



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*April 9, 2021*

## **Boqvist scores go-ahead goal in Devils' 6-3 win over Sabres**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

April 8, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The New Jersey Devils placed their faith in their youngsters to finish out an inconsistent season, and the players responded.

A day after trading key veterans Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac to the New York Islanders, Jesper Boqvist led the Devils' youth movement by scoring the go-ahead goal with 11:15 remaining in a 6-3 win over Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

Pavel Zacha scored two power-play goals, and Jack Hughes snapped a 10-game scoring drought while adding two assists in a game the Devils rallied in after squandering a 3-1 first-period lead. Yegor Sharangovich and Janne Kuokkanen, who scored an empty-netter, had a goal and two assists each.

All five Devils goal-scorers are 23 and younger.

"You don't know how your team's going to react after a day like yesterday," coach Lindy Ruff said of trading two players who had a combined 26 years of NHL experience.

"You're hopeful with that added responsibility that they'll push through," he added. "I think you saw in the third period, when we got down to three lines, some of the young guys that were playing the best got more ice time and it paid off for us."

Aaron Dell stopped 24 shots in making his third start of the season and pick up his first win in more than 14 months. Dell had gone 0-6-1 in eight appearances since he made 28 saves for San Jose in a 6-3 win at Edmonton on Feb. 6, 2020.

The win snapped the Devils 0-2-2 skid, and came after New Jersey signaled it was looking toward the future beyond this season by acquiring two draft picks, including a first-rounder, and two minor-league forwards from the Islanders.

Victor Olofsson, Jeff Skinner and Tage Thompson scored for Buffalo, which had gone 3-0-2 in its past five, including a 5-3 win at New Jersey on Tuesday. Linus Ullmark finished with 32 saves in a game between two of the East Division's worst teams, who are all but mathematically out of playoff contention.

"The winning goal, we had the puck on our stick. We won the draw, had the puck on our stick multiple times and didn't exit the zone. It ended up in our net," Sabres interim coach Don Granato said. "So, they were hungrier than we were tonight. That's a tough game when your opponent's hungrier than you, and that was the case."

Michael McLeod set up the go-ahead goal by catching Sabres defenseman Brandon Montour flatfooted in chasing down a loose puck behind the Buffalo net. McLeod's wrap-around attempt banked off Ullmark's pad and into the slot, where Boqvist buried it inside the left post.

The game got off to a furious start, with the teams combining for three goals in the first 3:46.

After Olofsson opened the scoring 53 seconds in, the Devils responded with Zacha scoring power-play goals 1:40 apart.

"It's never easy to see guys traded, especially guys like Trav and Palms," said Zacha, who enjoyed his first two-goal outing of the season and fifth of his career. "I think there's a little bit more responsibility for us now, and I think we took it and won the game today."

And then Hughes scored from the slot with 3:56 left in the opening period. A forechecking Sharangovich sparked the goal by forcing Buffalo's Jacob Bryson to turn the puck over along the right boards.

Ruff was most encouraged by Hughes, the No. 1 pick in the 2019 draft.

"I like the fact that he's battled through this, night after night," Ruff said. "I hope that this propels him, that he starts to feel good about his game, a little less frustration."

#### SWEDISH CENTURY

Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin had the secondary assist on Skinner's goal for his 100th career point. Five days shy of his 21st birthday, the 2018 No. 1 draft pick became the youngest Swedish-born defenseman to reach that milestone. Erik Karlsson reached 100 points at the age of 21 and 199 days.

It also came in his 180th career game, the second-fastest among blue-liners in Sabres history, behind Phil Housley, who picked up his 100th point in his 106th game.

#### HALL PASS

Sabres forward Taylor Hall was a healthy scratch for a second consecutive game in anticipation the pending unrestricted free agent will be dealt before the NHL's trade deadline on Monday. Hall signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with Buffalo in free agency in October.

#### ON HISCHIER ALERT

Devils captain Nico Hischier is nearing his return after missing his 22nd consecutive game with an upper-body injury. Hischier, who is still listed week to week, traveled with the Devils after resuming practice on Wednesday.

#### UP NEXT

Devils: Return home for two-game set against Pittsburgh, starting Friday night.

Sabres: Host Washington on Friday night.

## **Mike Harrington: Major battles ahead for Sabres against marquee foes**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

I went down the YouTube wormhole Thursday afternoon. Took the ride 10 years back, to April 8, 2011. Sabres-Flyers, Game 81 of the season in then-HSBC Arena.

It comes back to you quick.

The spin-o-rama and backhand goal from little Nathan Gerbe. Glimpses of the late Steve Montador. Tyler Myers ragging the puck in his own zone and Danny Briere opting not to forecheck as the clock ticks away on regulation and the fans are on their feet roaring. The celebration at the horn for the one point in the standings needed to clinch a playoff berth. The breathtaking end-to-end rush of Thomas Vanek that resulted in an overtime winner.

It's the last time the Sabres locked up a playoff berth. How many more years will we wait for another moment like it?

In the pandemic world of 2021, we're left with a Sabres-Devils game to mark that anniversary on a Thursday night with no fans in the building. And it was an absolute clunker, a 6-3 loss in a game that was tied at 3-3 through 40 minutes. Turnovers and sloppy play all over.

You'll barely remember anything about it in 10 hours, let alone 10 years.

Sabres winger Tage Thompson aptly said it's one of those short-memory games you quickly park because there's another one here Friday night against the Washington Capitals. Good idea. If the Sabres play like that against Alex Ovechkin & Co., they won't be tied going into the third period.

Interim head coach Don Granato deviated from his norm when he gave the Sabres an optional practice Wednesday and then an optional morning skate Thursday. Normally, one or the other would be mandatory.

It was a mistake. The Sabres were sluggish well into the second period of this one. They played as though the game was optional, too.

It was impressive, however, to see Granato comfortable enough in his skin to quickly admit he goofed with that decision when a reporter immediately inquired about it after the game.

The season series with the Devils ended Thursday and it was time. Eight head-to-head meetings between two of the NHL's bottom five teams can make anyone bleary-eyed. The Sabres finished 4-3-1 against New Jersey and that's nearly half of their nine wins on the season. The Sabres are 8-8-5 against the three East teams currently out of the playoffs (Philadelphia, the New York Rangers and New Jersey).

What happens now? Look out.

The picture is a wee bit bleaker against the four current playoff teams – and they will be the opponents for 14 of the remaining 17 games.

Against Washington, the New York Islanders, Pittsburgh and Boston, the Sabres are 1-16-1.

Yes, that's not a typo. They are 1-16-1 – and they have lost the last 14 games against those clubs in regulation.

If Granato has any designs on this job on a permanent basis, he's going to need to make some inroads against those teams. Wins against the Flyers and Devils just don't carry much weight compared to a

The Sabres started the year 0-2-1 against Washington before beating the Capitals Jan. 24 in a shootout a couple of hours before the Bills-Chiefs AFC championship game. Since then? Not a single point.

They are 0-6 against the Islanders, 0-4 against the Penguins, 0-2 against the Bruins and 1-4-1 against the Capitals. There are two games left against both the Caps and Isles, four to go against Pittsburgh and six more against Boston.

"What's relevant, I guess, for us is to look forward to the challenge and know these are teams that are Stanley Cup contenders," Granato said. "... Because of the talent within the division, you're locked in, you can't run to another division to play anybody else. That's the challenge of this season. And that's a challenge we have to embrace. It will make us better – a better team for the future, better players for the future – if we embrace it."

Winger Kyle Okposo didn't hesitate when asked how the Sabres are going to survive this stretch.

"Got to play better," Okposo said matter of factly.

Then Okposo expounded and got to the crux of why those teams are where they are in the standings and why the Sabres are where they are.

"I think that if you ask anybody to start the year if you would be surprised if any of those four teams won a Stanley Cup, you'd have said 'no,' " Okposo said. "And so we have to know that they're a veteran group, they're a mature group, they're not going to be teams that get away from their structure at any point for any reason, other than give up a goal and then they're just going to keep playing the same way.

"That's something that as a young team, as a growing team, as a team that's trying to form our own identity, we have to take some more of that aspect into our own game. So we're looking forward to the challenge, excited about tomorrow."

Let's see how Granato gets his team ready to play Alex Ovechkin & Co. this time. Early returns on the coach have been encouraging. But we'll have to see how he does against elite teams with top talent on the ice and behind the bench.

There won't be the noise, fervor and meaning of 2011. Let's see if the Sabres can at least get some lessons and a few points out of them that they might remember come training camp in the fall.

## **The Wraparound: Sabres' comeback falls short, point streak ends with 6-3 loss**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

This was one of the worst performances by the Buffalo Sabres since Don Granato took over as interim coach last month.

The Sabres spent much of the second period hemmed in their own zone. The effort was there. The execution wasn't. Breakout passes were misfired. Issues on defense reared their ugly head. Inevitable regression on the penalty kill has finally arrived.

Yet, for as poorly as the Sabres played at times Thursday night in KeyBank Center, Granato's players rallied from a two-goal deficit to tie the score before losing to the New Jersey Devils 6-3.

The Sabres (9-24-6), still last in the NHL with 24 points, were unable to extend their point streak to six games, which would have been their longest since they went 5-0-1 to start the 2019-20 season. Buffalo had only two shots on goal in the third period.

