



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*April 20, 2021*

## **Dustin Tokarski has given a boost to Sabres' play in the crease**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 19, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres' goaltending situation is a fascinating subplot to the final month of their season.

Starter Linus Ullmark is on the injured list again and the team admitted last week that the schedule will probably run out on May 8 before he's ready to return. Carter Hutton, who exited a game last month in New York with a leg injury, is coming to the end of his three-year contract. You wonder if he can get a game or two before the season ends, perhaps to show other teams that at age 35 he still might be a viable option as an NHL backup.

No. 1 prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen is on the taxi squad and seemingly on track to make his NHL debut here either Thursday or Friday night against the Boston Bruins in KeyBank Center. That leaves Dustin Tokarski, who is fast becoming one of the wilder stories of the club's year and will be making his fourth straight start in Tuesday's game against the Bruins.

With Ullmark on his first injured stint, Tokarski had to relieve Hutton that night in Madison Square Garden. He had not been in an NHL crease since getting 10 minutes in one game for the Anaheim Ducks in 2016. He had no wins in the league since 2015.

A month later, Tokarski has led the Sabres to wins over Washington and Pittsburgh in a four-day span. On Monday, he was named the NHL's First Star of the Week after leading the league for the week with 128 saves in four games. He went 2-1-1 with a 2.27 goals-against average and .934 save percentage.

In relief of Ullmark, Tokarski made 29 saves in last Tuesday's 3-2 shootout loss to the Bruins in TD Garden. Tokarski then stopped 27 shots in Thursday's 5-2 win at Washington – his first NHL victory since Dec. 12, 2015, for Montreal against Ottawa. He was 1-1 over the weekend against the Penguins, making 38 saves in Saturday's 3-2 loss and stopping 34 shots in Sunday's 4-2 victory.

While there have been some questionable goals allowed, Tokarski hasn't let them linger and has calmed down in the crease considerably in recent games. Playing three games in four days, including a back-to-back against Pittsburgh, was no easy feat, and the 5-foot-11 Tokarski handled it brilliantly.

"Someone's giving me an NHL start, I'm taking it every time," Tokarski said after Sunday's win. "So, I looked forward to the game today when I found out I was playing and it was a lot of fun getting a win against those guys. They have a great team and our guys played a heck of a game.

"Sometimes you've just got to go out there and compete. I love going out there battling. If there's some fatigue, you've just got to put that behind you because everyone's tired. Players are playing a ton of games, too. So there's no excuses. So go out there and play. My guys played awesome."

Among NHL goalies who have played at least five games this month, Tokarski entered Monday's play fourth in the NHL in saves in April (201) and 13th in save percentage (.926). On the penalty kill, he's third in the league at .960.

Tokarski spent most of his season as the Sabres' taxi squad goalie, playing only two games in Rochester. It was easy to dismiss him as a spare part coming from the AHL, but he's won plenty of hardware in his career.

He led the Spokane Chiefs to the Memorial Cup in 2008 and was named the MVP of the tournament to determine the top junior team in Canada. He led Canada to a gold medal at the 2009 World Junior Championships and won Calder Cups with Norfolk (2012) and Charlotte (2019). The Norfolk team, coached by current Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper, compiled a 28-game winning streak that stands as the all-time record in professional hockey. Tokarski went 32-11 that season and then dominated the playoffs, going 12-2, 1.46/.944.

In the NHL, however, Tokarski has not gotten many runs other than two years with Montreal that included starting the final five games of the 2014 Eastern Conference final against the New York Rangers in place of the injured Carey Price.

Tokarski's three March appearances for the Sabres were not good (0-3, 4.11/.890), but he has quickly improved with regular work in April.

"You hear intelligence, competitiveness and he's a guy that you want to go to battle with when you're his teammate," Rochester coach Seth Appert said Monday. "You know he's giving you everything he can back there. You know he's battling for his team and his teammates. It's not always pretty. It's not always textbook. Sometimes I'm not even sure how you coach him stylistically. ... I don't think I would teach young goalies some of the things he does. But it works for him. And he knows what works for him.

"'Coop' just said that he's the ultimate winner," Appert said. "Sometimes with goalies, you get too hung up with scouting and drafting and working with them on technique and looking the proper way. And you forget what really matters most, which is winning. ... He doesn't care about style points. He just wants to give his teammates a chance to win and that's how he's wired."

