



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 27, 2014*

## **Sabres-Predators Preview**

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Associated Press

March 26, 2014

A meeting with the NHL-worst Buffalo Sabres could be just what the Nashville Predators need to avoid the longest home losing streak in franchise history.

The Predators look to snap a six-game skid on their own ice by beating the injury-riddled Sabres at home for the first time in over 10 years Thursday night.

Nashville (31-31-11) is nine points back of Phoenix for the Western Conference's second wild-card spot with nine games remaining for both teams.

If the Predators miss the playoffs for a second straight season, they could point to their recent struggles at Bridgestone Arena. They've gone 0-5-1 in the last six there to match the team-record skid for the fourth time and first since April 4-15.

Nashville equaled the mark Tuesday as it failed to build on a pair of road wins by losing 5-4 in a shootout to Colorado.

"It felt like one of those games where you deserve to win it by the way you played, but you need to give a lot of credit to their team," center Matt Cullen said.

Cullen scored twice to give him three goals and three assists in the past three games after he had five points over his previous 20.

Defenseman Shea Weber leads the Predators with 46 points but hasn't managed any during the home losing streak. He had a goal and an assist in a 4-1 road win over Buffalo (20-44-8) on March 11.

Weber, though, has no points in three career home meetings with the Sabres, and Nashville has dropped each of them dating to a 4-1 win Nov. 29, 2003.

Buffalo will likely finish the season with the fewest points in the NHL, and it's lost nine of 10 while totaling 11 goals. Scoring has been an issue all season, as the Sabres have been shut out 10 times to tie the franchise record set in 1996-97.

They were blanked again Tuesday, falling 2-0 to Montreal while dropping to 1-3-0 on this five-game road trip. To make matters worse, defenseman Tyler Myers (upper body) and right wing Torrey Mitchell (undisclosed) suffered injuries.

They're added to an injured list that includes goaltenders Jhonas Enroth (lower body) and Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and center Zenon Konopka (back).

"Almost every game somebody goes down. It's one of those things, when things go bad, I guess they go bad," coach Ted Nolan told the team's official website.

Matt Hackett is expected to make back-to-back starts for the first time since being recalled from Rochester of the AHL on March 17.

Hackett had 33 saves against the Canadiens after making 35 in a 3-1 win at Edmonton last Thursday, his first victory since beating Phoenix 3-2 in a shootout with Minnesota on March 8, 2012.

"He played well the last two games, particularly last game in Montreal," Nolan said. "I thought he was the difference maker. It could've been a lot worse, but he kept us in the game."

## **With jobs on the line, on-ice woes persist**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 26, 2014

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Before they became Sabres broadcasters, Rob Ray and Brad May played on one of the most competitive teams in Buffalo's sporting history. Dubbed "The Hardest-Working Team in Hockey" during the mid-1990s, players pushed each other to be better on a daily basis.

As this edition of the Sabres heads into tonight's game in Nashville with nine losses in 10 games, folks are wondering if the players know they're supposed to compete for victories and future employment.

"You know, I had a great conversation with Brad May and Rob Ray on the airplane," coach Ted Nolan said Wednesday. "They played as long as they had because they're very competitive people. The one thing they both said to me is, 'Do these guys realize they're auditioning? Do they realize that some of them their contracts are up?'"

"I'm hoping they do."

The players say they understand, but they've had a funny way of showing it.

An inability to score combined with a penchant for foolish decisions has made a future in the NHL hazy for many. Buffalo has 12 players who will be free agents this summer, and it's unlikely many general managers will flock toward people who failed to stand out on the worst team in the league.

"You play for your career each and every night," right wing Matt D'Agostini, a waiver claim who will be an unrestricted free agent, said in Bridgestone Arena. "You want a job for next year, especially when you're in my situation. I've kind of been on the brink the last couple years."

"I'm just trying to play hard – not to sound selfish like it's all about myself – but if I play hard, play my game, it's going to help the team win. But it's also for getting jobs for the future."

D'Agostini and fellow forward Cory Conacher drew Nolan's ire Tuesday in Montreal for taking bad penalties. It prompted the coach to say players are indeed competing for future employment.

In addition to D'Agostini, Zenon Konopka, John Scott, Alexander Sulzer and Henrik Tallinder will be unrestricted free agents. Conacher, Tyler Ennis, Marcus Foligno, Jamie McBain, Chad Ruhwedel, Nicolas Deslauriers and Matt Hackett are set to be restricted free agents.