Victor Olofsson's shot from the slot 53 seconds into the game counted as the opening goal, and the Sabres rallied from a two-goal deficit with Tage Thompson and Jeff Skinner scoring in the second period.

However, Jesper Boqvist scored the eventual game-winning goal with 11:15 remaining in regulation. Yegor Sharangovich pushed it to 5-3 by scoring off a Sabres turnover late in the third period, and Janne Kuokkanen added an empty-netter.

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark, who was making his sixth start since returning from injury on March 27, stopped 32 of 37 shots, including 21 after allowing three goals in the first period.

Pavel Zacha had two goals for the Devils and Jack Hughes added a third to give New Jersey (14-18-6) a 3-1 lead at the end of the first period.

Opening salvo: Olofsson gave the Sabres a 1-0 lead by one-timing a shot from the slot off a pass from Henri Jokiharju.

Jokiharju carried the puck down the right-wing boards and to the corner before sending the centering pass to Olofsson, who scored his 11th of the season and second in three games. With a secondary assist on the goal, winger Kyle Okposo collected his ninth point in nine games.

Rebound control: Zacha scored his first of two goals, both on the power play, by collecting a rebound and firing a backhand past Ullmark at 2:06 into the first period after Ullmark stopped a high wrist shot from defenseman Ty Smith.

Room to work: The Sabres weren't close to Zacha when he gathered a pass on the power play, skated to the top of the left circle and uncorked a wrist shot over the glove of a screened Ullmark to give the Devils a 2-1 lead at 3:47 into the first period.

The Sabres have allowed at least one power-play goal in three consecutive games.

Another mistake: The Sabres failed to cover Hughes in front of the net on the play that gave the Devils a 3-1 lead at 16:04 into the game. Hughes, who was drafted first overall in 2019, received a puck in the slot, regained possession after a poke check by Okposo and beat Ullmark with a wrist shot for his eighth goal of the season. The play was possible because Sharangovich stole the puck from Sabres defenseman Jacob Bryson.

Entering Thursday, the Sabres were 2-13 when trailing after the first period this season.

Momentum shift: New Jersey controlled play for the first half of the second period, outshooting the Sabres 6-2 across the first five minutes and sustaining possession in Buffalo's end. However, the Devils took two penalties in a span of 2:24 and the Sabres scored on the latter power play.

Defenseman Brandon Montour's shot from the left point went off Aaron Dell's leg pad and Thompson was left uncovered to trim the deficit to 3-2 at 11:56 of the second period.

Equalizer: Skinner snapped an eight-game goal drought and tied the score 3-3 with 1:39 remaining in the second period with a backhander in front after he collected a rebound off a shot by Sam Reinhart.

Making history: With a secondary assist on Skinner's goal, Sabres defenseman Rasmus Dahlin recorded his 100th career point in his 180th game. He is the second-fastest defenseman in franchise history to accomplish the feat – Phil Housley reached the milestone in his 106th game – and the second-fastest by a Swedish defenseman in NHL history.

Although the San Jose Sharks' Erik Karlsson reached 100 points in his 168th game, he did so at age 21. Dahlin turns 21 on April 13.

Go-ahead goal: Devils forward Michael McLeod's wraparound led to a loose puck in front and no one tied up Boqvist, who scored to give the Devils a 4-3 lead.

Lineup notes: Center Curtis Lazar (lower body), center Jack Eichel (upper body), center Dylan Cozens (upper body), defenseman Will Borgen (forearm) and goalie Carter Hutton (lower body) remain out of the Sabres' lineup. Winger Taylor Hall sat out for precautionary reasons as General Manager Kevyn Adams continues to negotiate a trade.

With Hall out, the Sabres again deployed a lineup with 11 forwards and seven defensemen.

Next: The Sabres are scheduled to play the Washington Capitals on Friday in KeyBank Center at 7 p.m.

## **Observations: 'Hungrier' Devils show Sabres are still a work in progress**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

With a group of Buffalo Sabres on the ice for an optional morning skate Thursday, interim Don Granato beamed while describing his opportunity to develop the young talent on a team sitting at the bottom of the National Hockey League.

"This is an exciting position to be in because all of these guys have such a significant high ceiling and capacity, and that's exciting," said Granato.

Almost 12 hours later, in the aftermath of a 6-3 loss to the New Jersey Devils, Granato pointed to one possible cause for the Sabres' ugly performance inside KeyBank Center: optional on-ice training.

The Sabres' practice Wednesday and morning skate Thursday were both optional, a move made by Granato to provide ample rest for his players amid a chaotic, truncated 56-game season in which nine of their players were placed on the NHL's Covid-19 protocol list.

For the first time since Granato took over March 17, the Sabres were outworked for much of the game against a young, relentless Devils team led by coach Lindy Ruff. The Sabres, now 9-24-6 and unable to extend their point streak to six games, managed only two shots during a third period in which the Devils scored three goals.

Some of the mistakes were made by young players thrust into prominent roles because of injury and the looming Taylor Hall trade. Others were committed by veterans trying to find their way following a midseason coaching change. It was the first time in several games the growing pains were obvious.

Buffalo allowed three goals in the first, including two to the NHL's third-worst power play. Following a sluggish start to the second period, the Sabres rallied to tie the score with a power-play goal by Tage Thompson and a signature Jeff Skinner backhand off a Sam Reinhart shot.

"We didn't play well enough at the start and we didn't play well enough through the game and, of course, as a result of that you look and you think of, 'What could you have done different?'" said Granato. "And (the optional skates were) a big one. You're gauging that rest and work ratio, and we didn't respond the way we needed to with the rest, clearly. ... Easy to see that."

The optional skates weren't lacking intensity. For example, the Sabres' practice Wednesday following a 5-3 win in New Jersey was a skill session led by interim assistant coach Matt Ellis and included approximately 10 skaters, many of whom stayed on the ice for over an hour.

The effort was there Thursday night. The execution wasn't after Victor Olofsson's goal 53 seconds into the game, which winger Kyle Okposo said gave the Sabres a false sense of security. Bad penalties and individual mistakes led to the unraveling.

"I think everybody knows that one wasn't our best," said Okposo.

Thompson, 23, scored the Sabres' second goal, a power-play shot off a rebound, but took a penalty in the offensive zone that led to Pavel Zacha's second of two first-period goals. Defenseman Jacob Bryson, also 23 years old, could not clear a loose puck on the Devils' tying goal in the first and turned the puck over on their third.

The Sabres struggled with puck management and creating offense off the rush, neither of which have been issues under Granato. The comeback was encouraging, as Skinner's fourth goal of the season tied the score, 3-3, with 1:39 remaining in the second period. But this illustrated how Granato's quest to revive the Sabres – which is hindered by injuries to Jack Eichel, Dylan Cozens and Curtis Lazar – is still very much a work in progress.

"They were hungrier than we were tonight," said Granato. "That's a tough game when your opponent's hungrier than you, and that was the case."

Here are other observations from the game Thursday:

1. Defenseman Henri Jokiharju should be considered a core player: For whatever reason, former coach Ralph Krueger wasn't willing to let Jokiharju work through his struggles defensively. The 21-year-old was a healthy scratch 10 times before the coaching change. Jokiharju needs to be stronger in his own end. The same goes for Rasmus Dahlin and most players on this roster. But Jokharju has too much upside to keep him on the bench, as he showed in the first period Thursday night.

Jokiharju, a first-round draft pick in 2017, showed poise by carrying the puck down the right-wing boards and toward the corner before finding Olofsson with a perfect centering pass. Give credit to Okposo, who has nine points in his last nine games, for drawing Devils defenseman P.K. Subban out of position.

If the final month of the season is all about development then Jokiharju should be given every opportunity to build confidence, including on the power play. He's a pending restricted free agent and the trade that brought him to Buffalo was one of Jason Botterill's best as general manager.

2. Time to practice: As much as Granato wants to be careful overworking his players, the Sabres need to get to work on their struggling special teams.

The two goals allowed in the first period came against a depleted Devils roster that got significantly worse with the trades of Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac. Some of this has to do with personnel – the Sabres are still without Lazar and Bryson hasn't been great on the penalty kill – but there's no excuse for the space Buffalo is giving opponents in these situations.

The Sabres' power play, meanwhile, is now amid a 3-for-41 slump across the past 22 games. Thompson's goal provided Buffalo with its second power-play marker in as many games, but it came after another ugly showing by the top unit.

"Anytime your power play gets one it builds some momentum and life," said Thompson. "We need the power play to be successful, win games, so it was good to get one out there."

3. Trading Linus Ullmark would be a mistake. This wasn't Ullmark's best game in net. He shouldn't have allowed a rebound on the first power-play goal and was too slow to find the puck around a screen on the second. Yet, he still entered Thursday with a 3-1-1 record and .921 save percentage since returning from injury on March 27.

As expected, Ullmark's name is being mentioned in trade rumors given that he's a pending unrestricted free agent and contenders are always looking to improve goaltending depth. While it's fair to wonder if he would sign with Buffalo long-term, trading a starting goalie for a draft pick isn't worth the risk.

