



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*January 4, 2014*

## **Devils-Sabres Preview**

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

January 4, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres may own the fewest points in the NHL, but they've hardly resembled the league's worst team lately at home.

Ryan Miller has had a hand in that success.

Miller will likely be in net looking to win a sixth straight home game, as the Sabres face the New Jersey Devils on Saturday night.

Buffalo (11-26-4) not only has the worst record in the league, its average of 1.63 goals ranks last - 0.60 behind Minnesota for 29th. The Sabres fell 4-1 at Minnesota on Thursday, losing their 11th straight on the road.

"It's just one of those things where when we're bad, we're bad," interim coach Ted Nolan said.

They've been very good at home, however, going 5-0-1 in their last six home games. They're averaging 2.75 goals to win four straight there for the first time since a five-game streak from Feb. 19-March 12, 2012.

Miller has been superb at home, compiling a 1.34 goals-against average and .962 save percentage while winning his last five games in Buffalo. He last won six straight there from Nov. 13-Dec. 9, 2010.

Miller, named to the U.S. Olympic team earlier this week, may have a chance to equal that run since he's 4-1-1 with a 1.60 GAA and a shutout over his last six home meetings with the Devils (17-17-8).

He enters this matchup coming off a 28-save effort at Minnesota, losing his fifth straight on the road.

"Ryan's been playing really good, and we didn't give him an effort in front of him," captain Steve Ott said.

Matt Moulson also seems to be enjoying himself in Buffalo, scoring six of his seven goals there after the Sabres acquired him in a trade from the New York Islanders on Oct. 27. The left wing had no points and was a minus-6 over the past two games - both on the road.

Buffalo struggled in nearly every facet in a 1-0 overtime loss at New Jersey on Nov. 30, mustering a season-low 15 shots.

The Devils are looking for a much more complete effort after losing 5-3 loss to Chicago on Friday, surrendering four goals in the third period.

"We played well for the first 40, then we hit the pause button," said center Ryan Carter, who returned to the lineup after missing 14 games with a leg injury.

Patrik Elias, though, is expected to miss a second straight game due to general soreness. His 25 points are second on the team to Jaromir Jagr's 34.

Jagr, though, has just one point in five games after totaling 11 during a seven-game point streak.

A trip to Buffalo could get the future Hall of Famer going again. He has 23 goals and 27 assists in 39 career games there, collecting 11 points in his last eight visits dating to 2005.

Cory Schneider will likely get the nod in goal after Martin Brodeur had 19 saves Friday. Schneider earned the shutout against the Sabres, but he lost 4-3 in overtime with Vancouver in his only game at Buffalo on Nov. 15, 2010.

Tyler Myers beat Schneider in the extra session, and provided the Sabres' lone tally Thursday.

## **Sabres claim enforcer off waivers from Wild**

Associated Press

January 3, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres have claimed enforcer Zenon Konopka off waivers from the Minnesota Wild.

This is the seventh team for the 33-year-old forward, who also played for Anaheim, Columbus, Tampa Bay, Ottawa and the New York Islanders. He signed with Minnesota in July 2012.

Konopka was put on waivers on Thursday after playing in 36 games and claimed Friday. He has a goal and an assist and 55 penalty minutes. He has 29 points in 323 career NHL games.

He is from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, less than 40 miles from Buffalo.

## **Sabres try to turn the page at home**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 3, 2014

The Sabres start the second half of their season tonight, and what happened in the first half is better left unsaid.

“Not too good,” forward Marcus Foligno said with a pained laugh Friday. “Obviously, you’re in the basement of the league. Lately, it’s been turning around, and then the past two games it was tough.”

The Sabres finished the opening 41 games of the schedule much like they started them. The 11-26-4 club got outclassed, couldn’t score and suffered lopsided defeats in Winnipeg and Minnesota. It was a major letdown after a 5-2-2 run that featured a 5-0-1 record in First Niagara Center.

They’re back in Buffalo, which they hope cures at least some of their ailments. Tonight’s game against New Jersey is the start of seven home games in the next nine outings.

“Hopefully, we can build something throughout this month,” left wing Matt Moulson said. “We were building something pretty good and didn’t put together two good games. We have another chance to pick it up and put those two games behind us.”