“You want to leave a good impression going into the summer,” Conacher said. “A lot of us on this team are due for a new contract. Every day’s pretty much a tryout, no matter what game it is in the season. You’ve got to prove you can play in this league.”

The last Sabres team to resemble this one was in 2002-03 edition.

Buffalo finished 26th overall, and players such as Radoslav Hecl, Sean McMorrow and Jaroslav Kristek were never seen in the NHL again. Norm Milley, Jason Botterill and Milan Bartovic followed them out the door a short time later.

“Obviously, we have a lot of draft picks, a lot of young guys,” Conacher said. “You might not see some of these guys in the room next year. It’s going to be important for us to work together, help each other out and earn respect.”

The arrival of a new general manager should increase the uneasiness for the Sabres’ underachievers. Tim Murray isn’t beholden to any of them, and he joined the team in Music City to watch the game against the Predators.

“It’s a rebuilding time here in Buffalo,” D’Agostini said, “and obviously with the record it’s going to be a major shake-up, new guys coming in, some guys going out. That’s just the way it is when a team isn’t successful.

“That’s why you’ve just got to work hard and show them that you want to be here.”

## **Hackett earns an encore start tonight for Sabres**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 26, 2014

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — If there's one thing Matt Hackett proved during his first two games with the Sabres, it's that he deserves a third. He'll get it tonight.

Coach Ted Nolan is going back to Hackett against Nashville after the goaltender shined during a win over Edmonton and a 2-0 loss to Montreal on Tuesday.

"Hackett definitely earned it," Nolan said Wednesday in Bridgestone Arena. "That's one thing about now, it's audition time. When you audition and you do a couple good things in the auditions, you should get another one."

"He played well the last two games, particularly the last game in Montreal. I thought he was a difference maker. It could have been a lot worse, but he kept us in the game."

Hackett stopped the Canadiens' first 31 shots and finished with 33 stops. He turned aside 35 of 36 last week during a 3-1 win over the Oilers, the Sabres' only victory in their last 10 outings.

"I try to be calm in there," Hackett said. "I try and be positionally sound. I don't make too many flashy saves. Like Jim Corsi says, I want to be sticky. I want to be sticky all the time and get hit in the chest. That's how my goal is, and that's how I want to play."

Hackett was in command in Montreal, which meant a lot to the 24-year-old. His uncle Jeff Hackett was a goalie for the Habs from 1998 to 2003.

"It was fun to play in the building that my uncle used to play in," the Sabres' Hackett said. "I was pretty nervous going into it, but then I settled down and felt good. It was a special game for me, and I had a blast."

...

The first five questions of Nolan's post-practice chat dealt with injured players. Obviously, things aren't getting much better in Sabreland.

Tyler Myers, Marcus Foligno, Torrey Mitchell and Zenon Konopka missed the Sabres' workout with various ailments, while goaltender Michal Neuvirth was sent back to Buffalo for further evaluation of his lower-body injury.

"Every game somebody goes down," Nolan said. "It's one of those things when things go bad, they go bad."

While Foligno should be back tonight, he's the only definite. Myers is banged up after crashing into a goal post, Konopka is out with a back injury suffered on an airplane ride and Mitchell is unlikely to play after getting hurt in Montreal.

"Mitchell, his is something that's maybe a little more serious, but we'll take a look at him later," said Nolan, who added a couple of players in Rochester would be put on call if it appeared players wouldn't be ready. "There's a silver lining for everything. Now it gives more kids from Rochester who are playing well maybe have a chance to play up here."

...

It remains unclear whether goaltender Jhonas Enroth will play during the final 10 games. He has been recuperating in Buffalo after suffering a leg injury March 16.

"We thought it was something and it wasn't," Nolan said. "Check another thing and it wasn't that, either. They're just doing evaluations, and we think it was what we originally thought it was – if that answers your question in a roundabout way.

"We think it's just going to take a little bit longer for him to heal. I wouldn't rule him out totally."

...

The Sabres' penalty-kill unit has gone an impressive 15 for 17 during the last five games. Rather than be excited, it is lamenting a power-play goal scored by Daniel Briere with 3:06 left Tuesday. It ruined what had been a 5-for-5 night.

