



Buffalo Sabres

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Penguins-Sabres Preview

By Alan Ferguson

Associated Press

February 4, 2014

While they continue to pace the Eastern Conference, the Pittsburgh Penguins would like to avoid another road loss before the Olympic break. They're also hoping to see Sidney Crosby break out of his slump.

Visiting the league-worst Buffalo Sabres would seem to provide the Penguins and Crosby a good opportunity to accomplish both goals Wednesday night.

Pittsburgh (39-15-2) has built significant leads in the conference and Metropolitan Division by going 24-6-1 since Nov. 26. All but one of those seven defeats have come on the road, where the Penguins have lost two of three.

They totaled one goal in those two losses and were limited to 24 shots in each, including a 3-1 defeat in Phoenix on Saturday. Pittsburgh came back to outshoot Ottawa 48-25 two days later and won 2-1 on James Neal's overtime goal.

Crosby, however, failed to record a point for the second straight game. The NHL points leader hasn't gone three in a row without one since a five-game drought Oct. 31-Nov. 10, 2009.

He hasn't scored a goal in five straight, dropping into a tie with Chris Kunitz for the team lead with 27. Coach Dan Bylsma said his captain has played well despite the goal drought.

"He's 100 percent," Bylsma said. "He was our best player on both sides of the puck, (Monday) and I thought he played an excellent game regardless of whether he got a point or not."

Crosby had his only multipoint performance in the last five games with two assists in a 3-0 win over Buffalo on Jan. 27. He has nine goals and 17 assists during a 16-game point streak versus the Sabres and has never been held without a point in 13 visits to Buffalo.

Pittsburgh has won eight straight over the Sabres with Crosby on the ice, and he's totaled 10 points in the last four.

Buffalo has allowed at least three goals in 10 of 11, going 2-6-3, and has given up a combined 25 goals during a seven-game home losing streak.

The Sabres (15-32-8) opened this month with a 7-1 loss in Colorado on Saturday, two days before losing 3-2 at home to West-worst Edmonton.

Buffalo failed to score in the final two periods Monday despite a 31-16 shots advantage. Drew Stafford had given the Sabres a 2-1 lead after the opening frame with a short-handed goal in his return from an upper-body injury, which forced him to miss four games.

Marcus Foligno had a potential tying goal with 10:25 left waved off after the referee ruled the whistle had blown before the puck went in.

"We played pretty well today. We created a lot of scoring chances, and should have scored more than two goals," forward Linus Omark said.

Defenseman Tyler Myers sat out the third period after hurting his right leg, and his status is unknown for this game. Buffalo is also missing forward Matt Moulson (upper body).

Pittsburgh defenseman Kris Letang has missed the past three games due to an illness and might not be available.

The Penguins have won two straight and nine of 12 in Buffalo.

The Sabres are 1 for 28 on the power play in the past 11 meetings overall but have scored with the man advantage in four straight games.

U.S. lacks clear-cut No. 1 goalie, along with several other Olympic rivals

By Stephen Whyno

Canadian Press

February 3, 2014

SOCHI, Russia - Dan Bylsma laughed off the question of which goaltender would start the first game of the Olympics for the United States.

"That's not a question I'm ready to answer right now," the U.S. hockey coach said Friday. "Whether I know it or not, you're not going to find out today."

Plenty of people are guessing between Ryan Miller and Jonathan Quick, and their respective resumes make it a difficult choice. But it's not like the U.S. is alone in not having a clear-cut No. 1 goaltender going into Sochi.

Among the top eight countries, only Sweden in Henrik Lundqvist, the Czech Republic in Ondrej Pavelec, Slovakia in Jaroslav Halak and Switzerland in Jonas Hiller know who's the man in net. Carey Price seemingly has an edge for Canada over Roberto Luongo, and the same goes for Tuukka Rask over Antti Niemi for Finland, but nothing's guaranteed.

Meanwhile, Russia must choose between Sergei Bobrovsky and Semyon Varlamov at some point by the time pool play is over. Perhaps there doesn't need to be any anointing of a starter.

Bylsma said "philosophically I'm not that type of guy" who needs to pick one goaltender and stick with him. That's a good thing given that in Miller and Quick the U.S. has a couple of reliable options ahead of third goalie Jimmy Howard, who doesn't waste much time worrying about who's going to start.

"No sense in racking my brain on that one," Howard said. "I think all three of us are very talented goalies. But Ryan was the MVP of the (2010 Olympic) tournament, he's got a Vezina, Quickie's got a Stanley Cup and a Conn Smythe. It's hard to compete with that right now."

Realistically, it's a two-horse race between Miller, the longtime Buffalo Sabres goalie who was stellar in almost getting the U.S. the gold medal four years ago, and Quick, who is in the conversation based on what he did in the 2012 playoffs for the Los Angeles Kings.

Bylsma undersold it being a "tough choice," though in handicapping the situation Miller has to be the front-runner based on his Vancouver experience.

"I've had reports from the tournament that he was the best player for Team U.S.A. and in the tournament," Bylsma said. "He was that good and he stepped

into the goal and clearly was a big part of the team's success, right up to the end, right up till the golden goal in overtime there."

