

“Donnie Granato is a person that I absolutely think is in the mix for this and should be,” Adams said. “He’s a great hockey guy, he’s a great person and it think the important thing is the players do have a lot of respect for him and that goes a long way as well.”

In Sunday’s 5-3 win road win in Philadelphia, the Sabres erased two deficits to stun the Flyers.

Adams said the Sabres have started “playing with purpose.”

“I see a bit of more structure to our team in terms of defensively, we look more on our toes pressuring,” he said. “And we have a bit of it looks like more of an understanding of the why: Why are we doing certain things?”

“And on the offensive side, I saw before maybe a team that was caught in the middle. ... We had a lot of talented players but we were kind of just this in between, it felt like. Where now we’re a bit more on our toes, and feel like our D are freed up to be getting up ice.”

Adams said the Sabres have also raised their “competitiveness” under Granato.

“When we do practice, we’ve had better tempo, better compete,” he said. “From the data that we get after practice, the numbers show that as well. And what I think that’s translating into is a team that can skate and have better pace and compete hard. So Donnie’s done a nice job.”

—

Adams said he has had “very, very serious conversations” over the past week with an assistant GM candidate.

The rookie GM has been working without an assistant since he took over for Jason Botterill almost 10 months ago.

Adams said he plans to continue talking to potential hires.

“It’s a priority,” he said. “It’s a huge hire in terms of how we’re putting together the hockey department and structure and we need to build the front office back up. We need to hire more scouts, we need to make sure that we’re putting the pieces in place from our front office right through the scouting department, player development department.”

The Sabres fired 22 members of the hockey department when they dismissed Botterill.

Sabres want to re-sign goalie Linus Ullmark: ‘A priority for us’

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 12, 2021

In his third full NHL season, goalie Linus Ullmark has emerged as the Buffalo Sabres’ MVP and backbone. When a lower-body injury sidelined him almost a month earlier this year, they lost 15 straight games.

Their three other goalies this season – Carter Hutton, Jonas Johansson and Dustin Tokarski – have a combined record of 1-19-3!

The Sabres sorely need to re-sign Ullmark, who can become an unrestricted free agent following the season.

“A priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus and he and his agent both know that,” Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said on a Zoom call Monday.

The Sabres, of course, couldn’t risk dealing Ullmark, 27, before Monday’s trade deadline. Right now, they have don’t have another goalie in the organization ready to be an NHL starter.

Top goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, 22, has struggled following the Rochester Americans’ recent COVID-19 pause. After allowing five goals and getting yanked from Saturday’s 9-2 loss to the Cleveland Monsters, he has compiled a 3.60 goals against average and an .888 save percentage in 14 games this season.

Ullmark, who signed a one-year, \$2.6 million contract before the season, will likely demand a lucrative long-term deal. For example, Vancouver Canucks goalie Thatcher Demko, 25, signed a five-year, \$25 million extension March 31. Ullmark has better career numbers and more experience than Demko.

“We said all along we want Linus to be a Buffalo Sabre and we really feel good about where his game is at,” Adams said. “We’ve had great conversations. Been ongoing. Continue to talk right now. I’ve spent time with Linus just one-on-one having conversations about philosophically where we’re at and where we’re looking to get to and what he’s looking for. That’s my style.

“I think that’s an important relationship to have with your players. It’s not about dollars and cents. It’s more about vision and where are we headed and why. We’ve had those conversations and we’ll continue to work at it.”

Ullmark has compiled a 9-6-3 record with a 2.64 goals-against average and a .917 save percentage in 19 games this season.

Sabres' Jack Eichel will miss more time, not ruled out for season

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 12, 2021

Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said this afternoon that captain Jack Eichel will miss more time recovering from his upper-body injury.

Eichel, 24, has missed 18 games since suffering what appeared to be a neck injury when the New York Islanders' Casey Cizikas hit him behind the net March 7.

Adams did not rule out Eichel returning for some late-season games.

"He was recently again looked at by the doctors and a slight improvement from where he was at before," Adams said on a Zoom call to discuss the trade deadline. "I don't want to go too much further than that, but it does look like he's still going to be out for a while, so where that puts him in terms of return, we'll have to see. It would be great to get him in, even if it was late in the season, but I'm just not sure.

"So we're going to have some more conversations over the next couple days, bring everybody on the same page with our doctors."

The Sabres, whose season ends May 8, have offered few details on Eichel's condition over the past five weeks.

"It's important that when we have the proper information to share one way or another, how we're moving forward, that will be completely transparent," Adams said. "I think ... as we move forward here in the coming days there'll be more clarity."

Curtis Lazar shocked by trade to Bruins after rebuilding career with Sabres

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 12, 2021

Ex-Buffalo Sabres center Curtis Lazar signed a two-year contract prior to the season and quickly solidified a regular spot in the lineup, so he wasn't expecting to be traded before this afternoon's deadline.

"Yeah, it completely caught me off guard," said Lazar, who was dealt to the Boston Bruins earlier today with winger Taylor Hall in exchange for forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in 2021.

At 11 p.m. Sunday, Lazar, 26, said he saw general manager Kevyn Adams' name pop up on his phone.

"My first thought was 'Where am I going?'" Lazar said on a Zoom call. "My wife and I just actually had our first kid a week ago. So a lot of moving parts right there. But (I) couldn't be happier with Boston, the opportunity. Obviously, they see something in me that they liked to include me in that deal. And I'm ready to prove it and show it."

The affable Lazar, who always seems to be smiling, proved his worth to the Sabres over parts of two seasons.

