



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Jets remain in the hunt with 2-1 win over Sabres

By John Wawrow
Associated Press
April 23, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Having eked out a win over the Buffalo Sabres, Evander Kane and the Winnipeg Jets were already looking ahead to the next big test in their late-season bid to make the playoffs: Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals.

"This game means nothing now," said Kane, referring to the Jets' 2-1 win over the Sabres on Monday night. "We needed this game in order to make something of tomorrow. Tomorrow's the biggest game of our season."

Antti Miettinen's shot from the right circle that just dribbled in over the goal line with 7:36 remaining proved to be the difference in keeping the Jets in the playoff race.

Winnipeg (24-19-3) improved to 6-0-1 in its past seven and moved within a point of the idle New York Rangers and Ottawa Senators, who hold the Eastern Conference's final two playoff spots. Just as important, the Jets also crept to within a point of Southeast Division-leading Washington. That sets up a critical showdown on Tuesday, when Winnipeg travels to play the Capitals in the final week of the season.

"I think it's been circled on our calendar for a long time now," Jets captain Andrew Ladd said. "We wanted to put ourselves in a position where tomorrow's going to be a meaningful game, and we've done that. So here it is."

The win didn't come easily against a Sabres team that was playing for pride - having been eliminated from contention following an 8-4 loss to the New York Rangers on Friday - and riding a hot goalie in Jhonas Enroth.

Enroth was nearly the difference in stopping 37 shots, including Kane's first-period penalty shot.

He had little chance to stop the two that got past him. Aaron Gagnon opened the scoring 7:32 into the second period by redirecting in Derek Meech's centering pass. And then there was Miettinen's shot that found its way in through a crowd in front.

The shot sneaked in under Enroth's left arm and had enough to dribble in behind him.

Jets goalie Ondrej Pavelec then preserved the victory by stopping 24 shots, including a huge glove save on Thomas Vanek with 5:45 left. Allowed to walk in from the right circle, Vanek held the puck waiting for a hole to open up and then snapped a shot, which Pavelec snagged with a quick wave of his glove.

"It just hit my glove. I don't know what to say," Pavelec said. "I think the guys deserve my help, because they played really well, and that's our job: to make the save."

Vanek scored the lone goal for Buffalo (19-21-6), which has lost six straight against the Jets.

"I thought Jhonas played great," Vanek said. "And I thought we had some good chances. We had some tap-ins that we missed. If you can't score, you can't score."

Winnipeg's seven-game point streak is its longest since going 6-0-1 from Nov. 22-Dec. 5, 2006, when the franchise was still the Atlanta Thrashers. In their second season in Winnipeg, the Jets are attempting to qualify for the playoffs for the first time in seven seasons and only the second time in the team's 13-year history.

Enroth bounced back after both he and Ryan Miller allowed four goals apiece to the Rangers.

His best series of saves came with just under 5 minutes left in the second period.

Dustin Byfuglien's one-timer from the left circle caromed off the far post, causing a scramble in front. Enroth kicked away Gagnon's shot from in close and then, with his back to the play, Enroth reached out blindly with his right arm to stop Ladd's shot from going into the open net.

Then there was his save on Kane's penalty shot 14:59 in. Enroth got just enough of his glove on Kane's shot to have the puck deflect off the crossbar and over the net.

Kane was awarded the penalty shot - the first of his career - when he broke up the middle, got a step on Andrej Sekera before being tripped up from behind by the Sabres defenseman.

Not all the news is good for the Jets. Already missing center Olli Jokinen (ankle) and defenseman Zach Bogosian (concussion), Winnipeg lost forward Kyle Wellwood, who hurt his right hand blocking Vanek's shot in the second period.

Jets coach Claude Noel would only say Wellwood sustained a long-term injury to his hand.

"We know what's at stake," Noel said, looking ahead to facing the Capitals. "It's the time of the year to put your best foot forward."

NOTES: Vanek's goal was the 248th of his career, good for sixth on the franchise list, one ahead of Mike Foligno and four behind Craig Ramsay. ... The Jets have converted on just eight of 28 penalty shots and have missed on seven straight. Kane scored the franchise's last penalty shot, beating Washington's Michal Neuvirth on Oct. 8, 2010. ... Sabres rookie C Mikhail Grigorenko played his first NHL game in a month after being recalled from QMJHL Quebec last week.