Quick was the third goalie on the 2010 silver-medal-winning U.S. team, two years before he broke out and led the Kings on their Cup run. That made him a lock for this roster and a candidate to start.

Then there's this season, which has been kinder to Miller than Quick, despite the Sabres being the worst team in the NHL. Quick missed a month because of a groin injury before returning in early January.

"The way (Miller has) has been playing all year with a team that hasn't won a lot of hockey games, he's been their best player and he's been very, very good," Bylsma said. "Jonathan Quick has come back from his injury around the first of the year and played his best hockey of the year."

It's a good problem for the U.S. to have. Finland is in a similar situation, choosing between a Stanley Cup finalist at the top of his game in Rask and 2010-champion Niemi. That's ahead of Kari Lehtonen, who could be considered elite in his own right.

"We got three goalies who can go in there and play a game, so I'm not worried about our goalies at all," Finnish defenceman Kimmo Timonen said.

Canada, on the other hand, has reason to worry because Price hasn't done this before and because Luongo for a stretch since Vancouver wasn't even the No. 1 goalie on his own team. Mike Smith is the obvious No. 3.

At Olympic orientation camp in August, coach Mike Babcock predicted the decision would be made for Canada by the time the Games start.

"One of these goalies will be real good," Babcock said. "One of these goalies will be hot going in that everyone will know who's playing goal for Canada."

It's not a slam dunk, though Price has to be considered the favourite. Like Quick, Luongo dealt with injury problems this season and only recently returned, while Price has been a bright spot for the Montreal Canadiens amid inconsistency.

"He matured as a young man, and he became a leader with our club," Canadiens coach Michel Therrien said. "We're all excited to have Carey Price, the way that he progressed through his career."

Sweden, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Switzerland don't have much to debate. According to Czech winger Milan Michalek, that's a benefit for Pavelec.

"I think it's good for him that he knows and he can get ready, prepare," Michalek said. "He's doing really good right now, so hopefully he can keep it up."

Lundqvist helped Sweden win the gold medal in Turin in 2006, while Slovakia's Halak and Switzerland's Hiller are each on playoff-bound NHL teams. Halak showed during a 2010 playoff run with Montreal that he can put together gold-medal-calibre play for a couple of weeks.

Halak gives Slovakia the belief it can contend in this tournament, as does Hiller for Switzerland as he follows a successful line of goaltenders that stretches back to Martin Gerber and David Aebischer.

"Swiss hockey has been privileged in the past, I don't know, 10 years to have so many good goalies," Swiss defenceman Mark Streit said. "Without a good goalie you're not going to win hockey games at that stage."

Buffalo's Ryan Miller sidesteps talk of future with Sabres

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

February 4, 2014

Ryan Miller's career is quite the juggling act these days.

He's still got work to do with the Buffalo Sabres, including tonight's start in goal when the Pittsburgh Penguins come to First Niagara Center. He's got a long travel grind ahead this weekend to Sochi for the start of next week's Olympic hockey tournament, and there's no verdict whether Miller or Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick will be the starter for Team USA.

And he's still dealing with the elephant in the room: With a trade prior to the Olympic break looking unlikely, what is going to happen to Miller when the Games are over? Does he stay or does he go?

If the Sabres trade Miller as soon as the Olympic roster freeze ends, that would make tonight's game his last at home in the Blue and Gold. The Sabres also have three more home games after the Olympics and before the March 5 trade deadline.

"I still don't know what to say. There's been a change here even since there was a change here before," Miller noted after practice Tuesday, referring to the hiring of new general manager Tim Murray in the wake of the November firing of GM Darcy Regier. "So it's like I'm waiting to see what the plan is and waiting to see what they have to offer.

"We haven't talked about anything with regard to contracts and we haven't talked about anything with regard to trades. They're doing their business."

Miller has a no-trade clause where he can indicate eight teams to which he won't accept a trade. That leaves 21 other possibilities. He said the Sabres have had his list for several months and it has not been revisited.

"Ryan is a Buffalo Sabre today," said interim coach Ted Nolan. "We're very thankful he's here and that's all I'm concentrating on is him being here and starting" against Pittsburgh.

Miller said "anything is possible" when pondering if this might be his last game in Buffalo. But asked point-blank by The Buffalo News if he's told the Sabres he wants out – or told them he's all-in to talk about a contract extension – Miller remained elusive.

"That's not really something I want to discuss with you guys," he said. "It's a private conversation about a business transaction. Really, that's what it comes

down to. I'm waiting to see kind of what the plans are around here. That would kind of give a little more indication.

"They can't execute anything they might be planning until some time passes, where they make some trades or they have some kind of indication what's going to happen. Even then, there's no guarantee they're going to get everything they want. It's just kind of we'll wait and see."

Similarly, Miller is in a holding pattern to find out if he's keeping the starting nod at the Olympics he had in leading Team USA to a silver medal four years ago in Vancouver. He gets one final shot tonight to impress Pittsburgh coach Dan Bylsma, who will be directing Team USA.

