



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 20, 2014*

## **Sabres-Oilers Preview**

By Taylor Bechtold

Associated Press

March 19, 2014

Backed by strong goaltending and improving offensive play, the Western Conference-worst Edmonton Oilers hope to continue building toward next season.

The East-worst Buffalo Sabres aren't getting much out of either area as they sit on the verge of a historic losing streak.

While the Oilers look to extend their surge, the Sabres will try to avoid the longest regulation skid in franchise history when the NHL's worst teams meet in Edmonton on Thursday night.

Viktor Fasth finished with 28 saves in a 5-1 home victory over Nashville on Tuesday to improve to 2-0-1 in three starts with the Oilers (25-36-9). He's allowed five goals while facing 83 shots since being acquired from Anaheim on March 4.

Fasth has formed a formidable duo with Ben Scrivens, who was picked up from Los Angeles in January. Scrivens is 6-4-0 with a 2.40 goals-against average in his last 10 starts after posting 29 saves in a 2-1 win at Carolina on Sunday.

He's expected to get another start Thursday as part of the team's rotation between the pipes. Dating to his time with Toronto, Scrivens has stopped 49 of 52 shots while splitting his last two starts against Buffalo (19-42-8).

"I think right now, with the way they're playing, they're in a rhythm of just kind of playing, switching them back and forth," coach Dallas Eakins told the team's official website.

Although the Oilers have allowed among the most goals in the NHL at 222, they're surrendered just 2.18 per game while going 10-4-3 over the past 17.

Edmonton also has scored 21 times over its last eight games after totaling seven goals in its previous six. Jordan Eberle led the way with two goals and an assist Tuesday to help the Oilers notch their second straight victory.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins added a power-play goal in the second period, giving Edmonton its second power-play score in as many games after going 2 for 36 over its previous 12.

"We have been trying to get some confidence in little things and we started to bear down and found some ways to score, especially on the power play," Eberle said.

The Oilers hope to continue that production while facing Buffalo goalie Matthew Hackett, who is expected to start for only the second time since the 2011-12 season.

Hackett posted a 3.07 GAA in 33 AHL games before getting called up with Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth out with lower-body injuries. The former third-round draft pick played 13 games with Minnesota from 2011-13 before the Sabres traded for him last April.

The Sabres have allowed 21 goals while scoring six during their second seven-game slide of the season. They haven't dropped eight straight in regulation in the 43-year history of the franchise.

"It's just so disheartening is what it is when you have 90 percent of the guys going and a few that are not," said coach Ted Nolan, whose club has scored a league-worst 127 goals.

Drew Stafford has done his part with four goals in six games after scoring in a 3-1 loss at Calgary on Tuesday. He's also scored six times in five career meetings with Edmonton.

The Sabres had won six straight in the series before Matt Hendricks' third-period goal gave the Oilers a 3-2 win in Buffalo on Feb. 3. Hendricks, however, is questionable for this meeting with a lower-body injury.

## **What's in a name? Plenty for Tyler Ennis**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 19, 2014

SHERWOOD PARK, Alberta — Tyler Ennis is home tonight, playing for the Buffalo Sabres in his native Edmonton. That's a rarity, just the second time in his NHL career.

Tyler Ennis is also pretty much at home this afternoon at First Niagara Center and a full house will be rooting for him. That's normal.

Except for the part about him wearing orange and white instead of blue and gold.

Two Canadian kids with the same name. Two guys who love to pass. Two guys who are astonished the other thrives with their name too. One will play a low-profile NHL game 2,200 miles away tonight in Rexall Place. The other has the bright lights of the nation on him during the NCAA Tournament second-round game between Syracuse and Western Michigan.

"I think the Syracuse Stud is definitely going to be the most popular Ennis in Buffalo right now," the Sabres' red-hot center joked. "I'm wishing him and his team well. I know they've finished on a little bit of a skid but this is a huge tournament for them and it's great they get to play in Buffalo in front of so many of their fans.

"My friends have been bugging me about him for a while. I think it's really cool. I'm excited for him the way he's played. It seems like he's an amazing player."