The Sabres need to sign Ullmark to an extension and try to bring in a No. 2 goalie. This draft is difficult to evaluate amid the pandemic and development of every player on this roster will take a hit if this team can't win games. Buffalo's other three goalies this season have gone a combined 1-18-3. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen is one-to-two seasons away from being a full-time option in the NHL.

Ullmark kept the Sabres in the game when they weren't executing at the start of the second period.

"I thought Linus played well," said Skinner. "He made some big saves, kept us in it. Obviously, we got down there, gave up two quick power-play goals. We needed him to be steady."

## **Taylor Hall 'still involved' with Sabres as trade talks continue**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

Taylor Hall has likely played his last game with the Buffalo Sabres, but the former Hart Trophy winner isn't away from the team while awaiting a possible trade.

Hall, ranked second on TSN's latest Trade Bait list ahead of Monday's deadline, remains out of the lineup as General Manager Kevyn Adams negotiates with other teams. However, Hall remains involved in team meetings and off-ice workouts while Buffalo wraps up a homestand this week, interim coach Don Granato said.

With Hall still on the roster, the Sabres don't have enough salary cap space to add a forward to the active roster. This forced Granato to deploy an 11-forward, seven-defensemen lineup for a second consecutive game Thursday night against the New Jersey Devils.

"He's still involved with everything," Granato said following the optional morning skate Thursday. "The same other than being held out of the game. As I mentioned, it's part of this week. There's some oddities that are presented this week, even affecting our lineup and what we do within that lineup. This is just one part of it. I feel the players all understand this and it's not a distraction going into any meeting or practice or prep or the game itself."

According to CapFriendly.com, the Sabres had \$669,675 of available cap space as of Thursday morning. The team even moved defenseman Jacob Bryson and forward Steven Fogarty to the taxi squad Wednesday to accrue space.

For whatever reason, the Sabres have yet to place defenseman Jake McCabe on long-term injured reserve after he suffered a season-ending knee injury. Doing so would create additional cap space for Adams to supplement the roster while waiting for a Hall trade to be complete.

It's unclear how many suitors are involved in talks with Adams, but one possible fit is gone after the New York Islanders acquired forwards Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac from the Devils on Wednesday for two prospects and two draft picks, including a first rounder.

Adams is reportedly trying to acquire a first-round draft choice in any Hall trade. Such a scenario would likely require the Sabres to retain 50% of the salary Hall is owed. It's also unclear what the market is for Hall, who has two goals with 17 assists and a minus-21 rating in 37 games with Buffalo.

Hall is shooting a career-low 2.3% – he shot 14% during his Hart Trophy season with the Devils in 2017-18 – and leads the Sabres in on-ice shot quality at 5-on-5, according to Evolving-Hockey.com. The 29-year-old played out of position on the power play and never benefitted from skating alongside Jack Eichel. Hall's skill was also suppressed in former coach Ralph Krueger's ultra-conservative system.

Florida is one possible trade partner after the Panthers cleared \$4.1 million in cap space by trading forward Brett Connolly to Chicago in a salary dump on Thursday.

### Reinhart trade chatter

TSN's Darren Dreger mentioned recently that teams around the NHL have called Sabres General Manager Kevyn Adams to gauge the price tag to acquire winger Sam Reinhart.

Which contender wouldn't want Reinhart? Entering Thursday, the 25-year-old led the Sabres in goals (13) and points (24) while counting \$5.2 million against the salary cap this season. He's a pending restricted free agent and won't be eligible for unrestricted free agency until 2022.

The former second overall draft pick had no interest in discussing those rumors when broached with the topic following an optional morning skate Thursday.

"Not much," Reinhart said if he thinks about the trade chatter. "I mean, what's going through my head right now is a game tonight against New Jersey."

#### UPL's week

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, the organization's top goaltending prospect, had a difficult week after spending some time on the Sabres' taxi squad.

Luukkonen, 22, recorded a .844 save percentage in three starts with the Rochester Americans, stopping 65 of 77 shots during a three-game series against the Syracuse Crunch. A second-round draft pick in 2017, Luukkonen has a 6-4-2 record, 3.48 goals-against average and .888 save percentage in 12 games with the Amerks this season.

Additionally, defenseman Oskari Laaksonen missed the Amerks' game Wednesday with what coach Seth Appert described as a minor lower-body injury.

## **Sabres game day: A three-game winning streak in the offing?**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

Matchup: Buffalo Sabres (9-23-6) vs. New Jersey Devils (13-18-6)

Where: KeyBank Center

When: 7 p.m.

TV: MSG

Radio: WGR 550

Give a gander at the New Jersey Devils' lineup tonight in KeyBank Center and it will have the kind of holes the Buffalo Sabres' roster could be displaying in the next couple of days.

It will be the Devils' first appearance since Wednesday night's blockbuster trade that sent veterans Travis Zajac and Kyle Palmieri to the New York Islanders for package of prospects and draft picks that included a first-rounder this July.

Zajac had played 1,024 games with New Jersey since being drafted 20th overall in 2004 and opted to waive his no-trade clause to go to a Stanley Cup contender. Palmieri was a five-time 20-goal scorer for the Devils and had played 395 games for them the last six seasons.

Those are big losses for the Devils but they won't change the Sabres' outlook on the game.

"It's interesting at this part of the year in playing in a division where there's only seven other opponents," Sabres interim coach Don Granato said today. "There's enough familiarity going into each game now that you don't really need to make the game much about the opponent you're playing or any discrepancies in their roster. And for us, we have to have the focus on where we can make our improvements, how we can become a better team."

Buffalo, meanwhile, will again sit Taylor Hall in advance of a potential trade just had the Devils had done the last two games with Palmieri. Granato said Hall remains involved in off-ice workouts and team meetings.

Streaking: The Sabres are 3-0-2 in their last five games. They have not gotten points in six straight since they started the 2019-20 season 5-0-1. They are also going for their first three-game winning streak of the season, something they have not done since February, 2020.

Buffalo is 4-2-1 against New Jersey this year heading into the final meeting of the series.

The lineup: Granato dropped a couple surprises on reporters today when he said the Sabres are using the same lineup as in Tuesday's 5-3 win at New Jersey. That means a return to the crease for Linus Ullmark (8-5-3, 2.48/.919) when it would seem this could have been a game for backup Dustin Tokarski, with Ullmark meeting Washington here Friday.

The other head-scratcher was the "same lineup" means the Sabres once again going with 11 forwards and seven defenseman and thus dressing veteran Matt Irwin, who only played 4 minutes, 52 seconds on Tuesday. It also means no NHL debut for Arttu Ruotsalainen, who was called up to the taxi squad Monday.

The reason is the Sabres are balancing daily salary cap issues, likely watching their money closely heading into the deadline to keep an eye on performance bonuses after the season.

"I'm not in a position to be discussing salary cap obviously as a coach and just for comfort," Granato said. "But yes, the roster decisions are a bit more complicated because of the week it is."

Spirit of '99: Rasmus Dahlin picked up a goal and an assist Tuesday at New Jersey, leaving him with 99 career points. No. 100 will make the 21-year-old:

1. The youngest Swedish defenseman in NHL history to 100 points.
2. The first defenseman and third player from the 2018 draft to 100 points (behind Carolina's Andrei Svechnikov and Ottawa's Brady Tkachuk).
3. The second-fastest Sabres defenseman to 100 points and second-youngest, behind in both only to Hall of Famer and former coach Phil Housley (106 games). Dahlin is playing game No. 180 tonight.

In the Devils net: New Jersey is going with No. 3 goalie Aaron Dell (0-2, 3.72/.877), who has not played since March 4. Starter Mackenzie Blackwood will serve as the backup. Regular backup Scott Wedgewood, who took the loss Tuesday, will have the night off.

## **Terry Pegula's net worth increases in Forbes' annual billionaires list**

The Buffalo News

April 8, 2021

Bills and Sabres owner Terry Pegula's net worth increased to \$5.4 billion 2020, according to Forbes' annual list of billionaires.

Pegula is listed at No. 520 on the list, which has grown to 2,765 members in what has been a record year for billionaire wealth worldwide. According to a report by Oxfam International, billionaires worldwide increased their wealth by \$3.9 trillion from the onset of the pandemic through the end of the year.

Pegula was listed as No. 330 on the billionaires list a year ago and No. 424 in 2019.

His net worth was listed at \$5 billion in April 2020.

The exclusive club of sports owners has seen its wealth increase substantially as well, despite empty arenas and stadiums and canceled games because of the pandemic. According to Forbes, the 20 richest owners controlling major league sports have a combined net worth of \$426 billion, up 60% from a year ago.

Pegula did not make the top 20 as Atlanta Falcons owner and Home Depot founder Arthur Blank is No. 20 at \$6.2 billion. The richest sports owner in North America is Steve Ballmer, who owns the LA Clippers, at \$68.7 billion.

The Sabres fired General Manager Jason Botterill and 22 members of the hockey operations department in June and Pegula said the organization would keep with three words in mind going forward: "effective, efficient and economic."

At the time, Pegula disputed there was a "financial situation," impacting PSE.

"There is no financial situation," Terry Pegula told reporters. "I don't know where that rumor started. If you look at every oil and gas company, which is our core business outside sports, they're all — you might use the word — hurting. But we don't have any debt on our oil and gas business."

