



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Sabres-Lightning Preview

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

February 26, 2013

Steven Stamkos is the NHL's leading scorer and a meeting with one of the league's poorest defensive teams could keep him rolling.

It may also be just what the Tampa Bay Lightning need to get off to a strong start for a change.

Stamkos looks to extend his goal-scoring streak to six games Tuesday night when the Lightning attempt to capitalize on a meeting with the sputtering Buffalo Sabres.

Stamkos led the NHL with a career-high 60 goals last season, while his 97 points were also a personal-best but ranked second to Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin's 109.

The All-Star center is again scoring at an alarming pace, as his 29 points lead the league while his 13 goals are tied for first with the New York Islanders' John Tavares.

Stamkos has goals in five consecutive games and 12 points during a six-game streak, but Tampa Bay (9-8-1) is only 3-3-0 during that stretch. Poor starts have plagued the Lightning in each of those defeats, getting outscored 6-2 in the opening period.

That continued Sunday, when they surrendered three in the first before their comeback fell short in a 5-3 loss at Pittsburgh.

"You can't give a team like that a three-goal lead in the first," said Stamkos, who had one goal and two assists. "We made a game of it, we did a lot of positive things, but we're shooting ourselves in the foot."

That may change with a meeting against the Sabres (6-12-1), who are at the bottom of the Eastern Conference and give up 3.2 goals per game.

Tampa Bay went 3-1-0 in last season's series, with Stamkos recording two goals and two assists. He has 15 points in 16 career meetings, seven coming in the past six at home.

Buffalo has been outscored 13-5 during a four-game losing streak and has lost six of seven. The Sabres have dropped their first two games since the firing of longtime coach Lindy Ruff.

Playing six of their next seven games on the road may not be a bad thing for a team that lost 4-0 at home to the Islanders on Saturday, prompting boos from the crowd that started in the second period. By the third, they turned their angry attention to general manager Darcy Regier, chanting "Goodbye, Darcy!"

"The fans are entitled to do what they want," left wing Thomas Vanek said. "I'm sure they're frustrated. They want a winning product on the ice, and so do we.

"We're a good team right now that finds a dumb way to lose."

Vanek had been one of the few bright spots thanks to a terrific start to the season that included 11 goals and 12 assists through the first 11 games. He's mustered only one of each in seven games since, going pointless in the last three.

Vanek, though, has 23 goals and 10 assists in 28 career meetings with Tampa Bay, tallying 10 points in the past six.

Buffalo captain Jason Pominville is also hoping a meeting with the Lightning can begin reversing his sluggish stretch. He has 35 points in 27 matchups with Tampa Bay, but enters this one with one goal in nine games overall after scoring six times with eight assists over the first 10.

Sunshine State could save season for Sabres

Road trip might be just what Sabres need

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

February 26, 2013

Gettin' outta Dodge. Go South, young man. Gone Fishin'.

Pick a saying, pick a cliché. Hang whatever sign you want. The Buffalo Sabres are hoping a trip to Florida can be a huge panacea for a season that has fast taken on water.

The Sabres practiced early Monday morning then jetted to Tampa, where they will meet the Lightning tonight in the Tampa Bay Times Forum. They'll play the Florida Panthers Thursday in Sunrise. It's the annual fathers/mentors trip, with elders accompanying the players and hoping to see the end of a four-game losing streak that has cost longtime coach Lindy Ruff his job, dropped the Sabres to last in the Eastern Conference and on the precipice of last overall in the NHL.

"You need to have belief," winger Drew Stafford said Monday. "As bad as it gets, obviously we're not going to give up. We have the right guys in here that we can turn it around. We've done it before. ... We've got roughly 30 games or so left and it's one of those things where it has to start tomorrow."

The environment around the team in Buffalo is as toxic as it's been since the 2002-03 bankruptcy season, when the NHL was operating the club in the wake of the Rigas fiasco and then-HSBC Arena was half-full.

But now the stands are packed. There are more than 15,000 season ticket holders and a group of fans that tore apart the Sabres Store to buy more than 50,000 pieces of merchandise during the one-week sale that greeted them during training camp week.