The Sabres aren’t going to do much if they can’t find the net. They totaled just one goal on the two-game trip, which dropped their NHL-worst goal total to 1.63 per game. Minnesota ranks 29th at 2.23.

Buffalo couldn’t score when healthy, and the absence of injured forwards Cody Hodgson, Drew Stafford, Ville Leino, Cody McCormick and Kevin Porter, plus defenseman Henrik Tallinder, diminished the lineup even more.

“If you look at our roster, we’ve got a lot of injuries,” coach Ted Nolan said. “We’ve got six guys out of the lineup, five regulars out of the lineup on a team that’s rebuilding and is a young team. That’s a lot for any team to handle.

“Besides that, I was more disappointed with the way we worked or lack of work and lack of sticking to what made us successful a little bit earlier.”

In hockey parlance, the Sabres don’t have enough talent to win on talent alone. They compensate through work, and it was missing on the road trip.

“We have to play a certain style,” Nolan said. “If we don’t, it shows. The last couple games if we veer from it, if we start ad-libbing, if we start trying to do stuff that is out of our wheelhouse, we’re in trouble. We have to play a very simple,

honest, north-south game. It's not a boring game. It takes a lot of work, but we have to be willing to do it."

The players are disappointed because they hit the road feeling like they had finally turned a corner.

"We kind of let off the gas," center Tyler Ennis said. "We were playing really well going into the break, and then we just seemed to be sitting back a little bit. We were taking it to teams, and then the last few games here we've been kind of being outplayed. That's disappointing.

"We've made a lot of improvements lately. We'll get it back."

The Devils are closing back-to-back games after hosting Chicago on Friday night. They entered the game against the Blackhawks on a 5-1-2 hot streak. As always, New Jersey is tough to score against, ranking eighth in the league with 2.37 goals allowed per game.

Teams need to be patient against the Devils and wait for breaks, but sitting back is what cost Buffalo this week.

"We've had a few games where we kind of sat back," goaltender Ryan Miller said. "This is not a league where you can really sit back if you're going to generate anything at all. It's the kind of league where you have to make opportunities.

"We've got a fair amount of injuries right now, so we've got guys in different roles. They've got to learn how to play those roles. It's a good opportunity for guys, and hopefully they step up and take it."

## **Waiver pickup Konopka feels right at home with Sabres**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 3, 2014

While growing up just over the border, Zenon Konopka dreamed of playing for the Sabres. The wish is about to come true.

Buffalo claimed the hard-working veteran off waivers Friday, and the center will debut tonight against New Jersey in First Niagara Center. Beating the Devils is one of the things on Konopka's immediate to-do list.

The 33-year-old from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., tweeted that he also wants to get a Sabres jersey for his pet bunny, Hoppy; give a high-five to television analyst Rob Ray; and eat chicken wings and pizza.

The Sabres want him to help in the faceoff circle and provide leadership.

"He'll do anything for the team," said left wing Matt Moulson, who was teammates with Konopka on the New York Islanders. "He's a great team guy. He always has your back."

Konopka has played 323 NHL games with Anaheim, Columbus, Tampa Bay, the Islanders, Ottawa and Minnesota. The Wild waived him prior to Thursday's 4-1 win over the visiting Sabres.

The 6-foot, 213-pounder has one goal and two points in 36 games this season. He has 12 goals, 29 points and 1,049 penalty minutes in his career, which began when the undrafted player worked his way up through the minors.

"Everybody probably knows he's more of a gritty type of competitive guy," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "Those type of guys are really good role models for the younger players. They last that long because they have that special ingredient to work and compete."

While toughness is Konopka's specialty – he has seven fights this season and 108 in his career – of more importance to Buffalo is his ability to win draws. He's won 65.7 percent, which would lead the NHL if he'd taken enough faceoffs to qualify.

He's definitely an atypical enforcer. Konopka has his own wine label, ZK28. He has a business that produces grape seed oil. He supports [StopConcussions.com](http://StopConcussions.com). He also has Hoppy, a 7-year-old black rabbit that is the star of Konopka's Twitter account.

Konopka is finishing a two-year contract and will be an unrestricted free agent following the season.

He has a cap hit of \$925,000 and a salary of \$1 million. Some of that cash will go toward tickets.