Jets edge Sabres despite Enroth's 37 saves

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
April 22, 2013

The Buffalo Sabres said all the right things heading into their first meaningless game. They wanted to play spoiler, show pride and fight to keep jobs.

In the back of their minds, though, they knew Monday's meeting with Winnipeg meant little. It showed early. The Jets, who needed to win to stay in the playoff race, roared past nearly every member of the home team.

Jhonas Enroth did his best to win the game – and his teammates eventually joined in – but the Sabres succumbed to Winnipeg, 2-1, in relatively barren First Niagara Center.

“They were hungry and they're playing for playoffs, and obviously we're out,” Sabres forward Marcus Foligno said. “There's different attitudes there. They played well.”

So did Enroth. He made 37 saves, including 28 in the opening two periods. He needed one more stop for the Sabres to earn an upset in front of an announced crowd of 18,654 that appeared several thousand short of that.

“I know they're going to put a lot of shots on net, and I expected the game to be like this,” Enroth said.

The Jets broke a 1-1 tie with 7:36 to play. James Wright dropped a pass to Antti Miettinen above the right faceoff circle, and his shot through traffic glanced off Enroth and went under his arm.

“I got a couple guys right in front of me there,” Enroth said, “so I never really saw it until it hit my chest or whatever it hit and bounced in.”

The Sabres took 11 of their 25 shots in the final period, but they couldn't get the equalizer and fell to 3-4 in the last seven outings.

“There was some pushback,” Foligno said of the Sabres' effort. “It took awhile. I just think they got tired from shooting so much.”

Winnipeg pulled within one point of the seventh-place New York Rangers and the eighth-place Ottawa Senators by improving to 6-0-1 in the last seven games.

Eager to stay in the race, the Jets took eight of the opening 10 shots and 12 of 15 en route to a 15-4 first period advantage.

Enroth, starting in place of Ryan Miller for the third time in five games, stopped the first 21 shots he faced, including a penalty shot by Evander Kane.

The Jets finally beat him when Aaron Gagnon, alone at the top of the crease, deflected a pass with 7:52 gone in the second.

The Sabres' power play struck for the fourth straight game four minutes later.

Just 19 seconds after Blake Wheeler trucked to the penalty box, Thomas Vanek scored his 18th goal, including his ninth on the power play.

It was all the Sabres could muster against Ondrej Pavelec.

"They had that mentality of wanting to be a playoff team still, and their hopes were alive," Sabres left wing Steve Ott said. "For us, in the back of our mind it's dwelling on us that we're not a playoff team. That's probably the difference in mentality-wise. Pride-wise, you still have to go out there and battle your [butt] off."

Every appearance means something to Enroth, who sat for more than a month this season.

He returned to the ice March 7, and since then he's gone 4-2-1 with a 1.98 goals-against average and .936 save percentage in nine appearances. In his seven starts, he's 4-1-1 with a 1.80 and .953.

There was no word on who will be in net tonight when the Sabres play in Pittsburgh.

The game was originally scheduled for last Saturday, but the manhunt for the Boston marathon bombers pushed the meeting back because the Penguins and Bruins also had their schedule altered over the weekend.

"I was just trying to look at the games I'm starting, and recently all the games I've been starting I've been playing pretty well," Enroth said.

"I want to play more games and I want to be a bigger part of the team, so I'm trying to be sharp and do good every game I get."

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subhead

Jets 2, Sabres 1

SLAP SHOTS: Jets pull within one of point of playoff spot, division lead as Miettinen scores winner with 7:36 left. ... Enroth starts in place of Miller for third time in five games, makes XX saves. ... Vanek scores on power play, which has found net in four straight games.

FAST FACT: Sabres goaltenders have stopped 38 of the 58 penalty shots they've faced, giving the team a career save percentage of .655.

NEXT GAME: At Pittsburgh Penguins, 7:30 tonight in Consol Energy Center.

Jets edge Sabres to continue playoff push

By Chris Ryndak

NHL.com

April 23, 2013

BUFFALO – Antti Miettinen moved the Winnipeg Jets within a point of a Stanley Cup Playoff spot in the Eastern Conference on Monday.

Miettinen broke a 1-1 tie with 7:36 remaining in regulation as the Jets earned a 2-1 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center.

Winnipeg is currently on a 6-0-1 run and Monday's win sets up a game against the Washington Capitals on Tuesday that will have major playoff implications. The Jets are already eagerly looking ahead.

