



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Devils preview

By Taylor Bechtold

Associated Press

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After Jaromir Jagr's historic effort helped them emerge from their offensive slump, the New Jersey Devils should have an opportunity to keep it going against the defensively challenged Buffalo Sabres.

Jagr and the Devils will try to win consecutive games for the first time in nearly two months Tuesday night against a visiting Buffalo team that is hoping to avoid its ninth loss in 10 games.

Already one of the league's lowest-scoring clubs, New Jersey (14-20-7) came into Saturday's game against Philadelphia averaging 1.5 goals over a 3-8-3 stretch since last scoring more than three in a 5-3 victory at Toronto on Dec. 4.

The 42-year-old Jagr got three by himself against the Flyers, passing Gordie Howe to become the oldest NHL player to record a hat trick in a 5-2 home win.

"It's not easy to score in this league anymore," said Jagr, now three goals shy of Phil Esposito (717) for fifth all-time. "With the videos, the preparation, the systems they play, plus the goaltenders are so good."

The line of Jagr, Adam Henrique and Scott Gomez combined for four goals and eight points Saturday as the Devils ended a two-game losing streak with their third win in their last 11 home games.

Jagr, who had one goal over his previous 12 games, hasn't produced a point in his last five meetings with Buffalo dating to his time with Philadelphia. Even if the right wing doesn't provide another outburst, the Devils should have plenty of scoring opportunities against the Atlantic Division-worst Sabres (14-23-3).

Buffalo allows an NHL-high 3.38 goals per game and has given up an average of 4.56 while going 1-7-1 in its last nine. The club hopes to avoid a season high-tying fifth straight loss after Saturday's 6-1 road defeat to the New York Rangers.

The Sabres have killed three of their last eight penalties, and three of New York's four first-period goals came on the power play. Buffalo also has given up at least one first-period score in each of its last eight games.

"It's tough to give up four goals so quick," goaltender Michal Neuvirth said after he was pulled in favor of Jhonas Enroth. "I have to look at the tape and figure out how to play better."

Enroth, however, will be back in net after going 1-3-1 with a 3.79 goals-against average over his last six games. He stopped 23 of 24 shots in a 1-0 overtime road loss Nov. 30, 2013, in his only start against New Jersey last season.

Defenseman Tyler Myers may be able to help in his return after missing the past six games with a lower-body injury.

The Devils have gone 2 for 22 on the power play over their last seven games, but they scored three times in the first period Saturday after going scoreless in the opening 20 minutes of their previous four games.

Buffalo's Zemgus Girgensons has a team-high 11 goals, but is scoreless in his last three games. The leading vote-getter for the NHL All-Star game did not have a point against the Devils in 2013-14.

The Sabres, who took two of three in last season's series, have totaled four goals while getting outshot 132-87 during their skid.

Cory Schneider looks to keep the Buffalo attack quiet after he finished with 18 saves in Saturday's win. He owns a 2.10 GAA in 15 home starts and is 1-2-1 with a 1.24 mark in his last four against the Sabres.

Sabres counting on Myers for a spark

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 6, 2015

NEWARK, N.J. — The Sabres are surrendering goals by the boatload. Their penalty kill can't stop anyone. The power play is rock bottom.

Imagine if one guy could come in and help with all that.

Hey, there's Tyler Myers.

The Sabres, who are in dire need of help, are getting a huge boost. The 6-foot-8 Myers returned to practice Monday and is ready to face the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday.

The defenseman missed seven games with a lower-body injury, and Buffalo went 1-5-1 without him as part of a 1-7-1 freefall.

Myers is the Sabres' runaway leader in ice time at 25:21 per game. He also leads in penalty-kill time (3:13) and is second on the power play (2:57). He certainly can help close some of the Sabres' wounds. He's not going to do it by himself, though.

"I'm not going to be the savior coming in," Myers said in Prudential Center. "We know a five-man unit is the way we have to play to keep goals out and to defend well as a team."

It's hard to imagine the Sabres defending worse. They've given up 41 goals during their nine-game slide, an average of 4.6 per game. The New York Rangers torched them with six Saturday night, and the players wandered through the postgame in quiet bewilderment.

"We've been on a little bit of a downhill here lately," said Myers, who was part of 10 wins in 13 games just prior to his injury. "The way we went during our winning streak, it brought a belief factor in the room I think we've been lacking a little bit in the last year or two. Just knowing we can do that gets guys to work that much harder to try and keep doing it."