“He’s a local guy,” his agent, Kevin Epp, said by phone. “I said, ‘It might cost you a little more than you make to play back there now. You’ve got too many family and friends. I’m sure you’re going to have an extra 50 fans a night there now.’”

“He was growing up with the Sabres, so it’s pretty exciting for him.”

...

The Sabres practiced without the injured sextet of defenseman Henrik Tallinder and forwards Cody Hodgson, Ville Leino, Drew Stafford, Cody McCormick and Kevin Porter. Only Leino has a chance to play tonight.

Steve Ott and Marcus Foligno made up a two-man line, so either Konopka or Leino could slide in to join them.

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The Devils have waived former first-round pick Mattias Tedenby. The 5-9, 175-pound winger hasn’t found a spot since being taken 24th overall by New Jersey in 2008. The speedy Swede has one goal in 15 games.

...

Five Sabres will have their heads shaved Jan. 20 to support cancer patients as part of the “Bald for Bucks” fundraiser. Hodgson, Mike Weber, Mark Pysyk, Alexander Sulzer and Brayden McNabb will be part of the group shave in the Sabres’ arena. Donations can be made at [BaldForBucks.org](http://BaldForBucks.org).

“Many of our fans have been touched by cancer,” Weber said. “It is nearly impossible to find someone who has not been impacted by it. The Bald for Bucks program is a fun way for us to get involved and is a visual reminder for people battling cancer that we are in their corner.”

## **Devils get right back at it, visit Sabres**

By Mike Battaglino

NHL.com

January 4, 2014

DEVILS (17-17-8) at SABRES (11-26-4)

TV: MSG PLUS 2, MSG-B

Last 10: New Jersey 5-3-2; Buffalo 4-4-2

Season series: Steve Bernier scored with 41 seconds to go in overtime to give the New Jersey Devils a 1-0 win against the Buffalo Sabres on Nov. 30. Cory Schneider made 15 saves for his second shutout with the Devils.

Big story: The Devils go from the top of the NHL standings to the bottom in less than 24 hours.

After hanging with the League-best Chicago Blackhawks for two periods of what became a 5-3 loss Saturday at Prudential Center, New Jersey travels to face the Sabres clinging to striking distance of third place in the Metropolitan Division.

"Regardless of who we're playing tomorrow or the next day or the next, it's a tight race, and we're on the second half of the season now, so you begin to lose the ability to say, 'OK, we've got a couple more games, we'll catch up, we'll catch up,'" Devils forward Ryan Carter told MSG Network on Friday. "The reality is, we're losing games (off the schedule) ... and every point is valuable and we've got to find a way to win 'em."

New Jersey failed to go two games over .500 for the first time this season.

Team Scope:

Devils: Marek Zidlicky scored twice Friday, and Andy Greene once, giving the defensemen seven goals each this season. They are tied for third on the team in scoring with 21 points (behind forwards Jaromir Jagr, 34 and Patrik Elias, 25).

"It's nice offensively; we have to tighten up a little defensively though, because we gave up too much too," coach Peter DeBoer said. "You can't just look at the offensive numbers, but they definitely contribute."

Schneider will start after Martin Brodeur played Saturday.

Sabres: Buffalo claimed center Zenon Konopka off waivers from the Minnesota Wild on Friday.

Konopka has the best faceoff percentage in the NHL among players who have taken at least 200 this season (.657, 157-82). Buffalo ranks 27th as a team (.466).

"He competes hard. He'll do anything for the team. He's a great team guy. He always has your back," said forward Matt Moulson, a teammate of Konopka with the New York Islanders. "He takes great pride in his faceoffs and I know that's something he works on all the time. That's something we could definitely use. He'll be a welcome addition."

Who's hot: Devils forward Adam Henrique has five points in a four-game streak. ... Sabres goalie Ryan Miller is on 6-3-1 run, having not allowed more than three goals in any of those 10 games, nor in 13 in a row.

Injury report: Carter (lower body) played Friday for the first time since Nov. 30. Elias (upper body) did not play after being injured Tuesday. Defenseman Anton Volchenkov (undisclosed) missed his third game in a row. Forward Damien Brunner (knee) and defensemen Peter Harrold (foot) and Adam Larsson (lower body) are out. ... Sabres forward Drew Stafford (upper body), injured Thursday, could be out "a little while," interim coach Ted Nolan said. Forward Ville Leino (lower body) is "pretty close." Forwards Cody Hodgson (left wrist, thumb) and Cody McCormick (upper body), and defenseman Henrik Tallinder (upper body) skated before practice Friday, but along with forward Kevin Porter (leg), are at least a week from returning.