With Ullmark and Hutton both pending free agents, the Sabres' goaltending picture is up in the air for next year. Tokarski can again give the Sabres insurance at the NHL level and an experienced hand in Rochester.

"It's late in the year and the playoffs are out of the picture, but guys are playing for positions," Tokarski said. "Guys are playing for each other, which is huge. The main thing now is end the season on a good note, and with a lot of pride and proving that the team has improved a ton over the course of the last month."

## **Sabres notebook: Bruins hit town with 4-0 mark since trade for Taylor Hall**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 19, 2021

Here come Taylor Hall and Curtis Lazar back to Buffalo. And here come the Boston Bruins, rejuvenated in the wake of last week's trade and back in the thick of the East Division race. They open a three-game series against the Sabres on Tuesday at KeyBank Center.

The Bruins are 4-0 since the deal, including the 3-2 shootout win over the Sabres last Tuesday in Boston in the first game after the deal that sent Anders Bjork and a second-round pick to Buffalo. Hall, who had two goals and a minus-21 rating in 37 games with the Sabres, has two goals, three points and a plus-4 rating with the Bruins. Lazar has one goal and an even rating.

Hall is playing on the second line with center David Krejci and winger Craig Smith. His mandate from the club was clear: Come in and be a complementary player.

"You don't have to be our leading scorer, you're not the face of the franchise like maybe some other places you've been," coach Bruce Cassidy said last week when asked how he explained Hall's role to the former No. 1 overall pick. "Just be a good hockey player for the Boston Bruins. So keep building your game. Let's see what your game is all about, come here, see what our game is all about, help us win."

Hall has done that as the Bruins, albeit still in fourth place in the East, have climbed to within six points of the lead and have three games in hand on first-place Washington after Sunday's 6-3 win over the Caps. Krejci has three of his five goals this season since Hall joined his line.

### Tough times vs. Bruins

Until Sunday's win over Pittsburgh, the Sabres were 0-10 at home and just 2-18-2 this season overall against the East's top four. They are 0-2-1 against Boston this year and a combined 1-13-1 against the Bruins, Penguins (1-5) and Islanders (1-6).

The Sabres are winless in their last eight games with Boston (0-6-2), and have lost four straight to them at home. This is the first three-game home series in franchise history, and was necessitated by the March 20 postponement when the Bruins were dealing with positive Covid-19 tests.

Tuesday's game is a 6:30 start for NBC Sports Network nationally, although the game will be televised locally by MSG. It was supposed to be the front half of an NBCSN doubleheader featuring St. Louis and Colorado, but that game was postponed by the Avs' Covid-19 pause.

### East Amherst's DeSimone loaned to Amerks

After spending parts of the last five seasons with the San Jose Barracuda, defenseman Nick DeSimone of East Amherst has been acquired on an AHL loan by the Rochester Amerks from the Vegas Golden Knights.

DeSimone was acquired by Vegas from the San Jose Sharks last week for a fifth-round pick in the 2022 draft. Oddly enough, that pick originally belonged to the Sabres and was sent to Vegas in 2019 for defenseman Colin Miller.

DeSimone had five assists in 14 games this season for the Barracuda and served as an assistant captain. He has appeared in 190 career AHL games, collecting 26 goals and 65 points. He had a career-high 46 points in 2018-19, when he finished tied for seventh in scoring among AHL defensemen. The 26-year-old played three years at Union College from 2014-2017, compiling 15 goals and 48 points in 108 games.

### Son of Vegas' DeBoer transfers to Niagara

Another connection to Vegas also announced his decision to come to Western New York to continue his hockey career. Boston University center Jack DeBoer – the son of Golden Knights coach Peter DeBoer – revealed on Twitter that he is transferring to Niagara University.

Jack DeBoer, who played for the United States National Development Team program in 2017-18, had five goals and 12 points in 57 games for BU the last three seasons.

## **Sabres goalie Dustin Tokarski named NHL's First Star of the Week**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 19, 2021

Buffalo Sabres goaltender Dustin Tokarski, who earned his first NHL win since 2015 and made 128 saves in four games, has been named the NHL's First Star of the Week, the league announced Monday afternoon.

