



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Avalanche Preview

By Jon Palmieri
Associated Press
January 31, 2014

It will be nearly a month before the Colorado Avalanche play at home after Saturday.

They certainly will face the right opponent as they hope for a happy send-off.

The Avalanche seek a seventh consecutive win against the league-worst Buffalo Sabres in their final home game before the Olympic break.

January was a very good month for Colorado, which went 10-3-1 after struggling through a 5-5-4 December. The surge continued with a 5-4 victory over Minnesota on Thursday, putting the Avalanche nine points up on the fourth-place Wild in the Central Division as they try to end a three-year playoff drought.

Matt Duchene had a pair of assists and Nathan MacKinnon scored one goal and set up another to help Colorado (34-14-5) win for the third time in four games.

"It was a big game for us. We have three games in hand and we're up (nine) points in the standings," Duchene said. "That puts us well ahead and we just have to keep taking care of business.

The Avalanche open a four-game road trip Monday in New Jersey and won't play at home again until Los Angeles visits Feb. 26.

No opponent would be more welcome than the Sabres (15-30-8), who have lost seven of nine, even with Thursday's 3-2 win at Phoenix. Buffalo is the NHL's lowest-scoring team with 104 goals - 24 fewer than the next-closest Calgary.

Duchene had a goal and an assist in a 4-2 win at Buffalo on Oct. 19. The Avalanche have won six straight meetings - three in a shootout and one in overtime - since a 6-4 loss Dec. 4, 2005.

Avalanche coach Patrick Roy doesn't want his team to look past the Sabres.

"It's important for us to be ready against Buffalo. They just beat Phoenix, 3-2. There's no easy win now in the NHL," he told the team's official website.

The biggest key behind Colorado's strong play has been Semyon Varlamov, who is 11-1-1 with a 2.63 goals-against average in his last 13 starts. He made 31 saves Thursday, hours after finalizing a five-year contract extension that runs through the 2018-19 season.

"It was a big day for us. I'm sure it's a great day for Varly as well," Roy said. "He certainly deserved that contract. We're very happy it's a done deal."

Varlamov is 3-0-1 with a 2.45 GAA lifetime against Buffalo. Backup Jean-Sebastien Giguere has lost his last four starts overall, posting a 4.79 GAA.

Whichever goalie is in net will be facing a weak offense that will be even worse with leading scorer Matt Moulson likely out through the break due to an upper-body injury.

"Right now, it's going to be a big loss for us, but like every other team, someone has to step up," interim coach Ted Nolan said. "There will be an opportunity for someone else."

One of the players Nolan needs to step up is rookie center Zemgus Girgensons, who ended a 16-game goal drought with a short-handed score in the third period Thursday.

That was the Sabres' third victory in five road games after an 0-9-2 slide away from home.

Avalanche center Peter Stastny is day to day with an ankle injury suffered Thursday, while the Sabres hope to get defenseman Christian Ehrhoff back after he sat out against Phoenix with an illness.

Moulson out through Olympic break

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 31, 2014

DENVER — Even if the Sabres wanted to trade Matt Moulson in the next week — and his agent isn't sure they were going to — an injury has put a halt to that.

Moulson, one of Buffalo's top scorers and trade assets, is expected to be out until after the Olympic break due to an upper-body injury. He was slashed and pushed into the boards Thursday during the Sabres' win in Phoenix, and he was in severe pain well after the game.

The prognosis improved Friday, but the left winger will still miss the next four games, including today's matinee against the Colorado Avalanche. The NHL starts a 2½-week break Friday, with the Sabres returning to action Feb. 25. That's Moulson's target date.

"It doesn't look like it's really too, too serious," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "He took a pretty good bang, so it looks possibly that he'll be out till after the Olympic break."

Injuries are not good any time, but Moulson's ailment comes as the NHL prepares for Friday's Olympic roster freeze. Some teams are said to be eager to make moves prior to the traditional trade deadline of March 5.

Moulson, a pending unrestricted free agent, is on the trade market.