After spending nearly all of 2018-19 in the minors, Lazar signed with the Sabres and started last season in the AHL again. But following only 18 games with the Rochester Americans, he earned a job as the Buffalo's third- or fourth-line center, showcasing a heavy style, killing penalties and contributing offense.

Then Lazar inked a two-year, \$1.6 million contract.

"I kind of hit my stride in Buffalo," Lazar said. "And I want to build off what I learned there and continue that with the Bruins."

Adams said parting with Lazar wasn't easy.

"I'm not surprised that Curtis was targeted by Boston," he said. "He's a good hockey player and plays his role well. So, yeah, it's the hard part of this business, especially when you're talking about quality people and having to make hard decisions. I think from our perspective we feel that we had a chance with a player like Bjork to have a bigger impact on the offensive side of the game with an expanded role than maybe where Curtis' role was. ..."

"I wish Curtis all the best. He's a tremendous person and was really professional here."

An opportunity to play for the Bruins, one of the NHL's perennial heavyweights, excites the 6-foot, 193-pound Lazar. He said he "always loved playing Boston, just because it's going to be high pace, it's going to be gritty."

"They kind of have that swag and physicality, which is what I really pride myself in in taking the body and setting the tone that way," he said. "I kind of see myself as a perfect fit in that team, just in that regard. You play the right way, you let the puck do the work and you don't back down from anyone."

Like Hall, Lazar, hopes he can experience playoff hockey again. Lazar only played seven postseason contests in his first six seasons. Right now, the Bruins rank fourth in the loaded East Division.

"I feel like for the both of us a chance to play some competitive hockey, be in that playoff race, it's exciting," Lazar said. "That's what every player wants, to be in the postseason. We've got a great chance here. I'm happy to be a part of a very special organization in the Bruins. I respect that team, the way they play. I respect the entire organization."

Lazar, who has missed the last six games recovering from an upper-body injury, said he feels "pretty much good to go now." He stayed in Buffalo for conditioning skates when the Sabres left town Saturday.

He said he planned to drive from Buffalo to Boston today and could be an option for Tuesday's game against, coincidentally, the Sabres.

The Sabres and Bruins play six more times this season.

"I look forward to sticking it to them tomorrow and next week," he said.

Ex-Sabre Taylor Hall grateful for trade, wanted to join Bruins for long time

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 12, 2021

In October, before winger Taylor Hall signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with the Buffalo Sabres, he said he was "really close" to joining the Boston Bruins as a free agent.

"I was ready to be a Bruin and just some other things kind of didn't work out," Hall said on a Zoom call Monday morning hours after being traded to the Bruins. "But it was not like any hard feelings or anything like that."

So when it became apparent the Sabres would deal Hall – they just endured an embarrassing 18-game winless streak – the Bruins became the No. 1 team on his list of potential destinations.

The no-movement clause in Hall's contract effectively allowed him to control his future before this afternoon's trade deadline.

"Definitely the no-move really helped me become a Bruin," Hall said. "It's been a team, since I knew that I would be traded for the last few weeks, it was a team that I really wanted to join and really wanted to be a part of."

Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams acknowledged the no-movement clause limited him to only working with the Bruins.

"Taylor was very professional and respectful and he said, 'I want to play for the Boston Bruins,' and that's the right he had," Adams said. "I understand it. They're a good hockey team and they've been a good team with a lot of players for years."

Having played just 14 playoff games in his first 10 seasons, Hall has experienced a lot of losing in his career.

"I really want to just be a part of a winning team," he said. "I want to add to that, and however I can do that, I'm all in."

As Hall, 29, sat out the Sabres' last four games – they wanted to protect him from getting injured – he said he spent time reflecting.

The 2017-18 Hart Trophy winner has looked awful this season, compiling just two goals, 19 points and a wretched minus-21 rating in 37 games. Still, he said he believes in himself. His confidence has been shaken, not shattered.

"I feel like I can add things to a team," Hall said.

Hall, of course, is grateful Adams worked to get him an opportunity to pursue a championship.

The Sabres received an underwhelming return for a player three years removed from an MVP season. They packaged center Curtis Lazar with Hall in exchange for forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in 2021. The Sabres also retained half of Hall's salary, according to The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun.

"Kevyn Adams ... was just fantastic in the way that he treated me and the way that he went about the situation knowing that I wanted to play for a chance to win the Stanley Cup," Hall said. "He worked it out to a team that I really wanted to go to. I'll always be thankful to him for that. Him as a hockey guy and as a person, I have a lot of respect for him."

Hall said he would "love to be a Bruin for a few years."

"It's been a bad year for me personally, and I need to play well," he said. "I need to contribute, and most of all I want to be part of a team that wins games. I really believe that we can do that here. That's just my main goal. There's been a lot of distractions this year, a lot of things that really haven't gone well and confidence-wise the team here in Buffalo just never got off to the right foot."

"I think the best way to get confidence is to be a part of a winning team and to make yourself part of the bigger solution."

Hall spoke on a Zoom from Buffalo. After the session, he said he planned to drive to Boston, where the Bruins, coincidentally, host the Sabres on Tuesday.

He said he will be available to face the Sabres, a team he never thought would become the NHL's laughingstock.

"Everyone came into this season with expectations that we would do a lot better than we did," he said. "I don't think anyone expected us to win the Stanley Cup, but I thought that we would be maybe flirting with a playoff spot, probably ultimately end up on the outside looking in. But I thought we could really build something maybe for the upcoming years."