And they're not happy.

The no-longer-faithful are jumping the team with boos at every opportunity. There are Bronx cheers for last-minute-in-the-period announcements and even at times for shots on goal or mere forays outside their end of the rink.

"As much as it hurts, they have every right to do it," defenseman Tyler Myers said after Saturday's 4-0 loss to the New York Islanders. "Fans' expectations on us are very high, and they should be. Hockey town like this, with as much support as we get from them, it's not acceptable for us."

Opposing writers and broadcasters have been shocked by the lack of noise in the building and the level of vitriol in the crowd. Interim coach Ron Rolston got no introduction Saturday on the public-address system or the jumbotron and there's little acknowledgment from the fans for the players taking the ice or being introduced with the starting lineups.

The team has irritated some fans even more by trying to create atmosphere with music at heavy metal-concert volume. All it's doing is blasting eardrums and masking the fact the paying customers have essentially been mute – other than times like the “Fi-re Darcy” chant directed at General Manager Darcy Regier in the 300 level Saturday.

It was just nine days ago that the Sabres had a third-period lead against Pittsburgh and were 12 minutes away from back-to-back wins over the Penguins and Boston Bruins. Since then, they've scored two goals in 195 minutes of hockey and endured the firing of the longest-tenured coach in the NHL.

Bet this was all a little tougher than Rolston thought it might be when he signed on last Wednesday.

“Right now we're at the point where we don't have anything structurally to build on in terms of belief,” Rolston said. “You go into a hockey game and some teams in this league hope they're gonna win and some teams know they're gonna win that night. The better teams are the ‘know-win’ teams and we're right now the ‘hope’ team.

“To get from hope to know is a process. To get there, you've got to do a lot of things well and you have to do it for 60 minutes. We're still hoping and our job is to get to the point we're knowing.”

The Sabres used a jaunt out West last year to hunker down together and save their season. Ryan Miller pitched back-to-back shutouts in Anaheim and San Jose to kick-start a March run that nearly resulted in a playoff berth.

Six of the Sabres' next seven games are on the road so this is a similar chance. But with all games in the East, someone the Sabres are chasing is winning.

“We don't have to kid ourselves,” said winger Thomas Vanek. “We have what, 29 games left? We probably have to win 21 of them to even have a chance.”

Vanek said the idea of going on the road isn't all that appealing to him even with the rough atmosphere in his home rink of late. Still, he admitted it might be a help on the stress level in the locker room, especially with some of the younger players.

“To me, it's just believe, be positive,” Vanek said. “There's no reason to talk anymore. We just need to do better. ... If you can't handle it, you're in the wrong business anyway. I'd much rather stay here and get a win for the fans and get them something to cheer about. But maybe it's good sometimes for some guys to get away and get on the road.”

Sabres notebook: Pardy's back to reinforce defense

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

February 26, 2013

Adam Pardy is back on the Buffalo Sabres' blueline and don't expect this trip to the NHL to be a one-game stay.

Pardy was recalled by the club and was at practice Monday in First Niagara Center. He'll be in the lineup tonight at Tampa Bay and likely for the foreseeable future.

Pardy played well as Tyler Myers' partner in the Feb. 5 loss at Ottawa but had to immediately return to Rochester when Christian Ehrhoff returned to the lineup after a one-game absence. That's not happening anytime soon now, with Alexander Sulzer going on injured reserve Monday, Jordan Leopold not practicing and a trade of a someone from the crowded defense corps certainly possible.

"It was frustrating," admitted Pardy, who was paired Monday with Mike Weber. "It's always frustrating when you get sent down. It's never easy to take but you have to use the time there to move forward and help yourself get better."

Pardy has one goal, four assists and a plus-1 rating in 11 games in Rochester. His resume also includes 183 NHL games with Calgary and Dallas.

"He just gave us a lot of presence down there, big body, good positionally and really calmed the game down," said Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston. "We're pretty young in Rochester on the blueline. He was somebody that came in, had experience at the NHL level, is 6-5 and just kind of settled things down for us, Especially when games get hairy, you need that presence."