**Up next: Devils at Sabres**

Bergen Record  
January 4, 2014

Today, 7 p.m.

TV: MSG Plus 2

Radio: WBBR-AM 1130

Story line: The second meeting of the season between the teams. The Devils defeated the Sabres, 1-0, in overtime Nov. 30 at Prudential Center. The Devils are 7-1-3 this season in the second game of back-to-back sets.

## **Ted Nolan wants Sabres' youngsters to learn from veteran newcomer Zenon Konopka**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 4, 2014

BUFFALO – Zenon Konopka is joining the Sabres for more than his grittiness and faceoff prowess. In the 33-year-old center, they also possess a hardworking veteran the youngsters on the rebuilding team can learn from.

“Those type of guys are really good role models for the younger players,” interim coach Ted Nolan said Friday shortly after the Sabres plucked Konopka off waivers from the Minnesota Wild. “They last that long because they have that special ingredient to work and compete.”

The reeling Sabres, who host the New Jersey Devils tonight inside the First Niagara Center, needed to add someone up front.

The Sabres had only 11 healthy forwards after winger Drew Stafford (upper body) left Thursday's 4-1 loss in Minnesota. With recall options limited, the banged-up club made its second waiver claim in five weeks. The Sabres also grabbed Matt D'Agostini on Nov. 28.

Konopka, a native of nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., is a rare mix of feistiness and skill, fighting regularly and annually ranking among the NHL's faceoff leaders.

“My mom was born in Buffalo, my grandparents, when they were alive, were from there, my aunt and uncle,” Konopka, who has a pet rabbit named “Hoppy” and a wine business, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune. “The best call I made was to my aunt in the nursing home. She was telling everybody there, ‘My nephew is going to play for the Sabres.’”

Sabres winger Matt Moulson, Konopka's teammate with the New York Islanders in 2010-11, called him a “great team guy.”

“He someone who's always got his teammate's back,” he said. “He competes hard. He brings it every night no matter how many minutes he plays. He's a great guy in the locker room and (I'm) excited to get him here.”

Naturally, Nolan wants to utilize Konopka in the dot. The Sabres' 46.4 faceoff percent ranks 27th overall.

“If you look at our faceoff situation, too, we can certainly use a faceoff man,” Nolan said.

Moulson said Konopka “takes great pride in his faceoffs.”

“I know it’s something he works on all the time,” he said. “So it’s something we can definitely use.”

The undrafted Konopka, 6-feet and 213 pounds, has a \$925,000 salary cap hit and \$1 million salary this season. He’ll be an unrestricted free agent this summer.

Konopka has 12 goals, 29 points, 1,049 penalty minutes and a minus-45 rating in 323 NHL games. He has one goal, two points and 55 penalty minutes in 36 games this season.

The Wild said it waived Konopka so the team could recall a goalie Thursday, although it reportedly had several other options if it wanted to keep the tough guy.

Konopka has 108 NHL fights, according to hockeyfights.com, including seven this season. He had a league-high 33 scraps in 2009-10 with Tampa Bay. He has also played for Anaheim, Columbus and Ottawa.

Nolan, of course, loves having toughness in his lineup. Enforcer John Scott has been taking a regular shift under him. Forward Cody McCormick, who plays and fights regularly, is hurt (hand).

“You can always use more grit, I guess,” Scott said. “So it’ll be a good addition.”

Exactly halfway through the 82-game season, the Sabres, who have an NHL-low 11 wins and 26 points, need another spark.

They imploded during their two-game road trip, losing 3-0 Tuesday in Winnipeg before Thursday’s awful effort.

Following the Wild loss, Nolan said, “When we’re bad, we’re bad.”

The Sabres had been on a 4-1-1 run, their best stretch this trying campaign.

What happened?

Nolan said injuries – the Sabres are down six players and five regulars, including Stafford, who’s out “a little while” – haven’t helped.

“On a team that’s rebuilding, that’s a young team, that’s a lot for any team to handle,” he said. “But besides that I was more disappointed with the way we worked or the lack of working and lack of sticking to what made us successful a little bit earlier.”