Despite growing up in Brampton, Ont., Syracuse's Ennis doesn't consider himself much of a hockey fan. But he makes an exception for his namesake.

"I've heard about him. I'm a fan of his," the freshman point guard said with a laugh Wednesday following practice in the FNC. "It was weird – I think my mom pointed it out a couple years ago. What's the chances we're both in upstate New York, have the same name, and are both from Canada? The chances of that are really slim."

"A really wild coincidence," said the Sabres' Ennis. "Canadian. Same exact name. And he's a passer, a creative guy too. Crazy. I've been watching a few of their games, and he's been very impressive. I really hope Syracuse puts on a good show in Buffalo."

The Sabres' shows have been horrible of late, with a seven-game losing streak that could become a franchise-record of eight with a regulation loss tonight. But it's no fault of Ennis, who leads the team in goals (18) and points (36).

The Sabres have just six goals in the last seven games, with Drew Stafford (4) and Ennis (2) accounting for them all. Ennis has 13 points in his last 16 games while Stafford has 17 points, including 10 goals, in his last 19.

Ennis and Stafford have been playing with former Canisius College star Cory Conacher, but he'll be replaced on the top line tonight by Marcus Foligno. The Foligno-Ennis-Stafford line was perhaps the hottest in the NHL after Foligno was called up for good in March, 2012.

"Hopefully we have luck like that again and put up some points here," said Foligno, who has one goal the last 17 games. "It's good to play on a top line, and Stafford and Ennis are really clicking. My job is to get in there, get them the puck and get to the net."

"You can't ask for much more from those two, so it would be unfair for us to break them up," coach Ted Nolan said. "With Conacher, he had a couple empty-net tap-in goals and he missed them. Maybe it will be good for Marcus to get in that position where his confidence could rise a little bit."

Still, the Sabres need someone on some other line to score a goal at some point or they won't win.

"At the beginning of the year, me and Staff couldn't buy one and the other guys were doing the scoring," Ennis said. "It's a tough situation when you feel like you can't help the team out by scoring. Right now, we're playing really well, generating a lot of chances. You'd think one goal from another line could really spark things."

As for the basketball Ennis, he'll be a little busy today to watch any hockey highlights. He said he's peeked at a few as a kid but "was never really too much into it," despite growing up in suburban Toronto. "I don't really watch too much hockey," he said.

The Sabres' Ennis said he had a basketball hoop outside his home here that was little used. His childhood was spent playing ball hockey in the basement.

"That hoop was out front and we might play between lunch breaks and stuff," Ennis said. "But I wasn't very good."

Seems like they both found their niche.

News Sports Reporter Jay Skurski contributed to this report.

## **Hackett to take a spin as starting goalie for Sabres**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 20, 2014

SHERWOOD PARK, Alberta — The Buffalo Sabres' revolving goal crease will spin again tonight in Rexall Place.

For the game against the Edmonton Oilers, it will land on Matt Hackett making his Buffalo debut. By Sunday night in Vancouver, the injured Michal Neuvirth is hoping to return.

So for those scoring at home, that could mean four starters in four games for the Sabres (Jhonas Enroth, Nathan Lieuwen, Hackett and Neuvirth).

And as bizarre feats in a brutal season go, that's a close second to the club's run of five different backups in five games after the Olympic break that included Enroth, Ryan Miller, Ryan Vinz, Jaroslav Halak and Neuvirth.

Hackett, acquired last April from Minnesota in the Jason Pominville trade, had big credentials but has not lived up to them in Rochester this year. He's just 13-17-2 with a 3.07 goals against and .898 save percentage. He has an NHL record of 3-7 in 13 games with Minnesota.

The starter in Rochester when training camp broke, Hackett lost the job to Lieuwen and has largely played one game a week for several weeks

"Nathan has been playing really well so he deserved it," Hackett said following practice at the Millenium Ice in suburban Edmonton. "I've been struggling a bit. I try to find my game here, I feel good, I'm confident and I'm excited for tomorrow."

Regular Amerks watching say Hackett has struggled with his composure in the crease – against shooters, officials and his teammates. And Hackett admitted he took his status after the trade a little for granted to start the season.

