



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 15, 2014

Sabres-Islanders Preview

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

March 15, 2014

No team has been worse on its home ice this season than the New York Islanders, while no club has been worse overall than the Buffalo Sabres.

The Islanders hope a visit from the woeful Sabres on Saturday night can help them turn things around on Long Island.

New York (25-34-9) suffered its ninth home loss in 10 games with Friday's 4-3 defeat to San Jose. The Islanders' 9-17-8 home record is the worst in the NHL and their .354 home winning percentage is the fifth worst in franchise history. The 29 points at home are their fewest since finishing 12-27-1 with one tie for 26 points in 2000-01.

The Islanders have been plagued by awful goaltending during their 1-8-1 home stretch, with Evgeni Nabokov, Anders Nilsson and Kevin Poulin posting a combined 4.50 goals-against average and .849 save percentage.

Nabokov stopped 22 of 26 shots on Friday in his first start against the club he spent his first 10 seasons with. New York cut San Jose's lead to one on Frans Nielsen's 21st goal with 22 seconds remaining, but with John Tavares still sidelined and Michael Grabner out after suffering a concussion in Monday's win at Vancouver, the Islanders couldn't pull even.

"That's a top-notch team we played, so any little breakdown and it's in the back of your net," coach Jack Capuano said. "I thought we had a great effort. We worked hard as a group and we were getting chances."

With New York opening a four-game homestand Saturday and playoff contenders Minnesota and Columbus visiting next week, this figures to be the Islanders' best shot at their first home regulation victory since Jan. 6.

However, they lost to Buffalo 4-3 at home in a shootout on Oct. 15 despite outshooting the Sabres 44-34. It marked New York's fifth loss in six meetings, with three of those defeats coming in shootouts. The Islanders also outshot Buffalo in four of those five losses.

In addition to owning the league's worst record, the Sabres (19-39-8) have lost five of six away from home following Thursday's 4-2 setback at Carolina. Buffalo held a 2-1 advantage in the third until Alexander Semin scored the first of three unanswered goals for the Hurricanes at the 11:48 mark. Drew Stafford scored earlier in the period after Tyler Ennis put the Sabres up 1-0 on a first-period penalty shot.

Buffalo was outshot 55-23, tying for the league's second-highest shot differential this season. It also has the top one after being outshot 50-17 in a 2-1 home overtime win over Washington on Dec. 29.

Michal Neuvirth's 51 saves on Thursday were a career best. He stopped 42 shots in a 2-0 loss at Florida last week in his first game since being acquired from Washington.

"I thought he was good again," coach Ted Nolan said. "The one thing our goalies are going to end up doing in the remaining 16 games we have - they're going to get a lot of good looks and play for that position."

Given the Sabres' offensive futility, those goaltenders will likely have to be stellar. Buffalo has four goals over its last four contests and one power-play goal in 16 opportunities while losing five of its last six.

Sabres have a near lock on last place

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 14, 2014

Warren Buffett is backing a contest that promises \$1 billion to anyone who fills out a perfect NCAA Tournament bracket. The chairman of The Buffalo News should have offered \$1 trillion to anyone who could have guessed the events that would occur in Sabreland this season.

His money would have been safe.

There was the quick firing of Darcy Regier and Ron Rolston, which coincided with the shocking return of Pat LaFontaine and Ted Nolan.

There was the mind-blowing departure of LaFontaine, plus the trades of goaltender Ryan Miller and co-captains Thomas Vanek and Steve Ott. Add in the other transactions, hirings and dubious records set (or about to be set) by Buffalo, and not even the slickest soothsayer would have a perfect percentage.

However, with 16 games left in the season, including tonight's visit to the New York Islanders, one preseason prognostication is in line to come true. The Sabres are in last place and have a great chance to stay there, giving them the best shot at the first overall draft pick.

The blueprint to be a terrible team designed by owner Terry Pegula, President Ted Black and Regier has had more twists than expected, but the results are as projected. The Sabres are just 19-39-8 and have only 10 regulation wins in 66 games. They'll enter Nassau Coliseum as losers of four straight, and they're getting worse by the game.

Buffalo gave up a season-high 55 shots Thursday night in a 4-2 loss to Carolina. It was tied for the fourth-most shots allowed in team history, and only a fantastic 51-save performance by Michal Neuvirth prevented a blowout.

At least the Sabres scored twice, which matched their output from the previous three games. They've totaled four goals in the four losses, causing their goals per game to dip to 1.89, far and away the worst in the NHL. It's near the record low of 1.84 set by the 1997-98 Tampa Bay Lightning.

Unless the Sabres average 4.1 goals per game the rest of the year, they'll be the lowest-scoring team in franchise history.

Despite all the trials and tribulations, the Sabres are still not a lock to finish 30th. For once, though, they look pretty good.

Entering Friday's schedule, the Sabres had 46 points. Edmonton had 54, Florida had 55 and the Islanders and Calgary had 59 each.