Nolan said the Sabres “have to play a certain style.”

“If we don’t, it shows,” he said. “The last couple games, if we start ad-libbing, if we start trying to do stuff that is out of our wheelhouse, we’re in trouble. We got to make sure we play a very simple, honest, north-south type of game.”

The good news is the Sabres play seven of the next nine games at the FNC, where they’ve won five of the last six (5-0-1).

“It’s been the fans,” Scott said about the strong home play. “They’ve been kind of rallying around us. I think they know the position we’re in and they know the team we have. I think they embrace that a little bit. Once we got on a little roll and have a few good shifts they get behind us and it kind of builds and build and builds.”

## **Sabres goalie Ryan Miller knew he had to earn spot on Team USA's Olympic squad**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 4, 2014

BUFFALO – Ryan Miller knew what most Olympic observers knew. Despite nearly backstopping Team USA to an unlikely gold medal in the 2010 Vancouver Games, the Sabres goalie wasn't a lock to represent his country again this year.

The 33-year-old has performed inconsistently at times during recent seasons. The Sabres, meanwhile, have become the NHL's worst team.

"It's something that I wanted to work hard for and get myself back in the picture," said Miller, one of three netminders named to Team USA's entry for the upcoming Sochi Games on Wednesday. "It really did seem like as the season was beginning and in the summertime I was a little bit on the outside looking in, and I wanted to work my way into a position. Things have kind of worked out."

They sure have. Miller has been the Sabres' MVP this season, posting strong numbers – a 2.70 goals-against average and .926 save percentage – for the bottom-feeding club.

Miller said he couldn't do anything other than play and let the roster work itself out.

"That's all you can really hope for," Miller said Friday inside the First Niagara Center. "It was something where the American goaltending has come a long way in the last four years, and it's been building. I think it's even getting better as we move forward."

"It was really about handling your own business to see how things work out. I'm happy to have the opportunity."

Detroit's Jimmy Howard and Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick are other goalies. Both just returned from injuries. Based on their limited action and Miller's consistently strong play all season, he's probably the favorite to start for the United States.

Miller knows it's an open competition, however.

"The work really starts now," he said. "It's a month of hockey. You got to earn and you got to travel and play a quick, hard tournament. So the job only gets tougher. So it's about finding the right way to play and trying to capture that and gain confidence."

Notes: Interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said center Ville Leino (lower body) is a game-time decision for tonight's home contest against the New Jersey Devils. ... The Sabres' lone goal in Thursday's 4-1 loss in Minnesota has been changed from Matt Ellis to Tyler Myers.

## **SABRES READY TO WELCOME KONOPKA TO THE TEAM**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 3, 2014

With another injury to deal with, the Buffalo Sabres looked to the waiver wire for a veteran player to fill the void.

Right wing Drew Stafford is expected to miss some time with an upper-body injury and the Sabres announced Friday afternoon that they had claimed center Zenon Konopka off of waivers from the Minnesota Wild.

Konopka is a 6-foot, 213-pound centerman who has won 65.7 percent of his faceoffs this season (157-82). He's also not afraid to drop the gloves, having racked up 55 penalty minutes – including seven fighting majors – in 36 games. He has one goal and one assist on the year. He's recorded 29 points (12+17) through 323 career games in the NHL.

With the move being announced during Buffalo's practice at First Niagara Center, Konopka was obviously not with the team Friday.

Konopka was waived by the Wild because the team needed to make room for a third goaltender on the roster after Josh Harding had to miss the game against the Sabres on Thursday due to illness. Wild coach Mike Yeo explained the team's reasoning that afternoon after the roster move had been made.

"We had to make a move to get a goalie up here and that was the decision," Yeo said "You look at the way our lines are right now, this wasn't just an impulse thing where we said, 'OK, let's construct our lines like this.' We want to give it a real chance to work and we think it can work with the four centermen that we have and that kind of puts Z on the outside a little bit there."

Thursday was also Konopka's 33rd birthday.

"Those types of guys are really good role models for the younger players and they last that long because they have that special ingredient to work and compete," Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said. "[Matt] Ellis is the same type of guy. You don't have to be blessed with a lot of skill, but that certain amount of grit and that determination, that goes long ways."