Pressed into duty Tuesday in Boston due to the injury suffered by Sabres starter Linus Ullmark, Tokarski went 2-1-1 in the four games that were all against playoff teams in the East Division. In relief of Ullmark, he made 29 saves in the 3-2 shootout loss to the Bruins in TD Garden. Tokarski then stopped 27 shots in Thursday's 5-2 win at Washington – his first NHL victory since Dec. 12, 2015, for Montreal vs. Ottawa.

Tokarski then went 1-1 over the weekend against the Pittsburgh Penguins, making 38 saves in Saturday's 3-2 loss and stopping 34 shots in Sunday's 4-2 victory. He came within 10 minutes of his second NHL shutout in that game; his only one remains a 2-0 victory for Montreal in Buffalo in 2014.

Until relieving the injured Carter Hutton March 22 in New York, Tokarski had not appeared in the NHL since playing one game for Anaheim in 2016. He has played in nine games for the Sabres this season, posting a 2-5-2 record with a 3.15 goals-against average and .914 save percentage. But in April he's 2-0-2, 2.68/.926.

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center registered nurse Michaela Pastorius joined Tokarski in sharing First Star honors. Throughout the season, the First Star is joined by a front-line worker from their city in being honored by the league.

Pastorius is a former Roswell cancer patient who put nursing school on hold while going through treatment, but vowed to finish her degree and now works alongside the nurses who once cared for her. She works at inpatient unit 6West, which was typically for cancer patients with solid tumors, but has become a designated Covid-19 space over the past year.

"When I was going through inpatient chemotherapy at Roswell Park, the Buffalo Sabres gave me motivation to continue fighting," Pastorius said in a statement. "The amount of support the Sabres show for Roswell and its patients felt personal to me since I am such a big fan. ... The appreciation I had and still have for their support is bottomless."

New York Rangers winger Artemi Panarin was the Second Star and Vegas winger Mark Stone was the Third Star.

The Sabres were off Monday and open a three-game home series against Boston at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in KeyBank Center.

## **Travis Yost's Sabre Metrics: What numbers show about improvement under Don Granato**

By Travis Yost  
The Buffalo News  
April 19, 2021

Perhaps he's just clearing a very low bar, but interim coach Dan Granato has the Buffalo Sabres playing better hockey of late. That could be enough to win the job full-time this summer.

Granato was given interim duties March 17 after the organization fired Ralph Krueger. It's hard to lay all the team's struggles at the feet of Krueger. The roster remains quite thin on the talent side, and the goaltending – up until the point of Krueger's firing – was stopping an appallingly low less than 89% of shots faced.

But Krueger wasn't without fault. He was the coach overseeing an awful third line that kept getting minutes; he was also the coach who vacillated between "first line Jeff Skinner" and "healthy scratch Jeff Skinner." And most distressingly, the team seemed lifeless under his watch. The coaching staff and the players are responsible for effort and attention to detail. The organization can thin out underperforming players over time, but a coaching change is easier.

Enter Granato. He's been tasked with the ultimate challenge – commandeer a team preparing to sell off any remaining assets to the highest bidder at the trade deadline, and uplift a team that knows it's been playing out the string since mid-February. Not exactly a recipe for success. And yet despite all this going on around the organization, swapping Granato for Krueger has had a net-positive effect. The grim goal differentials observed during the Krueger era have been eliminated. Perhaps more importantly, Granato's team is a full percentage point better in expected goal rates than it was under his predecessor:

It's going to be difficult, if not impossible, to get a true sense for what type of coach Granato is considering what he's working with. But if you are General Manager Kevyn Adams and Associate General Manager Jason Karmanos, what you want to see is directional improvement, and that's been the case over the last 17 games. A total such as 46% of the expected goals won't get you into the playoffs, but when it's a full point better than a team that had more talent at its disposal – well, that might be the first encouraging data point of the entire season. (I would be remiss to not point out that Buffalo crossed break-even on their 5-game moving average after Saturday's competitive game against Pittsburgh; a first since mid-February.

