



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*October 3, 2014*

## **Sabres' roster spots down to precious few**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 2, 2014

Training camp can often be a waste of time for NHL fringe players, specifically free agents and rookies. The roster is all but set for many teams, and bubble guys might not even get a second glance from coaches and management.

The Sabres made sure to do things differently. Buffalo heads into its final preseason game tonight in Carolina (7 p.m., Radio 550 AM) having used 37 skaters, and 25 have played multiple games. The inclusion has increased camaraderie and made the players feel like they were given a fair opportunity.

"You see a difference in attitude with everybody," General Manager Tim Murray said. "You see more competition. You see the competition looks to be on merit and not based on who drafted who where and when. The players have more belief in us, and we're headed in the right direction."

There weren't many jobs available when the Sabres opened camp two weeks ago, but the organization promised the players they'd get a chance to make the team. "Earned, not given" is how the coaching staff put it.

"Honestly, that was what they told me in July, and I think that's what they're doing now," defenseman Tyson Strachan said Thursday in First Niagara Center. "Really, at the end of the day, that's all you can hope for and all you can appreciate is getting a fair look and being given the opportunity. What you do with it is on you."

Strachan is one of nine guys hoping to still be in Buffalo on Tuesday when the opening-night roster is due. The Sabres have 26 healthy players, and they need to get down to 23.

"There's been no shortages of trying to showcase yourself and what you can do," said forward Zac Dalpe, who will play for the fifth time in the Sabres' six exhibitions. "It's another game to try and prove why you belong in this league."

Based on contracts, status and the preferences of coach Ted Nolan, there are likely 17 locks to make the team. There are 10 forwards (Matt Moulson, Tyler Ennis, Drew Stafford, Cody Hodgson, Zemgus Girgensons, Brian Gionta, Marcus Foligno, Chris Stewart, Nicolas Deslauriers and Cody McCormick), five defensemen (Tyler Myers, Josh Gorges, Mike Weber, Andrej Meszaros and Andre Benoit) and two goaltenders (Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth).

Nolan said he'll likely keep seven defensemen, which leaves four players – Jake McCabe, Rasmus Ristolainen, Nikita Zadorov and Strachan – competing for two spots. Injured Mark Pysyk may return to practice next week.

McCabe and Ristolainen can be sent to Rochester, while Strachan would need to clear waivers before reporting to the Amerks. Zadorov can play only in Buffalo or for his junior team in London, Ont.

McCabe has one goal, six shots and a plus-4 rating in three preseason games. Ristolainen has an assist, five shots and a minus-1 in three outings. Zadorov has an assist and three shots in three games, while Strachan has an assist and a plus-2 in his three appearances.

"The physical side of the game is something I bring," said the 6-foot-3, 215-pound Strachan, "but honestly I'm a composure and first-pass kind of guy. I think I'm great at getting out of our own end, and that's important in today's hockey. You go back, separate guys off the puck and make a good pass. It's a puck-possession game these days, for sure."

The Sabres can keep 14 forwards, which leaves five players – Sam Reinhart, Mikhail Grigorenko, Torrey Mitchell, Brian Flynn and Dalpe – competing for four spots. The long-term injury to right wing Patrick Kaleta, who is out at least a month, provided an additional opening for the hopefuls.

Like Zadorov, Reinhart can play only in Buffalo or for his junior team. The Sabres have the option of a tryout of up to nine games for both. Grigorenko is the only one who can be sent to Rochester without waivers.

Reinhart has one goal on four shots during his four games. The 18-year-old will be in the lineup tonight, likely between Foligno and Dalpe.

“It’s another chance to show what I can do for this team,” the No. 2 overall draft pick said. “If I take a step in the right direction again and show that I’m comfortable and able to play at this level, it’s only going to benefit me.”

Grigorenko has a goal and six shots in four games. Mitchell has an assist and seven shots in three games. Flynn has two assists in four games, while Dalpe is looking for his first point.

“I’ve progressed as the games have gone on,” Dalpe said. “I’ve had tons of fun. I think I’ve had a little bit of success, maybe not on the board as far as points-wise but doing what I need to do to stay here.”

He and the others could find out this weekend, with the Sabres possibly making their final cuts.