"I think it's been circled on our calendar for a long time now," Jets captain Andrew Ladd said. "We wanted to put ourselves in a position where [Tuesday's] going to be a meaningful game and we've done that. So here it is."

With two games remaining, Winnipeg sits in ninth place with 51 points, one back of the seventh-place New York Rangers, the eighth-place Ottawa Senators and the No. 3 seed, the Southeast Division-leading Capitals. The Jets are also two-points behind the sixth-place New York Islanders. None of those teams have clinched a playoff berth yet.

Washington can clinch the Southeast on Tuesday with a win in regulation or overtime. Winnipeg is 1-3-0 against the Capitals this season. Washington outscored the Jets 10-1 in the past two games, which were played on back-to-back nights in Winnipeg.

"For us, we know what's at stake. It's the time of the year that you put your best foot forward. They'll be coming, they'll be coming for sure," Jets coach Claude Noel said. "They'll know exactly what we're doing and we're going to have to put our best foot forward. We know what we did last time we played them in our building and they'll be all we can handle. We've got to give 'em our best."

The Jets entered the game coming off a six-game homestand in which they went 5-0-1. That run helped put them back in the playoff picture as their victory against the Sabres improved their record to 24-19-3.

"This game means nothing now," Jets forward Evander Kane said. "We needed this game in order to make something of [Tuesday]. [Tuesday's] the biggest game of our season."

Aaron Gagnon also scored for Winnipeg, while Ondrej Pavelec made 24 saves in his 11th straight start. His best stop of the night came with 5:45 left in regulation, when he robbed Thomas Vanek with a glove save.

"[Vanek] was waiting, he was holding the puck. And it just hit my glove. I don't know what to say," Pavelec said with a smile. "I think the guys deserved my help because they played really well all game and that's our job, to make a save. I was happy that I was able to do it."

Pavelec and the Jets defense also prevented Buffalo's steadiest pressure of the night, which came with under a minute to go and the extra skater on.

Goaltender Jhonas Enroth kept Buffalo in the game, turning aside 37 shots. Vanek, Buffalo's leading scorer, tallied for the Sabres.

"[Enroth] was great. He was our best player by far," Sabres forward Steve Ott said. "He came in and we knew he'd be strong."

The Sabres (19-21-6) were eliminated from playoff contention with a loss to the New York Rangers on Friday.

For the game winner, Miittinen accepted a pass from James Wright at the right point and took a slap shot that made its way under Enroth's left arm and trickled in over the goal line. Miittinen said he didn't even see it go in.

"No, I really didn't see how it got in there. I was just listening to the crowd," Miittinen said.

Gagnon opened the scoring 7:42 into the second period. Jets defenseman Derek Meech skated in down the left wing boards and threw a pass in front of the net just in front of the red line. Gagnon deflected the puck up over Enroth's left shoulder as three Sabres watched. The goal was Gagnon's third goal of the season and Meech's first point of the 2012-13 campaign.

Vanek tied the game with 8:03 to play in the second with his ninth power-play goal of the season. Drew Stafford crept in from the left point and swung a pass cross-ice to Tyler Ennis. Ennis put the puck toward the net and Vanek deflected it top shelf for his team-leading 18th goal.

With his goal, Vanek passed Mike Foligno for the sixth-most goals in Sabres' history with 248. Vanek is four behind Craig Ramsay for fifth place.

Kane was awarded a penalty shot with 5:01 to play in the first period after Sabres defenseman Andrej Sekera dived and interfered with Kane on his way to the net. Enroth made a glove save on the penalty shot attempt that deflected up and over the net. Enroth is now 1-for-2 in his career on penalty shots, while Kane is 1-for-5 in his career.

The penalty shot was one of 15 saves Enroth made in the first period to keep the game scoreless as the Jets outshot the Sabres 15-4. Enroth had made 29 saves in the game by the time the second period wrapped up.

Enroth capped off an acrobatic sequence late in the second period by stopping Jets captain Andrew Ladd with the back of his skate while facing the mouth of the net. After a shot went off the post, Enroth was scrambling on his back outside of the crease without a stick. The puck made its way to the front of the net and Enroth stopped Ladd with his back turned to the play. He stopped another shot by Gagnon before Buffalo was able to clear the zone.

Jets forward Kyle Wellwood left the game in the second period after blocking a shot from Vanek. Noel said that Wellwood will be out long term with an injured hand.