Here's a look at what's left for the teams who have the best chance to win the draft lottery, which will be held April 14:

- Buffalo: The Sabres have 16 games remaining. Only five will be at home, which means 11 are on the road. The Sabres are a league-worst 7-20-3 away from First Niagara Center. Of the 16 games, 11 are against teams holding a playoff spot or within six points of one.
- Edmonton: Including Friday's visit to Detroit, the Oilers have 15 games left. Ten are at home, where they are 12-16-3. Eleven are against playoff contenders. The Oilers feel they are trending up with the arrival of goalie Ben Scrivens, who had a .929 save percentage in his first 11 appearances.
- Florida: Including Friday's home game against New Jersey, the Panthers have 16 games left. Ten are at home, but a whopping 14 of 16 are against teams with postseason dreams. They, too, got a boost in goal with the acquisition of Roberto Luongo.
- Islanders: They hosted San Jose on Friday, one of 15 games left on the schedule. They have eight at home, while 12 are against playoff hopefuls. Like the Sabres, they shipped out talent at the trade deadline. Buffalo holds the Isles' first-round draft pick, but New York has until June 1 to defer the transaction to 2015.
- Calgary: Including Friday's visit to Dallas, the Flames have 16 games left. Nine are on the road, where they are 11-17-4. Of the remaining contests, 12 are against postseason possibilities.

Buffalo would need a rare hot streak or a complete tank by one of the other teams to move out of 30th.

Considering the Sabres' longest run of wins is three games, accomplished just once, a hot streak seems unlikely.

Of course, so has nearly every event since October.

Islanders, Sabres face off for first time in five months

By John Kreiser

NHL.com

March 15, 2014

SABRES (19-39-8) at ISLANDERS (25-34-9)

TV: MSG-B, MSG PLUS

Last 10: Buffalo 4-6-0; New York 3-6-1

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres and New York Islanders haven't played each other in exactly five months. The Sabres won 4-3 in a shootout at Nassau Coliseum on Oct. 15. They play at First Niagara Center on April 13, the final day of the regular season.

Big story: The Sabres and Islanders made a major trade 12 days after their most-recent game, with Buffalo sending forward Thomas Vanek to New York for forward Matt Moulson and two high draft picks. Neither player will take part in this game; each was traded at the NHL Trade Deadline on March 5.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo is all but assured of finishing last in the overall standings, and new general manager Tim Murray loaded up on picks and prospects as the trade deadline approached, trading veterans such as Ryan Miller, Steve Ott, Cody McCormick and Moulson. The moves may pay off in the future, but the present has seen Buffalo lose four in a row after stealing a 3-1 road win against the Tampa Bay Lightning in their first game after the deadline. The defense has struggled, allowing 55 shots in a 4-2 road loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday.

Goaltender Michal Neuvirth, who played against the Hurricanes, has faced 99 shots in two starts since being acquired from the Washington Capitals at the deadline. Neuvirth and Jhonas Enroth can expect to see plenty of shots the rest of the way.

"If there's one positive thing about it, Michal, I thought he was good again," coach Ted Nolan said after the game. "The one thing our goalies are going to end up doing in the remaining 16 games we have, they're going to get a lot of good looks and fight for that position."

Islanders: New York doesn't allow nearly as many shots as the Sabres, but the Islanders have surrendered more goals than any team in the NHL. The Islanders outshot the San Jose Sharks 38-26 on Friday, but a succession of defensive mistakes and blown coverages allowed the Sharks to leave Nassau Coliseum with a 4-3 victory.

"For the most part I thought we played a strong hockey game, and a couple of mistakes in the defensive zone cost us," said forward Kyle Okposo, who assisted on two of New York's three goals. "This is kind of how it's been lately. We haven't made a ton of mistakes, but they've cost us."

Who's hot: Sabres forward Tyler Ennis had a penalty-shot goal against Carolina and has points in three straight games. ... Okposo has five assists in New York's past two games and has career-highs with 26 goals and 67 points; he's eighth in the NHL in scoring.

Injury report: The Sabres are missing forwards Chris Stewart (ankle), Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) and Torrey Mitchell (lower body). ... Islanders center and captain John Tavares (knee) is out for the season. Forward Michael Grabner (concussion) is out.

Sabres hurting even more on D

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 14, 2014

Uniondale, LI (WGR 550) -- With San Jose playing in Long Island tonight, the Sabres couldn't get ice time.

We already know Alex Sulzer is out at least a week after his head hit the boards Thursday in Carolina.

Tyler Myers hurt his elbow and Mike Weber his foot or ankle. He only played one more time after Alex Semin's shot hit his foot and went in the net.

Still waiting to see if the Sabres will be able to update us and if there's somebody called up.

This could put Buffalo in a spot it doesn't want to be in. The Sabres would like Mark Pysyk, Rasmus Ristolainen and Chad Ruhwedel to play in Rochester and take that team as far as they can. Ruhwedel is already called up and will play for Sulzer. If both Myers and Weber miss time, John Scott would move back to D, but that leaves an open spot.