Five takeaways from GM Kevyn Adams's first Trade Deadline

By Adam Unger

WKBW

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams's first trade deadline has come and gone. After making three other moves leading up to deadline day, his biggest was sending forwards Taylor Hall and Curtis Lazar to the Boston Bruins.

Both forwards were introduced to Boston's media earlier today. And Adams gave his perspective on the deadline, the return for Hall & Lazar, and what lies ahead for Buffalo.

Five Takeaways following this year's trade deadline:

Forcing the Matter

"As you get down to the wire in negotiations, the number gets narrowed down quickly on who can make a deal like that work, and then ultimately it's in the player's control where they want to go," Adams said. "You're negotiating and you're doing your best for the organization when you're with one team."

I can't imagine being a GM at a trade deadline is easy. Especially for the first time. The collective thought of the return the Sabres got for Taylor Hall isn't exactly a good one. But Adams pretty much had a hand tied behind his back because Taylor Hall could dictate where he wanted to go.

"Boston was basically number one on the list of teams I wanted to go to," Hall said. "I wanted to play for a chance to win a Stanley Cup and he worked it out to a team that I really wanted to go to."

Hall would clearly only waive his no-move clause for certain teams. And as the market unfolded, and players like Jeff Carter and Braydon Coburn made their way to other contenders, the pool became more and more limited. It's not what Buffalo was hoping for out of the blockbuster. But Hall forced the matter; it's not completely Adams's fault.

Beantown At Last

"I was ready to come to Boston," Taylor Hall said. "It didn't work out, and I had to choose between some other options. But I've always had a ton of respect for the Bruins organization and the city of Boston."

Whatever didn't work out between Hall and Boston in the fall, it's clearly been rectified. Then again, his winter and spring with the Sabres didn't exactly work out, either. The Bruins were a front runner to land Hall before he signed with the Sabres. Hall also expressed interest in being in Boston for "a few years." Picking your own destination certainly helps.

"[Hall] said "I want to play for the Boston Bruins. And that's a right he had," Adams said. "I understand that. They're a good hockey team and they've been a good team with good players for years. So I get why he said that."

Familiar Faces

Many players dealt at the trade deadline this season will have to wait until next season to have a revenge game. And that's assuming pending free agents stay with the same team to which they were traded. But all parties involved in the Boston trade will see each other plenty.

"You look at the way they're playing now, it's very exciting, especially last night in [Philadelphia]," newly acquired Bruins forward Curtis Lazar said. "They have a very bright future with all those young guys that are playing the right way right now. And you can see that confidence growing. Saying that, I look forward to sticking it to them tomorrow and next week."

And the week after that. And probably the week after that. The Sabres and Bruins still have six of their eight games left on the schedule to close out the season. Hall and Lazar both drove to Boston and, at the discretion of Boston head coach Bruce Cassidy, could play tomorrow night.

Another Project for Granato

The aforementioned young guys playing well have only been playing well since Don Granato took over as the interim head coach. The Asplund-Mittelstadt-Thompson line has been a welcome surprise over the last few weeks. It sounds like newly acquired Sabre Anders Bjork could also benefit from Granato's restorative coaching.

"He's got speed, he's got compete, and we see an offensive upside chanced with a role that could expand on our team. So he's a guy that we identified and liked what he brought," Adams said. "For us, that was something that was important."

Adams and the Sabres' scouting staff haven't seen much of him lately, though: Bjork had been out of Boston's lineup since April 3rd. He only has two goals and three assists through 30 games played this season. But Granato's apparent ability to resurrect the play of a seemingly broken or busted prospect is a part of what could lead to him being kept around.

"From the beginning, I've always felt that [Granato] should be a part of this," Adams said. "He's a great hockey guy, he's a great person, and I think the players do have a lot of respect for him and that can go a long way as well."

Adding to the stockpile

If the Sabres were in "buy" mode a few years ago, or even a few months ago, you wouldn't know it if you looked at their draft capital. Every trade that Kevyn Adams has made since the season began has involved at least one draft pick. And that was by design.

"One takeaway that I had last year from the short time preparing for the draft is that it's tough to go into the draft shorthanded... draft picks are currency," Adams said. "Once our team got to the point where we weren't where we needed to be in the standings, there was a clear pivot."

Adams only had five picks for his first NHL Draft in 2020. He'll have double that in a couple months. While they won't all be Buffalo's own picks, the Sabres have at least one pick in each round; they have two picks in the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th rounds.

The first two picks of his tenure were forwards Jack Quinn and John-Jason Peterka. Quinn has 2 goals and 5 assists in 13 games played for the Rochester Americans, while Peterka has 7 goals and 10 assists in 27 games played in the top pro league in Germany. The 2021 NHL Draft will begin on July 23rd.

Still no timeline on return to lineup for Sabres captain Jack Eichel

By Matt Bove

WKBW

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. [WKBW] — Buffalo Sabres captain Jack Eichel hasn't played in a game since he was injured on March 7 against the New York Islanders.

Since that game, the Sabres front office and coaching staff have remained tight-lipped about Eichel and his injury.

On Monday, following the NHL trade deadline, Kevyn Adams was asked about the status of the Sabres' captain.

"I think it's important that when we have the proper information to share in one way or another that we will be completely transparent," Kevyn Adams said. "I think part of this for Jack has been to make sure the reason he's not playing is that he's not healthy enough to play and we need to help him and we need to do everything we can as an organization to get him back there."

Adams went on to say there will be more clarity in the coming days and they got a little bit of an update last week.