"I am aware that managers have been talking and are maybe trying to do something prior to this freeze, but in Matt's case I'm not sure anything was or would get done anyway," Moulson's agent, Wade Arnott, told The News by phone. "It's something that we can't control anyway, so to that end we're not overly concerned about it."

While Moulson has enjoyed his time in Buffalo since arriving in late October, Arnott said there have not been discussions with the Sabres about a contract extension.

"I suspect that maybe along the way we will, but to date we really haven't had any substantial talks regarding Matt," Arnott said. "He's enjoyed playing for the team. He knows that they're in a little bit of a rebuild time period, but he's excited about the future, the new management, the new ownership. He says a lot of positive things about his short time in Buffalo."

He probably doesn't have a lot of good things to say about the last game.

Moulson was whacked and shoved by Coyotes captain Shane Doan with six minutes left in the Sabres' 3-2 victory. The light slash caught Moulson on the left arm, and he crashed into the boards with his left shoulder leading the way. He crawled to the Buffalo bench while favoring the affected side.

"I was just hoping he got the puck in, then all of a sudden, I watched it afterwards, a little whack on the stick and a hit into the boards," Nolan said. "It was just one of those freaky things that happened."

"He's been playing really well. He's really buying into what we're doing here, and he's leading the team."

Moulson, serving as an alternate captain, picked up an assist against the Coyotes to run his season totals to 15 goals and 33 points in 51 games. He has nine goals and 24 points in the 40 games since Buffalo acquired him from the New York Islanders.

Moulson skated on the first line Thursday with center Tyler Ennis and right wing Zemgus Girgensons.

"It's going to be a big loss for us, but like every other team someone has to step up," Nolan said.

It appears Brian Flynn will get the chance against the Avalanche. Injured Drew Stafford won't be ready to return today, so Flynn could jump from the fourth line to the first. He has four goals and eight points in 51 games.

"One thing about Flynnner, he's a versatile guy," Nolan said. "He can go from fourth line to your top line. He's very versatile, so we could look at a possibility of putting him in there for a game or two."

Sabres notebook: Miller still has chance of starting in Sochi

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 31, 2014

DENVER — Ryan Miller is on an extended roll. Since the middle of December, the Buffalo goaltender is 8-3-3 with a 2.09 goals-against average and .938 save percentage. Those are top-notch numbers that stand out even more when contrasted with the Sabres' 15-30-8 record.

Still, the run might not get him the starting assignment for the United States at the Olympics.

USA Hockey named its captains Friday — Zach Parise will wear the “C” while Ryan Suter and Dustin Brown are the alternates — and the team's goaltending came up during the news conference. Miller, Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick and Detroit's Jimmy Howard are the team's three goalies.

Miller and Quick are the leading candidates to be in the crease Feb. 13 against Slovakia, but coach Dan Bylsma isn't ready to name a starter.

“That's not a question I'm ready to answer for right now,” Bylsma said. “It's going to be a tough choice. Both guys are playing really well.”

Miller was the star of the 2010 Olympics, which looks nice on his resume. But Quick won the Stanley Cup in 2012.

“I've had reports from the tournament that he was the best player for Team USA and for the tournament,” Bylsma said of Miller. “He was that good, and he was a big part of that team's success right up to the end and the golden goal in overtime. He has that experience.

“You're also looking at the other goalies on our team having championship experience. Jonathan Quick won the Stanley Cup and was maybe the best player on that team.”

Bylsma said it's not his philosophy to pick one goaltender and ride him throughout the tournament. That means one goalie might play against Slovakia and another one could be in the crease two days later against host Russia.

Miller played all six games in 2010 and went 5-1 with a 1.35 GAA and .946 save percentage.

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The Sabres visit the Colorado Avalanche at 3 this afternoon, and they should feel somewhat rested. Buffalo is playing its fourth game in a stretch of seven in 11 days, so coach Ted Nolan decided to stay away from the practice rink Friday.

The decision was easy after the Sabres got nestled in their Denver beds at about 3:30 a.m. Friday following a flight from Phoenix.