Sabres and Bills president Kim Pegula noted that they were not the only sports owners looking at how their operations run amid the challenges of the pandemic.

The Pegulas bought the Sabres for \$189 million in 2011 and the Bills for \$1.4 billion in 2014.

According to Forbes' annual NHL team valuations, the Sabres are worth \$385 million, despite operating an annual loss of \$11 million. According to Forbes' NFL list, the Bills are worth \$2.05 billion with an operating income of \$73 million.

## **OPINION: Sabres 'outworked' by Devils and lost**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 9, 2021

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) – As I was watching the Buffalo Sabres play their worst game in weeks on Thursday, it really made me wonder why Don Granato changed things up on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Sabres interim head coach made practice and the morning skate optional, which totally goes away from what has made this team successful for the last little bit - longer practices and hard work. After I heard his explanation on the postgame show, I really liked the fact that he's trying new things when it really doesn't matter to see what works with these players and what will work in the future.

I asked him if he had it over again would he do it differently, and with no hesitation, Granato said yes.

"We didn't play well enough from the start. We didn't play well enough through the game and as a result of that, you look and think of what could you have done differently, and that was a big one.

"You're gauging that rest and work ratio, and we didn't respond the way we needed to with the rest clearly. It was easy to see that, and there's no question on that."

The Sabres made many mistakes that cost them dearly. They were very sloppy with the puck, and guys like Jacob Bryson, Rasmus Ristolainen, Brandon Montour, Colin Miller and Kyle Okposo had very tough nights.

Okposo was on the ice for the first five goals scored in this game, two-for and three-against. Overall, he was on the ice for two goals-for and four-against.

Ristolainen was on the ice for the first four goals in the game and five overall, one-for and four-against.

Bryson was on the ice for three goals-against, and pretty much handed the puck right to Jack Hughes, who set up Yegor Sharangovich for the game-clinching goal.

Jesper Boqvist wound up scoring the game-winning goal when Miller tried to pass behind the net to Montour, but didn't put enough on it, allowing Michael McLeod to swoop in and steal the puck. Granato was upset because he said they had the puck on three different sticks before the goal and should've exited the zone.

The first two shifts of the game were dominated by the Sabres.

Casey Mittelstadt's line got an immediate forecheck going off the opening faceoff and got a whistle. Next came the Sam Reinhart line, and 53 seconds into the game, Henri Jokiharju comes deep into the corner and put a very skilled pass right on Victor Olofsson's stick, as he came open down the slot.

Remember this theme, good things happen when you go to the net.

That should've gotten the Sabres off and running, but just 37 seconds later, Cody Eakin took a holding penalty. 36 seconds after that, the third-worst power play in the league had a goal.

Buffalo wasn't done shooting itself in the foot.

Just 57 seconds after the Devils' goal, Tage Thompson takes a dumb offensive zone holding penalty and 43 seconds after that, Pavel Zacha scores again from the top of the left circle. The third-worst power play in the NHL was 2-for-2 just 3:46 into the game.

Zacha made a nice shot, but let's be honest, you need a save there from Linus Ullmark.

Hughes made it 3-1, and again, I didn't think it would be unreasonable to expect a save there. It wouldn't be easy, but you need a big save.

I thought then, and still think now, Granato made an error by not pulling Ullmark and letting Dustin Tokarski start the second period. Ullmark wasn't awful, but he also wasn't good. With back-to-back games, it would be a no-brainer to let Ullmark play Friday against the Washington Capitals. Now, it's likely Tokarski's start, but we'll have to see.

Zacha and Jesper Bratt are good players, but they look like Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl when they play the Sabres. With two goals, Zacha has 11 points in eight games against the Sabres, while Bratt had two assists and has nine points in eight games against Buffalo.

Aaron Dell is just another in a long list of goaltenders this year that got their first win of the season against Buffalo.

New Jersey led 3-1 midway through this game, and the Sabres finally started to play their game for about 10 minutes. That theme of going to the net helped them greatly.

On the power play, Montour ripped a shot from Jack Eichel's normal circle that Dell stopped, but kicked out a juicy rebound. Thompson did a great job of setting up in the perfect place to pounce on a rebound and he did just that to make it 3-2.

Just 6:25 later, Jeff Skinner flew to the crease as Sam Reinhart's shot was getting there. Dell left another huge rebound, and Skinner settled the puck down and backhanded the puck into the empty net.

You would think tying the game would've sparked the Sabres, but Skinner, who seemed like he was playing the whole game with only 11 forwards dressed, was not good at all until he scored that goal.

In the third, he played very well, but his teammates didn't elevate with him. It seemed like Granato was going to play him to death to try to snap him out of it.

Skinner and Taylor Hall seem to be the only players that got worse under Granato. Maybe his good third period will get him going again. Skinner played 18:40, which was third on the team amongst the forwards. Only Reinhart at 21:19 and Olofsson at 19:17 played more.

Okposo did get an assist on Olofsson's goal to give him points in eight-of-nine games. He has two goals and seven assists for nine points in that time. He said as a team, they were not good at any point.

"I just think they outworked us, and I think that first goal was a bit of a mirage and a false sense of security to start the game, because they were ready to work and we did not match their work ethic at any point in time," the veteran forward said.

The Sabres finishes the season series 4-3-1 against the Devils.

## **OPINION: Three observations: Sabres battle back, but can't get anything going late**

By TJ Luckman

WGR 550

April 8, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres struck first in Thursday night's contest against the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center, but it would be the only lead the Sabres would enjoy for the duration of the game.

The Devils scored on consecutive power plays and extended their lead late in the first period, but the Sabres were able to battle back in the second to tie things up at 3-3. Unfortunately for Buffalo, they couldn't generate any form of offense in the final period in a 6-3 loss.

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

### 1.) Penalty kill allows Devils back into game early

The Devils were down early, but a couple of early Sabres penalties gave the Devils some early power plays, and they completely took advantage.

First, Cody Eakin went off for a holding call on Devils forward Jesper Boqvist. 36 seconds later, Devils forward Pavel Zacha got New Jersey on the board to tie things up.

Less than a minute after scoring their first goal, the Sabres had an opportunity in the Devils zone, with Tage Thompson having difficulty with a pass in the slot. He lost the puck and chased Michael McLeod behind the net and took a holding penalty.

It took Pavel Zacha 44 seconds into that power play opportunity to pick up his second goal of the game to put the Devils ahead.

The Devils would get two more opportunities with the man advantage, but the Sabres managed to kill off both penalties.

Still, the penalty killing unit, which started off strong to begin the season, continues to show cracks in the foundation. Coming into the night, the Sabres were 16th in penalty killing percentage at 79.2%, but the Sabres allow the fourth-most unblocked shot attempts in the NHL, according to Evolving Hockey.

### 2.) Thompson continues to be an up-and-down player

Sabres forward Tage Thompson has had a tumultuous career since his trade to the Sabres. After a disastrous first season with Buffalo, followed by some success with the Rochester Americans in Year 2 before an injury in his first call up took him out for the rest of the season, Thompson expected to be a bigger piece in the lineup after signing a three-year deal in the offseason.

This year, the Sabres have been taking the good with the bad.

Despite scoring on the power play late in the second period, there were quite a few plays that make you want a little more from Thompson.

On his penalty, Thompson had a great chance in the slot off a great pass from behind the net by Rasmus Asplund, but he couldn't quite control the puck. He chased McLeod behind the net and took a penalty. If Thompson is able to get a shot off, it forces Devils goaltender Aaron Dell to make a difficult save on a point-blank shot.

Later in the period, Sabres forward Casey Mittelstadt did a great job entering the zone on a 2-on-2 rush. Mittelstadt skated himself into some space and a good passing lane to send a pass to a streaking Thompson to the front of the net. However, Thompson couldn't kick the puck up to his stick in time to get a shot off.

While he scored on the power play, Thompson's 5-on-5 play continues to leave more to be desired. Thompson had an expected goals percentage of just 18.23% in Thursday's game, but the Sabres didn't allow any goals-against with him on the ice. Still, the expected goals percentage indicates that teams have more opportunities to score against the Sabres with Thompson on the ice.

### 3.) Sabres take just two shots in the third period

Coming out to play the second period, the Sabres struggled to generate shots against the Devils, but later found their game and found their way back to tie the score at 3-3 heading into the third period. A brand new game.

Through the first 10 minutes of the period, the Sabres generated just one shot on goal. By the time the game ended, they increased that amount by just one. They took just seven shot attempts to the Devils' 20.

For a team that only needed to score once in the final 20 minutes, the Sabres were not able to do the one thing that enabled them to do that.

Sabres interim head coach Don Granato held an optional practice on Wednesday, and also held an optional morning skate for the players on Thursday after their Tuesday night win against the Devils. Granato indicated in his postgame comments the decision was likely a mistake, but he wanted to give the Sabres some well-earned rest after their most recent stretch of play, along with a five-game point streak.

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The Sabres will have to have a short memory after Thursday's loss, because the Washington Capitals will be bringing their talents to Buffalo on Friday night at KeyBank Center.

Coverage of Friday's contest starts at 6 p.m. ET with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show hosted by the Bulldog. Faceoff is scheduled to take place just after 7 p.m. ET on the flagship station of the Sabres - WGR Sports Radio 550.