“There’s always that one that makes room for himself,” Nolan said. “The spirit of the team is really starting to build itself. It’s fun to watch.”

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Nolan has decided on a captain, but he is not ready to announce it. The prime candidates are Brian Gionta and Josh Gorges.

“It hasn’t officially happened yet, but we all know who the leadership is going to be on this team,” Nolan said. “We’ll officially sit down with the people.”

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The star of the Sabres’ preseason has been Enroth. He is 2-0 with a 0.50 goals-against average and .983 save percentage.

“I see a different goaltender,” Nolan said. “I see a guy on a mission. I see a guy with a purpose. He wants that No. 1 job, and he’s doing everything in his power to do it with confidence and with assurance.”

## **With one preseason game left, Sabres nearer to naming roster, captain**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 2, 2014

The Sabres' roster hopefuls have had five preseason games to prove their worth. They have just one chance left.

Buffalo will conclude its exhibition season Friday in Carolina. The final cuts likely will come this weekend. The Sabres have 26 healthy players and need to be at 23 by 5 p.m. Tuesday. Players on injured reserve do not count toward the limit.

"After this last game we'll sit down and make the final one, but right now everything's going good," coach Ted Nolan said today. "The spirit of the team is really starting to build itself. It's fun to watch."

There are three spots available on defense, with Andre Benoit, Jake McCabe, Rasmus Ristolainen, Tyson Strachan and Nikita Zadorov competing. There are likely four openings at forward, with Sam Reinhart, Torrey Mitchell, Brian Flynn, Mikhail Grigorenko and Zac Dalpe in the mix.

"Modern hockey you know pretty well who's on the team when camp starts, but there's always that one that makes room for himself," Nolan said.

The coach said defenseman Mark Pysyk (upper body) skated on his own today and could be cleared to return to practice within a week. Tyler Myers skipped today's skate.

"He's had a great camp, so it was more of a maintenance day than anything else," Nolan said. "He's going to make the trip, and we'll see how he feels tomorrow."

The coach has chosen his captain but isn't ready to name him.

"It hasn't officially happened yet, but we all know who the leadership is going to be on this team," Nolan said. "We'll officially sit down with the people. We haven't talked to anybody about it, but we all know."

## **Sabres' Mike Weber ready to rebound from poor season: 'I come here to do whatever it takes'**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 3, 2014

BUFFALO – In a hockey-crazed town, with social media at everyone's fingertips, gritty Sabres defenseman Mike Weber felt the wrath of a disappointed fan base last season.

Weber accumulated a wretched minus-29 in 68 games during the tumultuous campaign, becoming the fans' top whipping boy. They wanted the Pittsburgh native benched.

Still, despite the NHL's 881st rating, Weber played every game over the final four months.

"A lot of people get to have a voice," Weber said Thursday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's preseason finale against the Carolina Hurricanes. "You got to respect it. (In) the same breath, I come work every day. I come here to get better. I come here to do whatever it takes.

"You take what those people have with a grain of salt, whatever their backgrounds are."

Respect helped keep Weber in the lineup. Sabres coach Ted Nolan has talked about the prideful Weber's character and passion. His mistakes often come from aggression. He tries too hard.

"The one thing I've known since I've been here is he is a character guy," Nolan said. "If he's going to make a mistake, it's going to be a mistake not for the lack of trying. Last year was a very tough year for him."

Nolan noted the Sabres' new coaching systems and defensive schemes could reign in the ultra-aggressive 26-year-old.

"So I'm quite sure you're going to see a better Mike Weber on the ice," Nolan said. "You're not going to see a much better person off it."

Weber has been adamant – "Enough's enough," he said in April. "Joke's over." – the Sabres must change the culture and create a higher standard. He knows he can't repeat 2013-14.

"I'm willing to do whatever it takes to be a regular face here and earn the respect of the fans and the media back," said Weber, who debuted in 2007-08 and is the team's longest-tenured defenseman.

Weber has likely earned a spot on the 23-man roster, possibly as the No. 6 defender. Nolan said the Sabres will probably keep seven defensemen, so when Mark Pysyk returns from an upper-body injury, Weber could be pushed out.

