



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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AP source: 2016 NHL draft to be held in Buffalo

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

October 10, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The NHL has selected the Buffalo Sabres to host the 2016 draft, a person familiar with the details told The Associated Press on Friday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the league and the team have not publicly announced their plans to hold the draft at First Niagara Center in Buffalo.

The source added, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman is expected to make a formal announcement in Buffalo on Monday before the Sabres' game against the Anaheim Ducks.

The 2016 draft in Buffalo will coincide with the final year of the Sabres' two-year agreement to host the league's annual pre-draft rookie scouting combine.

Buffalo has previously hosted the draft in 1991 and '98.

The 2014 draft was held in Philadelphia while the Florida Panthers will host the event in 2015.

The draft is typically held during the final weekend of June.

The Sabres opened their season this week with a loss to Columbus after finishing with the NHL's worst record last season. Earlier this week, Sabres owner Terry Pegula was approved as the new owner of the NFL's Buffalo Bills.

Blackhawks beat Sabres 6-2 with big third period

By Jay Cohen

Associated Press

October 12, 2014

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Blackhawks had Brad Richards at second-line center for much of training camp, and then coach Joel Quenneville returned Andrew Shaw to that role near the end of the preseason.

Sure looks like a smart move right now.

Shaw, Patrick Kane and Brandon Saad combined for two goals and five assists, and the Blackhawks used a four-goal third period to beat the Buffalo Sabres 6-2 in their home opener on Saturday night.

"It is satisfying. Playing with those two guys, you know they're going to make plays," Shaw said, "so I just try to go to the dirty areas and get them the puck and go to the net and they seem to make a lot of things happen."

Shaw, Kane and Saad helped lead Chicago back from a 3-1 deficit in the Western Conference final last season, but the Stanley Cup champion Kings won Game 7 in overtime. The Blackhawks then signed Richards in the offseason, but it looks as if Shaw is right at home playing center behind captain Jonathan Toews.

"That line had a couple of shifts that were pretty impressive in the third period," Quenneville said.

Zemgus Girgensons and Tyler Ennis scored in the first period for Buffalo, which lost 3-1 to Columbus in its season opener on Thursday night. Drew Stafford had two assists and Jhonas Enroth had 41 stops.

"In the third period, their star players turned it up a notch and we didn't," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said.

Shaw and Kane each had a goal and an assist in the Blackhawks' fifth consecutive win against the Sabres. Saad had a career-high three assists and Corey Crawford made 21 saves.

"I think we started really well, and we forgot to play defense," said Marian Hossa, who had a short-handed goal in the third. "They just kept coming and it was a tie game. But we had more chances and more shots, and eventually we played better defensively."

The game was tied at 2 when Kane one-timed a backhand pass from Shaw past Enroth at 5:58 of the third. It was the first of the season for the Buffalo native, who has five career goals against his hometown team.

Chicago poured it on from there. Hossa had a short-handed score at 10:03, Patrick Sharp converted a long power-play slap shot and Daniel Carcillo tapped in a feed from Saad with 2:37 left.

"We just got outplayed," Ennis said. "We didn't have any power plays going in the third and we were giving up tons and it's not acceptable to play like that on the power plays with the man advantages."

Coming off a 3-2 shootout win at Dallas in their season opener, a victory that Quenneville said they stole from the Stars, the Blackhawks jumped out to a fast start against the Sabres.

Shaw tipped Niklas Hjalmarsson's long shot past Enroth just 59 seconds into the game. Duncan Keith then had another long shot go off the stick of a Buffalo player and into the upper right corner for a 2-0 lead at 2:52 of the first.

With the crowd of 22,012 looking for a quick knockout, Enroth settled down and the Sabres went to work on Crawford. Girgensons poked home a rebound to get Buffalo on the board, and Ennis scored on a short-handed breakaway to make it 2-2 at 18:40.

Stafford set up the tying score when he intercepted a pass from Richards near the blue line and played it forward to a streaking Ennis, who skated in on Crawford for his first goal of the season. The Blackhawks went 1 for 4 on the power play.

Chicago had a chance to go in front in the final seconds of the first, but Enroth made a great save on Jonathan Toews right in front of the net.

Buffalo had the best opportunity in the scoreless second period. After Blackhawks defenseman David Rundblad failed to control the puck at the point, Nicolas Deslauriers got loose for a breakaway, but was stopped by Crawford, leading to chants of "Co-rey! Co-rey!" from the crowd.

NOTES: The Flames scratched C Brian Flynn and Ds Tyson Strachan and Nikita Zadorov. ... F Kris Versteeg and Ds Kyle Cumiskey and Michal Rozsival were the scratches for the Blackhawks ... Former Chicago Bears quarterback Jim McMahon received a standing ovation before he participated in the shoot the puck contest in between the second and third periods.

Foligno, Stewart supply size for Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 11, 2014

The guys in the Sabres' dressing room don't get much bigger than Chris Stewart and Marcus Foligno. Weighing a combined 454 pounds, the linemates have the ability to intimidate defensemen who see Stewart barreling down the right wing and Foligno closing in on the left.

The duo has been together since the opening day of training camp. If Foligno has his way, they'll be together until the season ends.

"He's definitely a linemate you want to stay with all year," Foligno said Friday before flying to Chicago for tonight's game against the Blackhawks. "You want to be on a line with that guy. He's a big body out there. He's fast, and he can score. He can help me out a lot, and vice versa."

Zemgus Girgensons centered for the wingers during Thursday's opener, and the line combined for one goal, one assist, nine shots, three blocked shots and two hits in the 3-1 loss to Columbus. The wingers might get a new center tonight after practicing with Sam Reinhart in First Niagara Center.

Reinhart had a rough debut, failing to take a shot and absorbing a big hit and many bumps. Having hulking wingmen could help the 18-year-old get his footing.

"Maybe give the young kid a little bit more of a safety net around him with those two guys," coach Ted Nolan said.

"I think whoever our center has been, their game has been elevated to another level," Stewart said. "We tend to make it easy on our center."

They make it hard on opponents if they're skating and hitting.

"We're both big boys, and we are skilled," Stewart said. "When you put the work first and the skill follows, it's tough to handle. When the big boys are on their game, you've got D-men looking over their shoulder. I think that has to be our game first."

Nolan is hoping Stewart leads the 23-year-old Foligno into the category of feared power forward.

The 26-year-old Stewart was there once with consecutive 28-goal seasons, and he wants to be elite again with his contract expiring at the end of the season.