In 21 games this season, Eichel has two goals and 16 assists. The Sabres have 15 regular-season games left on their schedule and Adams wouldn't speculate whether or not Eichel would return to the lineup at some point this season.

Sabres GM Kevyn Adams says Jack Eichel is still going to be out ‘for a while’

By Heather Prusak

WIVB

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Since Jack Eichel got hurt, the Sabres haven’t given any indication his injury is season-ending until now.

During his trade deadline zoom call on Monday, general manager Kevyn Adams said Eichel will still be “out for a while” which doesn’t sound promising for a return this season with 15 games left.

“He was again recently looked at by the doctors and slight improvement from where he was at before. I don’t want to go too much further than that but it does look like he’s still gonna be out for a while so where that puts him in terms of return, we’ll have to see,” Adams said.

“It would be great to get him in even if it was late in the season but just not sure so we’re gonna have some more conversations over the next couple days and get everybody on the same page with our doctors.”

Eichel has been out with an upper-body injury since the Sabres’ 5-2 loss to the Islanders on March 7th where it appeared he hurt his neck. At the time, head coach Ralph Krueger said the following week Eichel will be out for the “foreseeable future” but there was no mention of it being season-ending.

At the end of March interim head coach Don Granato said he didn’t think it [Eichel’s injury] would be season-ending but he had no timetable for his return either.

“It’s important that when we have the proper information to share and how we’re moving forward that we’ll be completely transparent,” Adams explained.

“The reason he’s not playing is because he’s not healthy enough to play and we need to help him do everything we can as an organization to get him back there. I think as we move forward here in the coming days there will be more clarity. We have a little bit more information last week and then here in the next couple of days gonna have some more conversations with the doctors and then for sure, kind of what are the next steps and why? And be transparent with that information with you guys.”

Curtis Lazar surprised but excited about joining Bruins

By Heather Prusak

WIVB

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – It was apparent the Sabres were going to deal Taylor Hall before the trade deadline but the surprise was he's not going to Boston alone.

The Sabres traded Hall along with Curtis Lazar to the Bruins in exchange for got forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in this year's draft, a deal that was made official Monday morning.

Even Lazar wasn't expecting it.

"It completely caught me off guard. I got the phone call last night about 11 p.m. and you know when you see the GM's name pop up a day before the deadline you kind of know what's gonna happen," Lazar said on his introductory zoom call with the Bruins.

"My first thought was where am I going? My wife and I actually just had our first kid a week ago so a lot of moving parts right there but couldn't be happier with Boston, the opportunity. Obviously they see something in me that they like to include me in that deal and I'm ready to prove it and show it."

Lazar had five goals and nine points in 33 games this season but after suffering a lower-body injury on March 31st hasn't played since. Ironically, Lazar said he was going to join the Sabres on their road trip which just so happens to start in Boston on Tuesday. So right away, he'll see his now former team.

"That fits in just with how this season's been going. It's been strange in all aspects but then again I mean you gotta look big picture and put things in perspective that we should just appreciate the opportunity that we're still able to play, we are staying safe and get a chance to play the game we love," Lazar said.

He's also excited to join the Bruins with Taylor Hall.

"He's a great guy, great competitor, obviously his numbers probably aren't what he wants it to be but he's fired up and ready to go. He's gonna put the work in to get the results," Lazar explained.

"I feel like for both of us it's a chance to play some competitive hockey, you know be in that playoff race. It's exciting, that's what every player wants to be in the postseason. We've got a great chance here. I'm happy to be a part of a very special organization with the Bruins."

It's not only a chance to possibly play in the postseason but also a fresh start after a tough year with the Sabres that saw a franchise record 18-game winless streak.

"We had a lot of adversity, not saying that other teams didn't but you get Covid and you kind of lose your legs and you go on that losing streak and what not and it was some tough sledding. There's no other way around it but it's a good group over there, I'm gonna miss the guys but I'm looking forward to a chance here to play with the Bruins," Lazar explained.

"We found some creative ways to lose games but you look at the way they're playing now, it's pretty exciting especially that game yesterday in Philly. I wish that team all the best, they have a very bright future with all those young guys that are playing the right way right now. You can see that confidence growing so saying that I look forward to you know sticking it to 'em tomorrow or next week," Lazar said smiling.

While Lazar is going to see a lot of his former team coming up, he's still grateful for his time with the Sabres.

"I kind of hit my stride in Buffalo and I want to build off what I learned there and continue that with the Bruins."

Taylor Hall after Sabres trade him to Boston: “I want to be a part of a winning team”

By Heather Prusak

WIVB

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – In December before the season started, Jack Eichel said signing Taylor Hall was “an exciting moment for our franchise, for the city.”

Ralph Krueger (head coach at the time) said the thought of Eichel and Hall playing on the same line would be a “lethal” combination.

Sabres team President and co-owner Kim Pegula expressed an excitement over the signing when talking to News 4’s Heather Prusak in January.

“I am really very excited and hopeful that we are on the right path. And then you get things like a Taylor Hall wanting to sign here. I know it was a one-year deal but he was a free agent that every team would have loved to have them come so why did he come here? He came here because of whether it’s the coach, the situation, talking to Kevyn [Adams], talking to my husband and I,” Pegula told News 4.

“He sees an opportunity here and I think that really bodes well for the organization, for the team when others from the outside feel like there’s something good happening here and wanting to be a part of it.”