The return of Myers will actually allow guys to work less hard. Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov have struggled trying to absorb Myers' minutes, especially on the penalty kill. They'll head back to their normal workload with the big guy back.

"You're giving his minutes to somebody else who may not be ready for those minutes," coach Ted Nolan said. "It just shows you how much we really missed Tyler, for sure. He's an anchor back there. He controls a lot of minutes. Even when he's playing his off game, his off game's pretty good."

Before anyone lines Myers up for canonization, it's worth noting he has one goal and eight points in 32 games. He'll help, but he's not going to overhaul an offense that has two goals in the last three games.

He can, however, help keep goals out.

Buffalo's special teams have been atrocious of late, particularly the penalty kill. The unit has just a 53.8 percent success rate during the nine-game skid, and it's resulted in 12 goals. Myers is back on the top defensive pair with Josh Gorges.

"I'm going to help as much as I can," Myers said. "I think with my reach I'm able to provide a good stick out there on the penalty kill, but like I said we have to know what each guy's role is so we can play as a five-man unit.

"It's a matter of all being on the same page. I think recently we've got away from that a little bit. It looks like some guys are doing one thing, other guys are doing a different thing on the ice. It's a matter of getting back on the same page, knowing what each other's jobs are so you can do your own job."

Several players have noted an increase in individual play. Nolan made a point during Monday's practice of emphasizing where every player needs to be to make the team system work.

Until a 5-2 defeat of Philadelphia on Saturday, New Jersey seemed like the perfect team to help Buffalo get out of its funk. The Devils entered the beatdown of the Flyers on a 2-7-3 slide that featured 19 goals in 12 games.

They feel better about their game now. The Sabres are happy to have Myers back for theirs.

"He's a guy who eats up big minutes for us," defenseman Mike Weber said. "He's a guy that is instrumental on the power play and on the penalty kill. It's huge when you get a guy like that back in your lineup who can really control the flow of the game when he's on the ice."

Sabres notebook: Varone hopes to help Hodgson get on track

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 6, 2015

NEWARK, N.J. — It's been a decade, but Cody Hodgson and Phil Varone once made a really great pair. They played peewee hockey together and learned to skate and stickhandle from Varone's father, Tony.

They'll team up again Tuesday night.

Phil Varone, recalled from Rochester on Sunday, will make his Sabres season debut against the New Jersey Devils. The 24-year-old will center for Hodgson and right wing Brian Flynn.

"His dad was a great skills coach that I had growing up," Hodgson said of Varone. "He worked on power skating and some hands stuff, and that's exactly what Phil is textbook at. He's a real sweet passer, and I'm excited to play with him."

Varone leads the Amerks with 21 assists in 35 games, so he could be the right guy to get Hodgson on track. The forward has just two goals and six points in 39 games.

"I know his numbers are probably not where he wants them to be, but he can put pucks in the net," Varone said in Prudential Center. "He's proven that at this level. I've known him for a long time. We played together growing up in minor hockey, so hopefully we can find something from way back when."

Varone, a restricted free agent at the end of the season, had one goal and one assist in nine games with Buffalo last year.

The 5-foot-10, 191-pounder is eager to show more.

"I'm not as nervous this time," he said. "I'm going to treat it like it's my first time, bring that enthusiasm. ... It's an audition every time you're playing, whether it's regular season, training camp or if you're in Rochester. I'm just going to do what I can to make sure I try to make this a permanent home."

While Varone's numbers with the Amerks are OK (he leads the team with 29 points), he hasn't been happy with his effort.

"Just being harder on pucks, I think sometimes I get a little complacent," Varone said. "To be honest, getting the call here will kind of weed that out of my game, which is nice. I plan on working on that, and I'm going to hopefully be a pain to play against."

Coach Ted Nolan wants all the recent callups – Varone, Tim Schaller and Mikhail Grigorenko – to show him something.

"These kids are going to get some opportunities now, especially the way our team is set up," Nolan said. "The best thing for young players to do is to do something, get noticed and say, 'I want to stay here.' You can't just fit in. You've got to try to do something different."

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Jhonas Enroth will be back in the Sabres' net after entering in a relief role during Saturday's 6-1 loss to the New York Rangers. He stopped 28 of 30 shots after watching Michal Neuvirth allow four goals on nine attempts.

"He played pretty well considering the circumstances last game," Nolan said of Enroth.