Miller said he last spoke to Bylsma about 10 days ago to get instructions to access a specialty website Team USA is using for video about play on big ice, including last year's World Championships in Stockholm, Sweden.

The chatter is that Bylsma is splitting the workload for his two goalies over the opening pair of games, Feb. 13 vs. Slovakia and Feb. 15 against Russia. Then he may turn to the hot hand.

"He hasn't said anything," Miller said. "It's just speculation."

Bylsma continues to not tip his hand.

"I rushed home last night to turn on the TV and while I watched the tape of our game again, I watched LA on the TV against Chicago," Bylsma told reporters Tuesday in Pittsburgh. "And I've taken the opportunity to watch Ryan his last three games and watch him play. Not just the game in here, where he played really well against us in the loss.

"That's the one position that I am continuing to watch clips on and video of the USA guys. I'm watching them both and I'll get to see Ryan live tomorrow."

Miller stopped 31 of 33 shots last week in the Sabres' 3-0 loss to the Penguins in Consol Energy Center, with the third goal going into an empty net. He stopped 38 of 40 in Thursday's 3-2 win at Phoenix but was pulled Saturday in Denver after giving up five goals on 27 shots in the first two periods.

"I've got to perform at a high level," said Miller, who has been wearing his specially painted Olympic mask in practice. "It's always how you perform and I felt like I played a decent game in their building last time and I just want to show I can be consistent and do it. Plus this is a game I need to bounce back. I was on the bench the last game and that's not very fun."

Miller said his 2010 experience should help him but doesn't necessarily give him a leg up on Quick either.

“I think it’s like law firms. It doesn’t guarantee any future payouts or verdicts,” Miller said. “It is what it is. It’s an experience that I will always cherish but I can’t stack it in the net behind me. It’s not going to deflect pucks away. I have to be a more veteran and evolved goaltender going in this time.”

Off the ice, Miller said he’s confident Olympic officials will keep athletes and their families safe at the Games. And he’s not going to worry about issues on this side of the world until he returns, hopefully with a gold medal in tow.

“You take care of everything here for two weeks so you don’t have to worry about things going on,” Miller said. “My mom and my sister are going to watch the dog and my wife and my dad are coming with me. Pretty much the rest of the world is going to be shut off for a while.”

Myers' injury not as severe as first thought

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 4, 2014

There were only five defensemen at practice Tuesday morning for the Buffalo Sabres, but still there was good news.

Tyler Myers who left Monday's game with a lower body injury could be back for tonight's game when the Sabres host the Pittsburgh Penguins at 7:30 in First Niagara Center.

Myers went down in the second period, hitting the boards hard and struggling to get off the ice. He played another shift, but left the game with about four minutes left in the second. He did not return for the third and after the game, the Sabres seemed concerned about the severity of the injury.

But the injury improved overnight and while Myers did not practice, interim coach Ted Nolan said it is possible he will play tonight.

"It's a lot better than we thought," Nolan said after Tuesday's practice. "It's more of a day-to-day situation so he was moving around pretty good today and hopefully he moves around real good tomorrow and gets to play. He could play tomorrow. You never know in situations like this. You never know how serious they are until you look at them. Right now it's kind of a day-to-day thing.

"When you see a guy go down, no matter who it is, some guys get banged up but he looked like he was hurt last night. It's a good thing that he's not hurt as seriously as we thought so that's a good thing."

Also banged up in the game was Mike Weber, who did not practice but is likely to be in tonight's lineup.

And you will definitely see Chad Ruhwedel back on the blue line.

The rookie played in five games for the Sabres this season. He made his NHL debut with the club last year playing in seven games. He has been solid for the Sabres in his games this season but was a healthy scratch for Monday's 3-2 loss to Edmonton.

"They talked to me and said don't look into it, you're playing well and be ready for the next game," Ruhwedel said. "I just need to keep making that good first pass. Being sound defensively and then when you can capitalize on the offensive blue line try to do so."

Nolan indicated that the 23-year old Ruhwedel sat as part of a game-management strategy. The Sabres will likely return Ruhwedel to the Rochester Americans for the Olympic break.

“He’s a younger player. We have a lot of games,” Nolan said. “You look at Tyler, he got banged up last night. Weber gets banged up last night. This kid, he’s gotta go back down to the American League right after this and play another six games and come back up here and play some more. ... That’s a lot. You almost have to manage it properly so you don’t put kids in a position where they might get hurt.”

When asked if Ruhwedel would definitely be back up in Buffalo after the Olympics, Nolan hedged his bets.

“Nothing’s cut it stone,” Nolan said. “We’ll look at it at that time.”

...

Zenon Konopka had an interesting start to his Tuesday morning. He spent it watching brain surgery.

Yes, you read that right, brain surgery.

Konopka put a photo on Twitter Tuesday morning of a trio of doctors preparing to remove a brain tumor. “Most interesting morning in along time ... Brain surgery. #unreal #frontrowseat #wow” he tweeted.