"We did a good job that whole game, and then that last one we got up ice and they had a three-on-three," said center Brian Flynn, who skated 6:04 short-handed. "It's one of those things where you do good all game and then you give up that late one, it hurts."

## **Sabres finish five-game trip vs. Predators**

By Davis Harper

NHL.com

March 26, 2014

SABRES (20-44-8) at PREDATORS (31-31-11)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-TN

Last 10: Buffalo 1-9-0; Nashville 5-4-1

Season series: Shea Weber had a goal and an assist when the Nashville Predators beat the Buffalo Sabres 4-1 on March 11. The Sabres visit Nashville for the first time since Dec. 11, 2011, when they came away with a 3-2 win.

Big story: This game will be a tale of two goalies.

With injuries to Michal Neuvirth and Jhonas Enroth, Sabres rookie Matt Hackett has stepped up. Hackett is 1-1-0 with a .958 save percentage and 1.51 goals-against average in his first two appearances for the Sabres. Coach Ted Nolan said Hackett has earned the temporary starter's job.

"Hackett definitely earned it. That's one thing about now, it's audition time. You audition and you do a couple good auditions, you should get another one," Nolan said.

Predators franchise goalie Pekka Rinne has made nearly every start since returning from injury on March 4, but with mixed results. Rinne has gone 3-5-2, but made 29 saves in a 2-0 victory against the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday.

Team Scope:

Sabres: The Sabres have the longest injury list in the NHL, with nine players -- including both regular goalies -- currently out of the lineup. While the Sabres have sunk further down the standings as a result, the injuries have given Nolan a chance to audition AHL talent.

"Almost every game somebody goes down. It's one of those things, when things go bad, I guess they go bad," Nolan said. "Now it gives a chance for some more kids from Rochester who've been playing well, maybe have a chance to play here the last six, seven games."

After defenseman Tyler Myers and forwards Marcus Foligno and Torrey Mitchell all left with injuries Tuesday in a 2-0 loss to the Montreal Canadiens, there is a chance that more players from the Sabres' AHL affiliate in Rochester could be called up as the Sabres finish up their five-game road trip at Bridgestone Arena.



Predators: Nashville hasn't won at home since Feb. 27, a six-game skid, and with 73 points in 73 games, the Predators are nine points behind the Phoenix Coyotes, who own the Western Conference's second wild-card position in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. The Predators need wins, home and away, and some luck if they hope to close the gap.

"We have a chance here to collect two points at home," coach Barry Trotz said. "We've got to get something going on at home. Our last 15 games at home haven't been great, while our last 15 games away have been. It's a trade off, but this is the place we have to make it real hard for a team to come in and get points."

Who's hot: Tyler Ennis has a goal and an assist in Buffalo's past three games and lead the Sabres with 19 goals and 38 points. ... Nashville rookie center Calle Jarnkrok has three assists in three games since being acquired from the Detroit Red Wings. Jarnkrok also converted first career shootout attempt Tuesday against the Colorado Avalanche.

Injury report: Buffalo goalies Enroth (leg) and Neuvirth (lower body) are day-to-day. Nolan said Foligno should be ready to play Thursday. Mitchell (undisclosed) and Myers (undisclosed) were to be re-evaluated Wednesday. Center Zenon Konopka (back), forward Zemgus Girgensons (lower body) and defenseman Alexander Sulzer (upper body) are day-to-day. Winger Chris Stewart (ankle) is out for the season. ... Nashville defenseman Seth Jones (concussion), winger Patrick Eaves (lower body) and center Paul Gaustad (upper body) are all day-to-day.

## **Preview: Predators vs. Sabres**

By Nick Cole

Nashville Tennessean

March 26, 2014

SABRES at PREDATORS

When: 7 p.m. Thursday

Where: Bridgestone Arena

TV/radio: Fox-TN/102.5-FM

Predators keys: 1) Take advantage of home ice: The Predators have not won at Bridgestone Arena since beating Tampa Bay 3-2 on Feb. 27. The month-long drought must end Thursday if Nashville wants to keep its slim playoff hopes alive. 2) Keep Cullen hot: Veteran forward Matt Cullen has turned his offensive game up a notch playing with Mike Fisher and Patric Hornqvist. He has three goals and three assists in the past three games. 3) Beat bad teams: Buffalo enters with the league's worst record (20-44-8), trailing the nearest team by 11 points. The Sabres also have the league's worst offensive attack, averaging just 1.89 goals per game.