Pardy said he likes being reunited with Rolston.

"He likes to keep things simple, have a structured game," Pardy said. "Make sure we're working together and communicating, taking care of our D zone."

Sulzer suffered a lower-body injury in the first period Saturday against the New York Islanders and Rolston would only say he would be out "a while". Leopold (hand) and Ville Leino (hip) did not practice Monday but Leino skated on his own afterward.

Thomas Vanek sat out for maintenance and said he expects to play tonight.

...

Tampa Bay forward Cory Conacher, the former Canisius College star, enters tonight's game leading NHL rookies in scoring with 17 points. He's the leader in assists (10) and is second in goals with seven, one behind Florida's Jonathan Huberdeau.

Conacher, a native of Burlington, Ont., was the AHL MVP last year while playing for Calder Cup champion Norfolk as he collected 39 goals and 80 points in 75 games. He had 12 goals and 28 points in 36 games this year at Syracuse during the lockout.

The 5-foot-8 Conacher has drawn plenty of parallels to Tampa Bay veteran Martin St. Louis and has helped the Lightning to an NHL-high 69 goals and a league-best average of 3.83 per game entering Monday.

“He’s very dynamic, much like St. Louis,” said Rolston, who smiled when asked about Conacher Monday after seeing him the last two years in the AHL. “They’re similar players. Very dynamic, extremely smart and will play in hard areas. That’s the difference when you have a player like that. Those guys will play in the traffic areas and that’s enabled him to be where he’s at.”

Conacher scored 62 goals and totaled 147 points during a career at Canisius that lasted from 2007-2011.

...

Rolston on being part of the Sabres’ annual fathers/mentor trip: “It’s great. They go up their whole careers wanting to get to this level and their parents are a huge part of that, taking them to the rink at 5 in the morning. Just the sacrifice parents go through now in order for their son to move up the ranks. For them to be here and have the payoff that their sons are in the NHL ... it’s an outstanding opportunity for both the player and the parent.”

Phil Housley could draw interest from Buffalo Sabres

By Charley Walters

Pioneer Press

February 26, 2013

Lindy Ruff, fired as coach of the Buffalo Sabres last week, and Phil Housley played together in Buffalo for eight seasons. Both were extremely popular there. It wouldn't be surprising if Housley, the former South St. Paul High School star who this winter coached the U.S. junior national men's hockey team to a gold medal in the world championships in Russia, gets interest from the Sabres, if not to succeed Ruff, then as an assistant next season.

Housley, 48, is the Stillwater boys hockey coach. With Housley as a U.S. junior national team assistant in 2007, the team won a bronze medal in the world tournament in Buffalo. Housley is a member of the Sabres' Hall of Fame.

Sabres' Stanley Cup odds officially hit zero percent

Buffalo Business First

February 25, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres have officially fallen off the Stanley Cup's radar.

The Sabres now have a 0.0 percent chance of winning the National Hockey League's championship trophy this season, according to Sports Club Stats, a North Carolina-based website that simulates league play in all major sports.

The Sabres' odds were pegged at 0.2 percent a week ago, but the team subsequently suffered a disastrous period marked by the firing of longtime coach Lindy Ruff and back-to-back losses to the Toronto Maple Leafs and New York Islanders.

Sports Club Stats says the Sabres still have a 0.8 percent chance of squeaking into the NHL playoffs this year. The only team with lower playoff odds is the Columbus Blue Jackets at 0.6 percent.

Sabres Vanek gets second day off in a row

WGR 550

February 26, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Thomas Vanek didn't practice on Monday along with Alex Sulzer, Jordan Leopold and Ville Leino. Leino took the ice after his teammates were done. Adam Pardy has been recalled from Rochester.

Vanek was given another day off after the team had Sunday off. When I asked him if he was hurting he said, "Yes, that's basically what it is, I'm trying to get better and ready for tomorrow." Ron Rolston said, "He's fine, just kind of a rest day, basically maintenance day for him."