Here’s the backstory: Konopka’s charity of choice is Stop Concussions, a non-profit foundation to address the growing trend of concussions in all sports. Through the foundation, he was put in contact with some doctors in Buffalo who invited him to see what was involved in brain surgery.

“They cut him and cut out a fracture of his skull to get to the tumor,” Konopka said. “You’ve got to get the tumor out without touching any important parts of your brain, pop her out and put it all back together. It was intense. When that saw starts up. Whoa. It was pretty impressive. These guys are just absolute geniuses.”

...

The Pittsburgh Penguins have been without their top defenseman and it’s uncertain when he may be returning.

Kris Letang missed his third straight game Monday night when the Penguins defeated the Ottawa Senators, 2-1, in overtime and he will miss tonight’s game in Buffalo.

Letang missed the games due to illness. When asked by reporters on Monday if there was any concern the illness could be serious and keep him out for the long-term, Penguins coach Dan Bylsma said they were uncertain and doing more tests.

Letang has 10 goals and eight assists in 34 games for Pittsburgh this season.

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With several players and coaches preparing to leave for Sochi, Russia, for the Olympic Games there is one sad thing most will leave behind – their families.

With security a concern, many are choosing not to bring family with them, including Nolan who will be the head coach for Latvia.

“No not that in that situation,” Nolan said when asked if he was bringing family to the Games. Was security the reason?

“Yeah, it’s part of it,” Nolan said. “It’s the majority of it. ... I’m just thinking safety first. The Games are unique but it doesn’t matter what the event is, safety is the No. 1 concern.”

Henrik Tallinder, who will play for Sweden, also is not taking his family and agreed it was a shame. “That’s not what you expect from the Olympics,” he said. “It is what it is.”

...

Luke Adam was added to the 2014 AHL All-Star Roster. Adam has 19 goals and 13 assists in 29 games for the Rochester Americans. He played in nine games for the Sabres, picking up one goal.

The All-Star event, held in St. John’s, Newfoundland, will be Feb. 11-12. Defenseman Brayden McNabb was also named to the team.

Sabres host Penguins in Wednesday Night Rivalry

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

February 4, 2014

PENGUINS (39-15-2) at SABRES (15-32-8)

TV: NBCSN, TSN2, RDS2

Last 10: Pittsburgh 7-3-0; Buffalo 2-5-3

Season series: This is the third and final game between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Buffalo Sabres. Marc-Andre Fleury has stopped 44 of 45 shots as the Penguins have won the first two by a combined 7-1 score.

Big story: Sabres goalie Ryan Miller will once again represent the United States when the Sochi Olympics begin in a matter of days. Fleury couldn't crack the Canadian roster, but he leads the NHL with 30 wins and has the Penguins positioned as the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference.

Team Scope:

Penguins: With Taylor Pyatt injured on his opening shift in a 2-1 overtime win against the Ottawa Senators on Monday and Andrew Ebbett reassigned to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton of the American Hockey League, assistant coach Tony Granato supplemented Pittsburgh's forward depth by skating on the fourth line at practice Tuesday.

Fleury became the fastest Penguins goalie ever to 30 wins in a season and had his teammates raving about a save he made in the third period on Senators defenseman Erik Karlsson. The Penguins went on to win when James Neal scored 1:55 into the extra period.

"That's the best one I've ever seen him make," Neal said of Fleury's glove stop on a blistering one-timer by Karlsson. "He's been doing that all year. He's an unbelievable goalie. He showed that. His consistency has been great all year. He just keeps getting better."

Sabres: Since a run of four wins in six games from Dec. 17-29, Buffalo has won just four of its past 16 games. Interim coach Ted Nolan has shuffled players in and out of the lineup; forward Ville Leino, a healthy scratch for the 3-2 loss to the Edmonton Oilers on Monday, saw some time on the second line at practice Tuesday.

With only six games remaining prior to the NHL Trade Deadline on March 5 -- two before the Olympic break, four after -- the scuttlebutt surrounding Miller's future continues. The 33-year-old pending unrestricted free agent has the sixth-

best save percentage (.925) despite facing the fourth-highest volume of shots (1,339).

"We haven't talked about anything with regard to contracts," Miller said Tuesday of his dealings with Sabres management. "We haven't talked about anything with regard to trades."

Who's hot: Penguins forwards Jussi Jokinen (one goal, four assists) Evgeni Malkin (two goals, two assists) and Neal (one goal, two assists) all have three-game point streaks. ... Sabres forward Steve Ott has two goals in the past three games.

Injury report: Pittsburgh defenseman Kris Letang (illness) will miss his fourth straight game. Pyatt (lower body) played only 22 seconds Monday before getting injured and is out until after the Olympic break. Goalie Tomas Vokoun (blood clot) and forwards Beau Bennett (wrist), Pascal Dupuis (knee), Chris Conner (hand) and Joe Vitale (wrist) are on injured reserve. ... Buffalo defenseman Tyler Myers (lower body) left the game Monday in the second period and didn't practice Tuesday. He's day-to-day. Defenseman Mike Weber (undisclosed) didn't practice Tuesday and is also day-to-day. Forwards Cody McCormick (upper body) and Matt Moulson (upper body) are on injured reserve.