“By the time we get up and drive an hour outside of town for a half-hour skate, sometimes rest is a little bit more beneficial than going on the ice,” Nolan said.

The Sabres didn't practice Wednesday, either, and it'll be interesting to see if they skate Super Bowl Sunday. They have a home game Monday against Edmonton, host Pittsburgh on Wednesday and travel to Ottawa on Thursday.

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Luckily for the Sabres, the calendar has switched to February. Avs goaltender Semyon Varlamov went 10-1-1 in January, which helped earn him a five-year, \$29.5 million contract extension.

Buffalo might also get a break because injured forwards Paul Stastny (ankle) and Alex Tanguay (knee) are questionable for Colorado.

The Avs have gone 7-2-1 in their last 10 games to improve to 34-14-5. They are 18-7-3 in Pepsi Center but remain wary of the Sabres.

“It's just a matter to respect these guys,” Colorado coach Patrick Roy said. “They've been playing better hockey lately. They seem to play well under Ted Nolan, and I think it's going to be important for us to play a good game.”

Host Avalanche not taking Sabres for granted

NHL.com

January 31, 2014

SABRES (15-30-8) at AVALANCHE (34-14-5)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, ALT

Last 10: Buffalo 3-4-3; Colorado 7-2-1

Season series: This is the second game between the Buffalo Sabres and Colorado Avalanche. Colorado won 4-2 on Oct. 19, getting goals from four different players.

Big story: The Sabres look to win consecutive games for only the third time this season, and the first since Dec. 17 and 19. They'll be without forward Matt Moulson, however. He's out until after the Olympic break with an upper-body injury. The Avalanche, meanwhile, hope to keep rolling after a 10-3-1 mark in January.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Ryan Miller made 38 saves and the Sabres beat the Phoenix Coyotes 3-2 Thursday night despite allowing two goals in an 18-second span late in the first period. Two of the Sabres' 15 wins this season have come against the Coyotes.

The Sabres were able to hold on to an early third-period lead, which has been a problem for them this season.

"Sometimes when we have a lead, we panic a little bit. Tonight, we still panicked a bit, but not as much. I think the more experience we have going through games like this ... experience is a great teacher," coach Ted Nolan said after the game. "They didn't panic as much and we held on and obviously Miller made some big, big saves."

Avalanche: Colorado earned a 5-4 win against the Minnesota Wild on Thursday to improve to 4-0-1 against the Wild this season. Semyon Varlamov had 35 saves hours after signing a five-year contract extension.

"We have picked up nine points out of a possible 10 [against Minnesota], which is something great," coach Patrick Roy said after the game. "We had to play well against these guys and that's what we've done all year."

Despite the Sabres having the fewest points in the NHL, Roy said Colorado wouldn't take anything for granted when they meet Saturday afternoon at Pepsi Center.

"It's important for us to be ready against Buffalo. They just beat Phoenix, 3-2. There's no easy win now in the NHL," he said.

Who's hot: Miller has stopped 67 of 71 shots during the Sabres' past two games. Forward Cody Hodgson has four goals in five games. ... Avalanche forward Matt Duchene has five assists in his past four games.

Injury report: In addition to Moulson, Buffalo is missing forwards Cody McCormick (upper body) and Drew Stafford (upper body). ... Colorado is without defenseman Cory Sarich (back).

Sabres' Matt Moulson likely out until after Olympic break

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 31, 2014

An upper-body injury will likely sideline Buffalo Sabres winger Matt Moulson until after the Olympic break, Ted Nolan told reporters this afternoon in Denver.

“He took a pretty good bang last night,” the interim coach said.

Shane Doan’s hit injured Moulson late in the Thursday’s 3-2 win in Phoenix.

The Sabres have four games left before the break, starting with Saturday afternoon’s tilt in Colorado. Nolan said there’s a small chance the 30-year-old could return before their final game Thursday. They resume play Feb. 25.