In Enroth's last start, a 5-1 loss to Tampa Bay on New Year's Eve, he concluded the game by smashing his goal stick and throwing the mangled mess. Nolan doesn't want to see that again.

"We're in a situation where we're all learning, and Jhonas this is his first year of really playing a lot of games," the coach said. "Some games you're not going to have the support that you'd like to have, but you have what we have and you've got to learn to win with what we have. Sometimes people are going to miss assignments. Sometimes people are going to be looking the other way when they should be looking that way, but that's some youthful mistakes.

"Jhonas has to deal with those type of things and hold his emotions in check."

The Devils plan to start goaltender Cory Schneider. He will play in his league-high 37th game.

He is 13-18-4 with a .917 save percentage and 2.45 goals-against average.

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As they do for every birthday, the Sabres ended practice by whacking the birthday boy on the backside with their sticks as he skated past. Since it was a special birthday – All-Star center Zemgus Girgensons turned 21 – they sent him through the line twice.

"I think it's awesome," Girgensons said of the tradition. "It's fun. It's a little painful, but it's something you get."

Devils play Sabres hoping to string wins together

By Dan Rosen

NHL.com

January 6, 2015

SABRES (14-23-3) at DEVILS (14-20-7)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, MSG

Season series: The three games the Buffalo Sabres and New Jersey Devils played last season were decided by one goal and featured eight goals combined. The Sabres won 3-2 in a shootout and 2-1 in regulation while the Devils beat Buffalo 1-0 in overtime. It's no surprise considering Buffalo was 30th in the League in scoring (1.83 goals per game) and the Devils were 27th (2.40) last season. Not much has changed this season; the Sabres entered the week 30th in scoring (1.78) and the Devils 28th (2.15).

Sabres team scope: Buffalo is 1-7-1 in its past nine games and has allowed five goals or more in six of its past seven regulation losses. However, the Sabres have played the past seven games without defenseman Tyler Myers, who is expected to return to the lineup Tuesday in New Jersey. Myers, who has been out with a lower-body injury, leads the Sabres in ice time per game (25:21). He is an important part of their penalty kill, which has allowed 12 goals on 26 attempts in the past nine games. The Sabres gave up three power play goals in a span of 2:32 in the first period of a 6-1 loss to the New York Rangers on Saturday.

Devils team scope: New Jersey got a hat trick from Jaromir Jagr and eight points from its top line of Jagr, Scott Gomez and Adam Henrique in a 5-2 win against the Philadelphia Flyers on Saturday. The Devils had scored 21 goals in their previous 14 games. It was their sixth win in the past 24 games as they are 6-13-5 since the last time they strung together consecutive wins (Nov. 11-14). Forward Martin Havlat and defenseman Eric Gelinas didn't practice Monday because they were sick. Center Jacob Josefson is eligible to come off injured reserve Tuesday; he has missed the past four games because he has been sick. He practiced Monday. Peter Harrold (head) also practiced Monday after sitting out the game Saturday.

Jets, Sabres prospects stand out at WJC

By Craig Custance

ESPN.com

January 5, 2015

TORONTO -- It was as cool a moment as this version of the IIHF World Junior Championship has produced. Team Canada's Nic Petan scored his third goal in the semifinal that sent the host country to the gold-medal game, and hats rained down on the Air Canada Centre ice.

As the headgear collected around his son, Petan's father jogged down the steps toward the ice, a red hat in hand, and tossed it Frisbee-style over the glass to join the celebrating fans. The arena was filled with excited fans, but none prouder.

"It was pretty cool," Petan said after the 5-1 win over Slovakia.

It was also the moment that drove home another development: This tournament has been a great showcase for the patience the Winnipeg Jets have been preaching since GM Kevin Cheveldayoff arrived following the move from Atlanta.

For years, this franchise languished in the middle or bottom of the standings because of its inability or unwillingness to draft and develop players. If they weren't picking an Ilya Kovalchuk, Dany Heatley or Kari Lehtonen at the top of Round 1, they probably weren't finding an NHL player.

Cheveldayoff changed that when he took over. With the play of Team Canada's Petan and Josh Morrissey, along with Nik Ehlers leading the overachieving Team Denmark, he's quieting those who questioned the process, even mocked his patience. At the NHL level, the Jets are in the playoff race, but clearly the best days are coming.