Miller still unclear about future with Sabres

NHL.com

February 4, 2014

Ryan Miller is scheduled to be in net Wednesday for the Buffalo Sabres when they face the Pittsburgh Penguins (7:30 p.m. ET, NBCSN, TSN2, RDS2). After that, however, there are no guarantees.

Miller, set to become an unrestricted free agent after the season, told reporters in Buffalo on Tuesday that he has not had substantive discussions about his future with the franchise.

The 11-season veteran has played every one of his 538 games with the Sabres and said even he isn't sure if the game Wednesday will be his last with the home team at First Niagara Center.

"Anything's possible, just with the way the season's gone and the direction it could be headed," Miller said. "We'll just wait to see what the plans start to become."

It's been a tumultuous season for the Sabres. They enter play Tuesday 30th in the NHL standings with 38 points, six points behind the 29th-place Edmonton Oilers. The Sabres also overhauled their front office this season. Pat LaFontaine was hired as president of hockey operations Nov. 13, and that same day fired general manager Darcy Regier and coach Ron Rolston. Ted Nolan was named interim coach and on Jan. 9 Tim Murray was hired as general manager.

None of that has made Miller's situation any clearer.

"Still don't know what to say," Miller said. "There's been a change here. There was a change here before. So it's like waiting to see what the plan is and waiting to see what they have to offer. We haven't talked about anything with regards to contracts, talked about anything in regards to trades. They're doing their business. ..."

"I have a limited no-trade agreement and that's something I put out there in the summer. That's not something they approached about altering, changing or discussing. So let's just assume they're doing their business. I can't control it."

Despite the Sabres' struggles, Miller has turned in a solid season. He's faced 1,339 shots, fourth-most in the League, in 38 games; the three goalies to face more pucks have played at least 44 games. Despite all that rubber being thrown at him, Miller has 14 wins, a 2.68 goals-against average and a .925 save percentage, eighth-best in the League. He also will be the starter or No. 2 goaltender for the United States at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

Miller met with LaFontaine not long after the Hockey Hall of Fame member was hired, but said that conversation, as well as any since then he's had with LaFontaine or Murray would remain between them.

"It's a private conversation about a business transaction," Miller said. "That's what it comes down to. I'm waiting to see what kind of the plans are around here."

Count this NHL guru as more than just a number

By John MacKinnon

Edmonton Journal

February 4, 2014

NEW YORK — No sentient being wants to be reduced to a statistic, a formula or an equation, not even someone who invented one.

That certainly holds true for Jim Corsi, the Buffalo Sabres goaltending coach for 16 years whose name now is arguably better known for the statistical tool he invented to measure a goalie's workload than for his own professional career as an athlete and coach.

His statistical measure, Corsi reckons, got batted around on the hockey seminar circuit and, over time, was adopted by the analytics crowd, who use it to measure a team's shot differential at even strength, factoring in all shots attempted: shots on goal, goals scored, shots blocked and shots that miss the net.

The analytics adherents reverse the Corsi lens, as it were, to measure and compare how hard teams make opposing goalies work.

Thus has Corsi, the stat, taken on a life of its own, somewhat to the bemusement of Corsi.

After all, the 59-year-old Montreal native has been, variously, a crackerjack university hockey goaltender; a gifted striker for the varsity soccer team; a workmanlike pro goalie who played 26 games for the Edmonton Oilers in 1979-80; and an Olympian for Italy.

The real Corsi is not unaware that more than a few of the fans who see their sport through the prism of advanced statistics had, for the longest time, no idea there was a flesh-and-blood Corsi with a history in the game.

"Indeed, the people talk about it like I'm an inanimate object," Corsi said in an interview in Buffalo this week. "Like I'm the box score, the Corsi score.

"I often tell my wife, 'I'm a somebody, no? So we laugh about it.'"

To Montreal rink rats of a certain age, Corsi was one of the more interesting and talented athletes ever to come out of Loyola, the small Liberal Arts college that merged with Sir George Williams University to form Concordia University in 1974.

In his final year, Corsi backstopped the Stingers to a 44-2-1 won-lost record, but Concordia lost in the then-CIAU semifinal game to the University of Toronto.

Corsi was an engineering student, a true student-athlete who counts as his mentors both Ken and Dave Dryden, briefly his Oilers teammate in 1979-80.

“When I graduated, Ken and I spoke for the longest while about college and pro hockey,” Corsi said. “I had a pretty good possibility with my (engineering) degree, you know.

“He said, ‘Jim, you know, you can always be an engineer in three years, but you can’t always be a hockey player. Give it a test, give it a go, and then see where it is. And here I am. No slide rule or calculators. I’m still in pro hockey.’”

His status as a pro was most painfully underscored at the 1984 Winter Games in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, where the issue of Olympic eligibility was the centre of a pre-Games controversy.

In the end, the IOC deemed any player who had signed an NHL contract and played so much as one NHL game ineligible. Corsi, with his 26 Oilers games, was out, along with two Canadian players and a cluster of others. They learned their fate the night before the Olympic tournament opened.