"I don't think I was working hard enough at the start of the year," said Hackett, who credited Amerks goalie coach and former Canisius netminder Bob Janosz for staying with him. "My work ethic had to improve and get better. As a goalie you're always battling with your partner. It's a healthy competition. I'm just trying to get my game back and work hard."

Hackett, who turned 24 on March 7, also admitted he was watching for a Miller trade, perhaps too much, to see if he'd get a chance in Buffalo.

"It's always my goal to come in and battle for a job, no matter what's going to happen up top," he said. "Some guys get traded at times and some guys come

back. Neuvirth's a great goalie, I actually got traded for him in junior and he's a really nice guy, so it's a fun battle and it makes everyone better.

...

Neuvirth participated fully in practice Wednesday, taking shots in several drills while continuing to break in new blue, gold and white pads and gloves.

"I want to make sure when I get back I'm 100 percent and can play every game and not miss any games," said Neuvirth, who suffered a lower-body injury during his 51-save outing last week in Carolina. "We're going step by step. Today I was facing shots. I felt good.... I want to be ready for Sunday."

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Cody Hodgson went back to center Wednesday and will be between Cory Conacher and Torrey Mitchell after spending a couple games on the wing. Hodgson has 16 goals on the season but just two in the last 17 games.

"Cody is one of those guys who is very good when you have people to get him the puck," said coach Ted Nolan. "Maybe he learned from a different position how he can spring a winger better, how he can cover more."

"There's a lot more starts and stops," said Hodgson, who played with Marcus Foligno and Brian Flynn. "Flynnie did a great job at center keeping things moving. We picked up some speed and had some great chances but couldn't score."

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The race for last overall is pretty much done as the Oilers have a 13-point lead over Buffalo. Edmonton is 5-2-2 overall thus far in March and 5-2-1 in its last eight home games.

## **Hackett making first start for Sabres**

By Eric Goodman

NHL.com

March 19, 2014

SABRES (19-42-8) at OILERS (25-36-9)

TV: MSG-B, TSN

Last 10: Buffalo 2-8-0; Edmonton 5-3-2

Season series: This is the second and final game between these cross-conference teams. The Edmonton Oilers defeated the Buffalo Sabres 3-2 at First Niagara Center on Feb. 3.

Big story: Oilers right wing Sam Gagner needs one goal to reach 100 in his NHL career, as his team tries to catch the Calgary Flames to avoid a last-place finish in the Western Conference. Buffalo is in last place in the Eastern Conference, but is 6-2-0 in its past eight games against the Oilers and hasn't lost in Edmonton since Oct. 16, 2003.

Team Scope:

Sabres: The goaltender carousel continues to turn in Buffalo as coach Ted Nolan said Wednesday that Matt Hackett would get the start in Edmonton. Hackett is set to become the fifth goalie to start for the Sabres this season. Nathan Lieuwen made his first NHL start in a 3-1 loss to the Calgary Flames on Tuesday, Ryan Miller was traded to the St. Louis Blues prior to the NHL Trade Deadline, and Jhonas Enroth (lower body) and Michal Neuvirth (lower body) are injured. Nolan confirmed Wednesday that Neuvirth is not set to return until Saturday at the Vancouver Canucks, the third of a five-game road trip for the Sabres.

"It's all about the evaluation period going forward here," Nolan said following practice Wednesday. "Hackett has come in with good credentials from the beginning so we'll put him in and see what he has."

Buffalo will try to avoid an eight-game losing streak Thursday after managing 14 shots at Calgary.

Oilers: Edmonton recalled right wing Tyler Pitlick from the Oklahoma City Barons of the American Hockey League on an emergency basis Wednesday with right wing Nail Yakupov (ankle) doubtful and center Matt Hendricks (leg) questionable for Thursday. Left wing Jesse Joensuu (high ankle sprain) is likely to miss the remainder of the season. Pitlick had 22 points (eight goals, 14 assists) with the Barons and scored a goal in three games with the Oilers this season.

"You're never sure how many chances you're going to get and you have to make the most of the chance when it comes," coach Dallas Eakins said Wednesday. "I hope [Pitlick's] ready for his chance."