“He was pretty sore after the game last night,” Nolan said. “But it doesn’t look like really too, too serious. If he’s a fast mender, you never know.”

Nolan wasn’t “100 percent sure” if Moulson had a fracture.

Moulson’s a three-time 30-goal scorer and a respected veteran. He has nine goals and 25 points in 40 games since the Sabres acquired him from the New York Islanders on Oct. 27.

“He’s been playing really well,” Nolan said. “He’s really buying into what we’re doing here and he’s leading the team. He wore an ‘A’ on his sweater last night for that reason. So right now, it’s going to be a big loss for us.”

What does Nolan think about Doan’s hit on Moulson?

“Little whack on the stick and a hit into the boards,” he said. “So it was one of those freaky things that happened.”

Brian Flynn will most likely replace Moulson on the left wing beside center Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons.

“One thing about Flynn, he’s a versatile guy,” Nolan said. “He can go from fourth line to your top line.”

Moulson, an unrestricted free agent following the season, could be traded before the March 5 deadline. A long-term injury, of course, might complicate that.

A healthy Moulson would be coveted by contenders. He’s quietly been one of the NHL’s top goal scorers in recent seasons.

Nolan, whose Sabres stayed off the ice today, said winger Drew Stafford (upper body) will be out one more game. Defenseman Christian Ehrhoff, sidelined by the flu Thursday, “should be ready” Saturday, Nolan said.

Sabres Moulson to miss some time

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 31, 2014

Denver, CO (WGR 550) -- The Sabres will be without Matt Moulson until after the break. The team didn't practice, but Ted Nolan was available. He said, "He took a pretty good bang last night so it looks like possibly he'll be out until after the Olympic break. I think we only have four or five games left so it could be the last part of it, but more than likely after the Olympic break." Nolan added, "It's definitely an upper body injury. He was pretty sore after the game last night, but it doesn't look like it's really too, too serious so, if he's a fast mender, you never know."

In 40 games with Buffalo, Moulson has nine goals and 15 assists for 24 points. Ted Nolan has been very impressed with the winger, "Moulson had been playing really well. He's really buying into what we're doing here, he wore an "A" on his sweater last night for that reason, so right now it's going to be a big loss for us and somebody's going to have to step up and it'll be an opportunity for somebody else."

After Moulson got hurt, Brian Flynn took his place with Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons. Nolan is thinking of sticking with that, "We might see a Flynn jump up into that position. One thing about Flynnner, he's a versatile guy, he can go from fourth line to your top line, so we could look at the possibility of putting him in there for a game or two."

The team was off Wednesday as it traveled to Phoenix then off the ice again Friday in Denver. Nolan said, "We talked to our medical staff last night and by the time we got in and all got to sleep, it was probably about 3:30 in the morning. By the time you get up and drive an hour outside of town for a half hour skate, sometimes rest is a little bit more beneficial than going to the ice."

Just because they didn't take the ice doesn't mean they didn't do anything. Nolan said, "We had a little get together here this morning and we all had a team gathering with Doug McKenney who was leading them through some stretches, so sometimes it's just stretching those muscles and T-Mac looking after the injuries, so it's a normal day, except we just didn't hop on the ice for a half hour."

Christian Ehrhoff missed the game in Phoenix because he was sick. Nolan said he's going to lay in bed all day and hopefully he's ready for the Avalanche.

MOULSON COULD BE OUT UNTIL AFTER OLYMPICS

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 31, 2014

DENVER – The Buffalo Sabres could be without their leading scorer until after the Olympic break.

Left wing Matt Moulson left the team's game Thursday night in Phoenix with 6:05 to play in the third period after taking a whack with a stick to his upper-body.

At the team hotel in Denver on Friday, Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan said that Moulson could be out until the NHL schedule resumes on Feb. 25. Buffalo plays four more games before the Winter Olympic break.

The Sabres are set to play the Colorado Avalanche on Saturday at the Pepsi Center at 9 p.m. EST.

"It doesn't look like it's really too, too serious. If he's a fast mender, you never know," Nolan said.