Meanwhile, Rick Cunningham, a Canadian with dual Austrian citizenship who had played more than 300 games in the old WHA, was permitted to compete for Austria.

A devastated Corsi did an interview at the time in which he said: “Evidently, the only amateurs here are the IOC.”

Those sporting badgers failed to see the humour in Corsi’s comments and sent him a stinging letter.

“For me, it was really an emotional time,” Corsi said. “I remember actually breaking down, talking to my wife. I was devastated. At that moment, on the eve of the Olympics, I was perhaps at one of the lowest points in my young professional career.”

Instead of sending him home, the Italian Olympic Committee stood by Corsi, kept him on as an assistant coach, enabled him to march in the opening ceremony, embraced him as part of their delegation.

“To this day, I appreciate it,” Corsi said. “So much so that I go back, I still work with the Olympic committee, I help with the hockey team.

“I’m going back to help with the World Championship. I’ve done all the Olympics for Italian TV, so I’ve always been there for Italy. I’ve been fortunate that way.”

He also counts himself fortunate to have coached for so long under former Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff, who learned from, among others, the late Roger Neilson, a hockey thinker ahead of his time in applying analytical tools, like video, to the game of hockey.

Corsi said he's happy the analytic use of the Corsi stat is helping to break down the stigma of trying to measure the sport in new ways, gratified to see bloggers applying his tool to measure players' contribution to the game, either collectively or individually.

"It was not enough for me to say, 'OK, do a drill,'" Corsi said of his approach to coaching goalies. "I was trying to see where our weaknesses were.

"It (Corsi stat) was more about me finding out what work our goalies were doing, and should we give him a day off, should we work him harder? How much work should we give the backup? Where is this generated workload coming from?"

Shots on goal was insufficient to measure that. Goalies can't relax, expecting a shot to be blocked, for example.

"Each time that action (a shot attempt) happens, is a goalie like 'Nah, that's not going to happen?' No, he's totally braced as much as you can.

"And subsequently, it has moved on to an area where (it's about) what is my contribution in the game? How does a player contribute to the workload? If the goalie is absorbing the workload, the workload must be coming from someone else.

"As I often tell people, statistics are like a lamppost for a drunkard: They can either illuminate or you can use it to lean on.

"It's value is in trying to illuminate. Let's not lean on it. It's part of the picture that we're trying to paint in our game that's so quick, to quantify what's happening.

"I'm at once humbled but also thrilled that it's going on. And worried, because I'm losing my identity. I don't know who I am anymore."

Goalie Ryan Miller knows his days with Sabres could be numbered

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 5, 2014

BUFFALO – Forget about the Olympics for a moment. Forget that Sabres goalie Ryan Miller will be playing in front of Pittsburgh Penguins coach Dan Bylsma tonight, a final chance to impress his bench boss at the upcoming Sochi Games.

Tonight could be Miller's last appearance with the Sabres inside the First Niagara Center.

Rosters freeze 3 p.m. Friday for the NHL's two-week Olympic break. The trade deadline hits one month from today.

Miller, an unrestricted free agent following the season, still hasn't discussed his future much with general manager Tim Murray and the Sabres' new regime.

"Still don't know what to say," the franchise netminder said Tuesday. "There's been a change here. There was a change here before. So it's like waiting to see what the plan is and waiting to see what they have to offer. We haven't talked about anything with regards to contracts, talked about anything in regards to trades. They're doing their business. ...

"I have a limited no-trade agreement, and that's something I put out there in the summer. That's not something they approached about altering, changing or discussing. So let's just assume they're doing their business. I can't control it."

Miller, who played his first game here Nov. 22, 2002, is cognizant tonight could be the end.

"Anything's possible, just with the way the season's gone and the direction it could be headed," the 33-year-old said. "We'll just wait to see what the plans start to become."

Miller wouldn't say what he has discussed with management.

"It's a private conversation about a business transaction," he said. "That's what it comes down to. I'm waiting to see what kind of the plans are around here. That would kind of give a little more indication."

The growing belief is Miller will likely want to be traded since the Sabres might be years away from contending for the playoffs, let alone the Stanley Cup, his ultimate goal. He said in December he wanted action, not words, from the team.

Does Miller know the regime's plan?

“They can’t execute anything that they might be planning until some time passes,” he said.

Four years have passed since Miller brilliantly backstopped Team USA to within a whisker of a gold medal at the Vancouver Games. But he knows his tournament MVP award means little these days.

“I think it’s like law firms,” Miller said. “It doesn’t guarantee you any future payouts or verdicts or anything like that. It is what it is. It’s an experience I will always cherish. I can’t stack it in the net behind me. It’s not going to deflect pucks away.

“I know I have to be a more veteran, involved goaltender going in this time, playing with a certain kind of energy and confidence. I’m just kind of trying to slowly reach that level as we get ready to go.”