The one thing that Granato's team has received that Krueger's team did not is some degree of puck luck. We talked about this component quite a bit during the futile parts of Krueger's tenure – in fact, the most compelling argument in support of Krueger was that the team shooting percentages were so unfathomably low, the laws of regression would invariably apply as the season went on.

Granato's been the beneficiary of that bounce – players who couldn't buy goals, such as Casey Mittelstadt (six goals in 15 games), Tage Thompson (four goals in 12 games), and Rasmus Asplund (four goals in 10 games) have suddenly found their scoring touch. Not only has his team drastically improved its finishing rate, the Sabres have also slowed down the firing squads that carved their goaltending unit apart in the opening weeks of the season:

Linus Ullmark (91.5% stop rate), when healthy, and Dustin Tokarski (90.7%) have played much better of late, and you have to imagine getting occasional saves in the defensive end is as big a morale booster to the rest of the skaters as anything Granato himself could say.

The organization will need more time to evaluate Granato. The team's playing better, and the front office knows they have some heavy lifting to do to repair the lineup. And not everything has been great – the power play has just four goals under Granato, and the team is 6-8-3 since the transition.

But there is no doubt the interim head coach has his team playing more aggressively, and more effectively. And that's a welcome change from what was a ghastly and, quite frankly, unwatchable first two months of the regular season.

## **Dustin Tokarski named 'First Star' of Week in NHL**

By Joe DiBiase

WGR 550

April 19, 2021

It's been a long journey back to the National Hockey League for Buffalo Sabres goaltender Dustin Tokarski.

With both Linus Ullmark and Carter Hutton going down to lower-body injuries, he has carried load for the Sabres in net, and has played well enough to earn NHL "First Star" of the Week honors.

Goaltender Dustin Tokarski and RN Michaela Pastorius from @RoswellPark have been named the @NHL's First Stars of the Week!

In Tokarski's four games in the last week, he posted a record of 2-1-1 with a 2.27 goals-against average and a save percentage of .934.

Tokarski's win over the Washington Capitals on Thursday night was his first victory since Dec. 12, 2015. It was also Tokarski's first NHL win since his father passed away a few years back. He pointed skyward as the horn sounded Thursday in D.C.

With all the Sabres' injuries in net, it's doubly impressive that Tokarski put up the numbers he did, playing four games in six nights. He'll likely continue to play the majority of the games until the Sabres get healthier.

Tokarski is the first Sabres player to earn "First Star" of the Week honors since Tyler Ennis was on the week ending Dec. 14, 2014.

Jaromir Jagr and John Scott are just a couple of players who earned "First Star" of the Week honors since the Sabres last had had one.

## **Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen ready for chance in NHL**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 19, 2021

BUFFALO – Forget about goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen’s last six outings, Rochester Americans coach Seth Appert said.

Yes, Luukkonen, 22, has looked sloppy at times since the Amerks’ COVID-19 pause ended late last month, compiling a 2-3-1 record and an awful .863 save percentage.

But a lot of players struggle after being forced to sit idle. Luukkonen did not play for three weeks.

Appert believes Luukkonen’s early-season exploits and the strong habits he has developed illustrate growth in his second North American pro campaign.

“His work ethic has been fabulous this year, the way he goes about every day,” Appert said on a Zoom call Monday. “He really approaches things like a pro now.”

Right now, Luukkonen is close to making NHL debut. The Sabres recalled their top goalie prospect to the taxi squad Saturday. Interim coach Don Granato said they plan to award him a start.

Granato wants Luukkonen, who recently suffered a lower-body injury, to practice and be with the team before he plays. So goalie Dustin Tokarski will likely start Tuesday’s game against the Boston Bruins at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres also host the Bruins on Thursday and Friday, so Luukkonen could play one of those contests.

Of course, the 6-foot-4, 220-pound Luukkonen needs more seasoning. The Finn has played just 25 AHL games and another 23 contests in the ECHL. Goalies often must hone their craft at least a few years in the minors.

His stint in Buffalo could be brief, perhaps just a one-game look.

“He’s ready,” Appert said. “No goalie’s totally ready at the age that he is. It’s a lot easier to play at that age as a defenseman or a forward. But I feel confident that he’s going to handle the opportunity very well.”

Appert, a former college goalie, has seen Luukkonen evolve. He coached against him on the international stage and said he saw a young player who possessed “elite” athleticism and competitiveness.