"It really is exciting. Our scouts have done a great job of recognizing players," Cheveldayoff said when we chatted this weekend. "The tournament is a great showcase from a standpoint of a player who wants to try and step out and be at the forefront. ... That's why organizations are excited when they have players in these tournaments. It's pressure-packed, it forces the players to do things at a greater level."

The Buffalo Sabres are pushing the Jets for the organization having its most impressive tournament. Despite Team USA's disappointing finish, forward Hudson Fasching was one of their best players. Tonight's gold-medal game will feature Sam Reinhart, who has arguably been the tournament's MVP.

Sabres GM Tim Murray was in the building Sunday night and is watching Reinhart's progress closely. The biggest thing he's looking for is how the No. 2 overall pick in last year's draft is responding to the additional responsibility he's been given by Team Canada. Playing in a gold-medal game provides Murray with even more information.

"You look at your guys and how important they are and can they play under that pressure?" Murray said. "This is the most pressure these guys have until they're in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Does their role increase or decrease as you go along?"

Reinhart has anchored Team Canada's top line and trails only Petan among tournament scoring leaders. Petan is at 11, with Reinhart and Connor McDavid tied for second with 10.

"He's been very good," Murray said when we spoke before Sunday's game. "He's a leader on the team. He's a first-line center ... he's first PK, he's first PP. He's responsible. In the U.S. game, he made defensive plays."

It's looking more and more like potential 2015 No. 1 pick McDavid will end up stealing the spotlight when the gold medals are awarded, but that won't stop a few GMs from feeling really good about the players they already have.

Nine more takeaways from the weekend's WJC action:

2. Decision time on Duclair

Another player who was being watched closely by his parent club was Anthony Duclair, who scored Team Canada's fourth goal against Slovakia. Duclair made a nice pass to set up Petan on his first goal, and he has played on Canada's top line all tournament.

Rangers director of player personnel Gordie Clark and assistant GM Jeff Gorton were among the many scouts and executives at the game Sunday evening, and the Rangers will have to make a call shortly on whether or not to return Duclair to junior or the NHL.

"It's going to come down to [coach] Alain [Vigneault] and [GM] Glen [Sather], just like it was to send him here," Clark told me on Saturday. Said Duclair, "I guess they'll tell me what they'll do after the tournament."

3. Proving it on a big stage

A big factor will be how much playing time Duclair will get down the stretch for the Rangers. He has the skill set and speed that Vigneault likes to plug into his system, but at the same time it's counterproductive if he sits. This strong WJC run can be a confidence builder and something that gives him momentum heading back to the NHL.

"I don't think there's any question," Clark said. "This is a pretty high level to be doing it at."

4. Behind the Rangers' selection of Duclair

Canada's top line of Reinhart, Max Domi and Duclair consists of a player taken No. 2 overall (Reinhart) and No. 12 overall (Domi). Then there's Duclair, who was the No. 80 pick in the 2013 draft. He slipped to the Rangers in part because of a point-total drop in his draft year, mixed with a reputation as someone who didn't necessarily play within the team concept particularly well.

"He was outstanding in underage" Clark said. "There was maybe a little attitude, but it was adjusted by the time we had to interview him. By the time I talked to him at the combine, I didn't see any of it at all. It was a humble kid. He said: 'Look, it's my fault. I've adjusted and I'm doing something about it.'"

5. Keys for the Duke

Duclair admits that he still has to pinch himself at the NHL level, surpassing even his highest expectations by making the team this year. "I try to soak it in as much as possible every day," he said. "I'm learning from unbelievable guys in that locker room and a great coach as well. Every day I come in with a smile on my face."

He also knows that a spot in the NHL isn't a birthright. "You shouldn't take it for granted," he said. "You have to work for it every day; when you're in the lineup, you give it all. You might not get much ice time, but you try to make a difference out there."

6. Fasel holds court

Before the two Sunday WJC games, IIHF president Rene Fasel addressed the media in a news conference where he was his usual candid and entertaining self.

He wondered whether high prices were the reason for attendance problems in Montreal, saying they would explore the causes with Hockey Canada after the tournament. He said this tournament will finish as the third most attended, trailing Ottawa and Edmonton/Calgary, but he thought steep prices drove attendance down.

"If you would do this pricing in Europe, you would have nobody in the arena," he said.

7. The World Cup All-Star-team option

Near the end of his news conference, I asked Fasel his thoughts on the 2016 World Cup filling out its rosters with two All-Star teams rather than countries. Organizers are considering a seventh team of European All-Stars from countries without teams, and an eighth of young North American stars who aren't on Team Canada or Team USA.