Miller played well against the Penguins nine days ago, stopping 31 shots in a 3-0 loss. It’s widely believed Miller and Los Angeles’ Jonathan Quick will split Team USA’s first two games before Bylsma picks a starter.

Bylsma acknowledged Tuesday he’s been watching the goalies closely.

“That’s the one position that I am continuing to watch clips on and video of the USA guys,” he said.

An impressive performance against superstar Sidney Crosby and the high-powered Penguins could sway Bylsma.

“It’s a good team to show off against,” said interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan, who noted Miller could play Thursday in Ottawa, the last game before the break.

Miller might be the sentimental favorite to start in Sochi. His play in 2010 made him a national hero and transformed him into the face of America hockey.

“The Olympics ... two weeks of kind of in-your-face hype,” Miller said. “It’s all about sports and it’s all about making celebrity out of the athlete. It kind of takes you to a different place if you can perform on that kind of a stage. Having been there, I hope to use that kind of experience and try to enjoy it and do it again.”

Winning a silver medal has left Miller feeling like he has some unfinished business.

“You’re a breath away from the gold,” he said. “It can be a hard award. It’s second place. In this league, you don’t really get that.”

Miller said his father and wife will travel to Russia. His mother and sister will stay home and watch the dog, he joked.

He's not overly worried about security, a big concern for some athletes.

"Last time there was probably a little bit more freedom as far as where our families were at," Miller said. "But this time my family is going to be in that area that they're calling secure. We just talked about keeping things really simple and not making yourself stand out at all, just things you kind of do when you're an American abroad these days.

"They're there to watch a hockey tournament and they can catch a few more sports. I don't think they should be too concerned."

Sabres' Ted Nolan relieved Tyler Myers won't be sidelined long

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 5, 2014

BUFFALO – Interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan said defenseman Tyler Myers is day-to-day and “a lot better than we thought” after a lower-body injury forced him out of Monday’s 3-2 loss to Edmonton.

Myers could play tonight against the Pittsburgh Penguins inside the First Niagara Center.

Naturally, Nolan, who said Myers “was moving around real good” Tuesday, is relieved

“Some guys get banged up,” he said. “But he looked like he was hurt (Monday) night.”

Meanwhile, Mike Weber is a “little bit beat up” and missed Tuesday’s practice. The defenseman “should be ready to go,” Nolan said, although he’s also day-to-day.

Defenseman Chad Ruhwedel, a healthy scratch Monday, will return tonight, Nolan said. The rookie will likely go to Rochester for the upcoming Olympic break.

Why scratch Ruhwedel, who appeared to be playing well?

Nolan said the 23-year-old, who never played more than 41 games in college, could endure a stretch of 36 contests in 70 days.

“That’s a lot,” Nolan said. “So you almost have to manage it properly so you don’t put kids in a position where they don’t get hurt.”

Ruhwedel will likely be summoned from the AHL when NHL play resumes.

“Nothing’s cut in stone,” Nolan said.

Ruhwedel has played 39 total games this season.

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Nolan said he and general manager Tim Murray decided to switch rookie Zemgus Girgensons from the wing back to center, his natural position. Nolan moved Girgensons to the middle briefly in November.

“It’s really tough to find a real good center ice man,” Nolan said. “Wingers are a little bit easier. I’m not saying it’s easy, but a little easier of the hard positions.”

Nolan said Girgensons “feels very comfortable in that position.”

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Rochester forward Luke Adam, who has 19 goals and 32 points in 29 games, has been added to the AHL All-Star team.

Miller has not moved forward with the Sabres yet

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 4, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Ryan Miller will start Wednesday at home against Pittsburgh. If Miller gets traded before the NHL roster freeze on the 7th or after the freeze is over, this could be his last game in Buffalo as a Sabre. Miller said, "Anything's possible, just with the way the seasons gone and the direction they could be heading, we'll just wait to see what the plan starts to become."

As far as his future with Buffalo Miller said, "I still don't know what to say. There's been a change here even since there was a change here before, so I'm waiting to see what the plan is and waiting to see that they have to offer."

It's well known the Sabres would like Miller to sign a new contract and stay. Miller said, "We haven't talked anything in regards to contracts and we haven't talked anything in regards to trades." Miller added, "They're doing their business and I have a limited trade agreement and that's something I put out there in the summer, it's not something they've approached me about altering or changing or discussing, so I must just assume they're doing their business and it means I can't really control it."

As far as if Miller has spoken in depth with Pat LaFontaine and Tim Murray, Miller wouldn't really say, "It's not really something I'd discuss with you guys, it's a private conversation about a business transaction really, it's what it comes down to. I'm waiting to see what the plans are around here and that would kind of give a little more indication."

So it sounds like Miller has not given them any reason to believe that he will re-sign here. He said, "They can't execute anything that might be planning until some time passes or they make some trades or they have some kind of indication of what's going to happen and even then, there's no guarantee they're going to get everything they want so, it's just kind of a wait and see."

You have to wonder if Ted Nolan is thinking about life without Ryan Miller. Nolan said, "As when I first got here, my main focus is right now and not worrying about what's going on tomorrow. Ryan's a Buffalo Sabre today, we're very thankful that he's here and that's all I'm concentrating on is him being here and him starting tomorrow night."