"Stewie is a little bit more mature player," Nolan said. "He's been around a little bit. We'll get him playing the way he's capable of playing. If we do that, then we've got Marcus following right along."

"You get two big forwards in this type of town, I think that's the type of play you want. You want the crashers and bangers. Not guys going around just hitting but playing a very aggressive style. We've got two big wingers. We're going to use that."

If Reinhart centers for the wingers, Girgensons will skate between left wing Cody Hodgson and captain Brian Gionta. The second-year center scored the Sabres' only goal Thursday.

"Girgensons was by far our best player," said Nolan, who would like Hodgson to help out in both ends of the ice, specifically in the defensive zone. "We don't want him to be a defensive-specialist Selke winner, but we want him

to continue to score some goals. We expect him to score like he did, if not more, and just pay a little bit more attention to defense and just be a little bit more competitive.”

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Center Cody McCormick missed Friday's practice with an undisclosed injury. His status for tonight was unknown. Brian Flynn would replace McCormick on the fourth line and skate between left wing Nicolas Deslauriers and right wing Torrey Mitchell.

The Sabres' fourth line was on the ice for Columbus' opening goal.

“The fourth line, like the rest of our team, wasn't very good,” Nolan said. “They can't have any odd-man situations. The expectations that you put on the first line to score goals, it's the same expectations you put on your fourth line in don't have any turnovers, don't get yourself in a bad position. They did.”

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The Blackhawks will start goaltender Corey Crawford in their home opener. He stopped 32 of 34 shots and all three shootout attempts during a 3-2 victory over Dallas on Thursday.

“He's really been looking at little details, working at his game,” coach Joel Quenneville said. “Loved his approach all camp.”

NHL draft coming here in 2016

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 11, 2014

Tyler Ennis can't help but smile when he thinks back to the 2008 NHL Draft. He and his family flew to Ottawa from their home in Edmonton, and they spent two summer days touring Canada's capital and dining in its restaurants. The journey became unforgettable when the Buffalo Sabres drafted him in the first round.

"It was one of the best moments of my life, for sure," Ennis said Friday. "It was actually a nice little vacation. We got to see Ottawa, went for dinners. The anticipation was pretty cool the night before. It was a life-changing experience."

Hockey's top prospects will get to enjoy similar moments in Buffalo in June 2016.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman will join Mayor Byron W. Brown on Monday to announce the 2016 NHL Draft will be held in First Niagara Center, a source with knowledge of the situation told The Buffalo News on Friday. Buffalo has hosted the draft twice previously, in 1998 in the arena and in 1991 in Memorial Auditorium.

The Sabres and the mayor's office declined to comment in advance of Monday's news conference.

The Sabres, who will soon open the HarborCenter complex in front of the arena, have lobbied the NHL to host any and all events so they could show off the city. Buffalo will be home to the NHL Scouting Combine in 2015 and 2016, and the 2016 Draft will follow.

Philadelphia hosted this year's draft, and the Philadelphia Sports Congress estimated the event would have a \$10 million impact on downtown. Owners, executives and scouts from all 30 teams attend the draft, as do approximately 100 draft-eligible players and their families.

Calls and emails to Visit Buffalo Niagara for its estimations on the event were not returned.

Interest in the draft has increased exponentially in recent years, league-wide and in Buffalo. Prospects are reaching the NHL quicker these days, so fans are paying more attention to which players their favorite team selects. That's especially true in Buffalo, where the last-place team is rebuilding through the draft.

Sam Reinhart, selected second overall by the Sabres in June, was among the top prospects to get a detailed look at the host city. He took a trolley through Philadelphia, ate Philly cheesesteaks, visited the Betsy Ross House and took batting practice in the city's Major League Baseball stadium.

"I got to tour the whole area," Reinhart said. "That was a pretty neat experience."

Kane takes a walk of fame

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 12, 2014

CHICAGO – One way Patrick Kane is like so many people in his native South Buffalo is he'll be pulling hard for the Bills to send Tom Brady home unhappy today. The Chicago Blackhawks star spent Saturday night helping to beat Terry Pegula's Buffalo Sabres, but said prior to his team's home opener that he's thrilled Pegula has added another tidy little sports property to his burgeoning empire with the purchase of the Bills.

"It seems like he's trying to recreate the city of Buffalo by himself. He's done a lot of good things," Kane said prior to scoring the winning goal in Chicago's 6-2 victory over the Sabres in the United Center. "Obviously what's going on downtown with HarborCenter, it's definitely an attractive place for players and free agents because you're going to have that winning attitude from the Pegulas.

"Good for them and the city of Buffalo too. Especially with the Bills having that commitment to stay, that's huge for the city."

Kane snapped a 2-2 tie with his first goal of the season at 5:58 of the third period, taking an Andrew Shaw pass in the slot and sweeping it past Jhonas Enroth in one motion.

Kane confounded the Sabres Saturday at a key time and he was happy to get a first-hand look at the Bills doing the same thing during their season-opener against the Chicago Bears in Soldier Field. And, although he didn't want Buffalo reporters to say it all too loud, he was more than happy with Dan Carpenter's game-winning field goal.

"I made sure I went there with neutral colors but I was kind of fist-pumping under the chair when Carpenter hit that," Kane said.

Though it might seem hard to believe, Kane is at the start of his eighth NHL season. Still, he's only 25 years old and with plenty of hockey ahead.

The most noteworthy item to Hawks fans from Kane's busy summer was the identical eight-year, \$84 million extensions Kane and Jonathan Toews signed in July that kick in next season and keep the pair in Chicago through the 2022-23 season. Kane will be 34 at the end of the deal, which quickly quelled all kinds of Internet chatter that he might entertain free agency and a return to Buffalo in 2015-16.

"This city has been unbelievable to me," he said. "The fans, the organization, the city in general have stood behind me in good times and bad. I've see a lot of loyalty from the city of Chicago. It was a pretty easy decision to stay here.

"If you have a chance to play in this city that long, you'd be stupid not to take it. At the same time, you wish Buffalo all the best. You always keep your eye on them and wish them the best."

Kane had an assist and a shootout goal Thursday as the Blackhawks opened with a 3-2 win at Dallas. He entered Saturday with 494 points in 516 career games, including 178 goals. He also has 37 goals and 91 points in 93 career playoff games.