The Sabres are not only losing a valuable scorer, but a leader on the team as well.

Moulson is tops on the team in goals (15) and points (33) through 51 games this season. With Christian Ehrhoff out of the lineup due to an illness on Thursday, Moulson served as an alternate captain in his stead.

"He's really buying into what we're doing here and he's leading the team. He wore an 'A' on his sweater last night for that reason," Nolan said. "Right now, it's going to be a big loss for us, but like every other team, someone has to step up. There will be an opportunity for someone else."

The team will look to Brian Flynn to fill Moulson's shoes on a line with Tyler Ennis and Zemgus Girgensons. Flynn had been up and down the lineup the past few games, playing with Philip Varone and Marcus Foligno as well as with Zenon Konopka and Matt Ellis.

"He can go from the fourth line up to your top line. He's very versatile so we could look at the possibility of putting him in there for a game or two," Nolan said.

Drew Stafford will miss his fourth game in a row Saturday night with an upper-body injury. Ehrhoff might be ready to play against Colorado.

The team did not practice Friday morning, but had a stretching session at the hotel. After a late flight to Denver from Phoenix, Nolan talked with the trainers and medical staff and felt it was best to keep the team off the ice.

“Today was one of those days that if we only had a little time, I’m quite sure we would’ve practiced. But with the team getting in so late and the games so numerous, rest is a little bit more important right now,” Nolan said. “...It’s a normal day except we didn’t hop on the ice for a half hour.”

Sabres' PR chief bound for Sochi

By James Fink

Business First

January 31, 2014

Ryan Miller will not be the only member of the Buffalo Sabres organization traveling to Russia to represent the United States in this year's Winter Olympics.

Michael Gilbert, the Sabres' longtime vice president of public relations and community affairs, will be working with USA Hockey during the Sochi games, beginning next week. Gilbert will be working directly with Dave Fischer, USA Hockey's public relations manager, primarily on coverage and media concerns focusing on the men's hockey team, but also some work with the women's hockey squad.

The men's team is comprised of National Hockey League players, including Miller, South Buffalo's Patrick Kane, and Amherst native Brooks Orpik.

"It's honor just to be asked," Gilbert said.

Gilbert, through the Sabres, has a deep working relationship with USA Hockey including the 2011 World Juniors held at First Niagara Center and various amateur tournaments and games played in Buffalo.

Sabres PR Chief Joins Team USA for Sochi Games

By Greg Hazley

O'Dwyer's PR News

January 31, 2014

Mike Gilbert, VP of public and community relations for the National Hockey League's Buffalo Sabres, will be joining the 2014 U.S. Olympic men's hockey team to support media relations during the Sochi Games.

Gilbert reports to Dave Fischer, senior director of communications for Colorado Springs-based USA Hockey, the governing body for amateur hockey in the U.S. Fischer will do his third stint in charge of PR for the men's Olympic hockey team in Sochi.

The men's team earned a silver medal in 2010 in Vancouver. In Sochi, it will be lead by Pittsburgh Penguins coach Dan Bylsma. The U.S. team, which faces Slovakia on Feb. 13, has not won a gold medal in hockey since the "miracle" run in 1980. Canada and Russia are favored in betting lines.

Gilbert has worked PR for the Sabres since 1997, joining from the New Jersey Devils.

Gilbert previously handled PR in the National Football League for the Philadelphia Eagles and Buffalo Bills around a stint in the World League of American Football with the Raleigh-Durham Skyhawks.

Zach Parise of the Minnesota Wild is captain of Team USA.

THE TIES THAT BIND

By Craig Kanalley

Sabres.com

January 31, 2014

GLENDALE, AZ -- One of the remarkable things about the hockey community is how tight it is, and how many connections you'll find if you just poke around into personal histories.

On Thursday, as the Buffalo Sabres participated in a morning skate at Jobing.com Arena in preparation for their game against the Phoenix Coyotes, family members looked on from the seats as the annual Parent's Trip continued.