He also has some competition from Tyson Strachan, a defenseman many ticketed for Rochester when the Sabres signed him July 3.

The 29-year-old could still be assigned to the AHL, but given how often defensemen get hurt, Strachan will almost certainly see some NHL action this season. He's probably eighth on the depth chart.

Strachan has shuttled between the two leagues since 2008-09, so he's used to the uncertain days leading up to the season.

"I think it's probably impossible not to play out scenarios in your head," Strachan said. "But at the same time, I've been through this for a lot of years. You figure out after a while that doesn't really do you any good to worry about things."

The 6-foot-3, 215-pound Saskatchewan native has played 138 NHL games, including 18 with Washington last season. He showcases a physical style similar to Weber's.

"I'm the type of player, the cog in the wheel, I guess," Strachan said. "I hope it's a cog that they need here. I just come to work and do my thing every day."

Strachan displayed some flash in Wednesday's 6-1 exhibition win against the Capitals, making a nifty pass from the point to Marcus Foligno as he zoomed to the net and scored.

Nolan said everyone on the bench thought Strachan couldn't see Foligno break free.

"Then he saw it," Nolan said. "As the game went on, he started getting a little bit more comfortable. The thing we're trying to do here is create an environment where people feel comfortable within themselves and try things."

Strachan's feeling comfortable with his decision to sign a one-year, two-way contract with the Sabres. They promised him would be able to compete for an NHL roster spot.

"It's always a tough thing when you're going free agent in July trying to make decisions like that," Strachan said. "Honestly, that was what they told me in July. I think that's exactly what they're doing now."

"Really, at the end of the day, that's all you can hope for and all you can appreciate is getting a fair look and getting an opportunity, and what you do with it is on you. That's the way it should be."

## **Allow Mikhail Grigorenko to reintroduce himself**

By Matthew Coller

WGR 550

October 2, 2014

Pretend for a moment that the first time you saw Mikhail Grigorenko was during his preseason games with the Buffalo Sabres this year. What would your first impression be?

You'd say he is big, is always on the puck, makes slick passes and had a sick-nasty shootout goal. You'd wonder a little about his speed, but you wouldn't question his drive to be at the highest level. Listening to him talk after games, you'd say, "Hey, his English is pretty good." And the reports you'd read about his efforts in rookie and training camp would impress you.

You might even say, "Watch out for this guy, Grigorenko. He's that draft pick from a few years ago? He's going to be a player."

Well, that's how it would be if Darcy Regier didn't put the 20-year-old in a situation to fail. Back in early 2013, he was one hundred miles in over his head on a junk team that was filled with players looking for anyone to blame but themselves for stockpiles of failure.

Had he been handled correctly, fans and media would be talking now about the young Russian forward as a promising prospect rather than the once-jerky kid who better darn well prove he's learned his lesson.

Keep in mind, most prospects return to juniors, then enter the AHL or NHL when they are 20. Mark Pysyk did that.

Grigorenko wouldn't be an enigma to us. He would be another exciting piece to the rebuild and a reason to (likely) travel to Rochester to watch him play top six minutes for the Amerks.

Yes, he should return to Rochester to start the year. As exciting as his offseason has been, the Sabres need to avoid making the same mistake twice.

While Grigorenko will be disappointed to go back to the minors and question the notion of "earning your ice time," he will get the most out of playing 20 minutes per night in the AHL against other top young players and older ones who have a great deal of experience.

During the preseason and camp, there were whoa-wow-wut moments, but the former first-round pick still has to grow in order to reach his ceiling. Things like skating, quick decision making, using his body on both ends of the ice, finding positions where he can score and where passes should go so others can score AHL and NHL style goals, power play and, like, pretty much everything hockey related – it can all be improved.

And there is plenty of time to do so. Consider Detroit's young star Gustav Nyqvist, who dominated the AHL with 60 points in 58 games in 2013, then started the 2013-14 season with Grand Rapids before getting the full-time call at age 24. He went on to score 48 points in 57 games for the Wings. And nobody is complaining that it took so long.