Vanek has looked very labored for a week or so during games. I mentioned that to Rolston and he said, "It's normal, he's playing a lot of minutes and just the normal bangs. He got in that collision with Joe Finley so just more soreness than anything." On if he's been playing hurt Vanek said, "It's one of those things, especially with the schedule, there's no time to heal. You just keep going on it and obviously if you keep going on it, you won't get much better so these two days is the first time in a while where I got an opportunity to just kind of sit and work on the things I need to do to get better."

Even though Alex Sulzer got hurt two days ago, coach Ron Rolston claims doesn't know what's wrong with him, "I have not gotten one yet (an update) on Alex. They're still in the evaluation process." With Pardy coming up, Rolston doesn't even know who went on IR.

The new head coach did say Sulzer's out for Tuesday for sure and will be out awhile.

Sabres Vanek thinks it'll take .724 hockey to get into the playoffs

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 25, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres own the worst record in the East and second worst record in the NHL. With this being a shortened schedule, games are dwindling away fast. In the last 29 games, Thomas Vanek thinks they have to do a lot of winning, "We don't have to kid ourselves, we have what, 29 games left? We probably need to win 21 of them to even have a chance. It's a big task, but I think this is a group that can put a streak together, but it starts with one. Not just to win, but it starts with having a good win, playing a good 60 minutes. A lot of our mistakes come from us turning it over and not getting out of the zone, but I don't think we're that far off. I know we've said that for week now and we keep losing, but as long as you believe, and I think the guys do then there's a chance."

Ron Rolston has been stressing fast pace during practice. All you have to do is watch the games and you know how slow this team is at doing everything. Rolston said, "You go into a hockey game and some teams in this league hope they're going to win and some teams know they're going to win and the better teams are the knowing teams and we're right now the hope team and to get from hope to know, is a process and to get there you've got to do a lot of things well and you've got to do it for 60 minutes."

Sabres' Rolston: 'It's going to be a process' improving

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 26, 2013

BUFFALO – Rebuilding the bottom-feeding, 15th-place Sabres back into a strong hockey club could be a long and arduous process following Lindy Ruff's dismissal as coach last week.

The team's in shambles, having lost four straight games and six of the last seven. There's little to like about the Sabres and no quick fix.

They possess no identity.

"I know patience isn't big with anybody," interim coach Ron Rolston said Monday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's tilt in Tampa Bay against the Lightning. "It's not big with me. It's not big with fans. It's not big with media. But right now, it's going to be a process."

Some epic struggles keep complicating that process. The Sabres are so bad players can't build any belief they're going to win a game.

"There's two things," Rolston said. "You go into hockey games and some teams hope they're going to win, and some teams know they're going to win in this league that night. The better teams are the knowing teams, and we're right now the hope team.

"To get from hope to know is a process. And to get there, you got to do a lot of things well, and you got to do them for 60 minutes. We're still hoping. Our job is to get to the point we're knowing."

They better figure it out quickly. At 6-12-1, the Sabres are already six points out of a playoff berth with a game or two in hand on some teams. Their season's already on the brink just five weeks in.

"We don't have to kid ourselves," Sabres winger Thomas Vanek said. "We have 29 games left. We probably have to win 21 of them to even have a chance. It's a big task. But I think this is a group that can put a streak together, not just win. I think it just starts with playing a good 60 minutes. ...

"I don't think we're that far off. I know we've said that for weeks now and we keep losing. As long as you believe – and I think the guys do – there's a chance."

Even with frustration rampant, the Sabres believe they're maintaining a positive approach. Rolston has noticed his players' energy and upbeat nature, saying they're "getting better at just going out and being detailed, practicing like we're in first."

“Those are all things you have to build up,” said Rolston, who’s 0-2 since taking over Wednesday. “I’ve really liked the attitude and the energy. When guys are sitting in the video room, they’re just dialed in. ... They’re asking for solutions.”

Sabres winger said Steve Ott said “everyone’s very supportive with each other.”

“We got a great group of guys in here that really care about each other,” Ott said.

But some observers argue the Sabres’ current makeup will never work, even if they try hard, get along well and have a talented roster. More changes should be made.