The most obvious move would be switch Nic Deslauriers back to defense where he's played his whole life until this season.

Veteran Drew Bagnall is injured and out for the season. Nakita Zadorov isn't an option as he's in junior with London.

I suppose you could call up 22 year old Matt MacKenzie who was a third round pick in 2010, but I've seen enough of him in Rochester to know he's not NHL caliber. The same thing goes for another 2010 third rounder in 21 year old Jerome Gauthier-Leduc. Chadd Cassidy had high hopes for Gauthier-Leduc in preseason saying he'd get a lot of ice time, but he was playing so poorly he got sent to the East Coast League.

Game Preview: Islanders vs. Sabres

By Cory Wright

Islanders.com

March 15, 2014

New York Islanders

25-34-9 (59 points – 8th in Metropolitan Division, 14th in Eastern Conference)

9-17-8 home

Buffalo Sabres

19-39-8 (46 points - 2nd in Pacific Division, 16th in Eastern Conference)

7-20-3 road

7:00 p.m.

Nassau Coliseum

Uniondale, NY

Television: MSG PLUS

Play-by-play: Howie Rose; Color: Butch Goring

Radio: WRHU 88.7 FM, LI News Radio 103.9 FM

Play-by-play: Chris King

Islanders Storylines

- Clean Game: Matt Donovan's third period tripping penalty was the only infraction whistled in Friday's game between the Islanders and Sharks.
- Debut: Johan Sundstrom made his NHL debut Friday night, playing 10:28 and recording one shot on goal.
- Plus, Plus, Plus: The Islanders top line (Lee-Nielsen-Okposo) each recorded a +2 rating on Friday.
- Shots: The Islanders have outshot their opponent in each of the past four games (126-102 total).

Sabres Storylines

- Drew Stafford: The eighth-year Sabre is now the longest-tenured player in Buffalo.
- Cory Conacher: After being claimed off waivers from the Ottawa Senators last week, Conacher has recorded two assists. Conacher played his college hockey at Canisius College in Buffalo.
- Michal Neuvirth: Record a career-high 51 saves in Thursday's 4-2 defeat in Carolina. He has a .949 SV% in two games with Buffalo.

Islanders player to watch

Anders Lee - Forward

Anders Lee continued the hot start his NHL career, tallying two points (one goal, one assists) in Friday's game against San Jose. The Notre Dame product now has hit the scoresheet in four-of-five games and has nine points (six goals, three

assists) in eight games this season. Lee skated on the Islanders top line against the Sharks.

Sabres player to watch
Tyler Ennis - Forward

Tyler Ennis leads the Sabres with 17 goals and is closing in on his second 20-goal campaign of his five-year career. The small [5'9], but speedy forward is tied with Cody Hodgson for the team lead in scoring with 35 points. Ennis is currently riding a three-game point streak (one goal, two assists) and had a goal against the Islanders earlier this season.

2013-14 season series (0-0-1)

The Islanders lost their lone meeting with the Sabres 4-3 in a shootout on Oct. 15, 2013. The Islanders held a 3-2 lead late in the contest, but allowed the tying goal with 2:01 to play. Tyler Ennis scored the shootout-decider.

LAST GAME:
Oct. 15, 2013: BUF 4, NYI 3 SO

Islanders
16.7% (20th)
77.1% (29th)
191
232
3-6-1

Power play
Penalty kill
Goals for
Goals against
Last 10

Sabres
14.3% (27th)
82.0% (15th)
131
196
4-6-0

New York Islanders previous game lines

Forwards

27 Anders Lee – 51 Frans Nielsen – 21 Kyle Okposo
12 Josh Bailey – 29 Brock Nelson – 15 Cal Clutterbuck
17 Matt Martin – 18 Ryan Strome – 13 Colin McDonald
28 Johan Sundstrom – 53 Casey Cizikas – 43 Mike Halmo

Defensemen

44 Calvin de Haan – 3 Travis Hamonic
14 Thomas Hickey – 11 Lubomir Visnovsky
37 Brian Strait – 46 Matt Donovan

Goaltenders

20 Evgeni Nabokov
45 Anders Nilsson

Buffalo Sabres previous game lines

Forwards

88 Cory Conacher – 63 Tyler Ennis – 221 Drew Stafford
82 Marcus Foligno – 19 Cody Hodgson – 27 Matt D'Agostini
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 65 Brian Flynn – 23 Ville Leino
32 John Scott – 24 Zenon Konopka – 37 Matt Ellis

Defenseman:

57 Tyler Myers – 10 Christian Ehrhoff
52 Alexander Sulzer – 20 Henrik Tallinder
5 Jamie McBain – 6 Mike Weber

Goaltenders:

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

What's Happening at the Coliseum:

- Lower Lobby 5pm
- Doors Open 5:45pm
- American Red Cross Blood Drive (9am – 3pm)
- Charity of the Game – Knights of Columbus
- Mercedes Chuck a Puck
- St. Patrick's Warm Up Jersey's