“I thought there were things we could take advantage of from a style standpoint,” Appert said. “I think he’s cleaned a lot of those things up.”

Luukkonen, a second-round pick in 2017, 54th overall, has worked to become more than simply a big body blocking pucks.

“He’s much stronger in his frame, his skating is stronger, he’s holding his feet, and that allows you to use that athleticism to your advantage,” Appert said earlier this season.

Luukkonen said he learned as a rookie last season he needed to have more structure in his game.

“I was kind of behind the play all the time, so I think that’s one of the main reasons why I feel more comfortable here this year,” Luukkonen said earlier this season.

Overall this season, Luukkonen has compiled a 7-5-2 mark with a 3.60 goals-against average and an .888 save percentage in 14 games.

“I don’t think his save percentage is indicative of his play,” Appert said. “I think his save percentage is more indicative of a little rustiness coming out of the COVID pause.”

Appert said Luukkonen has grasped his drive and talent will only take him so far.

"You get to the second-best league in the world and you get exposed for some of those habits," Appert said. "And then that's a good thing, because it challenges you to change and to grow and to create better habits, which are going to allow you to have success in the National Hockey League."

"UPL has done those things. He's really worked hard to acquire the habits he needs to not only be successful here, but to give him a chance to be successful in Buffalo."

Appert said after Luukkonen prepares for practice, they go on the ice and spend seven minutes working on "his skating inside the crease."

"Then he puts another 15 minutes on his goaltending habit," he said. "This is all before practice, right? And then he goes and attacks practice."

Following practice, Luukkonen works out with the Amerks' strength coach and also walks uphill on a treadmill.

"What I call 'Finnish mountain climbers,'" Appert said.

Appert said Luukkonen has constructed a base of confidence around his habits and work ethic while strengthening his body.

"He can handle the weight that he's added," he said. "He's at a really good weight. But he's a big, strong kid and that's a lot of weight to move around for a 21-year-old."

Notes: Sabres center Casey Mittelstadt has a three-game point streak and has compiled seven goals and 10 points in his last 11 games. Mittelstadt scored seven goals in 59 games before his goal March 31 kicked off his torrid run. ... The Amerks on Monday received defenseman Nick DeSimone, an East Amherst native, on loan from the Vegas Golden Knights. The San Jose Sharks recently traded DeSimone, 26, to Vegas. He had spent the last four years with San Jose's AHL affiliate, the Barracuda. ... Ex-Sabres forwards Taylor Hall and Curtis Lazar, who were traded to the Bruins on April 12, have each played four games for their new team. Hall has already scored two goals for the Bruins, equaling his meager 37-game output with Buffalo. ... The Sabres had Monday off.

## **Sabres goalie Dustin Tokarski named NHL's First Star of Week**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 19, 2021

Buffalo Sabres goalie Dustin Tokarski has been named the NHL's First Star of the Week after earning his first two wins since 2015 and making a league high-128 saves.

In four appearances through Sunday, Tokarski, 31, compiled a 2-1-1 record with a 2.27 goal-against average and a .934 save percentage.

In Thursday's 5-2 victory over the Washington Capitals, Tokarski won his first NHL game since Dec. 12, 2015, making 27 saves. It was also his first win since his father, Mark, passed away in 2017.

Tokarski followed up by making 38 saves in Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins. He made 34 stops in Sunday's 4-2 win over the Penguins.

He also made 29 saves after relieving an injured Linus Ullmark in Tuesday's 3-2 shootout loss to the Boston Bruins.

Overall, Tokarski has compiled a 2-5-2 record with a 3.15 goals-against average and a .914 save percentage in nine games this season. He hadn't played in the NHL since 2016 before last month.

New York Rangers winger Artemi Panarin (four goals and 10 points in four games) and Vegas Golden Knights winger Mark Stone (three goals and eight points in four games) earned second and third star honors, respectively.

## **Sabres netminder Tokarski named NHL's First Star of the Week**

By Julianne Pelusi

WGRZ

April 19, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — After winning his first NHL game in more than five years on Thursday night over the Washington Capitals, Dustin Tokarski pointed to the rafters.

The 5-2 victory was also the 31-year-old netminder's first NHL win since losing his father in 2017.