## **Sabres' point streak ends at five games**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

April 8, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres' point streak ended at five games on Thursday night after a 6-3 loss to the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center.

It took the Sabres just 53 seconds to score the game's first goal, thanks to a one-time shot by Victor Olofsson. Henri Jokiharju made the pass to help create the goal that made it 1-0 Buffalo less than a minute into the game.

The lead was short-lived, thanks to a power play chance for New Jersey.

Pavel Zacha's ninth goal of the season came with Cody Eakin in the penalty box. He would add his second power play goal of the game less than two minutes later to give the Devils a 2-1 lead early in the first.

Jack Hughes extended New Jersey's lead to 3-1 with a goal late in the opening period. The young forward nearly had the puck taken away in front of the net, but was able to gain control and beat Linus Ullmark in the top corner of the net.

Tage Thompson capitalized on the Sabres' second power play of the night to halve the team's deficit. Thompson's third goal of the season was also his first power play score of the year to bring Buffalo to 3-2 against New Jersey.

Jeff Skinner was able to take advantage of a loose puck at the side of the net and bury a rebound chance that tied the game at 3-3 late in the middle stanza.

The goal was assisted by Rasmus Dahlin, who reached a milestone with the point.

The Devils re-gained the lead on Jesper Boqvist's first goal of the season. The winger capitalized on a rebound attempt in front of the net, giving New Jersey a 4-3 lead over the Sabres.

Yegor Sharangovich extended the lead to 5-3 with his ninth goal of the season. The score came with less than two minutes to go in the game and helped seal the Devils' victory.

Janne Kuokkanen also added an empty net goal to add insult to injury and cap off the scoring, 6-3.

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### GAME SUMMARY

#### Goal Summary:

#### First Period:

BUF: 0:53 - Victor Olofsson (Henri Jokiharju, Kyle Okposo)

NJD: 2:06 - Pavel Zacha (9) PPG (Ty Smith, Jesper Bratt); 3:47 - Pavel Zacha (10) PPG (Ty Smith, Jesper Bratt);

16:04 - Jack Hughes (8) (Janne Kuokkanen, Yegor Sharangovich)

#### Second Period:

BUF: 11:56 - Tage Thompson (3) PPG (Brandon Montour, Colin Miller); 18:21 - Jeff Skinner (4) (Sam Reinhart, Rasmus Dahlin)

NJD: NONE

#### Third Period:

BUF: NONE

NJD: 8:45 - Jesper Boqvist (1) (Michael McLeod); 18:17 - Yegor Sharangovich (9) (Jack Hughes, Janne Kuokkanen); 19:28 - Janne Kuokkanen (6) ENG (Yegor Sharangovich, Jack Hughes)

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Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: 1:30 - Cody Eakin (Holding - 2 min.); 3:03 - Tage Thompson (Holding - 2 min.)  
NJD: 10:27 - Dmitry Kulikov (Tripping - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: 15:37 - Steven Fogarty (High sticking - 2 min.)  
NJD: 10:20 - Pavel Zacha (Interference - 2 min.); 12:44 - Miles Wood (Tripping - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: 14:14 - Rasmus Ristolainen (High sticking - 2 min.)  
NJD: NONE

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STATS OF THE GAME:

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Losi and Gangi Three Stars of the Game:

- 1.) Pavel Zacha - NJD
- 2.) Jack Hughes - NJD
- 3.) Rasmus Dahlin - BUF

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What's Next:

The Sabres will welcome the Washington Capitals to KeyBank Center on Friday night before heading out on the road. The puck drops at 7 p.m. ET on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sports Radio 550. The Paul William Beltz Pregame Show with the Bulldog starts at 6 p.m. ET.

## **Sabres look to earn points in six-straight games Thursday against Devils**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 8, 2021

Buffalo, N.Y. (WGR 550) – With the win on Tuesday in New Jersey, the Buffalo Sabres clinched the season series against the Devils. It's the first season series that they will win against East Division teams, as Buffalo is 4-2-1.

Don Granato said they will use the same lineup, which means Taylor Hall is out as he waits to be traded, Linus Ullmark is in net, and the Sabres will dress seven defensemen with Matt Irwin.

Due to so many injuries, the salary cap is very tight right now, which is why they can't activate Arttu Ruotsalainen from the taxi squad.

"I'm not in a position to be discussing salary cap as a coach, but yes, the roster decisions are a bit more complicated because of the week it is, especially with the trade potentials with Taylor," Granato said Thursday morning. "That played into the roster decisions the other night, and it will tonight."

Ullmark has really shown improvement in this season. He's gone from a backup goalie trying to prove he can be a starter in the NHL, to a No. 1 goaltender who will be an unrestricted free agent after this offseason.

In a season where the Sabres were winless in 18-straight games, Ullmark is 8-5-3. His save percentage is a decent .919, which is a career-high for him. Ullmark is 4-1-1 lately with a 2.19 goals-against average and a .937 save percentage. This is the stretch of games where he really showed he's up for the job.

In five games against New Jersey this season, Ullmark is 4-0-0 with a 2.04 goals-against average and a .939 save percentage.

In seven games against the Devils, Rasmus Dahlin has seven points. Dahlin has a goal and two assists for three points in his last two games.

Buffalo has points in five-straight games, going 3-0-2. With just a shade better play, the Sabres could've been on a six-game winning streak. I say a shade better because in the last six games, their play has been so much better than before. The team has also won three out of four games, going 3-0-1.

The Sabres' penalty kill had really done well for six-straight games, killing 21-of-23 penalties, but they've given up a power play goal in each of the last two games.

Kyle Okposo has points in seven out of eight games. During that time, he has two goals and six assists for eight points.

Casey Mittelstadt has two goals and three assists for five points on his four-game points streak.

Brandon Montour has four goals in his last five games.

The Devils show up without Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac, who were both traded to the New York Islanders on Wednesday. They do have Pavel Zacha, who has nine points in seven games against the Sabres. Jesper Bratt has seven points in seven games.

Aaron Dell gets the call in goal for New Jersey. This year, he's 0-2-0 with a 3.72 goals-against average and a .877 save percentage. This will be Dell's 111th NHL game.

New Jersey only has one win in seven games. If you take out the 2-1 loss to the Washington Capitals, the Devils have scored 11 goals in three games. The problem is they gave up 15 goals.

Six games ago, it seemed like the Sabres had last place in the NHL clinched, but their recent stretch of good play has them just six points behind the Ottawa Senators, seven points behind the Anaheim Ducks and eight points in back of the Devils.

When it comes to points percentage, Buffalo is at .316, while Ottawa is at .375, Anaheim is at .388 and the Detroit Red Wings are .390.

Buffalo is no longer the lowest-scoring team in the NHL. The Sabres average 2.21 goals per-game, while the Red Wings are in the cellar at 2.20. Buffalo has 19 goals in their last five games.

Join the Bulldog for pregame coverage on WGR starting at 6 p.m. ET when he'll be joined by Granato, Sam Reinhart and Rasmus Ristolainen.

## Sam Reinhart's stock is high. Should the Sabres trade him, or is he part of the long-term solution?

By John Vogl  
The Athletic  
April 8, 2021

There's really just one question regarding Sam Reinhart. Kevyn Adams is the only person who can answer it.

Is Reinhart part of the solution for Buffalo?

If the answer is yes, Adams doesn't have to do anything for a few months. The Sabres general manager can act in the coming days if the answer is no.

There's interest around the NHL in Reinhart, who checked in at No. 17 on The Athletic's trade deadline Big Board. As expected, Reinhart's thoughts Thursday about being a focus of trade talk were "not much." He did concede another losing season is weighing on him.

"It's been very tough this year," Reinhart said. "There's no way to argue that."

Like all of Buffalo's cornerstones, he's known nothing but losing. There's a case to be made for altering the dynamics of the dressing room.

Where Reinhart differs from the familiar faces is he's been relatively immune to the offensive woes. He has a team-high 13 goals, which ranks in the top 50 in the league. That's become Reinhart's sweet spot.

Since his rookie season of 2015-16, Reinhart is 59th in the NHL with 122 goals. Since his career took off on New Year's Day 2018, Reinhart is 40th with 77 goals. He's 50th with 179 points.

There's no doubt the 25-year-old is a top-line player.

"I see Sam as Sam, not dependent on anybody else even though him and Jack (Eichel) have had some great chemistry," Sabres interim coach Don Granato said. "He's a very well-established, talented NHL player."

Eichel's extended absence has given Buffalo a better feel for Reinhart. Long regarded as the center's wingman, Reinhart indeed has seen his numbers fall without the captain. Here are the five-on-five figures from Natural Stat Trick entering Thursday's 6-3 loss to the Devils.

2020-21 season	With Eichel	Without Eichel
Minutes	194	364
Goals for	8	9
Goals against	9	21
Corsi	55	46.5
xGF%	58.9	47.5

A drop-off was to be expected. Eichel makes everyone better. Reinhart's most common linemates have been Victor Olofsson, Taylor Hall and Eric Staal. Olofsson is a power-play specialist, and Hall and Staal had forgettable one-season stops in Buffalo.

Plus, there's been a position switch. With the trade of Staal and injuries to Eichel, Dylan Cozens and Curtis Lazar, the Sabres have shifted Reinhart to center for the past five games. Though he was drafted as a middle man, the sixth-year veteran has rarely played there.