Injuries: Predators F Paul Gaustad (upper body), F Patrick Eaves (lower body) and D Seth Jones (upper body) are out. Sabres F Torrey Mitchell (undisclosed), F Zenon Konopka (back) and G Michal Neuvirth (lower body) are out; D Tyler Myers (upper body) and F Marcus Foligno (undisclosed) are questionable.

Next for Predators: 7:30 p.m. Friday at Dallas.

## **Former Sabres goalie Ryan Miller relied on less with Blues, still adjusting to new team**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 27, 2014

TORONTO – Nights like Tuesday are acceptable now. Former Buffalo Sabres goalie Ryan Miller wasn't dynamic in the St. Louis Blues' 5-3 victory against the Maple Leafs. He looked average, even a bit shaky at times while making only 22 saves.

But Miller doesn't have to be perfect these days. The 33-year-old's tending goal for the NHL's best team, not its worst.

Miller is 8-2-1 since the blockbuster Feb. 28 deal sent the franchise goalie and captain Steve Ott to the powerhouse Blues. He's facing only 23.8 shots a game in St. Louis, down from the 35.3 he saw each contest with Buffalo.

"You just try to fit in," Miller said following the game inside the Air Canada Centre. "You're part of a good team. They work hard. They do the right things. They work for each other. They got a lot of talent. It's just slotting in and seeing where we can go."

Of course, the Blues, who have an NHL-high 49 wins and 105 points, are gunning for the Stanley Cup. The team possesses a "swagger and confidence" Miller hasn't experienced in years.

"There was tough years there in Buffalo for him," said former Sabres defenseman Jordan Leopold, a Blues regular. "To finally get out of that whole spectacle that's been going on the past few years is probably a breath of fresh air for him. Let him play his game and let him relax."

Going from worst to first has been "an adjustment," Miller said.

"You're brought into potentially someone else's party," he said. "You got to learn how to fit in and you got to definitely have the attitude where you're on a team that expects to win."

Friendships have helped Miller acclimate quickly. Besides Leopold and Ott, former Sabres center Derek Roy is a Blues regular. Miller played with David Backes, T.J. Oshie and Kevin Shattenkirk on the recent U.S. Olympic entry.

"I'm trying to just get the rhythm of what everyone does around the rink," Miller said. "So it's different. You come to a new rink and there's different routines and there's different meeting times and there's all these little things that go into practice day or game day."

It's very different on the ice, where Miller's adjusting to a new system.

"I got to learn how to make my reads just a little bit different," Miller said.

The Sabres allow their goalie to take the shot and play everything away from the puck, St. Louis coach Ken Hitchcock said. He has his Blues block the shot and clog the lane.

Hitchcock estimated Miller had grasped 60-70 of the new system. Believe it or not, Miller's save percentage is 10 points lower (.913) with the Blues. He's allowed 10 goals in his last three games.

"I had a fast start," Miller said. "I'm just trying to work my way back into a little more of a rhythm now."

The one constant is "they still need saves," Miller said. He knows no one wants to hear a goalie complain about facing fewer shots.

"They're probably just going to roll their eyes and not going to want to hear it," he said. "You just try to fit in with the team. You try to find your role and do your job."

His old team has endured more turmoil in the month since the trade. Pat LaFontaine resigned as the Sabres' president of hockey operations the day after he left.

The sudden exit "kind of shocked" Miller, who said he noticed as the trade deadline approached he hadn't seen LaFontaine.

"I don't know the inner workings of what was going on," Miller said.

Still, interim Sabres coach Ted Nolan, a LaFontaine hire, is expected to sign a contract extension soon.

"To go that long away from the NHL and be a high-level coach, I'm glad he got an opportunity," Miller said. "He is a good coach. He cares about the players. I think he recognizes some of the buttons he needs to push."

xxx

Nolan told reporters Wednesday in Nashville winger Torrey Mitchell and defenseman Tyler Myers, who crashed into the net Tuesday, are questionable for tonight's game against the Predators. Mitchell's injury is more serious, he said.

The Sabres could make a couple of recalls. Center Zenon Konopka is still out.