Fasel supports the idea.

"To be very honest, I like the idea," Fasel said. "If we go with No. 7 and No. 8 in a normal national team, it's déjà vu. We had that in the Olympics, we had that in the Canada Cup. We have that in the world championships. It's still an idea. There's a rumor -- we don't know yet what they're going to do."

8. Eichel vs. McDavid

McDavid's impressive play has further secured his spot as one of the best prospects ever to compete in this tournament, but in talking to scouts, there was no sense that Team USA's surprising early exit has soured anybody on Jack Eichel.

"I don't think he helped himself as far as the battle with McDavid; he's going in the top two," said a Western Conference scout. "The one horse was further ahead of the other, and the other guy didn't do enough to catch him in this race. [Eichel] is not falling out of the 2 spot. If somebody decided to take him [No.] 1, they're just looking for a different kind of superstar."

9. Questionable decision to anoint Eichel

This scout questioned Team USA's decision to make Eichel its captain, considering all the pressure already on his shoulders heading into this tournament. The advantage McDavid has with Team Canada is that he's not relied on to do everything. Curtis Lazar's upbeat personality and leadership have made him the perfect captain for Team Canada.

"I don't think they did any favors by making [Eichel] captain," the scout said. "I don't mean to be anti-USA Hockey, it just puts an unneeded pressure. All of a sudden, he comes to this tournament in front of the hockey universe -- why do you put on more?"

10. Who goes No. 1?

The man who may ultimately have to choose between McDavid and Eichel, Sabres GM Murray, wasn't tipping his hand as to whether this tournament created a larger gap between Eichel and McDavid.

"Hard to say," Murray said. "I don't know how many people had Eichel ahead coming into this. The people that did, did they change their minds? I can't answer that question. Both guys played extremely well here. Both guys showed that we'd better pay attention right until the end of the year. ... Whoever is picking one will have the toughest decision in the world at the end of the year. I think there's a lot of reasons to love both kids."

Tyler Myers ready to return to struggling Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 6, 2015

Without Tyler Myers, the Sabres quickly became a mess, losing six of the seven games without their ace defenseman.

Opponents exploited Myers' absence, outscoring the Sabres 33-13 during the past two weeks.

Yikes.

Thankfully for the Sabres, who have lost four straight games and eight of nine overall, Myers will return from his lower-body injury tonight against the Devils.

"I'm not going to be the savior coming in," Myers told reporters Monday in New Jersey. "We know it's a five-man unit, the way we have to play to keep goals out and to defend well as a team."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan said Myers' presence will be "a huge difference." He leads the team in ice time with 25 minutes, 22 seconds a game.

Filling that void was difficult.

"It just shows you how much we really missed Tyler, for sure," Nolan said. "He's an anchor back there."

Myers added: "It's a matter of all being on the same page, and I think recently we've gone away from that a little bit. It looks like some guys are doing one thing and some guys are doing a different thing on the ice."

The Sabres also summoned forwards Tim Schaller and Phil Varone from Rochester on Sunday and returned Johan Larsson to their AHL affiliate.

"When things are going the way they are, you got to try shake it up here a little bit and get some new blood in and a new approach," Nolan said. "As I've always mentioned with this team, we got good characters on this team, just unfortunately things are going bad for us right now."

The newcomers will "get some opportunities now," Nolan said.

"The best thing for young players ... is to do something and get noticed and to say, 'I want to stay here,'" Nolan said. "You can't just fit in; you have to try to do something a little bit different."

Meanwhile, Nolan said center Cody McCormick couldn't walk Sunday. McCormick felt fine following Saturday's 6-1 loss to the Rangers. He felt better Monday but didn't practice.

Nolan also said goalie Jhonas Enroth will start tonight. Michal Neuvirth started the past two contests. Enroth relieved him early Saturday.

Sabres spend a lot of time on neutral zone play

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 6, 2015

Newark, NJ (WGR 550) -- The Sabres had an hour practice with Ted Nolan doing a lot of coaching as his team did breakouts and neutral zone play.

Buffalo has been atrocious with the puck lately and its shown as they've lost four straight and eight out of nine.

The team had its mandatory day off Sunday and Ted Nolan said they looked good, "They were refreshed, especially with a couple new players in because when things are going the way they are, you have to try to shake it up and get some new blood in and a new approach."