“I don’t really care what anybody else thinks,” Ott said. “I care what these guys in here think, and we’re committed to each other to be better, and we want to be better in here. That’s something that has to come within us. No one’s going to come down and sprinkle any magic dust on us and say, ‘You guys are instantly better.’”

“No, it comes within, and that’s why we’re putting the commitment in to each other. In doing so, we’re holding each other accountable.”

Rolston spent Sunday, the Sabres’ first day off since Ruff was fired Wednesday, analyzing the team and where it needs to go. He’s cognizant he can’t overload his players with new ideas and information.

So far, Rolston has been very hands-on, doing a lot of “educational teaching” throughout practices. Pace – not just team speed but doing everything quickly – has been a big message from the coach, who said the Sabres are “where we’re at for a reason.”

“In terms of team speed, and not only is it how you can skate, but how you move the puck and how clean you are moving the puck and where your support is moving the puck,” Rolston said. “So there’s a lot of elements to a team being a fast team, and right now ... we need to be much faster.”

Sabres summon Pardy from Rochester with Sulzer sidelined

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 26, 2013

BUFFALO – The Sabres' injury and on-ice woes could help defenseman Adam Pardy, an NHL regular before numbers kicked him back to the minors this season, carve out a spot on the blue line.

With Jordan Leopold (hand) and Alexander Sulzer (lower body) sidelined, the Sabres on Monday summoned Pardy from Rochester for the second time this season.

He should play tonight in Tampa Bay against the Lightning, the start of a two-game Florida trip.

If Pardy impresses, the Sabres might have a hard time yanking the 28-year-old from the lineup. The defense corps, once thought to be a strength, has played wretchedly this season. The Sabres have allowed 3.32 goals a game, the league's 28th-worst total.

"You're always expecting injuries," said Pardy, who played his 184th NHL game on Feb. 5 before returning to the AHL. "It's going to happen at some point. You got to be ready for it either way. You don't know when it's going to come. You never want to see what's going on right now here with this start. It's tough for everybody. There's an opportunity for me here to come in and try to help out where I can."

Interim coach Ron Rolston, who coached Pardy until taking over the Sabres last week, liked the veteran element he brought to the Americans.

"He ... just kind of settled things down for us, especially when games get hairy and you need that presence just to take care of the next shift," Rolston said.

Naturally, Pardy, a veteran of 184 NHL games, wants to stick around. He had spent four years in the big leagues prior to clearing waivers last month.

"That's always the goal," Pardy said. "You got to keep pushing forward. If I'm not pushing these guys, where's the competition, where's the push?"

Rolston had no update on Sulzer, who left Saturday's 4-0 loss to the New York Islanders early.

"They're still in the evaluation process right now," he said.

The Sabres placed Sulzer on injured reserve to make room for Pardy.

Soreness kept leading scorer Thomas Vanek from practicing Monday. He plans to play tonight.

"Obviously, he's playing a lot of minutes, and just the normal bangs," Rolston said. "He got in that collision with Joe Finley (Saturday)."

xxx

The Sabres can take their father or a mentor on the short road trip, a neat experience for many players.

“Some bonding time to give him a glimpse of how I get to give the NHL life,” Sabres winger Steve Ott said about his father, Butch. “That’s pretty awesome for a military dad that worked his (butt) off his whole career.”

Rolston thinks it’s a nice to reward the sacrifices fathers have made over the years.

“For them to be and have the payoff that their son’s in the NHL, it’s kind of a payback and just some time to spend together,” Rolston said.

xxx

Owner Terry Pegula has remained silent on the Sabres’ sorry state since coach Lindy Ruff was fired Wednesday, only issuing a statement.

However, his 19-year-old daughter, Jessie, tweeted her disgust during the second intermission of Saturday’s 4-0 loss to the New York Islanders, writing, “Lets call a spade a spade. The Sabres are just really bad.” The tweet was eventually deleted.

xxx

The Rochester Americans on Monday officially named Chadd Cassidy as the interim replacement for Rolston, who was promoted to replace Ruff. Chris Taylor will fill Cassidy’s assistant role.

One city's love affair with the Buffalo Sabres

By Andrew Kulyk

Artvoice

February 26, 2013

In Germany they call it “Echte Liebe”. That means “True Love”.