Saturday's game was the first one in the United Center that counted since the Hawks lost Game Seven of the Western Conference final to the Los Angeles Kings on an overtime goal by defenseman Alec Martinez. It was a devastating loss, quelling Chicago's chance at a true dynasty with back-to-back Stanley Cups and three titles in four years. The Hawks, of course, won the Cup in 2010 and 2013.

"After a little while, you try to forget about it and then you come back to camp and start talking to your guys again, it's pretty much quickly back into our minds," Kane said, laughing with reporters crowded around his locker. "We get a lot of questions about it. It's something a lot of us have tried to turn over the leaf on that and focus on this season.

"It's tough knowing we were so close to getting in the finals again and giving ourselves a chance to win another Cup. There's a lot of bounces in hockey and it could have gone the other way the year before or the other way in 2010 too. We're fortunate where we're at. At the same time there's still a bitter taste in our mouth."

Just prior to training camp, Kane traveled to Chicago to film a McDonald's commercial with LeBron James, NASCAR's Jamie McMurray and Alex Morgan of the U.S. national women's soccer team. Hockey players don't normally get this kind of publicity but Kane has parlayed his big-city role and the team's success into becoming one of the NHL's transcendent personalities.

"It's total professionalism," Kane said of James. "He's very smart, very knowledgeable. He has a lot of respect for himself and others. He knew a lot about hockey that I was actually surprised about. He talked to me about the Blackhawks and hockey in general. It was a really cool experience."

Kane also made headlines over the summer when he returned home to play for the Piranhas in a Performax Hockey League at Riverside Rink. Kane had five goals and five assists in the game and helped friend Vinny Scarsella, a former Canisius College player now with the ECHL's Utah Grizzlies, have a seven-goal game.

A couple weeks later, Kane was named MVP of the Fattey Hockey League at Leisure Rinks in West Seneca as he helped a team dubbed "Milli Vanilli" win a championship. Coming home and playing summer beer league hockey has been pretty normal for Kane. But his exploits went viral this summer,.

"It's always fun to come home and hang out with your friends you grew up with," Kane said. "You do certain things and didn't think you'd get publicity for it. ... I wasn't really expecting that but my buddies had a lot of fun with it."

Breakdowns strike Sabres again

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 12, 2014

CHICAGO – Two games tied through 45 minutes. Two third-periods busts. Two losses.

The Buffalo Sabres were in position to spoil the Chicago Blackhawks' home opener Saturday night but gave up four goals in the final 15 minutes as the Hawks cruised to a 6-2 win before a raucous United Center crowd of 22,012.

The Sabres were outshot for the game, 47-23, but the margin was 19-4 in the third period as goaltender Jhonas Enroth had little help.

South Buffalo's Patrick Kane scored the tie-breaking goal at 5:58, Marian Hossa scored short-handed at 10:03, Patrick Sharp tallied on a power-play at 13:16 and Daniel Carcillo added a goal in garbage time at 17:23.

"Old habits are hard to break," said coach Ted Nolan. "It was almost like we were content to keep it close. In the third period there, their star players turned it up a notch and we didn't."

The Sabres fell to 0-2 while the Hawks improved to 2-0 by beating Buffalo for the sixth straight time dating to 2009. The Sabres were tied in the final eight minutes Thursday against Columbus before losing, 3-1.

In this one, Buffalo went 0 for 4 on the power-play in the third period, and the Hossa goal on a 2-on-1 with Brandon Saad in the penalty box was a backbreaker.

"It's not acceptable to play like that on the power play when we have a chance to get back in the game," said center Tyler Ennis. "And then we fell apart in the D-zone too."

The Sabres got off to a terrible start as Andrew Shaw tipped in Niklas Hjalmarsson's point shot after 59 seconds and Duncan Keith capitalized on a Cody Hodgson turnover to beat Enroth with a floater to make it 2-0 after just 2:52.

But Zemgus Girgensons potted a Andrej Meszaros rebound at 7:17 and that seemed to energize Buffalo. It was Girgensons' second goal in two games; it took him 29 games last season to get his second goal. The teams played a tight and scoreless second period.

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Ennis is killing penalties for the first time in his career and showed he can produce offense in the role. His short-handed breakaway goal with 1:20 left in the first on a Drew Stafford feed got Buffalo even at 2-2.

"I think it's important for me to really round out my game, working on it defensively to get better," Ennis said. "Take faceoffs. Add the penalty kill. It's exciting for me. There's a lot I have to keep working hard at. But with my speed and quickness it could be helpful. There's just a lot of reads I have to learn to get better at it."

"In order to make that next step, there's certain parts of his game he wants to work on," Nolan said. "That's faceoffs, defensive zone and having that go-to guy in your lineup."

Ennis said one of the things he's concentrating on is holding his position at the top of the box and not chasing the puck too much, something he's been getting advice on from PK partner Stafford. It was Stafford who found Ennis in the neutral zone.

"He told me you don't have to be so aggressive," Ennis said. "You can be a little tighter. When it gets outside the dots, you don't have to rush guys."

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A line brawl featuring Sabres prospects Mikhail Grigorenko and Joel Armia spiced the Rochester Amerks' season-opening 6-1 win over Adirondack Friday night in Blue Cross Arena.

Adirondack winger Trevor Gillies and Rochester defenseman Nick Petrecki each got one-game suspensions Saturday for being assessed instigator penalties in the final five minutes. Gillies is expected to get an additional substantial suspension for driving the head of Rochester forward William Carrier into the ice.

The Amerks responded to that on the ensuing faceoff. Gillies posted an apology on Facebook Saturday, starting off with his family for "embarrassing the family name."

Schedule offers little respite for Sabres

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 13, 2014

Only two games into the new season, coach Ted Nolan fretted late Saturday night that his team is slipping back into old habits.

The Buffalo Sabres aren't getting shots. They're giving them up by the bucketful. They're getting taken to the cleaners in third periods. And by the way, they have a brutal October schedule that isn't going to give them too many breaks.

Today's matinee against the Anaheim Ducks in First Niagara Center (3 p.m., MSG, Radio 550 AM) is the first of two matchups in a 10-day span against a team coming off a 116-point season. That was the most in the Western Conference – 16 points more than Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles and nine more than Chicago.

The Sabres have already played Columbus and Chicago, two playoff teams from last year, and a loss today would put them at 0-3 for just the second time in franchise history. Of course, last year was the first time.

But look what else is planned for October. Yikes.

There are games at San Jose and Los Angeles, in addition to the rematch against the Ducks. There are two meetings with defending Presidents' Trophy winner Boston.