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A native of nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Konopka played hockey at an early age with Sabres center Matt Ellis. Ellis was raised in Welland, Ont.

“I’ve heard Teddy use the term to describe [captain Steve Ott] as a warrior. Well, this guy’s a warrior, too,” Ellis said. “I grew up with him, played minor hockey with him. He’s a guy that lays everything on the line night in and night out.”

He made special note of Konopka’s competitive nature.

“He’s there to compete, loves to win and he’ll be a nice asset to this locker room,” Ellis said. “I can’t say enough about the type of guy he is. He’s that one guy in our area, even in summer hockey, he hates to lose.”

Matt Moulson was a teammate of Konopka’s when both were on the New York Islanders in 2010-11. Konopka recorded a career-high nine points (2+7) and 307 penalty minutes in 82 games that year.

“He competes hard. He’ll do anything for the team. He’s a great team guy. He always has your back,” Moulson said. “He takes great pride in his faceoffs and I know that’s something he works on all the time. That’s something we could definitely use. He’ll be a welcome addition.”

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There was a scoring change after the final horn sounded in Buffalo’s 4-1 loss to the Wild on Thursday. The Sabres’ late third-period goal, initially credited to Matt Ellis, was given to Tyler Myers.

“It is what it is,” Ellis said. “It was a mad scramble in front. I put it towards the net and [Myers] did a good job getting himself in a good position and it banked in off him.

“I think that’s the way our team needs to score goals. Our team needs to create chaos in front with bodies going to the net. We need to get on the board with a lot more of those workman-like, so-called ugly goals and whatnot.”

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On the injury front, Nolan did not have an update on Stafford, who left the game Thursday night in the first period with an upper-body injury.

“It’s going to be a little while,” Nolan said.

Cody Hodgson, Henrik Tallinder and Cody McCormick, who are all out with injuries, were on the ice before practice, working with skating consultant Dawn Braid.

Those players and Kevin Porter, who is on injured reserve, aren’t expected to return to the lineup for at least a week. Porter and McCormick could be out longer.

Ville Leino missed the game against the Wild with a lower-body injury but Nolan hopes he'll be ready to go against the Devils on Saturday.

“Ville’s pretty close. He’s going to be another game-time decision tomorrow,” Nolan said. “Hopefully he’s in.”

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26 Matt Moulson – 63 Tyler Ennis – 28 Zemgus Girgensons  
9 Steve Ott – 82 Marcus Foligno  
32 John Scott – 37 Matt Ellis – 27 Matt D’Agostini  
17 Linus Omark – 65 Brian Flynn – 22 Johan Larsson

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 3 Mark Pysyk  
6 Mike Weber – 57 Tyler Myers  
52 Alexander Sulzer – 4 Jamie McBain  
44 Brayden McNabb .

30 Ryan Miller  
1 Jhonas Enroth

## **KONOPKA CLAIMED OFF WAIVERS BY BUFFALO**

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

January 3, 2014

In an effort to corner the market on players whose first name begin with the letter "Z", the Buffalo Sabres announced they had claimed forward Zenon Konopka off waivers from Minnesota.

Konopka (1/2/81, 6'0", 213 lbs), who was waived by the Minnesota Wild yesterday, has played in 36 games with Minnesota in 2013-14, recording two points (1+1) and 55 penalty minutes. Konopka, who turned 33 yesterday, was also 157-82 (65.7%) in 239 faceoffs taken with the Wild this season. In Konopka's three previous seasons, he posted a 58.7 faceoff percentage (1,014-712) in 1,726 total draws.

He joined the Wild prior to the 2012-13 season when he signed with the team as a free agent in July 2012.

Prior to the Wild, Konopka played for the Ottawa Senators (2011-12), New York Islanders (2010-11), Tampa Bay Lightning (2008-09 – 2010-11), Columbus Blue Jackets (2006-07 – 2007-08) and the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim (2005-06). He has notched 29 points (12+17) through 323 career games in the NHL.

A native of nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Konopka began his NHL career after stints in the American Hockey League, the ECHL and the Ontario Hockey League.

## **C-c-c-cold day for construction work**

By Gene Warner

Buffalo News

January 3, 2014

As they do every morning, about 100 construction workers on the downtown HarborCenter project gathered outside at about 7 a.m. today, just west of the Sabres Store, to stretch and get acclimated to the frigid weather.