Nolan said goalie Michal Neuvirth (lower body) has returned to Buffalo.

Goalie Matt Hackett, who has a 1.51 goals-against average and .958 save percentage in two games, will make his second straight start tonight.

## **INJURIES CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAYERS LIKE HACKETT**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 26, 2014

NASHVILLE – It seems as if every day, Buffalo Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan has to provide an update on another player that has sustained an injury.

Tyler Myers, Marcus Foligno, Torrey Mitchell and Zenon Konopka missed practice Wednesday afternoon at Bridgestone Arena. Myers, Foligno and Mitchell got hurt in Buffalo's game against the Montreal Canadiens on Tuesday.

Myers was tripped going in on goal midway through the third period and slid into the goal post. He took only three shifts after that.

Foligno blocked a shot by Brendan Gallagher while on the penalty kill in the second period and made his way to the bench after that. He ended up finishing the game with 16:19 of ice time.

Mitchell played virtually the entire game, his last shift ending with 1:01 remaining in regulation. He logged 15:42 of ice time, including 5:42 on the penalty kill.

Nolan said that Tuesday was more of a maintenance day for both Myers and Foligno. He expects Foligno to be ready to play against the Nashville Predators on Thursday.

The team will examine Myers and Mitchell and decide later in the evening whether or not they'll be able to play. Mitchell's injury might be "a little more serious" than the others, according to Nolan.

Konopka missed the game in Montreal due to a back injury. Nolan said it doesn't look like he'll be ready Thursday night.

There's a chance players will have to be called up from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League to fill the holes in the lineup. The Amerks – on the second half of a back-to-back – host the Milwaukee Admirals on Wednesday.

"Almost every game somebody goes down. It's one of those things, when things go bad, I guess they go bad," Nolan said. "Now it gives a chance for some more kids from Rochester who've been playing well, maybe have a chance to play here the last six, seven games."

Michal Neuvirth, who has not skated with the team the past few days, went back to Buffalo for further evaluations on his lower-body injury. He made his last appearance in net on March 13.

Jhonas Enroth did not travel with the team for their five-game road trip due to a lower-body injury he sustained on March 16. Nolan said he's also being re-evaluated and that there's a chance he could return before the season ends on April 13.

With both goaltenders on the shelf, Matt Hackett and Nathan Lieuwen have rotated starts the past four games. However, Nolan said Tuesday that he plans to stop the rotation and stick with Hackett.

Hackett picked up his first win with the Sabres on Thursday in Edmonton, where he made 35 saves. On Monday, he stopped 33 shots in a 2-0 loss in Montreal.

“Hackett definitely earned it. That’s one thing about now, it’s audition time. You audition and you do a couple good auditions, you should get another one,” Nolan said.

Before practice on Tuesday, Hackett sat on the bench with goaltending coach Jim Corsi as the two went over some video. Corsi and the defense then did some drills with Hackett toward the end of practice.

With the team’s busy travel schedule lately, there hasn’t been much time for on-ice work and Hackett said he’s glad they got the chance to go over some things in Nashville.

“It’s nice to get out there and can actually feel the puck, kind of work on a few things with him,” he said. “He wants me to keep my hands forward. They’ve been creeping back a bit in my stance so that’s one thing we’ve tried to focus on a bit. Just being sticky, like he says. Try and make saves look easy and keep them in my chest.”

Hackett said he felt calmer in his second start than he did in Edmonton.

“I felt maybe a little more relaxed, with the puck handling, especially,” he said. “I had a few good touches out there, maybe a couple mishandles, but I felt more comfortable going back there and I thought I was just seeing the puck pretty well.”

Hackett’s performance against the Canadiens is the one that made Nolan lean toward starting him against the Predators.

“He played well the last two games, particularly last game in Montreal,” Nolan said. “I thought he was the difference maker. It could’ve been a lot worse, but he kept us in the game.”

Nolan was asked if the players realize they’re being evaluated every day to see if they fit into the team’s plans moving forward.

“I had a great conversation with [Sabres broadcasters and alumni] Brad May and Rob Ray on the airplane last night,” Nolan said. “They played as they had because they’re very competitive people and the one thing they both said to me was, ‘Do these guys realize that they’re auditioning? Do they realize some of them, their contracts are up? Do they realize?’ So I’m hoping they do.”