The first 10 games in November are equally arduous, with two games against Pittsburgh and one each against the New York Rangers, Montreal, St. Louis, Minnesota and Detroit on the docket.

"The one thing in order to turn a franchise around is you look at the clubs like L.A. and Chicago and think 10 years back," Nolan said.

"Where were they? Same thing now. We've got young kids going through a transition period and we have to weather the storm early. We have to learn to play with big boys. It's a man's league. We'll have our learning curves."

The Sabres have a pretty steep one so far.

They are one of just five NHL teams to lose their first two games in regulation, joining Toronto, Philadelphia, Carolina and Colorado. Through two games, the Sabres already rank last in the league in shots on goal per game (22.5) and shots on goal against (43.5).

In the first 40 minutes of play, the Sabres and two opponents are tied at 3-3 and goaltender Jhonas Enroth has been stellar. In the third period, however, Buffalo has been outscored, 6-0, as the Blue Jackets and Blackhawks snapped ties on both occasions and Enroth was often left to fend for himself as his team was getting outshot, 35-12.

Columbus scored two goals for a 3-1 win in the opener Thursday while Chicago exploded for four in the final 15 minutes Saturday to break away from a 2-2 game and turn it into a 6-2 breeze. The Blackhawks outshot Buffalo, 19-4, in the third period.

"Honestly it was thanks to outstanding goaltending to get us in that position, to have a chance at winning," defenseman Josh Gorges said after Saturday's loss. "We have to learn to play with confidence. Play the right way. Continue doing the right things, the little things."

"It's about wanting it more than the opposition. When you get to those positions it gets tough when you're nervous and scared to make plays. That's when you have to look to trust your teammates, win your battles and make simple plays."

"We just have to be confident. The same thing happened against Columbus," added center Tyler Ennis. "We sat back. When you're tentative you're gonna lose."

Two Sabres who might not be competing this afternoon are defensemen Andre Benoit and Andrej Meszaros. They were both on the ice for five of Chicago's goals Saturday, and Meszaros was minus-4 in the game. Nikita Zadorov and Tyson Strachan are both waiting in the wings after sitting out the first two games as healthy scratches.

"You might see a change now," Nolan said. "That's two games and we can't continue going this way."

"We have to learn as a group how to get comfortable in those tight situations," Gorges said. "In 95 percent of the games, they're going to be those type."

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- NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and Mayor Byron Brown are expected to hold a news conference prior to the game to formally announce that the Sabres will be hosting the 2016 NHL Draft. The 2015 draft, which will feature Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, is set for June 26-27 in Sunrise, Fla.
- Former Sabres forward Ville Leino, who was bought out after last season and released from his training camp tryout by Boston a couple of weeks ago, has signed with Medvescak Zagreb of the KHL.
- Today's game features special Kids Day pricing. With the purchase of at least one full-price 300 Level II ticket for \$45, fans can purchase up to four additional tickets for \$15 each. Kids Day tickets are valid for use by children 15 and under.

Strong third period helps Blackhawks get past Sabres

By Brian Hedger

NHL.com

October 11, 2014

CHICAGO -- Patrick Kane did what he usually does against his childhood favorite team and the Chicago Blackhawks did what they usually do against the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday at United Center.

Kane scored the game-deciding goal early in the third period and assisted on another in the Blackhawks' 6-2 win in their first home game of the season.

Kane has five goals and four assists in nine games against his hometown Sabres (0-2-0), who've dropped six straight games against the Blackhawks dating back to the 2009-10 season.

Kane's linemates, center Andrew Shaw (goal and assist) and left wing Brandon Saad (three assists), had big games in the continuation of a line combination that's paid dividends stretching back to the Western Conference Final against the Los Angeles Kings last spring.

"Playing with those two guys, you know they're going to make plays," said Shaw, who scored the game's first goal 59 seconds into the opening period and set up Kane's goal. "I try to go to the dirty areas and get them the puck and go to the net. They seem to make a lot of things happen."

The Blackhawks (2-0-0) made a lot happen in the first 10 minutes of the game and the final 20, when they scored four times on 19 shots and only let goalie Corey Crawford (21 saves) see four shots.

There was a little letdown in the latter half of the first, when the Sabres tied it 2-2 on goals by Zemgus Girgensons and Tyler Ennis, but overall the Blackhawks' effort wasn't anything like their lackluster first two periods in a shootout win Thursday at the Dallas Stars.

It wasn't perfect, but there was a lot more to be happy about this time, including a 47-23 shot differential in their favor.

"Our [first 40 minutes] tonight wasn't bad," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "Just because it was 2-2, doesn't mean that it wasn't as complete as we'd like. I think across the board we were 100 percent better than we were the other day. [This] put us back on the right track."

In the third, Chicago got goals from Kane, Marian Hossa, Patrick Sharp and Daniel Carcillo to break the 2-2 tie and earn their second straight win. Shaw and defenseman Duncan Keith scored in the first, forging a 2-0 lead less than three minutes into the game.

Crawford, who wasn't nearly as busy as he was in Dallas, made 21 saves for his second straight win.

"I think we were able to wear them down in their zone," Crawford said. "We had some great shifts there in the third period, where I think they just kind of sat back and we were cycling. All five guys in the zone were moving it around and making it difficult on them with our speed and skill. It was nice to see."

Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth made 41 saves but dropped to 0-2-0.

"In the third period, their star players turned it up a notch and we didn't," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "The reason we came back was Girgensons. The one thing that a lot of people can take from him is his effort. He just works. If we get everybody to do that, we'll be OK. But for whatever reason, we had too many passengers tonight."

Chicago got things going quickly after the opening puck drop.

Shaw made it 1-0 by tipping a point shot from Niklas Hjalmarsson past Enroth, and Keith made it 2-0 at 2:52 with his second goal in as many games.

It appeared to be a rout in the making, but Girgensons stemmed the tide with his second goal in as many games, making it 2-1 at 7:17 of the first by flipping a shot past Crawford off a rebound of a long wrist shot by defenseman Andrej Meszaros

Ennis tied it 2-2 with 1:20 left in the first on a pretty shorthanded goal.

After Ennis deflected a pass by Brad Richards to cause a turnover, forward Drew Stafford collected it and earned his second assist of the game by sending a quick pass to Ennis for a breakaway. His wrist beat Crawford to the stick side after a quick backhand-forehand deke.

In the second, Hossa nearly put the Blackhawks back in front during a goal-mouth scramble. Instead, a video review upheld the initial ruling of no goal by showing he used a kicking motion to send the puck over the goal line.