"Sam is very capable at this point in his career at any position," Granato said. "The way he carries himself, his confidence level with respect to the competition, I can put him anywhere at any position and push him. Some guys when you shift them to center, it might be a delicate process. If you push them too hard, you could break their confidence.

"Sam is beyond that now."

So, it's established that Reinhart is a top-line veteran with the confidence to play anywhere.

Should he play in Buffalo?

Reinhart is skating on a one-year, \$5.2 million contract. He'll be a restricted free agent after the season. He's set to become unrestricted in July 2022. The clock is ticking on four potential scenarios:

1. The Sabres can trade him now. The acquiring team would pay a premium because it would have the forward for at least one more season.
2. The Sabres can trade him at the draft, which is typically when blockbusters happen.
3. They can sign him to another one-year deal and see if they finally improve. If the losing lingers, he can be dealt next season as a rental.
4. They can sign him to a long-term contract, cementing his status as a building block.

Let's start with a new contract. Reinhart has been underpaid throughout his career in relation to his production. His entry-level deal turned into a two-year bridge deal at \$3.65 million. This year's contract was somewhat deflated because of the pandemic.

While there have long been calls to lock up Reinhart with a long-term deal, the Sabres have benefitted financially from their decisions so far.

It's likely that changes with the next contract. It will require the buying of UFA years. Here are three comparable RFA wingers who signed deals that brought them into their UFA seasons.

RFA to UFA contracts	Years	Cap Hit	CAP%
Anthony Mantha	4	\$5.70 million	6.99
Josh Anderson	7	\$5.50 million	6.75
Oliver Bjorkstrand	5	\$5.40 million	6.63

All have similar offensive numbers to the Sabres forward.

- Reinhart since 2015: 0.29 goals per game, 0.65 points per game with career highs of 25 goals and 65 points.
- Mantha since 2016: 0.32 goals, 0.66 points with career highs of 25 goals and 48 points.
- Anderson since 2016: 0.28 goals, 0.46 points with career highs of 27 goals and 47 points.
- Bjorkstrand since 2017: 0.28 goals, 0.57 points with career highs of 23 goals and 40 points.

The Sabres could pitch Mantha's deal to Reinhart's camp. With the cap flat at \$81.5 million, the cap percentage of 6.99 percent would be the same \$5.7 million contract.

Reinhart, though, could decline a long-term deal and look for one in 15 months as a UFA. There could be money to be made in that decision. Here are three comparable wingers who signed UFA contracts.

UFA contracts	Years	Cap Hit	CAP%
Chris Kreider	7	\$6.50 million	7.98
Brendan Gallagher	6	\$6.50 million	7.98
Tyler Toffoli	4	\$4.25 million	5.21

Once again, they have similar offensive numbers to Reinhart.

- Reinhart since 2015: 0.29 goals per game, 0.65 points per game with career highs of 25 goals and 65 points.
- Kreider since 2014: 0.33 goals, 0.64 points with career highs of 28 goals and 53 points.
- Gallagher since 2013: 0.32 goals, 0.61 points with career highs of 33 goals and 54 points.

- Toffoli since 2014: 0.31 goals, 0.61 points with career highs of 31 goals and 58 points.

Waiting could get Reinhart an extra \$800,000 per season over the \$5.7 million Mantha contract. He could also lose big time. The pandemic certainly influenced Toffoli's deal with Montreal and led to winger Mike Hoffman's agreement on a one-year, \$4 million contract.

The security of a long-term deal now may outweigh the risk of negotiating in 2022.

There wouldn't be much risk to the Sabres in a long-term contract. The projection from The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn suggests Reinhart will remain a similar player for the next four years or more.

But everything goes back to the opening question: Is Reinhart part of the solution for Buffalo?

The team needs more leaders. While Reinhart does his job – and does it well – he doesn't provide the intangibles that Buffalo lacks. The team hasn't had a personality for years, and he's the poster boy for emotionless hockey. One way to bring in winners and personality is to trade the forward.

Reinhart's stock is high. He's shown the Sabres and the league what he can do.

Adams needs to decide if what Reinhart does is enough. The coming days could provide an answer.

## **Sabres battle back against Devils, still lose: ‘We just didn’t have it’**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 8, 2021

BUFFALO – A few weeks ago, an early two-goal deficit like the Sabres experienced Thursday against the New Jersey Devils would’ve been insurmountable.

They would’ve folded and gone down meekly.

But over the past week or so, the Sabres have morphed into, well, a somewhat normal team. Yes, they’re still one of the NHL’s lightweights, but they’re much more competitive.

While Thursday’s 6-3 loss inside KeyBank Center ended their two-game winning streak and five-game point streak, they roared back and tied the contest at 3 after falling behind 3-1.

“That’s just a sign of us having some more confidence that we’ve generated over the past week and a half or so, just making little, subtle plays,” winger Kyle Okposo said on a Zoom call of the Sabres battling back when they did not have their best.

Still, the Sabres can only take so much solace in tying the game. The Devils, who on Wednesday traded two of their best players, forwards Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac, outworked them.

“For some good reasons we were able to hang in there,” interim Sabres coach Don Granato said. “But they were hungrier all over the ice than we were. That was the difference. And yes, we executed enough to keep the game tight.”

Sabres winger Tage Thompson scored a power-play goal in the second before winger Jeff Skinner tied it later in the period.

Then the Sabres, like so many other times this season, generated little offense late with the game on the line. They sprinkled only two shots on Devils goalie Aaron Dell in the third period.

Jesper Boqvist’s goal 8:45 into the third period broke the 3-3 tie.

“You got to try to use that, 3-3 game, you don’t have a good 40 minutes and you’ve got a chance to win a game, we just got to come out and have a better third, and we just didn’t have it tonight,” Okposo said.

The Sabres started off well Thursday, taking a 1-0 lead 53 into the game when winger Victor Olofsson converted defenseman Henri Jokiharju’s pass in front.

Then they quickly fell behind, allowing New Jersey’s Pavel Zacha to score two power-play goals by the 3:47 mark.

After winning 5-3 Tuesday in New Jersey, the Sabres had optional practice Wednesday and an optional skate Thursday morning. Not surprisingly, they looked sloppy.

Granato regrets not having a full-team session.

“We didn’t play well enough ... and you think of, ‘What could you have done different?’ he said. “And that was a big one. You’re gauging that rest and work ration and we didn’t respond the way we needed to with the rest, clearly.”

The Sabres, who have 17 games left this season, have a stiff challenge over the last month. They play the four East Divisions heavyweights positioned in a playoff spot – the Boston Bruins, New York Islanders, Pittsburgh Penguins and Washington Capitals – 14 times, starting tonight at home against the Capitals.

The Sabres have one total win against those opponents this season. They won a 4-3 shootout Jan. 24 in Washington.

"If you asked anybody to start the year if you would be surprised if either of those four teams won a Stanley Cup, you'd say no," Okposo said. "We have to know that they're a veteran group, they're a mature group, they're not going to be teams that get away from their structure at any point for any reason.

"Whether they give up a goal or they're down two, they're just going to keep playing the same way, and that's something that as a young team, as a growing team, as a team that's trying to form our own identity, that we have to take some more of that aspect into our own game."

Okposo assisted on Olofsson's goal and has compiled nine points in his last nine games. Rasmus Dahlin's assist on Skinner's goal was his 100th point in his 180th NHL appearance. He's the second-fastest Sabres defenseman who debuted with the team to reach the 100-point mark, trailing only Phil Housley, who needed only 106 outings.

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark made 32 saves.

## **Sabres prospect Jack Quinn adapting to AHL, showcasing skills with Amerks**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 8, 2021

In scoring his second goal as a pro, Buffalo Sabres prospect Jack Quinn showcased some of the slick skills that made him the eighth overall pick in 2020.

On Saturday, Quinn utilized his speed to beat a Syracuse Crunch defender down the right wing before his hard backhand from the edge of the slot cemented the Rochester Americans' 5-3 road win.

But Quinn's willingness to cut to the net and go to the so-called "dirty area" grabbed coach Seth Appert's attention.

Quinn possesses a shot so lethal he could've scored from the wing.

"What I liked about it was he got to the inside," Appert told the Times Herald. "That's something that's important to do for a goal scorer. I know that's something he worked a lot on with his coach in junior hockey, getting to the inside. And it would be easy to take that puck and stay wide."

The power-play goal illustrated some of Quinn's development during this unique season.

"That's a big way for me to score goals," Quinn said. "I need to figure out how to get to the net a little more."

In a normal year, Quinn, 19, would've returned to Ottawa, where he likely could've scored at least 50 goals for the Ontario Hockey League's 67's. The winger scored 52 times in 62 OHL games last season.

Teenagers usually can't play in the AHL if they have junior eligibility. But the COVID-19 pandemic has kept the OHL season paused, meaning Quinn and other prospects have a unique opportunity to compete against men.

"It's important that he's learned how good the American League is and how hard it is to score at this level, how strong guys are, and that's going to fuel and drive even more relentless work from him in the offseason," Appert said.

The 6-foot, 176-pound Quinn has looked comfortable in the AHL from the get-go, scoring a shootout goal and recording an assist in his debut Feb. 18.