"It was pretty incredible, to be honest," Tokarski said after the win, which would eventually help him earn the NHL's First Star of the Week honor.

"I lost my dad a few years back, so that was my first NHL win since he's passed. So I was just pointing up to him for that special moment, and then all the guys were just coming in. There's nothing better for a goalie celebrating with your teammates after a win."

Tokarski made a league-best 128 saves on 137 shots this week, picking up that win over Washington and splitting a two-game weekend series with Pittsburgh, after starting goalie Linus Ullmark went down with an lower body injury against the Boston Bruins on Tuesday.

The Sabres bounced back from a 3-2 loss on Saturday to the Penguins with a 4-2 win on Sunday, with Tokarski starting back-to-back games in net.

"Sometimes you just got to go out there and compete... We have other capable (goaltenders), of course, as well, but I love going out there battling," Tokarski said after Sunday's win. "If there is some fatigue, you know of have to put it behind you because everyone's tired. The players are playing a ton of games, too. So there are no excuses, and you just got to go out there and play.

"If someone's giving me an NHL start, I'm taking it every time."

## **Tokarski of Sabres, Buffalo registered nurse NHL First Stars of Week**

NHL.com

April 19, 2021

NEW YORK - Buffalo Sabres goaltender Dustin Tokarski and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center RN Michaela Pastorius have been named the NHL's "First Stars" for the week ending April 18.

Throughout the 2020-21 season the NHL is celebrating the remarkable efforts of the off-ice stars who make it possible for us to play our games amid a pandemic by honoring frontline healthcare heroes from the regions represented by the League's weekly and monthly "Stars."

Pastorius works as a nurse at Buffalo's Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, where just a few years ago she was walking the same halls as a patient battling a cancer diagnosis. Pastorius put nursing school on hold while going through treatment, but vowed to finish her degree and now works alongside the nurses who once cared for her as a patient.

The inpatient unit at Roswell Park where Pastorius works - known as 6West - is typically for cancer patients with solid tumors, but has become a designated COVID-19 space over the past year. Pastorius understands what these patients are going through and brings a positive attitude to the floor despite the incredibly challenging and emotional experience of the pandemic on both patients and staff.

"When I was going through inpatient chemotherapy at Roswell Park, the Buffalo Sabres gave me motivation to continue fighting," Pastorius says. "The amount of support the Sabres show for Roswell and its patients felt personal to me since I am such a big fan . . . The appreciation I had and still have for their support is bottomless."

Rounding out the "Three Stars" of the week are New York Rangers left wing Artemi Panarin and Vegas Golden Knights right wing Mark Stone . More on each NHL player's performance can be found below:

### **FIRST STAR - DUSTIN TOKARSKI, G, BUFFALO SABRES**

Tokarski made a League-best 128 saves on 137 shots, compiling a 2.27 goals-against average and .934 save percentage to help the Sabres (12-26-7, 31 points) go 2-1-1 versus three of the top four teams in the MassMutual NHL East Division. He turned aside 29 shots in a 3-2 shootout loss to the Boston Bruins April 13. Tokarski then recorded 27 saves for his first NHL victory since Dec. 12, 2015 (w/ MTL) - and first win since his father passed away in 2017 - in a 5-2 triumph over the Washington Capitals April 15. He finished the week with a pair of starts against the Pittsburgh Penguins, making 38 saves in a 3-2 loss April 17 followed by 34 stops in a 4-2 victory April 18. The 31-year-old Watson, Sask., native - who last appeared in the NHL in 2016-17 (w/ ANA) prior to signing with Buffalo in November - has played in nine games this season, posting a 2-5-2 record with a 3.15 goals-against average and .914 save percentage.

### **SECOND STAR - ARTEMI PANARIN, LW, NEW YORK RANGERS**

Panarin led the NHL with 4-6-10 and a +8 rating (tied) in four contests to power the Rangers (23-16-6, 52 points) to a sweep of their four-game series against the New Jersey Devils. Panarin scored once in a 3-0 win April 13, giving him a franchise-record 138 points (45-93-138) through his first 100 appearances with New York. He then collected multiple points in each of his next three games, notching 2-1-3 in a 4-0 triumph April 15, 1-3-4 (including the game-winning goal) in a 6-3 victory April 17 and two assists in a 5-3 win April 18. The 29-year-old Korkino, Russia, native and 2015-16 Calder Memorial Trophy winner ranks second in the League with 1.53 points per game this season, placing 10th overall with 16-36-52 in 34 outings.