The Oilers play the second of a six-game homestand and are 3-1-1 in the past five games at Rexall Place.

Who's hot: Sabres right wing Drew Stafford has five points (four goals, one assist) in the past six games. ... Gagner has nine points (two goals, nine assists) in the past eight games for the Oilers.

Injury report: The Sabres are without defensemen Tyler Myers (elbow) and Alexander Sulzer (upper body) and forwards Chris Stewart (ankle) and Zemgus Girgensons (lower body). ... In addition to the injuries to Yakupov, Hendricks and Joensuu, Oilers defenseman Anton Belov (partially torn oblique) is out.

## **Sabres goalie Matt Hackett to start against Oilers**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 19, 2014

With Matt Hackett starting Thursday against the Oilers, the Buffalo Sabres will use five goalies in a season for the first time since 1995-96.

The Sabres are missing starter Jhonas Enroth (right leg) and backup Michal Neuvirth (lower body).

Neuvirth faced shots during Wednesday's practice and could be available Sunday in Vancouver, interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan told reporters in Edmonton.

"He's doing a lot better right now," Nolan said.

Rookie Nathan Lieuwen started his first NHL game Tuesday, stopping 23 shots in the Sabres' 3-1 loss in Calgary.

"Nathan's got to be proud of himself, the way he's played," Nolan said. "But to overload him real quick is unfair for him."

Hackett is 13-17-2 with a 3.07 goals-against average and .898 save percentage in 33 games with Rochester this season. He allowed seven goals on 31 shots in the Americans' 7-3 loss to Binghamton Sunday, his last appearance.

"He's played pretty well in Rochester so he deserves a chance," Nolan said.

The 24-year-old was one of the AHL's better goalies before the Sabres acquired him from Minnesota last season.

"It's all about the evaluation period going forward," Nolan said.

Hackett has played 13 NHL games. He last started March 29 with the Wild.

## **Sabres will start Hackett in Edmonton**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 19, 2014

Edmonton, AB (WGR 550) -- The Sabres are shooting to start four different goalies in four games as Matt Hackett will get the start Thursday in Edmonton.

Jhonas Enroth started Sunday against Montreal and got hurt, Nathan Lieuwen started in Calgary, Hackett goes in Edmonton and Michal Neuvirth says he's shooting to start Sunday in Vancouver.

Lieuwen has played pretty well in his two NHL games but Ted Nolan said, "Nathan has to be proud of himself the way he's played, but to overload him real quick is unfair to him so, we'll play Hackett."

In Rochester Hackett has played 33 games this season going 13-17-2 with a 3.07 goals against and .898 save percentage.

Hackett does have 13 NHL games under his belt with Minnesota. He went 3-7-0 with a 2.64 goals against and .914 save percentage. Hackett won his first two games in the NHL at San Jose and Los Angeles and went 1-7 after that. In his career he's played Dallas three times and Colorado twice.

The book on Hackett is he lets his temper get the best of him and it costs him games. Hackett said there was something else too, "I don't think I was working hard enough at the start of the year and I've been working hard now with my goalie coach Bob Janosz in Rochester and so yes, I think the work ethic had to improve and I'm getting better." Hackett also knows his play as of late has been subpar, "The past few games have been tough and I've only been playing one of the games on the weekends, so it's tough to get in there and get things rolling. I've been working hard in practice and trying to get my game back and I feel like I'm getting better."

When Darcy Regier acquired Hackett in the Jason Pominville trade, he gave off the impression that he thought Hackett would have a good chance to be the goalie of the future. Hackett said that maybe got to his head.

Hackett thought like most fans did that Ryan Miller would get traded creating goaltending opportunity within the organization, "It's always my goal to come in here and battle for a job no matter what's going to happen up top, so that's the way it goes, some guys get traded at times and some guys come back. Neuvirth's a great goalie, I actually got traded for him in junior and he's a really nice guy, so it's a fun battle and it makes everyone better."

In practice on Thursday, Nolan broke the red hot Ennis line. Marcus Foligno went back to form the line that went crazy when he first was called up. He'll play wing with Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford.

Ville Leino falls to the fourth line, while Cory Conacher will play with Cody Hodgson and Torrey Mitchell.