Buffalo had a great scoring chance thwarted at 15:13 of the second, when forward Nicholas Deslauriers scooped a puck that hopped over the stick of defenseman David Rundblad at the Sabres blue line and turned it into a breakaway.

This time, Crawford made a pad save to keep the game tied.

It was all Blackhawks from there. Kane's goal at 5:58 of the third started a landslide that included Hossa's 30th career shorthanded goal, a category he leads among active players. Sharp then added his second power-play goal in as many games and Carcillo scored his first goal of the season to cap the scoring.

"We just said between periods to try and shut [their transition game] down and not give them anything on the rush, eliminate that from their game," Crawford said. "We turned pucks over at our blue line against them and [went] back quick the other way, and it almost turned out like that the whole third period, a lot of zone time for us."

Sabres' Cody Hodgson feeling comfortable at left wing

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
October 11, 2014

BUFFALO – A year ago, the thought of Cody Hodgson playing anywhere but center would have seemed absurd.

The Sabres had few viable options down the middle. Tyler Ennis was still bouncing between two forward spots. Zemgus Girgensons was just beginning his NHL career as a winger.

Besides, Hodgson had just signed a six-year, \$25.5 million contract extension to be the No. 1 pivot.

But late in the season, following an evaluation period, the team's new regime mapped out the future. Ennis had settled in nicely at center under coach Ted Nolan. Girgensons, Nolan and general manager Tim Murray decided, would be a better long-term fit in the middle.

So they shifted Hodgson, a center his entire career, to left wing.

The 24-year-old thrived there, compiling four goals and eight points in nine games to close the season. Hodgson then went on a tear at the world championship as a winger for Team Canada, scoring six goals and eight points in eight contests.

This season, Hodgson's a permanent winger.

"I see it as an opportunity," Hodgson said Friday inside the First Niagara Center. "We have a lot of good players on this team, especially offensively. It's nice to be able to contribute in whatever way I can. Left wing, I felt real comfortable."

He skated beside slick rookie center Sam Reinhart and Brian Gionta during Thursday's 3-1 season-opening loss to Columbus. Hodgson nearly generated a couple of goals, but he held the puck on a two-on-one break and was stymied when Reinhart dished to him in the slot.

"If I would've scored, Samson would've had a pretty good debut night with a couple points," Hodgson said after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game in Chicago against the Blackhawks. "I thought it was a pretty good combination."

Still, Nolan switched lines Friday, putting Girgensons between Hodgson and Gionta. Girgensons centered Hodgson late last season, when Hodgson busted out of a long slump.

Clearly, playing left wing frees Hodgson up offensively. With fewer defensively responsibilities, he often breaks loose. Teammates have consistently hit him with long passes down the side.

"You start to take off, catch defenses sometimes," said Hodgson, who had 20 goals, 44 points and a minus-26 rating last season. "The last game I did that a couple times where the defense didn't really expect you to break and you're gone."

Hodgson, who's struggled defensively for years, can't ignore that side of the game, Nolan said.

What's his expectation for Hodgson this season?

"Continue to play a little bit more defensively – just a little bit more," Nolan said. "We don't want him to be a defensive specialist, (a) Selke winner. ... We expect him to score like he did, if not more, and just pay a little bit more attention to defense and just be a little bit more competitive."

There aren't many right-handed shots that play left wing. Hodgson used to center one of the best, former Sabres star Thomas Vanek.

"Always open, always in position to score," Hodgson said about Vanek. "That's something I can really take away from him. I'm still learning. I'm trying to get better at the position, but I definitely need to remember what Thomas did to create offense, because he was so good at it."

xxx

Sabres forward Cody McCormick missed Friday's practice for a maintenance day but could play tonight. McCormick was to be evaluated before the Sabres flew to Chicago, Nolan said.

Brian Flynn would likely replace him.

xxx

Nolan on the Sabres' sloppy effort Thursday: "I thought about it all night the way our team played the way they did, and this is a competitive group, they really are. It was almost like one of those deer-in-the-headlights look. We were dry. We didn't have no jump. Hopefully, this is just one of those jittery type of games. We get it out of our system, we move forward."

The Sabres had trouble simply exiting their zone.

"We didn't communicate," Nolan said. "We didn't support."

xxx

Nolan on flipping Girgensons and Reinhart, who practiced Friday between big wingers Marcus Foligno and Chris Stewart, his linemates much of training camp: "Just maybe give the young kid a little bit more safety ... with those two guys and get Gionta and Cody some speed in the middle."

xxx

The Sabres sent forward Johan Larsson to Rochester on Friday. Larsson played in the Americans' season opener hours later. He suffered a possible concussion Sept. 28.

Sabres fall to Chicago 6-2

By Staff Report

WGR 550

October 11, 2014

Feeding off the energy of the crowd in their home opener, the Chicago Blackhawks came out firing, netting the first goal of the game just :59 seconds in. The goal coming off a point shot by Andrew Shaw which skipped past Jhonas Enroth, who never even saw the shot go past him.

It didn't take long for the Hawks to tally goal number two, as they kept the puck in the offensive zone just long enough for Duncan Keith to rifle yet another point shot past Enroth, this one over the left shoulder, as Chicago quickly went up 2-0.

Buffalo kept fighting however, as after Chicago put some pressure on Jhonas Enroth, the Sabres mustered up a rush of their own. Forward Zemgus Girgensons capitalized on a juicy rebound left by Corey Crawford, as he put it past the veteran netminder to cut the Blackhawks lead in half with just under 13 minutes to play in the first.

The teams would exchange scoring chances following the Sabres goal, with Chicago hitting a few posts and the Sabres throwing some pucks at the Blackhawks net. With just over two minutes left in the period, the Sabres took a penalty that sent them shorthanded to close the stanza. Buffalo would take advantage on a beautiful breakout pass to Tyler Ennis, who knocked in the tying tally with just under a minute left.

Chicago would get one more chance on the power play but clanked one off the post with 20 seconds left, and an exciting 1st period came to a close.

As the second period started the Blackhawks controlled the pace of play, much like they did in the first. Midway through the period, it appeared Chicago had taken the lead, but a puck that was kicked was found to have not actually even crossed the goal line. Chicago would get their next chance a few minutes later as Marian Hossa found his way into the slot to fire a point blank wrist shot into the pads of Jhonas Enroth.