### **THIRD STAR - MARK STONE, RW, VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS**

Stone ranked second in the NHL with 3-5-8 in four games to lift the Golden Knights (31-11-2, 64 points) to a perfect week and their sixth straight win dating to April 9. He recorded consecutive 1-1-2 performances in a pair of matchups against the Los Angeles Kings, a 4-2 victory April 12 and 6-2 triumph April 14. Stone added another four points in two games versus the Anaheim Ducks, collecting two assists in a 4-0 win April 16 and 1-1-2 in a 5-2 victory April 18. The 28-year-old Winnipeg native tops Vegas and places 12th in the NHL with 15-35-50 through 43 contests this season. He also sits among the League leaders in plus/minus (3rd; +25), game-winning goals (t-3rd; 7), shooting percentage (7th; 20.3%) and assists (t-8th; 35).

## **Notebook: Bruins could have their hands full with Sabres**

By Steve Conroy

Boston Herald

April 19, 2021

As the Bruins desperately tried to keep their head above water in the many win-one/lose-one weeks leading up to the trade deadline, there was a belief that the B's did have one ace in the hole. While the rest of the East Division had been feasting on the dysfunctional Buffalo Sabres, the B's had barely played the league's doormats.

Well, now is the B's time with the Sabres — five of their remaining 13 games are against Buffalo, including three this week — but all of a sudden it doesn't look quite as appetizing as it once did.

With the trade deadline passed, veterans moved out, any hopes of making the playoffs gone, and captain Jack Eichel done for the season, the Sabres are doing what many bottom-rung teams do when stress is removed from the equation.

They're playing well.

The Sabres are 5-3-3 in the month of April and in the last week have scored wins over the Capitals and Penguins. In the last month, Buffalo threw a couple scares into the B's themselves. On March 27 near the tail end of Buffalo's epic 18-game losing streak, the B's needed a late third-period comeback to win at the Garden. Then in the first game after the trade deadline, the B's could not put the Sabres away, needing a shootout to earn the two points.

Not counting Eichel, the Sabres have seven top 10 picks in their lineup, some acquired in trades, others from their own years of futility. But what may be more important than the untapped talent level, the Sabres' compete level has been raised. In the loss in Boston last week, the Sabres lost both the war and the battles (Matt Irwin and Tage Thompson taking one-sided beatings from Nick Ritchie and Kevan Miller), but the main point is that they showed up for both. That has not always been the case.

The B's play the Sabres in five of their next seven games and have everything to lose, while their opponent has nothing. The B's players must understand that.

"It's a tough sell to the players sometimes, because that's how a team gets painted and then everyone's buying into it, saying they're not very good. Then all of a sudden teams start playing well and Buffalo is in that mode right now. They're coming together as a team," said coach Bruce Cassidy.

"They're playing their best hockey they've played all year. Our challenge to get our players' attention after you've come off some New York Islander and then Washington games that are the first-place teams. We have to be focused and ready to go."

Some of the Sabres' young, high-end talents are finally getting their feet under them. Casey Mittelstadt, the 8th overall pick in 2017, has 3-4-7 totals in his last five games while Dylan Cozens, 7th overall in 2019, has five helpers in his last five games. And Anders Bjork seems ready to make the most of the opportunity since being acquired in the Taylor Hall trade. He's got a goal and two assists in his four games with Buffalo. Goalie Dustin Tokarski has also played very well since relieving the injured Linus Ullmark in Boston last week.