## **CHANGES ON THE WAY AS SABRES PREP FOR EDMONTON**

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

March 19, 2014

EDMONTON – The Buffalo Sabres will have a slightly different look on Thursday as they attempt to snap a seven-game losing streak against the Edmonton Oilers. Matt Hackett will get the start in goal, and Marcus Foligno has been moved to a line with Buffalo's two hottest players, Drew Stafford and Tyler Ennis.

Michal Neuvirth took part in today's practice at a suburban Edmonton rink, but interim coach Ted Nolan doesn't expect him to be ready for game action until at least Sunday in Vancouver. That opens the door for Hackett to make his first start as a member of the Sabres tomorrow at Rexall Place.

Hackett, acquired from Minnesota in the Jason Pominville trade at last year's deadline, is 13-17-2 in 33 games with the Rochester Americans this season, with a 3.07 GAA and .898 save%. The 24-year-old had 13 games of NHL experience with the Wild before joining Buffalo, posting a record of 3-7-0 with 2.64 GAA and .914 save%.

Nolan said that Hackett's start is as much about timing as it is evaluation.

“Nathan (Lieuwen) has gotta be proud of himself the way he's played (so far). But to overload him real quick is unfair to him, so we'll go to Hackett. He's played really well down in the AHL so he deserves a chance,” said Nolan. “It's all about the evaluation period going forward here, especially looking to the future to see who we've got and what we've got. Hackett came in with good credentials in the beginning so we'll see what he has.”

Something else that Nolan would like to see is more offense from his forwards, and that's where he hopes Foligno can help out. Stafford (4) and Ennis (2) have combined to score all six of Buffalo's goals during the current losing streak, and Nolan hopes that shuffling the deck up front will result in more scoring. Foligno will take the place of Cory Conacher who had skated with the red-hot duo since joining the Sabres six games ago.

“(Stafford and Ennis), they've both got their game going. You can't ask for much more from them. It'd be unfair for us to break them up,” explained Nolan. “With Conacher, I think he had a couple of empty net tap in goals that he missed. Maybe it'll be good for Marcus to get in that position, and maybe his confidence will rise. It's just one of those things where we have to shake it up and try to create some offense somewhere.”

Cody Hodgson was back at center today following a brief stint on the wing, and he was flanked by Conacher and Torrey Mitchell. After skating on the fourth line

in Calgary on Tuesday, newcomer Nicolas Deslauriers will now get a chance to play left wing with Brian Flynn and Matt D'Agostini.

Four players rotated through the fourth line in today's practice, including Ville Leino who was demoted from third line action on Tuesday. Leino was joined by John Scott, Matt Ellis and Zenon Konopka, Buffalo's lone healthy scratch against the Flames.

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**TODAY'S LINES**

Marcus Foligno – Tyler Ennis – Drew Stafford  
Cory Conacher – Cody Hodgson – Torrey Mitchell  
Nicolas Deslauriers – Brian Flynn – Matt D'Agostini  
Ville Leino – Matt Ellis – John Scott – Zenon Konopka

**DEFENSE PAIRS**

Christian Ehrhoff – Rasmus Ristolainen  
Jamie McBain – Mike Weber  
Chad Ruhwedel – Henrik Tallinder

**GOALIES**

Matt Hackett  
Nathan Lieuwen  
Michal Neuvirth (inj)

## **Arena makeover puts Sabres on ice**

By Jay Tokasz

Buffalo News

March 19, 2014

While the blue and gold are away, the NCAA has made itself comfortable inside First Niagara Center.

Spectators who walk into the bowl area of the arena today will find scant evidence that this is the home of the NHL's Buffalo Sabres, aside from some title banners and retired jerseys hanging from the rafters.

Gone is the ice surface with the familiar buffalo and crossed swords, replaced by a 116-foot-long maple floor emblazoned with the NCAA logo.

Arena stores that stocked pucks and Tyler Myers jerseys now carry Syracuse and Ohio State T-shirts and mini-basketballs. A young guy named Tyler Ennis still will be playing here – but he'll be dribbling and bounce passing for the Orange, not stick-handling and forechecking for the Sabres.