"Our team has showed a lot of things for me. Character, a lot of resiliency, our focus has been really good," Noel said. "Our work ethic and our 60-minute game have been way better. I think it's been driven from intensity, emotion and we know what's at stake."

Sabres waste Enroth's strong effort, fall to Jets

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 23, 2013

BUFFALO – To Jhonas Enroth, Friday's terrible relief effort meant little. The backup goalie forgot about allowing four goals in 31 minutes at the final horn. Enroth didn't start the Sabres' 8-4 loss to the New York Rangers. The game wasn't his.

"I came off the bench the other game," Enroth said Monday after making 37 saves in the Sabres' 2-1 loss to the Winnipeg Jets. "So I really didn't care about that after the game. Just trying to look at the games I'm starting, and recently all the games I've been starting I've been playing pretty well."

Enroth's slick numbers back up his claim. The 24-year-old is scorching, playing like a future No.1 netminder again.

In his last six starts, the Swede is 4-1-1 with a 1.47 goals-against average and a .956 save percentage.

Remember, Enroth's March 12 victory was his first since Nov. 26, 2011. Following two poor early-season starts, he was possibly playing for his job not long ago.

"Jhonas was great," Sabres winger Steve Ott said. "He was our best player by far tonight. He came in. We knew he would be strong."

Enroth was strong from the get-go, making a nifty glove stop on Alexander Burmistrov just minutes into the contest, one of 15 first-period stops.

After Andrej Sekera hauled down Evander Kane later in the period, Enroth stymied the sniper's penalty shot.

"I watched the video before the game," Enroth said, "so I knew he was going to go high glove there."

Still, Enroth's sturdy effort couldn't buoy the Sabres in their first outing since Friday's loss knocked them out of the postseason chase.

Antti Miettinen's one-timer 12:24 into the third period looked harmless.

"I had a couple guys in front of me there," Enroth said. "So I never really saw it until it hit my chest or whatever it hit."

Enroth got a piece of the puck, but it trickled in, possibly under his arm.

The ninth-place Jets, who play the Capitals tonight in Washington for the Southeast Division lead, needed the win badly. The Jets trail third-place Washington and Ottawa and the Rangers, who hold the last two Eastern Conference playoff spots, by one point. Those three teams, however, each have a game in hand.

"I don't think it's a secret that we probably have to win the last three games to get in the postseason, so I think tonight was the first step," Jets captain Andrew Ladd said. "We didn't want to get ahead of ourselves. But now we've taken that step and we can focus on Washington ... and the biggest game of the year for us."

Ott thought the Jets possessed "that mentality of wanting to be a playoff team."

"For us, it's dwelling on us that we're not a playoff team in here, and that probably was the difference mentality-wise," Ott said. "Pride-wise, you still have to go out there and battle."

Ott fought Ladd late in the second period after he hit Christian Ehrhoff, one of the few times the announced crowd of 18,654 fans inside the First Niagara Center roared.

Jets rookie Aaron Gagnon opened the scoring 7:42 into the second period, deflecting a shot high.

Thomas Vanek's power-play score, his team-leading 18th goal and 37th point, tied it 11:57 into the second period.

Incredibly, the Sabres have lost six straight games to the Jets while scoring one goal in each.

Sabres rookie Mikhail Grigorenko nearly scored that elusive second goal.

In his first game since March 12, the Russian skated 15:18 and had a couple of nice scoring chances centering Jochen Hecht and Drew Stafford.

"I was a little bit disappointed I didn't score," said Grigorenko, who spent a month back in junior. "I had a couple chances. I was around maybe like five times today. But (I) couldn't."

What did interim Sabres coach Ron Rolston think of Grigorenko's 23rd NHL appearance?

"I'd have to watch the film to really give it justice," Rolston said.

Rolston gives more one-liners than the quick-witted Lindy Ruff, the man he replaced two months ago.

Only Rolston's not making a joke. He's simply not answering the question.

Rolston said Monday morning that goalie Ryan Miller, who might start tonight in Pittsburgh against the Penguins, could play at home again.

In between two Bronx cheers, Miller sarcastically saluted the crowd shortly before he was yanked Friday.

The Sabres close the season at home Friday against the New York Islanders.

Sabres' Ehrhoff excited to represent reeling German national team

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
April 23, 2013

BUFFALO – Watching Germany's national team fall into disarray and off the world stage hasn't been easy for Sabres defenseman Christian Ehrhoff.