Still, he's cognizant his skill will only take him so far. So he has embraced the challenges that accompany playing pro hockey as a teenager.

"As challenging as it's been, it's also, I think, the best thing for me," he said. "I think you can grow a lot when you face adversity. I think I've faced adversity this year. I haven't played as well as I want to, but I think that's helping my game grow a lot as I was figuring it out here this year."

So far, Quinn has registered six points in 11 games. Saturday's outing – he also recorded an assist and four shots – might've been his best performance.

"That was probably the most dangerous he's looked offensively throughout a whole game," Appert said. "Like, there was many shifts where you felt he could score."

Appert said Quinn has quickly adapted to the faster style he must play in the AHL.

"And I don't mean by how fast he's skating; I mean by understanding that you've got to play give-and-go hockey at this level to become a great offensive player," he said. "Very few players in the world can just hold it, hold it, possess it, lean on people. ..."

"The best scorers at higher levels, in the NHL, they don't have the puck a lot usually. They give it and then find an opening and get it back and then deliver that potent shot, and I think that's something he's really delivering on here."

## **Taylor Hall to be scratched again versus Devils as Sabres try to trade winger**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 8, 2021

In what are almost certainly his final days in Buffalo, winger Taylor Hall is still involved in all Sabres-related activities other than playing, interim coach Don Granato said.

So while Hall, 29, is still around the team, he will be scratched again for tonight's game against the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center. The Sabres, of course, want to protect an asset as Monday's trade deadline approaches.

They first scratched Hall, who is expected to be dealt soon, for Tuesday's 5-3 win in New Jersey.

"It's part of this week," Granato said on a Zoom call of the decisions made because of the looming deadline.

"There's some oddities that are presented this week, even affecting our lineup and what we do within that lineup. This is just one part of it.

"I feel the players all understand this and it's not a distraction going into any meeting or practice or prep or the game itself."

Granato said the Sabres plan to use the same lineup tonight that beat the Devils on Tuesday, meaning goalie Linus Ullmark will make his third straight start and seven defensemen will dress.

The Sabres recalled Arttu Ruotsalainen, one of their top forward prospects, to the taxi squad on Monday. They want to give him an opportunity to play.

But salary cap complications might hold back the Finn's NHL debut until the Sabres unload some money. They have \$669,675 of cap space, according to capfriendly.com.

"The roster decisions are a bit more complicated because of the week it is," said Granato, who wouldn't offer more details.

The Sabres, who held an optional practice this morning, have won two straight contests and have a five-game point streak. They haven't won three straight games all season.

They've earned four of their nine wins against the Devils this season. A victory tonight would clinch the eight-game season series for them.

In other news, the Sabres this afternoon recalled defenseman Brandon Davidson and forward C.J. Smith from the Rochester Americans to the taxi squad. They played for the Amerks in Wednesday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Syracuse Crunch.

## **Sabres' point streak snapped with 6-3 loss to Devils**

By Jenna Callari

WKBW

April 8, 2021

BUFFALO, NY (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres are back in the loss column. After a five-game point streak that included three wins and two overtime losses, the Sabres fell in regulation to the New Jersey Devils 6-3 Thursday night, snapping both the point and win streak.

Victor Olofsson put the Sabres on the board in the first minute of the game but the remainder of the 1st period belonged to the Devils - scoring twice on the power play and another even strength goal to take a 3-1 lead. The Sabres turned up the energy in the 2nd, with both Tage Thompson [power play] and Jeff Skinner scoring off the rebound to tie things up heading into the final period. The Devils though, outpowered the Sabres in those final 20 minutes, adding three more goals to seal the win.

Linus Ullmark had 32 saves in the loss while Rasmus Dahlin recorded his 100th career point.

Thursday's game was the final meeting between the Sabres and Devils this season. The Sabres are back at home on Friday when they host the Washington Capitals.

## **First and third periods sink Sabres in 6-3 loss**

By Paul Stockman

WIVB

April 8, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – The bookend periods were too much for the Sabres. All six of the goals they allowed came in the first and third which led to the 6-3 loss. Players said they were out of sync and a bit outworked against New Jersey.

"I think that was the first game in a little bit that here, probably in the last six that we really have kind of gotten away from what we've tried to have as our identity and we just didn't execute tonight, it starts with me," forward Kyle Okposo said. "I've got to be better and I think, I think everybody knows that that one wasn't our best."

They jumped out to a 1-0 lead less than two minutes into the game when Victor Olofsson found the back of the net thanks to a pass from Henri Jokiharju. New Jersey responded with a pair of Power Play goals to take a 2-1 lead before the game even hit the five minute mark.

"It just seemed that throughout the game, stretches we weren't executing at a high enough level," forward Jeff Skinner said.

One positive to take from the loss, they clawed their way back to a tie in the second with goals from Tage Thompson and Skinner. That made it 3-3 after two.

New Jersey came right out and score two unanswered goals to take a 5-3 lead late in the game. They added another empty net goal to take the 6-3 win.

"Kind of weird game obviously just a little inconsistent there at times, but I think that's a good thing about the schedule is that we've got a quick turnaround so we're just gonna have a short memory and try to find a way to move on," Thompson said. "I think we've been playing pretty good hockey as of late so we've just got to focus on that and keep moving forward."

The Sabres play the Washington Capitals at home on Friday at 7 p.m.

## Devils defeat Sabres in first game without Palmieri, Zajac

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

April 8, 2021

**BUFFALO** -- Jesper Boqvist scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period to lift the New Jersey Devils to a 6-3 win against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

Pavel Zacha scored two power-play goals, and Jack Hughes, Yegor Sharangovich and Janne Kuokkanen each had a goal and two assists for the Devils (14-18-6), who had lost their past four games (0-2-2). Aaron Dell made 24 saves for his first win of the season.

"We're a young team and we have to find a way to win these games, and we finally did," Zacha said. "Third period's very important, especially with a tied game, and I think we worked hard, played the same way. We didn't change anything in the system. We just kept working and we scored those goals and won the game."

New Jersey was playing its first game since trading forwards Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac to the New York Islanders on Wednesday.

"It's never easy to see guys traded, especially guys like Trav and 'Palms'," Zacha said. "They've been here with me since I started (drafted in 2015) so you never want to see guys like that go. But we knew what team we had here today and we had to work hard and go win a game."

Victor Olofsson, Tage Thompson and Jeff Skinner scored, and Linus Ullmark made 32 saves for the Sabres (9-24-6), whose five-game point streak ended (3-0-2).

Boqvist gave the Devils a 4-3 lead when he got to the rebound of a wraparound attempt at 8:45 of the third period.

"The third period, the winning goal, we had the puck on our stick," Sabres coach Don Granato said. "We, on the draw, had the puck on our stick multiple times and didn't exit the zone. It ended up in our net. So they were hungrier than we were tonight. That's a tough game when your opponent's hungrier than you, and that was the case."

Olofsson took a pass from defenseman Henri Jokiharju in the low slot to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead 53 seconds into the first period.

Zacha backhanded a rebound on the power play to tie it 1-1 at 2:06 and scored at 3:47 from the top of the left circle on the power play for a 2-1 lead. Hughes extended the lead to 3-1 at 16:04.

Thompson made it 3-2 on the power play at 11:56 of the second period. Skinner tied it 3-3 when he backhanded a loose puck at the right side of the net at 18:21.

"I think that that's just a sign of us having some more confidence that we've generated over the past week and a half or so," Sabres forward Kyle Okposo said. "Just making little, subtle plays, 'Tommer' gets a big one on the power play there. 'Skinny' gets one in front to tie the game. But you got to try to use that, 3-3 game, you don't have a good 40 minutes and you've got a chance to win a game, we've just got to come out and have a better third, and we just didn't have it tonight."

Sharangovich made it 5-3 from the right circle at 18:17, and Kuokkanen scored an empty-net goal at 19:28 for the 6-3 final.

"Really liked our third period where we generated some good opportunities," Devils coach Lindy Ruff said. "We didn't give up a lot. We only gave up a couple of shots. We played the game the right way, put pucks in deep. We got rewarded. The Boqvist goal was get the puck to the net, it went off the goaltender's pad, and came right back out and 'Bo' put it in the back of the net."

**NOTES:** Dell is the fourth Devils goalie to win a game this season (Mackenzie Blackwood, Eric Comrie, Scott Wedgewood). It's the first time they have had at least four goalies with a win since the 1991-92 season (Craig

Billington, Martin Brodeur, Chad Erickson, Chris Turreri). ... Sabres forward Taylor Hall (precautionary) was held out of the lineup for the second straight game with the NHL Trade Deadline on Monday. ... Rasmus Dahlin had an assist on Skinner's goal for his 100th NHL point (16 goals, 84 assists) in his 180th NHL game. He is the second-fastest Sabres defenseman to reach the milestone after making his NHL debut with the team (Phil Housley, 106 games). ... Dahlin, who turns 21 on April 13, is the youngest Sweden-born defenseman in NHL history to reach the milestone and the second-youngest Sabres defenseman (Housley; 19 years, 273 days).