This was a special day, though, and not just because the mid-morning temperature hovered between 0 and 1 degrees, with a wind chill reading of 14 degrees below zero.

It also was the day that a huge hydraulic mobile crane lifted the 51,000-pound “ice plant” – an almost-turquoise-blue piece of equipment that will make ice for the two rinks – from the ground to the fifth floor of the quickly rising structure just north of First Niagara Center.

That big lift was rescheduled from Thursday, because of the heavy, driving snow downtown.

But today was a largely blue-sky morning, with moderate wind and no snow.

Still, the workers donned insulated thermal gloves, face warmers, hard-hat liners, fleeces, long underwear and plenty of layers, as they battled the frigid conditions.

“The number-one concern is the safety of the workers,” said Ryan Poropat, project superintendent for Mortenson Construction. “Way behind that is everything else, including productivity.”

That’s why project leaders emphasized that it was OK for any workers to take a break, if they were too cold. And the rising structure already has three “warming” areas for workers.

Workers started the day with 10 to 15 minutes of runners’ stretches, arm circles and upper-body stretching.

“I like to keep the warm-up outside because I want guys to get the feel for how cold it is and what we’re going to be working in today,” said Frankie Ventura, safety consultant for Gateway Concrete.

And what was their response?

“You hear a lot of grunts and groans,” Ventura said.

Ventura has one coping mechanism for dealing with the extreme cold.

“Basically, this is what we do for a living,” he said. “Sometimes you have to go outside your mind and pretend you’re in a warm climate, where it’s not so cold.”

His favorite hot-weather fantasy: a 90-degree day in Hawaii.

Despite the cold, morale on the project is high, for one basic reason.

“It gives you, as a union man, I want to say bragging rights in your career,” Ventura said of the project. “Besides pride in our work, it’s a monument of what we built in the city of Buffalo, for Buffalo.”

Some of these workers have built parking garages and hotels, but this project also has a pair of elevated ice rinks, and no one has worked on a project like that.

“It’s a once-in-a-career-type job,” Poropat added.

He’s from Chicago, and he knows what he plans to do after this project is finished and he’s back home.

He wants to book a room at the hotel he helped build and bring his father, father-in-law and son back here, to see the Sabres play his hometown Blackhawks.

Poropat was too politically correct to say, on the record, which team he’d be rooting for, although he did say he’d be rooting for South Buffalo’s own Patrick Kane, the Blackhawks’ young star.

Ventura knows what he’ll say, years from now, when he passes by the HarborCenter project.

“Look at the beautiful palace we built.”

## **Freezing temperatures present a challenge to outdoor workers**

By Kevin Jolly

Time Warner Cable Buffalo

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BUFFALO, N.Y. — Even when the temperature drops below freezing, the show must go on. That means construction workers at HARBORCENTER and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus have to bundle-up and grin and bear it.

"What's the must-have piece of gear if you're out here in this cold?" we asked.

"Good gloves and good Boots," said one worker.

At a parking garage on Exchange Street, Paul Hagen works 14-hour days. He spends part of that time in a heated booth most of it outside in the freezing cold. He says the key is wearing layers.

"Coverall, sweatshirt, turtleneck under there, and another shirt under there," said Hagen.

That's exactly what Caesar Scott does before he heads out.

"I put on a jacket underneath this heavy coat here, nice warm bundled-up hat, and little hot chocolate in my belly," said Caesar Scott.

It's not just the layers. Some NFTA workers who were out salting the sidewalks outside subway stations say the secret is to pace yourself.

"We do it then we take a couple of minutes in the truck and that's it because in-between each station we warm up and we get back out and we do it again," said Justin Simpson.

This is one of the longest cold snaps Buffalo has experienced in years, with days of temperatures plummeting in the single digits.

Joe Savage with X-press Signs spends much of his day in a bucket high above the ground. He says when the mercury falls this low, there're two things he's never without.

"Definitely wear gloves and thermals. Put on those layers and you'll be fine," said Joe Savage.

Of course, if you really want to know how to deal with the freezing temperatures, just ask a U.S. Mail carrier.

"I just dress in layers and keep moving. That's all you can do," said Gary Griffin