Buffalo would get their best chance of the period with about 7 minutes left in the period as Nic Deslauriers skated in all alone from the red line, only to miss on the opportunity. The Blackhawks got a powerplay shortly thereafter, but failed to generate any solid scoring chances, and the teams headed to the third period still deadlocked at 2.

The third showcased one of the best offensive teams in the league as the Blackhawks dominated from start to finish, netting four goals in the stanza. The first one coming from Patrick Kane, who knifed his way around a few Sabre defenders to beat Jhonas Enroth. Shortly thereafter it was Marian Hossa, who had been on the doorstep threatening the entire game, netting one. And lastly, Patrick Sharp found the back of the net on a beauty of a shot from inside the offensive zone.

The Blackhawks were not done however, as after killing a penalty, forward Daniel Carcillo jumped out of the penalty box and into the action as he beat Enroth for the 4th Chicago goal of the period, giving the Hawks a 6-2 lead, and the fans one more to go to celebrate in their home opener.

Goals

First Period

CHI- :59 Andrew Shaw (1)

Assists: Niklas Hjalmarsson, Brandon Saad

CHI- 2:52 Duncan Keith (2)

Unassisted

BUF- 7:17 Zemgus Girgenons (2)
Assists: Andrej Meszaros, Drew Stafford

BUF- 18:40 Tyler Ennis (1) (Shorthanded)
Assist: Drew Stafford

2nd Period
No Scoring

3rd Period

CHI- 5:58 Patrick Kane (1)
Assists: Andrew Shaw, Brandon Saad

CHI 10:03 Marian Hossa (1) (Shorthanded)
Assists: Jonathan Toews, Brent Seabrook

CHI 13:16 Patrick Sharp (2) (Power Play)
Assists: Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane

CHI 17:23 Daniel Carcillo (1)
Assist: Brandon Saad

Hamilton: Sabres had a slow start, but recovered

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 11, 2014

Chicago, IL (WGR 550) -- You had to know the Blackhawks were going to come out flying in their home opener and the Sabres had no answers early. Chicago scored two goals in the first 2:52, but to Buffalo's credit, it did recover.

The first goal came at :59 when Andrej Meszaros did a poor job of tying up Andrew Shaw and he tipped home a Niklas Hjalmarsson shot.

Just 1:53 later, Cody Hodgson took a faceoff and threw the puck right up the middle to Duncan Keith. His shot hit a Sabre and it was 2-0.

I have to give the Sabres credit after that, there was no panic. They started getting pressure on Corey Crawford. The first shot by Zemgus Girgensons was a crazy pad save after Crawford coughed the puck up. The second shot was after Tyler Myers sent in Drew Stafford for a good chance.

Girgensons broke through for Buffalo when he lofted a Meszaros rebound over Crawford.

Now make no mistake, the Hawks were still pressing. Ben Smith and Jonathan Toews hit posts and Enroth made a really nice pad save on Toews when he got an unexpected shot off, but I thought Buffalo worked through it.

They got a chance to tie the game when Brad Richards tried to force a pass from the right point across the blue line that Stafford picked off. Tyler Ennis took off and Stafford sent him in alone. He beat Crawford for his first ever shorthanded goal.

Sam Reinhart intercepted a pass in the offensive zone and wound up walking in from the side boards. He forced Crawford into a real nice save. Later, Reinhart made a play he'd like back when he tried a blind pass in the offensive zone that went the other way with Pat Kane on the ice. Enroth made the save, but it was a learning experience for the 18 year old.

In the period Enroth made 15 saves while Crawford stopped eight.

The second period really saw momentum swings. Buffalo started off well when Ennis executed a 4-on-3 getting a puck to Rasmus Ristolainen for a shot down the slot.

Crawford was equally spectacular when Nic Deslauriers had a clean cut breakaway only to be stoned.

Enroth has been stellar through 40 minutes with 26 saves. In 30 seconds had made two saves on Marcus Kruger and three on Marian Hossa to keep the game tied.

Hodgson had another poor defensive effort and it almost broke the tie. He did a bad job on his back check with Hossa who cut to the slot only to be robbed by Enroth.

After two periods Buffalo outhit the Hawks 25-13. Deslauriers, Girgensons and Stafford all had three.

The third period started fast, Chris Stewart got away with pulling down one of the Hawks setting up a great scoring chance to Josh Gorges who had jumped in, but Gorges couldn't handle the pass.

The Hawks came back when who other than Kane was left alone in front. He took the pass and one-timed it past Enroth.

The Sabres had a chance to tie it on the power play, but Meszaros made a bad read allowing Hossa to walk in

and he scored the shorthanded goal.

There were times in this game where the Sabres played one of the best teams in the NHL very well on the road, but the Hawks are just too good and too skilled for the Sabres at this point, especially on the road.

Blackhawks score four in final period to defeat Sabres

By Tin Musick

The Sports Xchange

October 11, 2014

CHICAGO -- Chicago Blackhawks goaltender Corey Crawford remembered a familiar saying when he saw Buffalo Sabres left winger Nicolas Deslauriers storming toward him on a breakaway Saturday.

"We say, 'Close the gap,' " Crawford said. "I got a good read. I read that he was shooting there, and I was able to close it up pretty quick."

Gap closed. Game won.

Crawford's save preserved a tie score late in the second period, and the Blackhawks erupted for four goals in the third period to beat the Sabres, 6-2, in front of 22,012 fans at the United Center. Patrick Kane scored the go-ahead goal with 14:02 remaining in the third period for the Hawks, and Marian Hossa, Patrick Sharp and Daniel Carcillo each scored to pad the lead.

The Blackhawks (2-0-0) squandered a two-goal lead in the first period but recovered to beat the Sabres (0-2-0), who were outshot by a margin of 47-23. Crawford stopped 21 saves to post his second consecutive win. Sabres goaltender Jhonas Enroth made 41 saves in the loss.

The Sabres dropped their sixth consecutive game against the Blackhawks. Buffalo has not beaten Chicago since Dec. 11, 2009.

"Old habits are hard to break," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "It looked like we were content to keep it close, and in the third period, their star players turned it up a notch and we didn't."

For much of the game, it appeared as if the Sabres could break the habit. They rallied from a 2-0 deficit with goals by center Zemgus Girgensons and center Tyler Ennis, and they killed the Blackhawks' first three power plays to frustrate a sellout crowd of 22,012.

But the game unraveled in the third period.

"We sat back," Ennis said. "When you're tentative, you're going to lose. We've got to shore things up for sure defensively, but you've got to be competitive. You've got to go out there and compete."