You could go on and on with quotes like this showing the level of excitement Hall coming to Buffalo brought. But almost six months later to the day, he’s now on his way to Boston after the Sabres traded him to the Bruins ahead of April 12th’s 3 p.m. NHL trade deadline, a move that was expected and made official Monday morning.

“It was such a whirlwind of a year that it just went pretty badly, obviously,” Hall said during his introductory zoom call with the Bruins.

“We started off our first ten games we were above 500 and then we had the Covid outbreak and we just couldn’t get our footing after that. And for myself obviously it wasn’t the season that I would have liked to have, not even close so these last few days you do some soul searching and you look back on what you could do better and look forward to the future. And obviously I’m so happy and excited to be part of the Bruins. I can’t wait to play and I can’t wait to be part of a group like that.”

Hall used the word “winning” many times during this zoom call when talking about joining the Bruins.

Boston was basically number one on a list of teams I wanted to go to.

“It’s obviously been a bad year for me personally and I need to play well. I need to contribute and most of all I want to be a part of a team that wins games and I really believe we can do that here. That’s just my main goal,” Hall said.

“I think there’s been a lot of distractions this year, a lot of things that really haven’t gone well and confidence wise the team in Buffalo just never got off to the right foot so I think the best way to get confidence is to be a part of a winning team and to make yourself part of the bigger solution.”

Along with Hall, the Sabres also traded forward Curtis Lazar to the Bruins and in exchange got forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in this year’s draft. Buffalo also retains 50 percent of Hall’s salary.

It seemed like that momentum and good feelings from when Hall signed with the Sabres carried over when the season started. Hall scored his first goal with Buffalo and the team’s first goal of the season during the opener on January 14th. Eichel also had an assist on that power play goal which further had people thinking this pair was going to do some special things together with this team.

Then things went south.

It wasn't until March 4th when Hall scored again, his second goal of the season in a 5-2 loss to the Islanders. And that was it. Just two goals for Hall during his time with the Sabres.

"Unfortunately right now I'm not the most confident hockey player. Throughout this year there's been a lot of struggles and obviously goal scoring has been probably the biggest one so I gotta find a little bit of that part of my game back. I don't think that it's completely lost," Hall explained.

A big reason Hall came to Buffalo was to reunite with Krueger who he spent time with in Edmonton. Once the Sabres finally fired Krueger, it seemed there was even more reason for Hall to want out of Buffalo.

"With Buffalo I mean I think everyone came into this season with expectations that we would do a lot better than we did. I don't think anyone expected us to win the Stanley Cup but I thought that we would be maybe flirting with a playoff spot, you know probably ultimately end up on the outside looking in," Hall explained.

"But I thought we could really build something maybe for the upcoming years and then around trade deadline like I am right now I'd have to make a decision on if I wanted to stay or go or whatever it may be. Ultimately things didn't go as well as I would have liked and obviously our team was in the situation that it's in."

Hall even said he was close to signing with the Bruins in the summer but things didn't work out. Now at the trade deadline, it was at the top of his list of teams to go to and Kevyn Adams made it happen.

"Kevyn Adams here the GM was just fantastic in the way he treated me and the way that he went about the situation knowing that I wanted to play for a chance to win the Stanley Cup and he worked it out to a team that I really wanted to go to. I'll always be thankful to him for that and as a hockey guy and as a person I have a lot of respect for him," Hall said.

And before closing out his first press conference as a Bruin, he stressed again what he's looking for with his new team.

"I want to be a part of a winning team and whatever I have to do to do that that's what I'm here to do so I still believe in myself a lot as a hockey player and saying that I still believe I have a lot of athleticism and a lot of speed and I hope I can add to the team with those traits."

Hall, Lazar: What went wrong in Buffalo

By Julianne Pelusi

WGRZ

April 12, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Taylor Hall admitted he isn't the most confident hockey player right now, after his short-lived time in Buffalo. The Buffalo Sabres traded the 29-year-old forward to the Boston Bruins along with forward Curtis Lazar in exchange for a second round pick and forward Anders Bjork, ahead of Monday's NHL trade deadline at 3 p.m.

"It was such a whirlwind of a year that it went pretty badly, obviously. We started off, our first 10 games we were above .500 and then we had the COVID outbreak and we couldn't get our footing after that," Hall said when he was introduced to the Boston media on Monday morning.

"For myself, obviously, it wasn't the season that I would have liked to have had. Not even close."

Hall said he had done some soul-searching in the past week, while he sat out of the Sabres lineup as a trade precaution since Tuesday.

The former Hart Trophy winner, who came to Buffalo in the most recent offseason, said he wanted to join the Bruins last summer.

"I was ready to be a Bruin and just some other things kind of didn't work out. But it was not like any hard feelings or anything like that. Once I knew that there was a possibility that I would be traded, Boston was basically No. 1 on the list of teams that I wanted to go to," Hall said, while expressing his gratitude from Sabres General Manager Kevyn Adams for helping him get to a Stanley Cup contender and where he wanted to go.

Hall said he ultimately landed on Buffalo during the offseason because he felt captain Jack Eichel is a better player than he is and he just wanted to "be one of the guys." He thinks he's found that situation in Boston, as well.

"I'm really excited to be a part of that group and to just be one of the guys. I don't expect to come in and light the league on fire or anything like that. I just want to come and win games. I want to be a part of a winning team that has something that I haven't had before, and that's what makes me most excited," Hall said.

Hall and Lazar both plan on driving up to Boston on Monday. Lazar said he is excited for the opportunity to play for the Bruins but said he is sad to leave his teammates in Buffalo.