In less than 48 hours, First Niagara Center morphed from hockey home into a hoops haven.

The Sabres left town on a 10-day road swing, allowing NCAA basketball to take top billing in Buffalo.

And it all begins today inside the arena with team practices, which are free and open to the public.

The 40-minute shoot-around sessions for each team begin at noon, with the University of Dayton Flyers taking the court first, followed by the Western Michigan University Broncos at 12:45; the Ohio State University Buckeyes at 1:30; the Syracuse University Orange at 2:15; the University of Connecticut Huskies at 4:25; the Villanova University Wildcats at 5:10; the Saint Joseph's Hawks at 5:55; and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Panthers at 6:40.

Four games will be played Thursday and another two Saturday. The games are a certain sellout, which means fans interested in obtaining tickets will have to go to the secondary market, where demand for Thursday afternoon's double bill including Syracuse, for example, has pushed prices from \$107 on Monday to \$178 on Tuesday evening.

Arena crews have been working nearly around-the-clock since Sunday night, after the Sabres-Montreal game, to get the venue ready.

The NCAA has exacting standards when it comes to the look of the host sites for basketball tournaments. Advertising in the bowl area of the arena, for example, is a definite no-no.

So the Sabres rented out plenty of black bunting to cover up corporate signs. It drapes the boards of the ice rink, hiding any evidence that companies such as Verizon, Toyota, Labatt Blue and Toshiba advertise here. Screens block out digital advertising boards that ring the arena just under the 300 Level.

“It becomes an NCAA event, as opposed to another event in another building,” said John Wooding, a spokesman for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, which manages the Buffalo games in the tournament. “The goal of this is to turn it into a memorable experience for the student-athletes.”

The transformation for March Madness is greater than for any other event held in the arena, including concerts, said Michael Gilbert, spokesman for the Sabres. “This is one event where we have to do a lot of changeover work,” he said.

But the Sabres planned for it well in advance, letting the NHL know that this particular week would be a good time for the league to schedule a lengthy road trip for the team.

The Sabres, of course, have been through this before, as this is the fifth time since 2000 that Buffalo has hosted the NCAA basketball tournament.

This is the first tournament under owner Terry Pegula, who bought the Sabres in 2011. Gilbert said Pegula is highly supportive of the event being held at the arena.

“It’s good for Buffalo,” said Gilbert. “It’s a multipurpose facility. It’s part of what First Niagara Center does, and as an extension, we hope to do more of this with HarborCenter” – the facility under construction adjacent to the arena that will house two ice rinks, a hotel, training facilities and a restaurant.

Preparations inside the arena for the tournament began months ago.

A large storage area where the Sabres keep items such as extra risers, stairs and other athletic and event equipment had to be emptied to make room for a gathering space that can accommodate what is expected to be more than 200 media in town to conduct interviews with participating players and coaches.

The Sabres rented out 10 large trucks, loaded them with the items from the storage area and sent them away until the tournament is over.

The basketball court was shipped in from Connor Sports Flooring in Salt Lake City along with a host of other items provided by the NCAA.

“We spent this past week and a half getting shipment after shipment from the NCAA,” said Beth Guiliani Gatto, director of arena operations for the Sabres. “They send everything – water coolers, drink bottles, NCAA towels for the benches.”

One thing the Sabres did not have to do this year was take down its divisional and conference title banners and retired jerseys – something the NCAA had demanded in 2000, 2004, 2007 and 2010.

“All the previous years, we had to take them down,” said Guiliani Gatto. “It’s a little bit labor-intensive, so we were very glad we didn’t have to take those down.”

Tuesday, another shipment arrived – more than 8,000 T-shirts and sweatshirts bearing the names of the teams playing in Buffalo.

Most of the shirts were printed in Kansas City on Sunday and Monday following the bracket announcements, then shipped later Monday.

The main Sabres store on the ground level of First Niagara Center won’t be selling NCAA merchandise, but six satellite stores on other levels of the arena were emptied of all Sabres gear and replaced with shirts, baseball caps, basketballs, pins and other items bearing the 2014 NCAA tournament logo.