The country recently failed to qualify for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Consider that other than three world war bans, the country's ice hockey team had qualified for every other Olympics, all of them since 1948.

"Obviously, the non-qualification for the Olympics is very frightening, very sad," Ehrhoff said Monday prior to the Sabres' 2-1 loss to the Winnipeg Jets inside the First Niagara Center.

Still, Ehrhoff accepted an invitation Sunday to represent Germany at the next month's world championship, his ninth international appearance.

Ehrhoff felt obligated to play.

"It's just not right to criticize the federation or German hockey and then not show up to try to help change things," Ehrhoff said. "I felt like I needed to do it. I wanted to do it, too. I feel like it can give me a positive end to the season."

With the Sabres out of the playoffs, expect other players to be invited to the tournament, which starts May 3 in Finland and Sweden.

Former Sabres coach Lindy Ruff will be leading Team Canada.

While Germany has hardly been a hockey superpower over the years, the sport's still popular in the country. Seven Germans are in the NHL, including current Sabres Jochen Hecht and Alexander Sulzer.

What has happened to the national team?

"It's structural things that go on behind the scenes," Ehrhoff said. "There's a lot of unsolved stuff where people just can't find solutions. It's not as organized as it should be. That's why we are in the situation we are. With the possibilities we have as a nation, we should do better."

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Sabres winger Drew Stafford called his new spot manning the left point on the power play "a totally different game."

For years, Stafford, a 6-foot-2 power forward, has played down low during man advantages. But interim Sabres coach Ron Rolston recently put Stafford on the point, a position he played in college and some of his brief run Rochester six years ago.

“You have a lot more responsibility of making solid plays, especially against teams that are pressuring really hard,” Stafford said. “You have to have a certain amount of patience up there and also just have a little bit of moxy with the puck. It’s a little more challenging.”

Stafford, who has only six goals, 16 points and a team-worst minus-17 rating in 44 games, doesn’t mind the move.

“At this point, honestly, whatever they want to do, wherever they want me to play, I’ll do my best,” he said. “If that’s where they see me fitting in, I’m going to embrace it. I really enjoy it so far.”

Stafford created Thomas Vanek’s second-period goal when he pinched into the left circle and fed Tyler Ennis on the opposite side before Ennis hit Vanek in the slot.

“I do like creeping down into that shooting area,” Stafford said.

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The Sabres scratched wingers Patrick Kaleta (hand) and Ville Leino (upper body) and defenseman Tyler Myers (leg).

Jets edge Sabres to continue playoff push

By Brandon Schlager

Sabres.com

April 23, 2013

Winnipeg 2 - Buffalo 1

Monday, April 22, 2013

First Niagara Center

GAME RECAP

Winnipeg hasn't been an easy opponent for the Buffalo Sabres of late. The Jets showed why Monday night.

Fighting for their playoff lives, Winnipeg skated into First Niagara Center and extended its winning streak against the Sabres to six games with a 2-1 win. Buffalo has scored just one goal in each of those six games, a streak that dates back to the beginning of last season.

Jhonas Enroth was the game's first star, stopping 37 of 39 shots, but took the loss in net. Enroth falls to 4-1-1 in his last six starts while maintaining a .956 save percentage and a 1.47 goals against average. Thomas Vanek scored the Sabres only goal, his 18th of the season, and with it moved into sixth place on the Sabres all-time scoring list, passing Mike Foligno with 248 career goals.

The Jets sit just one point back of the idle New York Rangers for the eighth and final Eastern Conference playoff spot with two games to go following the win. The Rangers eliminated the Sabres from contention Friday.

Buffalo will close out its season Friday at home against the New York Islanders following a trip to Pittsburgh tomorrow night.

1st Period

Both teams went scoreless in the first period. Enroth, however, was kept busy, making a handful of big saves throughout to keep the Jets off the board. His biggest save came with five minutes left when he turned aside Evander Kane on a penalty shot. Winnipeg outshot Buffalo, 14-4.

2nd Period

After Winnipeg's Aaron Gagnon broke the scoreless tie at the 12:18 mark, Thomas Vanek's 18th goal of the season pulled the Sabres even again five minutes later. The play started from the left corner, where Drew Stafford slung the puck cross-ice to Tyler Ennis, who then found Vanek in the slot with a perfect pass for the power-play goal. The Sabres were outshot 14-10 in the period.