For the Buffalo Sabres, there has always been a bond with the crazed hockey fans in Mannheim, Germany. They have watched from afar as their local hero, Jochen Hecht, grew up and fulfilled his dream to be a big league hockey player, and found his fame and fortune in Buffalo.

Then the Sabres visited Mannheim and played an exhibition game in 2011.

Then Jason Pominville chose Mannheim as his team when the NHL went into lockout mode.

Bam! Now that love affair is off the charts.

“After every game, two players get set up in the corridors to do autographs. When Pominville had his turn the line went three times around the concourse,” sad Stefan Schaefer, one of the leaders of the team’s booster club, the Adler Fan Projekt.

Our USRT Europe tour has brought us back to Mannheim, where we got to experience their venue, SAP Arena, last year when we covered the Buffalo Sabres’ tour here. Many new fellowships were made as a result of that visit, and Schaefer and 65 of his best friends got to come to Buffalo last February and experience Sabres hockey at its finest.

So how did things go? Let’s just say that Mannheim rolled out the red carpet for the Ultimate Sports Road Trip in a big way.

Schaefer and two other friends, Dominik Kaiser and Anna Chaluppa, met us at the Hauptbahnhof as our train pulled in, and we set out on a walking tour of the city. Contrary to some impressions, Mannheim is NOT some brutal industrial wasteland. It is quite charming actually, much of it rebuilt after the war and downtown is laid out in a well planned rectangular street grid. Besides the main train station, centers of activity include the Mannheim Castle, a sprawling baroque style structure built in 1606 as the residence and headquarters of the Princes of the Palatinate. Today it is the main center of the University. The center square is marked by a huge water tower which is quite beautiful, and this is the spot where Adler Mannheim championship celebrations take place.

And speaking of the Adler, they used to play in an arena called the Friedrichspark, which is essentially an indoor/outdoor arena, a seating bowl built into a hill, the exterior side walls all open and exposed. The entire place looked like one of those structures at the county fair where one would find the livestock exhibit. A few years back the team moved

into the 13,700 seat SAP Arena a few miles out of town. The new building has the look and feel of an NHL venue, and supporters here revel in their title, "Hockeytown".

For the USRT, there were more surprises on this day. Schaefer and the crew took us into the arena, where we met their radio broadcaster, their famed public address announcer, Udo Scholz, and as we walked around we saw a healthy sprinkling of fans wearing Buffalo jerseys. "Udo", as he likes to be called, then told us he'd like to introduce us to the crowd at the end of player warmups and would be join him down on the ice.

As in other sports venues, the end zones are where the action is and in Mannheim, the loudest supporters crowd the standing room end zone and sing their songs and wave huge flags. So we had to do it. We had to do something unique to show our love and appreciation for the nice intro.

Showtime... Udo heads out onto the ice, explains our travel project, 122 teams in the 4 major sports, and we step out. That end zone section broke out into a noisy cheer, and fans began shouting, "Let's Go Buffalo!" For us! We had it all planned out. Peter gestured cupping his ear, asking the fans to be noisier. We held our scarves high up in the air, and did that bow and "Euro" wave. It was a signature Ultimate Sports Road Trip moment and one that we will always cherish.

The game was great, even more so for us when we left our seats after one period to join the end zone supporters for the rest of the game. We joined in the chants, we clapped along to the non stop beat of the drum, perched right behind Schaefer, who is the drum master in the upper deck. The Adler overcame two deficits, and scored three goals late in the third period to win this one, 5-2. Their season ends around March 10 and they are perched high atop the standings for another championship run in the DEL playoffs. (They fell just short last season, losing in the finals to Eisbaren Berlin)

We met and talked to lots of fans. Everyone asked about Pominville. We heard about Jason and the Spengler Cup heroics where the Adler dispatched Team Canada. People wanted to know how Jochen was doing and told us how much he was missed, as he was the mainstay of the team's first line for much of the season. And of course, fans wanted to discuss the Sabres' recent stumbles. Yeah they follow us around here, and Mannheim peeps are very invested in Buffalo's team fortunes.