"We had a lot of adversity... it was some tough sledding. It's a good group over there. I'm going to miss the guys, but I'm looking forward to a chance to play for the Bruins," Lazar said.

"We found some creative ways to lose games, but you look at the way they're playing now, it's pretty exciting. They have a very bright future with all those young guys that are playing the right way right now... you can see that confidence growing."

Bruins take advantage of Sabres in Taylor Hall trade

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Despite down year, Hall can bring extra offence to Bruins

By Luke Fox

Sportsnet

April 12, 2021

As observers, critics and fans, we crave bold moves and outside-the-box thinking from our sports executives.

Taking risks equals juicy headlines and deep debate.

So, it was particularly intriguing when a rookie general manager, the Buffalo Sabres' Kevyn Adams, and a recent league MVP, Taylor Hall, took a wild, one-year, \$8-million swing over the off-season to see if they could help solve each other's curse.

While we applaud the stab, the results have been nothing short of disastrous — from Hall's shockingly low shooting percentage (2.3, when his career average is 10), career-worst minus-23 rating and paltry two goals, to the underwhelming return his midnight-hour trade to the Boston Bruins yielded Adams.

When Hall, 29, heads to his fourth team in two seasons, he'll be joined by depth forward Curtis Lazar, who is signed through 2022 at a \$800,000 cap hit. Going to Buffalo is cost-certain forward Anders Bjork (\$1.6-million cap hit through 2023) and a 2021 second-round draft pick.

Because the Sabres will retain half of Hall's \$8-million AAV, Hall will arrive in Boston as only the sixth-most-expensive forward. And he should see easier on-ice matchups skating behind the dominant Brad Marchand–Patrice–Bergeron–David Pastrnak line.

Despite receiving serious rental interest in Hall from a few contenders (the Golden Knights, Capitals and Islanders were reportedly in the mix), Adams walked back from his initial ask of a first-round pick for the biggest household name on the market.

Don't forget: The ball was in Hall's court here, as the 2018 Hart Trophy winner had negotiated a full no-move clause.

Adams, of course, signed off on that condition, tying his own wrists.

"Definitely the no-move really helped me become a Bruin," Hall said Monday morning, before embarking on the seven-hour drive to Boston. "This was a team I really wanted to be part of and really wanted to join."

Avoiding details, Hall revealed that he "was ready to be a Bruin" during the 2020 off-season. A contract came close but did not materialize, and he took a flyer in Buffalo, expecting the Sabres could maybe flirt with a playoff spot.

Buffalo's inexperienced front office will take more heat this week when the trade deadline's ledgers get tallied up.

All told, Adams has dispatched Hall, Lazar, Eric Staal and Brandon Montour in exchange for a second-rounder, two third-rounders, a fifth-rounder and Bjork.

By comparison: The other big seller, Columbus Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen, has recouped two first-rounders, a third-rounder, a fourth-rounder and a seventh-rounder for Nick Foligno, David Savard and an injured Riley Nash.

Hampered with a battered blue line and an ailing crease, Bruins GM Don Sweeney has done some fine patchwork over the past 24 hours.

In addition to Hall, who presents Bruins second-line centre David Krejci with some long-coveted skill on the flank, Sweeney also secured defenceman Mike Reilly from Ottawa for a 2022 third-round pick. Nice value.

With this splash, the pressure shifts off Sweeney now that he has given his veteran core a boost.

The pressure shifts onto Hall. Best case: he provides a secondary wave of offence for a champion, the way Phil Kessel did for the Penguins' most recent title runs.

He is an elite talent whose lack of playoff success (14 post-season games played in an 11-year career) and frequent suitcase-packing have dropped his stock heading into a second consecutive free-agent summer.

The \$8-million AAV offers won't be flying around this time.

A healthy scratch the past few days as Adams bubble-wrapped his most valuable asset, Hall spent the time doing some "soul searching."

The star has been humbled.

Speaking over Zoom Monday, Hall sounded decidedly down on his own game, yet optimistic about pulling on a fresh sweater.

"For myself, obviously it wasn't the season that I would've liked to had. Not even close," Hall said. "Unfortunately right now I'm not the most confident hockey player.

"I don't think it's completely lost or anything like that."

Taylor Hall says he would love to be a Bruin for a few years
Here is another chance.

If he soars, Hall could stick in Boston beyond 2021, with Krejci and Tuukka Rask's hefty contracts coming off the books. At the very least, Hall can showcase what he's capable of when surrounded by a legitimate roster with high standards and even higher hopes.

"I'd love to be a Bruin for a few years. It's been a bad year for me personally. I need to play well," Hall said.

"I came to Boston with [Tyler] Seguin in 2010 just before our draft, and I love the city. I love the fan base and the way they care about hockey. And every time I've come to Boston since then, I've always really enjoyed my time there. So, it's a city that I have a lot of respect for as a sports city, and I can't wait to get there."

With Hall's Bruins facing the Sabres six more times this season, starting Tuesday, the contrast should be striking.

Hall will waste no time jumping in the lineup.

"I really just want to be part of a winning team," Hall said.

"I'm really excited to be a part of that group and to just be one of the guys. I don't expect to come in and light the league on fire or anything like that. I just want to come and win games. I want to be a part of a winning team. That's something that I haven't had before, and that's what makes me most excited."

Taylor Hall trade takeaways: Bruins get a bargain from Sabres in head-scratching deadline deal

By Jackie Spiegel
Sporting News
April 12, 2021

In the early hours of the 2021 NHL trade deadline, word began to spread that the Bruins and Sabres had a deal in place regarding top trade chip Taylor Hall.