3rd Period

Antti Miettinen scored the eventual game-winner with 7:36 remaining in the period. Buffalo held an 11-10 advantage in shots.

BEHIND THE NUMBERS:

Vanek's power-play goal was his ninth this season, tying him for third-most in the NHL. ... Tyler Ennis extended his point streak to four games (1+4) with an assist on Vanek's goal; Drew

Stafford pushed his to three games (1+2). ... Mikhail Grigorenko accumulated 15:18 in ice time, his second-highest total this season. ... This was the 51st game all-time between Buffalo and Winnipeg/Atlanta; Buffalo leads the series, 21-19-11. ... The Sabres are 14-8-4 all-time at home against Winnipeg/Atlanta.

ROSTER NOTES:

Mikhail Grigorenko played in his first NHL game since March 12 after sitting out two games following his recall last week. ... Patrick Kaleta (hand) missed his 12th game this season.

BUFFALO'S REAL-TIME STATS LEADERS:

Time on Ice: Christian Ehrhoff, 23:38

Shots: Thomas Vanek, 6

Blocked Shots: Six tied with 1

Hits: Mike Weber, 5

Faceoff Wins: Mikhail Grigorenko, 9

Total Faceoffs: Cody Hodgson, 18 (8-10)

BUFFALO'S RECORD WHEN...

When opponent scores first: 5-17-2

Tied after the second period: 8-6-0

When outshot by opponent: 15-15-2

Game decided by one goal: 12-9-6

SPECIAL TEAMS:

Power Play

Today: 1/1

Overall: 23/160 (14.4%)

Home: 13/79 (16.5%)

Penalty Kill

Today: 3/3

Overall: 135/171 (79%)

Home: 59/75 (78.7%)

UP NEXT:

* Tuesday at Pittsburgh, 7:30 p.m.

* Friday vs. New York Islanders, 7 p.m.

Jets win, set up showdown with Caps

By Mark Ludwiczak
The Sports Xchange
April 23, 2013

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Winnipeg Jets won't be savoring Monday's 2-1 victory over the Buffalo Sabres for very long.

That's because the biggest game of their season is right around the corner.

Antti Miettinen scored the game-winning goal with 7:36 remaining, and Ondrej Pavelec made 24 saves -- including a highlight-reel glove stop on Thomas Vanek with under six minutes to go -- to give the red-hot Jets two critical points in the final stage of the season.

With the win, the Jets (24-19-3) have 51 points -- one fewer than the Capitals, who sit atop the Southeast Division. The two teams square off Tuesday in Washington.

"This game means nothing now," Jets forward Evander Kane said. "We needed this game in order to make something of tomorrow. Tomorrow's the biggest game of our season."

Aaron Gagnon also scored for the Jets, who are 6-0-1 in their last seven games.

The Capitals have one game in hand on Winnipeg, meaning the Jets do not control their own destiny in the division race, but Tuesday's game could go a long way in deciding which team makes it to the postseason. After Tuesday, the Capitals end the season with home games against the Ottawa Senators and the Boston Bruins. Winnipeg's lone game after Tuesday is home against the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday.

The Jets are also one point behind the New York Rangers and Ottawa, who currently sit seventh and eighth in the Eastern Conference. Like the Capitals, the Rangers and Senators each have a game in hand on Winnipeg.

"It's a big game," Jets coach Claude Noel said of Tuesday's matchup. "For us, we know what's at stake. It's the time of the year that you put your best foot forward. They'll be coming for sure. They'll know exactly what we're doing, and we're going to have to put our best foot forward. ... We've got to give 'em our best."

Vanek scored for the Sabres, who fell to 19-21-6. Jhonas Enroth, making the start in place of Ryan Miller, was terrific between the pipes for the Sabres. Enroth had 37 saves overall, several of them highlight-reel stops.

"He actually kept us in it for most of the game," Sabres interim coach Ron Rolston said. Miettinen scored the game-winner on a blast from the right point at 12:24 of the third. The shot hit Enroth under the goalie's left arm and continued into the net for the defenseman's third goal of the year.

"I had a couple guys in front of me there," Enroth said, "so I never really saw it until it hit my chest or whatever it hit."

The Jets opened the scoring at 7:22 of the second period on their 22nd shot of the game.

Defenseman Derek Meech skated past Buffalo's Jochen Hecht along the left boards and fed Gagnon, who redirected the puck into the top of the net. It was Gagnon's third goal of the season.