Thanks to Crawford's breakaway save, the score remained tied 2-2 entering the third period when Kane fired a one-timer past Enroth. Kane took a pass from center Andrew Shaw along the boards and snapped a low shot for his first goal of the season.

Chicago's line of Kane, Shaw and Brandon Saad combined for two goals and five assists. Kane and Shaw each tallied a goal and an assist, while Saad notched three assists.

"They're good," Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "I think we saw that last year, and I think they like playing with one another."

Hossa followed Kane's go-ahead goal with a short-handed goal with 9:57 remaining in the third period to make it 4-2, and Sharp added a power-play goal with 6:44 remaining to increase the lead to 5-2. Chicago right winger Daniel Carcillo capped the scoring with 2:37 remaining.

All told, Buffalo allowed 76 shot attempts. Forty-seven shots made it on goal, while Sabres players blocked 17 shots and 12 other shot attempts by the Blackhawks missed the net.

"We had a lot of shots," Saad said. "We played pretty well. We still gave up some chances, so we've got to tighten that up, but we're happy with our offensive play."

The Blackhawks opened the scoring 59 seconds into the first period when Shaw deflected a shot past Enroth. Shaw beat Enroth glove side with the redirection, which followed a shot from the blue line by Hawks defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson.

Less than two minutes later, the Blackhawks increased their lead to 2-0 when defenseman Duncan Keith snapped a shot from the high slot. Keith's shot deflected off a Buffalo stick and fluttered past Enroth's glove side. Girgensons sliced the deficit to 2-1 when he sprinted down the ice on a three-on-two rush and punched a rebound past Crawford with 12:43 remaining in the first period. The score marked two goals in as many games for Girgensons, a speedy 20-year-old who has drawn the praise of Sabres coach Ted Nolan.

Ennis evened the score at 2-2 with a short-handed goal on a breakaway with 1:20 remaining in the first period. Ennis' breakaway followed a giveaway by Blackhawks center Brad Richards, whose pass in the offensive zone was intercepted by Sabres right winger Drew Stafford and pushed up ice to Ennis for the tying goal.

NOTES: Blackhawks LW Kris Versteeg (lower body) and D Michael Rozsival (upper body) missed their second consecutive games. ... Buffalo coach Ted Nolan tinkered with his lines, pairing C Sam Reinhart with LW Marcus Foligno and RW Chris Stewart. Meanwhile, Sabres C Zemgus Girgensons anchored a line with LW Cody Hodgson and RW Brian Gionta. ... Blackhawks D Trevor Van Riemsdyk made his United Center debut two days after playing in his first NHL game at Dallas. ... The Blackhawks and Sabres will face off again April 3 in Buffalo in the only other meeting.

Center swap at Friday's practice

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 10, 2014

Against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday, Zemgus Girgensons centered Marcus Foligno and Chris Stewart while rookie Sam Reinhart was with wings Cody Hodgson and Brian Gionta.

Friday morning at practice at First Niagara Center, Girgensons and Reinhart flipped spots, closer resembling lines that were assembled for much of training camp. Buffalo Sabres coach Ted Nolan figures putting Reinhart, the second-overall pick in 2014, with the bigger bodies like Foligno and Stewart will do him good for the team's next game on Saturday in Chicago (8:30 p.m., MSG-B, Bell TV, WGR 550).

"Give the young kid a safety net around him with those two guys and get Gionta and Cody some speed in the middle," Nolan said. "Girgensons was by far our best player last night."

Girgensons scored Buffalo's lone goal in the 3-1 loss to Columbus because he bee lined down the middle of the ice right to the net and lifted the puck over goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky. Nolan would have liked to see more plays go up and down the ice rather than across and for players to not pass up quality scoring opportunities. Columbus held a 78-39 edge in shot attempts.

"This is a close-knit team already, just going through it, and I think they're being too generous with one another," Nolan said. "They don't want to be selfish – a couple times trying those rink-wide passes, hitting somebody wide open where you could've shot it and maybe have somebody fight for the rebound."

"I think we've just got to alter our train of thought and start going more north-south and start throwing pucks and people to the net."

The line of Tyler Ennis between Matt Moulson and Drew Stafford generated a lot of offensive chances early. However, Ennis realizes they have to be able to sustain that pressure. Staying out of the penalty box would help achieve that.

"We had a lot of chances the first few shifts and then we kind of lost our mojo and we started taking a few penalties," he said. "We got a little tired and they took over the momentum."

Nolan attributed some of the struggles the team had to opening-night nerves.

"This is a competitive group. They really are. It was almost one of those deer-in-the-headlights looks," he said. "There was just no drive, we had no jump. Hopefully this is just one of those jittery games we get out of our system and move forward."

FRIDAY'S PRACTICE PARTICIPANTS

26 Matt Moulson – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
82 Marcus Foligno – 23 Sam Reinhart – 80 Chris Stewart
19 Cody Hodgson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 65 Brian Flynn – 17 Torrey Mitchell

4 Josh Gorges – 57 Tyler Myers
6 Mike Weber – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
61 Andre Benoit – 41 Andrej Meszaros
51 Nikita Zadorov – 24 Tyson Strachan

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

Cody McCormick did not skate. He was given a maintenance day by the coaching staff but may travel with the team to Chicago.

Earlier in the day, the Sabres assigned forward Johan Larsson to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League. He'd been recovering from an upper-body injury sustained on Sept. 28.

Sabres prepared for tough test in Chicago

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 11, 2014

CHICAGO – Winning a game at United Center is never easy. The energy and build-up based on the fact Saturday night is also the Chicago Blackhawks' home opener may make it that much tougher for the Buffalo Sabres.

The Blackhawks are 11-6-1-1 in home openers at United Center dating back to 1995. They finished with a 27-7-7 record at home last season.

Recent history hasn't been too kind to the Sabres against the Blackhawks, especially in Chicago. The Sabres are seeking their first victory at United Center since Jan. 10, 2007. They've lost their last four games in Chicago and five in a row to the Blackhawks overall.

Buffalo will try to change all that when they take on Chicago for their first road game of the season at 8:30 p.m. EST (8 p.m. pregame show on MSG-B and Bell TV).

Keeping things simple and maintaining strong communication will be critical if Buffalo wants to skate away with two points.

Sabres forward Drew Stafford has already noticed that the communication between players has already improved drastically since the start of training camp. He expects the team to build on the good things they were able to do in their season-opening loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"Now that we have our team, going forward, I think we're only going to get better," he said. "Against Columbus, that was a good test. They're a fast team. They're on the attack and they don't really give up much. We're going to see the same exact thing tonight against Chicago. We know it's not going to get any easier.