The deal was officially official at around 8 a.m. with Hall and Curtis Lazar heading to the Bruins for Anders Bjork and a 2021 second-round pick.

It's a move that's long been speculated but finally went down with the NHL trade deadline approaching.

Here are the reasons it worked for Don Sweeney and his Bruins and why it's a weird one for Sabres GM Kevyn Adams.

Bruins takeaways

1. Secondary scoring

Currently, the Boys from Beantown sit in the last playoff spot in the East with a number of teams within striking distance. And they surely need some offensive juice. The Bruins have just a plus-5 goal differential, which is the lowest among any team currently in the playoffs, and have potted a measly 106 goals (26th in the NHL) with 70 of those at 5v5.

Yes, Hall's season in Buffalo was a massive fail but he has proven he can score over the course of his career. The 2018 Hart Trophy winner has 582 points in 664 career games and one thing the Bruins lineup has been begging for up front — for a number of years — is secondary scoring.

His addition will allow Bruce Cassidy more flexibility as he'll most likely slot next to David Krejci, who he spoke highly of when chatting with the media Monday.

"He's been a great player in our league for such a long time," Hall said regarding the long-time Bruins centerman. "I have a lot of respect for what he's done in his career and how he can still play at a high level — it's incredible — along with a lot of other guys on that team. Such a good puck-mover, smart, can see the game and can move really well out there."

2. Takes the pressure off Hall

While he was a No. 1 pick, after winning that Hart Trophy three years ago, a lot of pressure was placed on the shoulders of Hall. He was expected to carry the Devils (but then injuries hit). He was expected to be a big-time spark when he went to the Coyotes. He was expected to be "the guy" next to Jack Eichel.

Now, with Patrice Bergeron, David Pastrnak, Brad Marchand in the top six, he doesn't have to be "the guy" and just be one of the guys.

"That was one of the biggest reasons why I wanted to play in Boston," he said. "That's why I'm so happy I'm traded here. I've been the focal point on a lot of teams in my career and I never made myself the focal point. That's just the situations that I was in, and the first chance that I got in free agency I went to Buffalo, a team that had Jack Eichel, a player that I think is better than myself. I just wanted to be one of the guys. I wanted to be on a successful team. Ultimately it didn't work out here in Buffalo, but going to Boston, there's so many great players on that team — Hall of Famers — guys that have had just amazing careers, careers that if I had anything like that at the end of my career I'd be super happy with."

3. Long term

Hall mentioned in his Zoom session with reporters that he wanted to go to the Bruins in the offseason but the sides, while close, couldn't agree on a deal. While he's only signed through this year, and is an unrestricted free agent, he could be a long-term Bruin based on how the audition works for the remainder of the season.

"I'd love to be a Bruin for a few years. It's been a bad year for me personally, and I need to play well," Hall said "I need to contribute, and most of all I want to be part of a team that wins games. I really believe that we can do

that here. That's just my main goal. There's been a lot of distractions this year, a lot of things that really haven't gone well and confidence-wise the team here in Buffalo just never got off to the right foot. I think the best way to get confidence is to be a part of a winning team and to make yourself part of the bigger solution, and that's what I'm looking forward to doing."

Sabres takeaways

1. Hall had to go

This is a given. Two goals in 37 games — one of those being opening night — just does not cut when you're a former No. 1 pick and a guy who has a Hart Trophy. It definitely doesn't cut it when you're signed to an \$8 million deal. And it doesn't cut it when you're not only set up with an ex-coach in Ralph Krueger — who worked with Hall for three years in Edmonton and who Hall praised during his media availability following the signing — and a top centerman in Jack Eichel.

It's easy here. Hall had to go, no questions asked.

"I can't really give you that answer right now (on what went wrong) because it was such a whirlwind of a year that it went pretty badly, obviously," he said. "We started off, our first 10 games we were above .500 and then we had the COVID outbreak and we couldn't get our footing after that.

"And for myself, obviously, it wasn't the season that I would have liked to have had. Not even close. These last few days, you do some soul-searching and you look back on what you can do better and look forward to the future."

2. No first-round pick?

Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen was able to snag a first-round pick for David Savard. He was also able to snag a first-round pick for Nick Foligno. So the big question is: How was Adams not able to snag a first-rounder for Hall?

Obviously, the decline over the last few years — and the previously mentioned debacle in 2021 — created a weaker market for Hall. But you'd think there'd be some GM willing to pay the price for the potential upside of Hall.

3. What did they really get?

Basically swapping Lazar and Bjork is a 1-for-1. Two depth guys who don't bring a whole lot of oomph to the roster but can play bottom-6 roles. So what is the team getting? A second-round pick? Not a big-time haul for Hall. In fact, the Sabres are reportedly paying the Bruins to take Hall. Adams reportedly agreed to retain 50 percent of the remaining contract on Hall, helping out the Bruins who didn't have the cap space to take on the entire contract.

Big picture: The Sabres were 100 percent going to lose Taylor Hall in the offseason. With the trade they at least got something in return.

7 takeaways from Kevyn Adams' post-deadline press conference

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

April 12, 2021

Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams detailed the process that went into the team's trade with the Boston Bruins, discussed the future of goaltender Linus Ullmark and updated the search for a permanent head coach during a Zoom call with the media following the NHL trade deadline on Monday.

The Sabres acquired forward Anders Bjork and a second-round pick in the 2021 NHL Draft in exchange for forwards Taylor Hall and Curtis Lazar earlier in the day, making Hall the third and final pending unrestricted free agent to be traded by the Sabres prior to the deadline.