Buffalo tied the game on the power play just over four minutes later on Vanek's 18th goal of the season. Tyler Ennis found Vanek camped in the slot, and Buffalo's leading scorer redirected the puck past Pavelec. Vanek moved into a three-way tie for third in the NHL with nine power-play goals.

The Jets got off to a quick start but were unable to capitalize on any of their chances within the first 20 minutes.

Kane nearly opened the scoring at 14:59 after being awarded a penalty shot. Kane was illegally taken down on his initial breakaway attempt, but the forward's wrist on the penalty shot was stopped by Enroth. Enroth got a piece of Kane's shot with his glove, and the puck deflected off the cross bar and over the net. Winnipeg outshot Buffalo 15-4 in the opening period and outshot the Sabres 39-25 overall.

"I don't think it's a secret that we probably have to win the last three games to get into the postseason, so tonight was the first step," Jets captain Andrew Ladd said. "We didn't want to get ahead of ourselves, but now we've taken that step and we can focus on Washington tomorrow and the biggest game of the year for us.

"I think it's been circled on our calendar for a long time now. We wanted to put ourselves in a position where tomorrow's going to be a meaningful game, and we've done that. So here it is."

NOTES: Jets center Kyle Wellwood will miss the remainder of the season after suffering a hand injury against the Sabres. ... Rookie Mikhail Grigorenko played in his first game with the Sabres since March 12; the rookie was sent down to his junior team, the Quebec Remparts, following that contest. Grigorenko returned to the Sabres after the Remparts were eliminated from the QMJHL playoffs. ... Ville Leino (upper body), Patrick Kaleta (hand) and Tyler Myers (broken leg) were scratched for the Sabres. ... Jacob Trouba, Olli Jokinen, Anthony Peluso, Arturs Kulda, Zach Redmond, Tobias Enstrom, Zach Bogosian and Nik Antropov were scratched for the Jets. ... This was the 51st meeting all-time between Buffalo and Winnipeg/Atlanta. It was also the third and final meeting between the teams this season

Jets Hold Off Sabres 2-1

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

April 23, 2013

Jhonas Enroth came up with 37 saves Monday night against Winnipeg, but it wasn't enough to prevent the Jets from skating away with a 2-1 victory. Thomas Vanek scored Buffalo's lone goal, his 18th.

The two sides were both kept out of the net in the first period, but not for lack of trying -- especially by the Jets. Winnipeg racked up 14 opening period shots, but Jhonas Enroth stopped each, including a penalty shot attempt by Evander Kane.

Buffalo fell behind 1-0 at 7:42 of the second on Aaron Gagnon's 3rd of the season. Gagnon was left alone in front of the Sabres' crease and tipped a Derek Meech pass over Enroth's left shoulder to put Winnipeg ahead. Thomas Vanek tied it up with a power play goal 4:15 later. Vanek redirected a Tyler Ennis pass into the Jets' net for his 18th, making it a 1-1 game.

Winnipeg regained the lead at 12:24 of the third period thanks to Antti Miettinen. Enroth appeared to get most of the shot, but the puck dribbled under his pads and over the goalline to put the Jets ahead for good 2-1.

Playing in his first game since March 12, Mikhail Grigorenko saw 15:18 of ice time over 15 shifts, with one shot on net. Grigorenko was a healthy scratch for Buffalo's last two games after rejoining the team from QMJHL Quebec.

The Sabres have just two games remaining, including Tuesday's postponed road trip to Pittsburgh. Faceoff against the Penguins will be 7:30 p.m. on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

None

Penalties

11:18 - BUF - Steve Ott (2 min., cross checking)

2nd Period

Goals

7:42 - WPG - Aaron Gagnon (3) (Derek Meech, Dustin Byfuglien)

11:57 - BUF - Thomas Vanek (PPG) (18) (Tyler Ennis, Drew Stafford)

Penalties

3:48 - BUF - John Scott (2 min., high-sticking)

11:38 - WPG - Blake Wheeler (2 min., hooking)

19:34 - BUF - Steve Ott (2 min., roughing)

19:34 - BUF - Steve Ott (5 min., fighting)

19:34 - WPG - Andrew Ladd (5 min., fighting)

3rd Period

Goals

12:24 - WPG - Antti Miettinen (3) (James Wright, Mark Stuart)

Penalties

None

Goaltending

WPG - Ondrej Pavelec (24 saves, 25 shots)

BUF - Jhonas Enroth (37 saves, 39 shots)

Power Plays

WPG - 0 of 3

BUF - 1 of 1

Three Stars

1.) BUF - Jhonas Enroth (37 saves)

2.) WPG - Antti Miettinen (1 G, 0 A)

3.) BUF - Tyler Ennis (0 G, 1 A)

Sabres Grigorenko makes his return

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 23, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Mikhail Grigorenko skated with the Sabres for the first time since coming back from his junior team. He centered Jochen Hecht and Drew Stafford and was okay in the first period.