Regier and the Sabres marketed Grigorenko as a phenom, when it turns out he was just a regular, talented prospect. He was made out to be like Nathan MacKinnon, instead he was like most other skilled first rounders that are selected on potential, not ability to step in and save a ship that had clearly already sunk.

Filip Forsberg, a skill player drafted one spot above Grigorenko, has been working his way through the AHL, only having played 18 NHL games. Predators fans are excited about him – would they be if he had been jammed into the NHL and asked to be a star immediately after he was picked? Probably not.

One other thing: There is an implied notion that contrition is required from Grigorenko. It isn't. He should not be ashamed or apologetic for being less than a locker room favorite back in '13. It would be like asking any normal

person to apologize for cheating on homework in junior high. He acted the way most prospects would have if they were in his position, and now he's in a much better spot.

So forget what you knew about Grigorenko. Reintroduce yourself to him. He might just end up being pretty cool to watch.

## **Enroth got goaltending teaching in Sweden**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 2, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Jhonas Enroth got two games in during the preseason and did very well. He allowed just one goal on 58 shots and he'll sit and watch as Michal Neuvirth plays the last game.

Now Enroth has to sit for a week until the regular season starts and said he wishes he got one more game, but is happy with his play, "I felt pretty good, I thought I had two strong games and I'm happy with my preseason here, but I'm going to stay humble and keep working hard."

Enroth feels like he's a different goalie after working with one of the premiere goalie coaches in Sweden during the summer. Arthurs Irbe hadn't been hired yet so Enroth wanted to work with a man who's helped many Swedish goaltenders in Michael Wernbloom. Enroth said, "Honestly I think I am a little bit different. I worked pretty hard over the summer with a goalie coach back home that I hadn't worked with before and I'm doing it a little bit different, playing a little bit different and I think it's worked out pretty good so far."

Ted Nolan also sees a different player. He said, "It's funny you said that because I talked to him today on the ice and he had that look in his eye and it's one of those things that you have a feel for and you see and I see a different goaltender and I see a guy with a purpose. He wants that number one job and he's doing everything in his power to do it with confidence and assurance."

There have been many good goalies from Sweden in the NHL including the best in Henrik Lundqvist. Enroth thought he had missed out on what is being taught in his homeland, "I was just catching up basically with the Swedish style of playing the game. There are a lot of good Swedish goaltenders right now so I felt like I missed out a little bit and I contacted one of the better goalie coaches back home and I worked with him all summer and he taught me a couple of things that I'm working with every day."

I became intrigued about what the Swedish style of goaltending is. Enroth said "It's how you play around the post. It's pretty hard to describe if you're not a goalie, but there are a lot of good young goalies from Sweden right now and they're doing something good over there, so I wanted to catch up and work with one of the better guys over there."

Tyler Myers didn't practice on Thursday as Ted Nolan called it a maintenance day. Last season some maintenance days turned into injuries where games were missed, so we'll see where this goes.

Nolan said Mark Pysyk skated on his own and was better.

Nolan also said he has chosen a captain, but he hasn't told the players yet.

## **Reinhart making push for roster spot**

By Steve Vesey

WIVB

October 2, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - With the preseason winding down, a lot of focus is now on Sabres first-round pick Sam Reinhart and whether he will make the regular season roster.

Reinhart scored his first goal of the preseason Wednesday night, getting the monkey off his back. He says, he is getting more comfortable out there each day.

"As I get into more games and get the puck more, naturally you get more comfortable with it," said Reinhart. "Obviously, the guys are there to help and give me tips whenever they can. That's been a big part of it, obviously when you get more comfortable with the guys and your surroundings, you're naturally going to get more confident."

With the final game of the preseason looming Friday, the rookie says he is not focused on whether he will make the team.

"Not focusing on the end result, focusing on the process and getting better every day," said Reinhart.

The Sabres are at Carolina Friday night to close out the preseason slate.

## **Stronger communication leading to better defense for Sabres**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

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A knock on the Buffalo Sabres over the past few seasons is that they've been a quiet group that doesn't talk much on the ice. As training camp has progressed, you can hear the change already.

During practice, it seems like each day, more and more players are communicating audibly and it's a welcome change for both the players and coaching staff.