The team previously acquired a trio of picks from Montreal and Florida in exchange for forward Eric Staal and defenseman Brandon Montour, respectively.

Here are takeaways from Adams' session with the media.

1. Detailing the trade with Boston

The Sabres signed Hall to a one-year deal during the offseason in hopes that he would add a top-six scoring threat and nudge the team toward playoff contention. Hall started strongly but saw his production dip as the season wore on, finishing with two goals and 19 points in 37 games.

Adams said the two sides spoke a few weeks prior to the deadline about how to make a potential trade work given Hall's full no-movement clause. The message from Hall and his agent was that he would like to play for a Stanley Cup contender.

As offers came in, Hall turned his focus to Boston.

"As we got to yesterday when things heated up a little bit, I would say, obviously stayed in touch and got to a point where Taylor thought Boston was the team that he thought he wanted to go to," Adams said. "That was where he felt was the best fit and contractually, he had earned that right to make that call. We focused our attention there and obviously was able to get a deal done."

Adams said the Sabres targeted the 24-year-old Bjork as a player with untapped offensive upside. The Bruins sought Lazar, who had carved out an everyday role as a checking centerman since joining the Sabres last season, in return.

"I feel he's going to be a good player that comes in and has a chance to play a bigger role," Adams said of Bjork. "I think that's sometimes what it takes for players to grab an opportunity and run."

2. The team sought to stockpile picks

Buffalo now holds 10 draft picks in 2021, up from five when the season began. In addition to the second-round pick acquired from Boston, the team received:

- A sixth-round pick from Colorado for goaltender Jonas Johansson.
- Third- and fifth-round picks from Montreal for Staal.
- A third-round pick from Florida for Montour.

"That was definitely the plan," Adams said. "One takeaway that I had last year in a short time preparing for the draft was it is hard to go into the draft short-handed. Draft picks are currency, and besides building your pipeline, which I think has been lacking, you can also use that currency in other ways."

"You can package picks together to potentially acquire players. You can package picks together to move up in the draft. Maybe we need some pick for expansion reasons to help yourself. So, it definitely was a strategy going in once our team got to the point where we were not where we needed to be in the standings."

3. Sabres hope to retain Ullmark

One of the pending UFAs who did not depart via trade is Ullmark, who has developed into the team's No. 1 goaltender over the past two seasons.

Adams said the team hopes to keep the goaltender in the fold beyond this year and added that conversations between the two sides are ongoing.

"I've spent time with Linus just one-on-one having conversations about philosophically where we're at and where we're looking to get to and what he's looking for," Adams said. That's my style. I think that's an important relationship to have with your players.

"It's not about dollars and cents. It's more about vision and where are we headed and why. We've had those conversations and we'll continue to work at it, but priority for us is absolutely to sign Linus and he and his agent both know that."

4. Granato in the mix for head coach

Adams said it has been his opinion from the beginning that interim head coach Don Granato be a part of the conversation to retain the position on a permanent basis.

"For sure, Donnie Granato is a person that I absolutely think is in the mix for this and should be," Adams said. "He's a great hockey guy, he's a great person and it think the important thing is the players do have a lot of respect for him and that goes a long way as well."

The Sabres are 4-7-2 under Granato, who took over on March 17 with the team mired in a winless streak that would eventually extend to 18 games. They are 4-2-1 since that streak ended and have embraced a faster-paced, possession-based game.

Perhaps most promising of late has been the success of young players who began the season without an everyday spot in the lineup. Casey Mittelstadt has assumed a top-six center role and tallied seven points in his past seven games. Tage Thompson has three goals and an assist in that span while Rasmus Asplund has four goals and an assist in eight games under Granato.

Adams said he has seen a team playing more on its toes and one that's surer of its decisions on the ice since Granato took over. Increasing the intensity and frequency of practices has translated to a more competitive product in games.

"So, Donnie's done a nice job," he said. "He's a hockey coach. He's a guy that shows up every day prepared. He's been around the game a long time. He's been a head coach for a number of years, obviously, you guys know that. And the guys really like playing for him."

5. No update yet on Eichel

Adams said the hope remains for the Sabres captain to return from his upper-body injury by the end of the season but added there is no certainty on a timetable.

"He was recently again looked at by the doctors and a slight improvement from where he was at before," Adams said. "I don't want to go too much further than that, but it does look like he's still going to be out for a while, so where that puts him in terms of return, we'll have to see. It would be great get him in, even if it was late in the season, but I'm just not sure."

6. Assistant GM remains a priority

Adams said he had "very serious" discussions with a potential candidate over the past week.

"It's a priority," he said. "It's a huge hire in terms of how we're putting together the hockey department and structure and, like I said before, we need to build the front office back up."

"We need to hire more scouts, we need to make sure that we're putting the pieces in place from our front office right through the scouting department, player development department and just make sure that as we move forward, we're having the right people in the right positions."

7. What's ahead

The Sabres have 15 games remaining, an opportunity for young players to continue to prove themselves within a schedule that presents Stanley Cup contenders like Boston, Washington, Pittsburgh, and the New York Islanders on an every-other-day basis.

The final stretch will also be a chance for more young players to earn looks out of Rochester, for Granato to continue to show the front office how he leads a team, and for newcomers Bjork and Drake Caggiula - who was acquired on waivers from Arizona last week - to make a first impression.

The Sabres visit the Bruins on Tuesday at 7 p.m. Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30.