There would be one more surprise after the game. A whole bunch of us went out to a quaint German bistro (We got there in 8 minutes flat, topping out at 192 Km/ph on the autobahn, thank Stefan). Over beer, authentic German food and great conversation Udo himself showed up. Turns out he owned this place, and he joined up with us, ordering us up wine and schnapps and regaling us with stories of his career in sports. He is in his mid 70s now, and has extensive experience as a public address announcer, having also worked for the FC Kaiserslautern and Borussia Dortmund Bundesliga soccer teams for many years. As we sat there it dawned on us that we're breaking bread with a true legend. It would sort of be like hanging out and drinking with Milt Ellis and hearing anecdotes of his days with the Sabres.

The day went way too quickly. We parted way with our wonderful hosts. But we did not say goodbye. We said Auf Wiedersehn. Till we meet again. For there is no doubt that our Adler Mannheim friends will be back to Buffalo someday, and there is even less doubt that a return visit to Mannheim will be in the USRT's future.

Sabres hope to right ship against Lightning

By Eric Goodman

NHL.com

February 25, 2013

SABRES (6-12-1) at LIGHTNING (9-8-1)

TV: MSG-BUFFALO, SUN SPORTS

Last 10: Buffalo 3-7-0; Tampa Bay 3-6-1

Season series: This is the first of three games this season. The Lightning took the 2011-12 season series with a 3-1-0 record.

Big story: While the Lightning go for their fourth win in their last six games and try to maintain the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, the Sabres are in the midst of a four-game losing streak and are above only the Columbus Blue Jackets for the least amount of points in the NHL. Interim coach Ron Rolston seeks his first win for the Sabres in his third game behind the bench since he took over for fired coach Lindy Ruff last Wednesday.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo might have a new face leading the club for the remainder of the season, but it's been the same old result for Rolston over his first two games as the team's temporary coach. And while a 2-1 loss to the Winnipeg Jets last week resulted in Ruff being relieved of his duties, there isn't likely going to be any major personnel moves following a 4-0 shutout defeat to the visiting New York Islanders this past Saturday, which gave the Sabres their third straight loss at First Niagara Center. Rolston is going to deal with what he has, but is determined to make the best of it.

"The work is there. The care is there. Right now it's just the psyche part," Rolston told NHL.com Saturday. "It's important for [the team] to stay on and stay positive."

Lightning: With such a consistent crop of quality offensive talent, it's hard to believe that the Lightning have made the playoffs just once in the past five seasons. But if Tampa Bay hopes to qualify for the postseason, it will help to get two all-important points against the struggling Sabres. While the Lightning bolted out the gate with five straight wins at home, they are only 1-3-1 at Tampa Bay Times Forum since then.

Tampa Bay is in a tough spot in that winning the Southeast Division would guarantee a playoff seed no lower than the third spot, but losing it could knock them out of contention altogether. The Lightning are tied with Carolina in points for the top spot in the division, but they played one more game than the Hurricanes. The team needs a better first-period showing Tuesday than it got in a 5-3 loss at Pittsburgh Sunday as the Penguins held a 3-0 lead entering the first intermission.

"You give [the Penguins] a three-goal lead, you get Crosby going early in the first period, it's going to be a tough night," Lightning forward Martin St. Louis told NHL.com. "I thought we hung in there and we didn't panic, we stuck with it and we fought back."

Who's hot: Buffalo hasn't had anyone recently that would be considered as playing hot, but captain Jason Pominville did have four points (3g, 1a) in four games against Tampa Bay last season. ... For the Lightning, Steven Stamkos is in the midst of a six-game point streak with six goals and six assists over that span.

Injury report: Defenseman Andrej Sekera returned to the Sabres' lineup Saturday after missing the last three games with a lower-body injury, while defenseman Jordan Leopold missed his second straight game with an upper-body injury. Defenseman Alexander Sulzer left the game against the Islanders in the second period Saturday with a lower-body injury and did not return. Forward Ville Leino continues to skate, but remains on injured reserve. ... For the Lightning, forward Ryan Malone (lower body) is out until next month.