Marcus Foligno considered the talk on the ice, particularly in the defensive zone, as a key component in their 6-1 preseason win over the Washington Capitals on Wednesday.

"The biggest thing is we talk a lot in our zone now," he said. "We've got guys like Josh Gorges where you can hear him everywhere on the ice. [Tyler] Myers has been talking more this year. Everyone's really communicating out there."

On the blue line, the additions like veterans like Gorges and Andrej Meszaros have already made a huge difference in the dressing room. Both players have been part of teams that have made deep playoff runs – Gorges reached the Eastern Conference Finals with Montreal in 2010 and Meszaros made it to the Stanley Cup Final with Ottawa in 2007.

"When you bring in veteran guys that have played on successful teams and know what it takes to get deep into the playoffs and the finals, those little things – just the little extra talk, the little extra, 'I'm over here, anything – just helps that much better to get us out of the zone," Mike Weber said.

"We were in a spot where last year, systems-wise, we weren't up to snuff. Talking-wise, we weren't even close to be competitive that way in our defensive zone and that's why we got trapped down there last year."

Nolan has also noticed a difference in the group from the start of training camp when it comes to the bonding the team is doing in addition to the higher levels of communication. He also mentioned – yep – Josh Gorges as a player that has made a big impact in that regard.

"He's out there every day not just practicing his game and getting better, but he's communicating with everybody. 'Talk to me. Let me know how much time I have,'" Nolan said.

"He's really, really good at that and when it's dark and you've got three people around you, you don't see too much. So you need that voice to guide you out and you need that support. That's what we've been really working on."

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### **RETURN THE FAVOR**

During Wednesday night's preseason game, there came a moment when Capitals forward Dane Byers challenged Foligno to a fight. Foligno, coming off shoulder surgery in the summer, declined the invitation. However Chris Stewart stepped in to take care of business.

"That was tough last night. I was biting my mouthguard when that happened," Foligno said. "But it's preseason. If you're getting challenged by a guy you're not really aware of or trying to enter the League, you don't want to risk it with the offseason I had. It was great for a guy like Chris Stewart to help out a teammate.

Foligno knows he'll have to make it up t his teammate one way or another.

"Definitely going to have to repay that favor or buy him a steak dinner or something," he said, laughing.

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### **A CAPTAIN IS COMING**

Nolan said he is "real close" to naming a captain.

"It hasn't officially happened yet, but we all know who the leadership is going to be on this team so we'll officially sit down with the people," Nolan said. "We haven't talked to anybody about it, but we all know."

The team will make more roster cuts sometime after their final preseason game on Friday in Carolina.

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### **THE GOALTENDING BATTLE**

Michal Neuvirth will start in goal against the Hurricanes. He'll look to rebound from his last preseason game.

Jhonas Enroth, the other goalie he's in a competition with for the starting job, is coming off a 22-save performance against Washington in which he allowed only one goal. Nolan has liked what he's seen from Enroth so far.

"He seems to have that look in his eye. It's one of those things you have a feel for and you see," Nolan said. "I see a different goaltender. I see a guy on a mission and I see a guy with a purpose. He wants that No. 1 job. He's doing everything in his power to do it with confidence and assurance."

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### **THURSDAY'S PRACTICE GROUP**

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82 Marcus Foligno – 23 Sam Reinhart – 20 Zac Dalpe  
26 Matt Moulson – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 21 Drew Stafford  
19 Cody Hodgson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 17 Torrey Mitchell  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 8 Cody McCormick – 65 Brian Flynn

4 Josh Gorges – 6 Mike Weber  
29 Jake McCabe – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
61 Andre Benoit – 24 Tyson Strachan  
51 Nikita Zadorov – 41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth  
34 Michal Neuvirth

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### **INJURY UPDATES**

Tyler Myers was given a maintenance day and did not practice. Nolan was pretty sure that Myers would play Friday night.

Patrick Kaleta and Johan Larsson did not skate as both recover from upper-body injuries.

Defenseman Mark Pysyk skated on his own before practice for the second straight day. He's been out since Sept. 23 with an upper-body injury.

"He skated today a little better than he did yesterday," Nolan said. "He's coming along good so hopefully he gets the green light within the next week or so and start practicing."