On his first shift he was totally lost in the defensive zone and lost Alexander Burmistrov. Jhonas Enroth showed he recovered from Friday making a phenomenal glove save.

After that, the kid relaxed and made a couple of nice, quick passes to get out of the zone. The first was given to him in his skates by Mike Weber and he still was able to kick it up to his skates and make a good pass out.

The second was again a nice, quick play where he found a streaking Hecht. The winger took it right to the net, but shot wide.

As the period wound down, Grigorenko came across from the wall to the front. Hecht laid a perfect pass to him and he would've had half the net, but the puck either bounced or he missed it.

Grigorenko had five shifts for 4:12 in the period. He won all three faceoffs he took.

The second period was a pretty good period for him as well. After being burned early by Burmistrov, he came back with him right to the net twice.

Winnipeg looked like it was going to clear the zone, but Grigorenko came out of nowhere to cause the turnover and got the puck in deep forcing Ondrej Pavelec into a good save.

He got a puck in the defensive zone in the right circle and quickly put a pass off the wall right on the tape to Stafford producing a three on two.

Through two periods he played nine shifts for 9:41. He won seven of nine faceoffs.

In the third, Hecht came down two on one with Grigorenko and tried to pass it to him. He got his stick lifted otherwise it would've been a tap in.

Grigorenko finished with 15:18 total ice time over 15 shifts with one shot on net. He also won nine faceoffs and lost six.

Overall, I think Grigorenko showed he belonged more this evening than he has in many other games this season. Obviously there's still a long ways to go, but I think he can be happy with that game and build off it.

"I got some confidence back in juniors," he said after the game. "I played with confidence today and I was good on faceoffs. When I'm doing good at faceoffs, it gives me some more confidence and we had the puck more today."

Sabres Ott not soured at all

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 23, 2013

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- There was a lot of disappointment not only with the fans, but in the lockerroom at the way the elimination game against the Rangers went.

Buffalo needed not to lose in regulation to stay alive and they went out and gave up eight goals at home.

I know, some of you out there think these players don't care, but I can tell you that's not it. Yes, there are big problems, but not caring isn't one of them.

Now the question is what are we going to see for the next three games starting tonight against Winnipeg? Steve Ott said, "Our mentality has to be the same. We have to play with a lot of pride. Our main goal was to get into the playoffs and obviously it's not possible now and now it's playing for pride and playing for the passion of the Buffalo Sabres organization. We tried all season long, especially in the last little while, but we really want to have that mentality."

The reason these players play this game is to get into the playoffs and compete for the Stanley Cup. When that's taken away, it can't be easy to get over that and keep playing. Ott said, "It's tough, I can't stand it. Me personally I think this is my 5th year now I believe that I haven't been in the playoffs and it sucks. You play this sport to get into the playoffs and have a chance at the Stanley Cup and you know what it is, it's that old cliché of being bigger, faster, stronger and you've got a lot of time now to start changing your ways and prepping for the future.

When Ott walked into the door for the first time after the lockout, he was thinking something totally different than what's taken place, "For sure, I imagined ourselves as a playoff team and a contender, but that's not the case, but there's still a lot of great respect and I've had a great time learning to be a Buffalo Sabre and going out there and seeing what this is all about. It's very frustrating that we're not a playoff team because that's the main goal from the beginning of training camp, but I truthfully believe in the organization from the ownership all the way down that the ship is going to be right here and we're going to be moving forward."

Ott stated a few weeks ago that he wants to be a Sabre for a long time and it doesn't sound like that's changed, "They've been so first class to myself since I've been traded here from ownership, through management through coaches through my teammates, I've truly enjoyed being a Buffalo Sabre. It's left to management what they want to do future wise, (Ott has one year remaining on his contract) with everything and I want to be a part of the solution and not the problem.

Ott will be part of the pregame show with Schopp and the Bulldog beginning at 6:00.