## 5 takeaways | Point streak ends with loss to Devils

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

April 8, 2021

Tage Thompson and Jeff Skinner scored to erase a two-goal deficit during the second period, but Sabres interim head coach Don Granato thought the hungrier team prevailed in a 6-3 loss to the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

Jesper Boqvist scored to break a 3-3 tie with 11:15 remaining. Yegor Sharangovich and Janne Kuokkanen added goals within the final two minutes to conclude a third period in which the Devils outshot the Sabres, 11-2.

"We were able to hang in there," Granato said. "For some good reasons we were able to hang in there. But again, they were hungrier all over the ice than we were. That was the difference."

Victor Olofsson also scored a goal for the Sabres, who entered the contest riding a five-game point streak (3-0-2). Linus Ullmark allowed five goals on 37 shots.

Here are five takeaways.

### 1. Special teams spoil early lead

Henri Jokiharju carried the puck down low on a rush and fed Olofsson in the slot to give the Sabres a 1-0 lead just 53 seconds into the contest. The advantage was short-lived thanks to a pair of quick penalties.

Cody Eakin was called for holding at the 1:30 mark, paving the way for Pavel Zacha to bury a rebound on the ensuing power play. Zacha scored again with the extra man after Thompson took another holding penalty at 3:03.

Jack Hughes extended the Devils' lead to 3-1 with 3:56 remaining in the period.

"Coming out in the first I think we were a little slow," Thompson said. "They were beating us to pucks and winning battles. I think we just got outworked in the first and it put us behind the eight ball."

### 2. Rest vs. work

Granato has pushed the Sabres since taking over as interim head coach in March, upping the intensity and frequency of practices despite a condensed schedule. He explained it as a calculated gamble to risk sacrificing energy in order to gain time spent improving within a new system.

Amid a stretch of three games in four days, the Sabres held an optional morning skate Wednesday. Granato suggested he would have had a full session with the benefit of hindsight.

"We didn't play well enough at the start and we didn't play well enough through the game and of course as a result of that you look and you think of, 'What could you have done different?'" he said. "And that was a big one."

"You're gauging that rest and work ratio and we didn't respond the way we needed to with the rest, clearly."

Work and rest will continue to be a balancing act with no two-day breaks between games for the remainder of the season.

### 3. Sabres fight back

The Sabres were able to erase the two-goal deficit during the second period on the strength of goals from Thompson and Skinner, both of whom buried rebounds around the New Jersey net.

Kyle Okposo said the comeback was another sign of the growing confidence in a team that erased deficits to earn points in each of its past three games.

"I think that that's just a sign of us having some more confidence that we've generated over the past week and a half or so," he said.

#### 4. Dahlin hits 100

Dahlin's assist on the game-tying goal was his 100th NHL point in 180 games, making him the second-fastest Sabres defenseman to hit the milestone after beginning their career with the team. Phil Housley was the fastest, hitting the mark in 106 games.

The helper also extended Dahlin's point streak to three games, with two goals and two assists in that span.

#### 5. The big picture

The Sabres conclude their season series against the Devils with a record of 4-3-1. They host the Washington Capitals on Thursday to begin a stretch that includes 14 games against the four teams currently holding playoff seeds in the East Division (Boston, the New York Islanders, Pittsburgh, and Washington).

"It's a challenge we have to get excited about, really," Granato said. "... That's the challenge of this year and this division is you've got five or six teams, you might not be surprised even if the sixth team won the Stanley Cup this year because of the talent within the division.

"And you're locked in, you can't run to another division and play anybody else. That's the challenge of this season and that's the challenge we have to embrace. It will make us better, a better team for the future, better players for the future if we embrace that challenge."

Coverage on Thursday begins at 6:30 p.m. on MSG.

## **At The Final Horn: Devils 6 - Sabres 3**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

April 8, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres and New Jersey Devils entered the third period of Thursday night's game tied, but the Devils scored three times in the final period to hand Buffalo a 6-3 loss at KeyBank Center.

Victor Olofsson, Tage Thompson and Jeff Skinner scored for Buffalo while Linus Ullmark made 32 saves on 37 shots.

Pavel Zacha scored two power-play goals in the first five minutes of the game for New Jersey. Zacha wrapped up the season series against Buffalo with 11 points (4+7) in eight games.

Jack Hughes, Jesper Boqvist, Yegor Sharangovich and Janne Kuokkanen also scored for the Devils. Aaron Dell made 24 saves.

After opening the scoring Buffalo battled back to erase a two-goal deficit heading into the third period. However, Boqvist broke the tie early and New Jersey added two late goals to put the game out of reach.

The Sabres were outshot 11-2 in the third period.

Buffalo's power play finished the game 1-for-3. The team was 2-for-4 on the penalty kill.

What happened

The Sabres opened the scoring 53 seconds into the game. Defenseman Henri Jokiharju joined the rush and carried the puck down the right wing into the corner. He then hit Olofsson with a pass and the forward beat Dell with a one-timer.

New Jersey soon took the lead.

The Devils found themselves on the power play immediate after when Cody Eakin was sent to the box for holding. Zacha eventually picked up a loose puck in the slot off a rebound and put it past Ullmark to tie the game 2:06 in.

Just 1:40 later, with Thompson in the box, Zacha scored again with the man advantage to give New Jersey the lead.

All alone in front, Hughes made it 3-1 when he roofed a shot with 3:56 remaining in the first.

Thompson buried a rebound on the power play with 8:50 left in the second period to cut the Devils' lead to one.

With 1:39 remaining in the second, Buffalo tied things up thanks to Skinner's fourth of the year. Buffalo cycled the puck well and worked the puck to Sam Reinhart, who took a high shot on goal. The puck went off Dell's arm and landed in front of Skinner, who lifted a backhand over the goal line.

Boqvist punched home a loose puck in the slot 8:45 into the third period to put the Devils back in the lead.

Sharangovich added another New Jersey goal with 1:43 left in regulation and Kuokkanen scored on an empty net with 31.6 seconds to go.

Roll the highlight film

Let's take a look at Skinner's game-tying goal at the end of the second:

Worth mentioning

-Rasmus Dahlin recorded his 100th career point on Skinner's goal.

-With the secondary assist on Olofsson's goal, Kyle Okposo extended his personal point streak to nine games (2+7).

-As the NHL Trade Deadline approaches, pending unrestricted free agent Taylor Hall was once again a healthy scratch for Buffalo. The deadline is Monday at 3 p.m.

Coming up

The Sabres host the Washington Capitals on Friday. Faceoff from KeyBank Center is scheduled for 7 p.m. on MSG and WGR 550. Catch the pregame show starting at 6:30 on MSG. Tickets for the game are on sale now.

## **Morning Skate | Sabres look to extend point streak vs. Devils**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

April 8, 2021

Sabres interim coach Don Granato acknowledged that lineup decisions will be less cut-and-dried than usual this week as the April 12 trade deadline approaches.

The clearest example is forward Taylor Hall, a pending unrestricted free agent who will sit Tuesday for the second straight game. But asked whether salary cap considerations affect potential recalls in his place, Granato said there are multiple factors at play affecting the roster.

"I'm not in the position to be discussing salary cap, obviously, as a coach," Granato said. "... But yes, the roster decisions are a bit more complicated because of the week it is."

The Sabres, as such, expect to stick with the same lineup when they conclude their season series with the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center on Thursday night. The team dressed 11 forwards and seven defensemen in a 5-3 victory in New Jersey on Tuesday.

That lineup, heavy with young players stepping into impact roles, has guided the Sabres to a five-game point streak (3-0-2). Casey Mittelstadt has points in four straight games, with three goals and two assists in that span. Rasmus Dahlin has three points in the past two contests.

The list goes on. Tage Thompson has three points in the past five games, not counting the shootout winner he scored against New York on Saturday. Rasmus Asplund joined a line with Mittelstadt and Thompson on Tuesday and scored his fourth goal in just 10 games this season.

"This is an exciting position to be in because all of these guys have such a significant high ceiling and capacity, and that's exciting," Granato said. "It's exciting to them to come to the rink, and they love the game of hockey so create an environment where they can love the game of hockey and challenge them to be better, because who doesn't like becoming better?"

"That works. That works everywhere, anywhere in life and we have to make sure that's at the forefront here."

### Scouting the Devils

New Jersey made a pre-deadline splash Wednesday, sending two of its longtime veterans in Kyle Palmieri and Travis Zajac to the New York Islanders. Jesper Boqvist will move to center in place of Zajac.

The Sabres are 4-2-1 against the Devils this season and can take the season series with a win.

"At this part of the year and playing in a division where there are only seven other opponents, there's enough familiarity going into each game now that you don't really need to make the game much about the opponent you're playing or any discrepancies in their roster," Granato said.

"For us, we have to have the focus on where we can make our improvements, how we can become a better team. I've mentioned that so many times, individually and collectively. Our focus going into these games will remain on that."

### Tune in

Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m. The puck drops at 7.

## **Sabres reassign Smith, Davidson to taxi squad**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

April 8, 2021

The Sabres have reassigned forward C.J. Smith and defenseman Brandon Davidson from the Rochester Americans to the taxi squad, the team announced Thursday.

Smith and Davidson both played for the Amerks against Syracuse on Wednesday. Davidson tallied a team-high four shots in the 4-3 overtime loss.

Buffalo hosts New Jersey at 7 p.m. Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30.