"What they've done now is they're putting guys in that were maybe fighting for ice time and now they're just letting them play. I'm not there and I'm not going to say there's no accountability, but there's not a lot on the line, they've been eliminated from the playoffs. They're basically playing to get better, they're learning coach Donnie Granato's style and to carry that forward to next year," said Cassidy. "When you lose some of that pressure of the every-day grind, then you take some veterans out like a Hall, like (Eric) Staal, then maybe that allows some of the younger guys to be more vocal and grow into a responsible role in the room. I don't know. I'm not in there. But that's typically what happens when some of the older guys leave. Now all of a sudden you've got a Mittelstadt that maybe wasn't getting the minutes who has benefited the most, it looks like. Anders Bjork goes in there and he gets more of an opportunity than he was getting with us. ... These younger guys are getting more of an opportunity without a lot of pressure on them. Sometimes, it makes it easier to play. To be honest, I always felt they had decent players they just never came together as a team for whatever reason."

Grzelcyk, Miller travel with team

Matt Grzelcyk and Miller traveled with the team for the five-game road trip. Cassidy said Grzelcyk, who has not played since taking an elbow to the head in Philadelphia on April 10, has a chance to return as soon as Tuesday night while Miller, who has missed the last three games with an undisclosed injury, has a chance to play later in the week. Jakub Zboril, who missed Sunday's game with a non-COVID related illness, will also travel with the team.

Cassidy said Jarred Tinordi suffered facial injuries on the boarding hit by Garnet Hathaway on Sunday, but added he was feeling well on Monday

Jaroslav Halak, on the COVID list for two weeks, was able to participate in the B's optional practice on Monday and traveled with the team, though it's not clear when he'd be ready to play again.

Brandon Carlo (upper body) remains unavailable for the trip.

B's ink Lyle

The Bruins signed Providence defenseman Brady Lyle, a free agent who'd been playing for the P-Bruins on an AHL contract, to a two-year entry level deal that comes with a \$800,000 NHL cap hit. Lyle, 21, has 6-6-12 totals in 19 games with Providence.

O'Ree Award nominations still open

Nominations are still open for the Willie O'Ree Community Hero Award, given to the individual who has positively impacted his or her community, culture or society through hockey. Anyone who is a resident of the United States or Canada can nominate a candidate at [NHL.com/OReeAward](https://www.nhl.com/OReeAward).

## **Tokarski, Roswell RN Michaela Pastorius named NHL First Stars of the Week**

By Jourdon LaBarber

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Buffalo Sabres goaltender Dustin Tokarski has been named First Star of the Week by the NHL, the league announced Monday.

Tokarski went 2-1-1 in four games over the past week, stopping 128 of 137 shots for a save percentage of .934. His 27-save outing against Washington on Thursday marked his first NHL victory since Dec. 12, 2015. He pointed skyward after the final horn sounded, a nod to his late father.

"It was pretty incredible, to be honest," Tokarski said that night. "I lost my dad a few years back, so that was my first NHL win since he's passed. So, I was just pointing up to him for that special moment.

"And then all the guys were just awesome coming in, and there's nothing better for a goalie than celebrating with your teammates after a win."

Tokarski followed that victory by starting on back-to-back afternoons against the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday and Sunday, earning win No. 2 with a 34-save outing in the latter contest.

"That's competitiveness and that's drive and determination," interim head coach Don Granato said Sunday. "All those intangibles are what push him through and pushes anybody through.

"... Usually there's a little drop in focus, little subtleties maybe off in a second night. Maybe you're off your angle a little bit or rebound control. But none of that tonight. You would have thought it was the same as last night or maybe even better."

Tokarski ranks fourth in the league in total saves since the beginning of April (201). He entered the season having not played in the NHL since October 2016.

The NHL is recognizing frontline workers throughout the season for their contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tokarski was named "Co-Star of the Week" along with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center RN Michaela Pastorius, who fought her own battle with cancer as a patient at Roswell three years ago.

Pastorius completed her education upon finishing treatment and began working at Roswell, where she spent the past year caring for patients in a designated COVID-19 space. She is a lifelong Sabres fan who cites Rob Ray and Jason Pominville as personal favorites.

"When I was going through inpatient chemotherapy about three years ago at Roswell Park, the Buffalo Sabres gave me such motivation to continue fighting," she said. "My parents would visit me while I was there, and if there was a game on, you bet that we would be watching it!

"The amount of support the Sabres show for Roswell and its patients felt personal to me since I am such a big fan. Feeling supported at this time of my life was something I absolutely needed."

New York Rangers left wing Artemi Panarin and Vegas Golden Knights right wing Mark Stone were named Second and Third Starts of the Week, respectively.