Speaking to those family members uncovered some interesting links, not just among players, but back to the coach too. Among them there is a shared history of hockey, Canada, and strong family values, along with a connection to some of the original inhabitants of Canada.

A conversation with Cody McCormick's father, Chris, revealed that the McCormick family knew the Nolan family many years ago -- well before the two were united on a single sheet of ice in the National Hockey League.

"My grandmother's family was raised on Ted's reserve, and our reserve -- Batchewana -- is like five miles apart," the elder McCormick said. "I used to play hockey with Ted's older brother. We had a team in Garden River. I used to play cards with Ted's dad, and I knew his mother and brothers."

Chris McCormick, like Nolan, has First Nations' blood. He is a descendant of the native inhabitants of what is now known as Canada.

"Chris is a family friend from way back," Nolan said after Thursday's morning skate. "When Cody made it, obviously we were all very proud of him making it into the National Hockey League. All of a sudden now I get to coach him, which makes it even more significant, considering growing up with his dad."

While Chris McCormick didn't mention it, Nolan added, "His dad is a former chief."

The respect between the men, dating back many years, is mutual.

"Ted's a really good guy and you can tell the improvement and the atmosphere with the players since he's been here," Chris McCormick said. "The spirit and them wanting to play. He's brought it out in them."

Some more conversations with Sabres family members in attendance revealed another connection: John Scott has First Nations blood as well.

“John’s mom is Cree Indian,” said Susan McCabe, Scott’s mother-in-law.

Nolan said he wasn’t aware that Scott had First Nations ancestry.

“I did not know that about John Scott’s mother, but I’ll dig in on that one,” he said. “It’s always good to find out a little bit more, instead of just all the time about X’s and O’s, wins and losses. There are many more stories to be told.”

Nolan added, “Sometimes we concentrate on the wrong things too often. We need to find out some good stories, and where these kids came from; some of the obstacles they had to overcome, battles they had to overcome in order to get here. To me, that’s what this game is all about, it’s about people.”

That’s what makes this trip so special. The players have the ability to spend time with the loved ones who have rooted them on and shaped them into who they are. It’s the people of the past that have molded these boys into men that compete at the highest level of hockey.

Chris McCormick recalled one memory from when Cody was in grade school, and playing community hockey.

“One of his teachers made this announcement to the class: ‘None of you guys will ever make it to the NHL.’ It was a motivator for him.”

There are good experiences and bad, but it’s the people around you who shape you into who you are. You don’t always get a glimpse into that personal history of the players, but it’s there.

McCabe said that John Scott has always been instilled with strong family values.

“He’s very involved. He’s very protective of family,” she said. “He’s a little overwhelmingly protective. It’s nice though because I feel safe. When I’m traveling, it’s nice to have him because no one bothers me. I just feel safe.”

She joked that Scott’s protective instincts could be interesting when his two-year-old daughter one day becomes a teenager.

“When my granddaughter starts dating, he’s going to put on some hockey fight tapes. He’s going to be protective. I feel bad for the guy she’s going to date. He’s protective now, but I can’t imagine.”

Family is what it’s all about.

“Family is very, very important, especially in the athletic world,” Nolan said. “Our families have to be a little bit more understanding. The athletes come home after a bad game; you’ve got to get ready for the next game. The travel, and also the

wear and tear on the wives. They're probably the unsung heroes out of everyone. They've got to keep life in order."

The sacrifices come from the parents too. Chris McCormick recalls when Cody was drafted by the OHL's Belleville Bulls at age 16.

"My wife and I were really surprised," McCormick said. "We don't know anybody there, had never been to Belleville. We're going to somebody's house and don't know the people. And we're going to drop off this 16-year-old kid. So that was for us, as parents, an experience."

It ended up working out and put McCormick on the path that eventually led to the National Hockey League.

"My wife and I are really proud that he's playing in the greatest hockey league in the world," Chris said of his son. "I'm really glad to see that it hasn't changed him. He's still a down-to-earth, fine person."

Perhaps the best part: "He's a good father who's got two children. He's a really good family man."