Sabres Myers isn't hurt badly. Girgensons changes positions

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 4, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The injury to Tyler Myers isn't as bad as Ted Nolan thought it was after Monday's game. Nolan said, "It's a lot better than we thought, it's more of a day to day situation. He was moving around pretty good today and hopefully he moves around real good tomorrow and he gets to play."

Mike Weber missed practice as a precautionary thing. Chad Ruhwedel will play Wednesday against Pittsburgh.

Nolan was pretty firm about a month ago that Zemgus Girgensons future in the NHL would be on the wing as a power forward. He is now a centerman again with Phil Varone going to the wing. Tim Murray thinks Girgensons should be a center and not a wing. It's not clear if he told Nolan he had to do it or Nolan just changed his mind after listening to Murray, "Tim and I, we talked about going forward and who we're going forward with. It's really tough to find a real good center iceman, wingers are a little easier so we've got a guy that grew up playing center ice. I had a good talk with him and he feels very comfortable in that position, so see how it transpires and we'll see how it works at the Olympics and maybe we've found ourselves a pretty good center iceman."

The question is, what else has made Nolan go back and forth on it. He said, "It was flip-flopped back and forth when I first got here I put him at center ice because I thought he would be a real good center ice and then you talk to some people and you have that thought, maybe he's a power forward and it kind of switched my mind a little bit too and then Tim comes in who's had a tremendous amount of experience in looking at this and sometimes your initial thought is the best so we'll try him at that position."

Nolan said Ryan Miller will start here Wednesday against the Penguins and may also play Thursday in Ottawa. He said he'd have to see.

MYERS MAY PLAY AGAINST PITTSBURGH

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 4, 2014

Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan received some potentially good news regarding the status of defenseman Tyler Myers on Tuesday.

Myers, who left the team's game on Monday with a lower-body injury, may be ready to play Wednesday night against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Myers did not participate in practice Tuesday morning at First Niagara but Nolan said that the prognosis wasn't as serious as they thought after the game.

"It's a lot better than we thought. It's more of a day-to-day situation. He was moving around pretty good today and hopefully he moves around real good tomorrow [so] he gets to play," Nolan said. "He could play tomorrow."

Miker Weber also missed practice but Nolan thinks he should be able to play as well and Chad Ruhwedel, a healthy scratch against the Oilers on Monday, will be in the lineup as well.

The Sabres and Penguins face off at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday. The game can be seen nationally on NBCSN.

The team's plan is to send Ruhwedel to Rochester during the Olympic break. He may or not return to the Sabres once they resume play on Feb. 25.

Nolan said Ryan Miller will start against Pittsburgh and may even start in Ottawa on Thursday.

For Miller, the Penguins game is another chance to impress Team USA coach Dan Bylsma, who will be behind the Pittsburgh bench.

"I have to perform at a high level. In hockey, it's always [about] how you perform," he said. "I felt like I played a decent game in their building last time and I just want to show that I can be consistent and do it again. Plus it's a game where I need to bounce back. I was on the bench last game and it's not very fun."

Miller was pulled after the second period Saturday afternoon in Colorado after the Avalanche scored five goals on 27 shots. He's looking to rebound against the highest-scoring team in the Eastern Conference.

"It's a good team to show off against," Nolan said. "Pittsburgh is probably one of the most explosive teams in the National Hockey League and Ryan's probably one

of the best goaltenders in the National Hockey League. So he's going to have a pretty good pretest before the Olympics," Nolan said.

Miller said he hasn't received any indication as to what his role on the national team will be, but is preparing like he is going to play every game.

Henrik Tallinder will represent Team Sweden along with goaltender Jhonas Enroth. While Tallinder is looking forward to traveling to Sochi, his focus right now is on the Sabres' two remaining games.

"You want to get going, but at the same time, you have to focus on your job," Tallinder said. "Every game, we have to approach it like it's do or die. Every game now, it's a battle for us to make sure we're ready for every game."

Zemgus Girgensons, who will play for Team Latvia at the Olympics, practiced at center once again and will remain there for the foreseeable future after Nolan had some conversations with general manager Tim Murray.

"I was kind of flip-flopping back-and-forth when I first got here. I put him at center ice because I thought he would be real good [at] center ice. Then you talk to some people and you have that thought, that maybe he's a power forward. It kind of switched my mind a little bit too," Nolan explained.

"But then Tim comes in, who's had a tremendous amount of experience in looking at this. So we kind of go back to sometimes your initial thoughts are probably some of the best. We'll try him at that position."

17 Linus Omark – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
9 Steve Ott – 19 Cody Hodgson – 27 Matt D'Agostini – 23 Ville Leino
84 Phil Varone – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 65 Brian Flynn
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Red, Non-Contact: 8 Cody McCormick

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 52 Alexander Sulzer
20 Henrik Tallinder – 4 Jamie McBain
32 John Scott – 5 Chad Ruhwedel

30 Ryan Miller
1 Jhonas Enroth