"As far as communication goes, we have it in here. We have a good group and we're going to continue to work at it."

A strong effort, first and foremost will be what the Sabres coaching staff will be looking for. They also hope the team will be able to learn from some of the mistakes they made against the Blue Jackets and correct them against Chicago.

"We have to reduce our number of turnovers and make those 5-foot passes as opposed to those 15-footers. We have to tighten up all areas of the game," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "...If you have any kind of turnovers and you want to play loosey goosey against a team like this, they'll make you pay and they'll make you pay hard."

ONE CHANGE

The lineup will be the same for Buffalo with only one switch to the lines. Sam Reinhart will center a line with Marcus Foligno and Chris Stewart while Zemgus Girgensons will play between Cody Hodgson and Brian Gionta.

Girgensons scored Buffalo's only goal Thursday night. He also scored the team's first goal of the season last year.

"One thing about Cody Hodgson, he can score some goals if someone gets him the puck. We feel the way Girgensons plays – he likes to hound that puck – hopefully he can spring Gionta and Hodgson," Nolan said.

After a 37-save performance against the Blue Jackets, Jhonas Enroth earned another start. He'll be in goal against Chicago.

FRIDAY'S LINEUP

26 Matt Moulson – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford
82 Marcus Foligno – 23 Sam Reinhart – 80 Chris Stewart
19 Cody Hodgson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 8 Cody McCormick – 17 Torrey Mitchell

4 Josh Gorges – 57 Tyler Myers
6 Mike Weber – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
61 Andre Benoit – 41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

Scratches: 24 Tyson Strachan, 51 Nikita Zadorov, 65 Brian Flynn
Injured Reserve: 3 Mark Pysyk, 29 Jake McCabe, 31 Matt Hackett, 36 Patrick Kaleta

McCormick was given a maintenance day Friday, but was given the all-clear to play Saturday night.

Sabres unable to spoil Blackhawks' home opener

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

October 12, 2014

CHICAGO – For 40 minutes, the game was pretty much up for grabs.

Then came the third period and the Chicago Blackhawks pulled away from the Buffalo Sabres in convincing fashion. The Blackhawks scored four goals in the third to snap a tie and win 6-2 in front of 22,012 fans at United Center.

The Sabres were heavily outshot – the final total favored Chicago 47-23 – but they had many opportunities, particularly on the power play in the third, to make a statement. The Sabres power play went 0-for-4 with all four opportunities coming in the final 20 minutes.

"We were just out of sync," Sabres forward Tyler Ennis, who scored one of Buffalo's goals, said. "We couldn't get in the zone, we were sloppy. Their kill was good but I think our entries were the problem. We couldn't get in and [it's] not good enough."

Patrick Kane snapped the 2-2 tie 5:58 into the third period. Then Marian Hossa capitalized shorthanded on a 2-on-1 break. Patrick Sharp added a power-play goal midway through the period before Daniel Carcillo tallied later on.

Sabres goaltender Jhonas Enroth made 41 saves.

"Old habits are hard to break. It was almost like we were content to keep it close," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "In the third period, their star players turned it up a notch. We didn't."

Coming off a 3-1 opening night loss to Columbus at home, the Sabres hoped for a better result on Saturday. Like the game against Chicago, that game was tied heading into the final frame.

"We just have to be confident," Ennis said. "The same thing happened against Columbus. We sat back and when you're tentative, you're going to lose. We've got to shore things up for sure defensively."

The players hope they can learn from these games and then be able to grow from them sooner rather than later.

"We have to as a group, learn to be comfortable in those tight situations because 95 percent of the games are going to be those types of games – tied games, one-goal games," Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said. "We have to be confident and comfortable playing in those games and sometimes it sucks. You've got to go through this to learn how to do it the right way."

"But you can't too long so we've got to learn from tonight and be ready to go for Monday."

A ROCKY START

The Blackhawks were celebrating their home opener are now 12-6-1-1 in first games of the year at United Center. They've also beaten Buffalo in each of their past six meetings.

Buffalo is now 18-25-1 all-time in road openers. The team hadn't opened their road schedule in Chicago since Oct. 9, 1980, a game in which they lost 4-3.

From the get-go, it looked like the Blackhawks were going to pile on often. Andrew Shaw deflected a shot in just 59 seconds into the game to make it 1-0. With the crowd behind them, the Blackhawks struck again at the 2:52 mark to go ahead 2-0 when Duncan Keith's shot from the point found its way into the back of the net.

"We knew they were going to come out hard. It was their home opener tonight and it's a great hockey team we were playing tonight," Gorges said. "We knew we had to weather the storm early."

A goal from Zemgus Girgensons brought the Sabres back to life. Buffalo worked the puck out of their own end and Girgensons was able to bang home a rebound off an Andrej Meszaros shot.

"The reason we came back was a guy like Girgensons," Nolan said. "The one thing a lot of people can take from him is his effort. He just works and if you get everybody to do that then we'll be OK, but whatever reason, we had too many passengers tonight."

HEY SHORTY

Then Ennis struck for the first shorthanded goal of his career. Before the game, Nolan said that in order for Ennis to take the next step in his development, he's going to have to be relied upon in many different situations.

Ennis had never played on the penalty kill prior to this year's training camp but assistant coach Bryan Trottier saw it as a great opportunity for Ennis, who had never really killed penalties before. The Sabres scored five shorthanded goals all of last season, tying them for 19th in the League.

The personnel shift paid off in a big way Saturday night. With 1:20 left in the first period, Blackhawks forward Brad Richards mishandled the puck at the blue line and Sabres forward Drew Stafford was able to get the puck up to Ennis. He then raced in on a breakaway and beat Corey Crawford to score.

"When I saw it get fumbled and Staff got it, I jumped and saw a chance at maybe a breakaway. The puck was bobbling but Staff got it to me," Ennis said. "I was trying to settle it down too and just make a move. I was happy it went in but disappointed with the loss."

NEW PAIRINGS ON THE HORIZON?

Defensemen Nikita Zadorov and Tyson Strachan have been healthy scratches for both games. Nolan said tweaks to the lineup may be made to get at least one of them in.

"You might see a change," he said. "That's two games where we can't continue going this way."

Buffalo's next game is Monday at 3 p.m. against the Anaheim Ducks at First Niagara Center.