With Cody McCormick walking around the arena today in a walking boot and Johan Larsson back in Rochester, Phil Varone and Tim Schaller are up. On McCormick Nolan said, "We thought he was going to practice with us today, considering the morning after the last game he couldn't walk so, he felt a little bit better today and we'll see how he feels tomorrow."

Larsson has not impressed very much at all in his 12 games up this season. When young players are given an opportunity by Nolan, average isn't good enough, "It's not Larsson's fault we were playing the way we were playing. Grigorenko's in the same boat as these kids are going to be given some opportunities and the best thing for a young player to do is to do something and to get noticed and say, 'I want to stay here'. You can't just try to fit in, you have to do something different. He did OK, but we'll see how these two guys do."

Tyler Myers will return Tuesday in New Jersey after missing seven games with injury. Myers said he won't be a savior, but Nolan's glad he's back, "It's a huge difference, if you take out any top guy, all of a sudden you're giving his minutes to somebody else who is maybe not ready for those minutes." Nolan added, "We put extra minutes on Zadorov and put extra minutes on Ristolainen and maybe that's why he got sick, so it's a huge factor."

With the team in Manhattan and the game in Newark, Nolan will not have a morning skate on Tuesday which really doesn't bother him, "There are some teams in this league that haven't had a pregame skate in two months or so, so the pregame skate is sometimes overrated, but right now what we need to do is be mentally engaged in what we have to do. It doesn't matter who we have and we have to learn to win with what we got and if you don't do that, you're not going to be too successful."

Jhonas Enroth will be back between the pipes against the Devils. Today's lines were:

Moulson-Girgensons-Ennis
Hodgson-Varone-Flynn
Stafford-Grigorenko-Stewart
Deslauriers-Schaller-Kaleta

Gorges-Myers
Zadorov-Ristolainen
Weber-Strachan
Mezсарos-Benoit

Sabres' Myers, "I'm not savior" as he'll return

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 6, 2015

Newark, NJ (WGR 550) -- Tyler Myers is ready to go after missing seven games giving Buffalo eight healthy defensemen.

Myers was back with Josh Gorges during Monday's practice. He said it's great to be back, but he's not going to be able to turn this around alone, "It's always frustrating when you're not playing, a little more frustrating when things aren't going as well as you hoped, but I'm not going to be the savior coming in, we know it's a five man unit the way we have to play to keep goals out and to defend well as a team."

The best penalty killing team in the NHL is Chicago at 89.9 percent. The worst is Philadelphia at 74.2 percent while overall the Sabres are 74.6. In the seven games Myers missed, Buffalo's penalty killing in 47.4 percent. That means they've killed off just nine of 19 shorthanded situations. Myers may not be a savior, but he certainly can help, "Coming back into the lineup I'm going to help as much as I can. With my reach I'm able to provide a good stick out there on the penalty kill, but we have to know what each guy's role is, so we can play as a four man unit or a five man unit with Yoni or Newvy back there and it's a matter of being all on the same page. I think recently we've gotten away from that a little bit. It looks like some guys are doing a different thing on the ice,"

So how does this team get back to where they were when they went 10-3? Myers said, "The way we went during that streak, it brought a belief factor into the room that I think we've been lacking in the last year or two and just knowing that we can do that gets guys to try and work that much harder to keep doing it."

Myers expected to be back sooner, but he said now he feels comfortable on the ice, "I feel great now. It was a little bit longer than I thought it was going to be, but the way I'm feeling now it's like I'm 100 percent, so I have no regrets in taking the time to get better."

One person that's happy Myers is back is head coach Ted Nolan, "It's a huge difference, if you take out any top guy, all of a sudden you're giving his minutes to somebody else who is maybe not ready for those minutes." Nolan added, "We put extra minutes on Zadorov and put extra minutes on Ristolainen and maybe that's why he got sick, so it's a huge factor."

Myers set to return Tuesday night

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 5, 2015

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY – When the Buffalo Sabres take on the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday, they'll have some big help back on the blue line.

Tyler Myers practiced with the team at Prudential Center on Monday and will be back in the lineup for Buffalo. He's missed the past six games with a lower-body injury. Since he's been out, the Sabres have gone 1-4-1.

The 24-year-old defenseman has averaged 25:21 per game this season. Prior to the injury, which occurred in the game on Dec. 20 against Colorado, he was on a 10-game stretch in which he'd logged more ice time than at any other point in his six-year career. He last led the Sabres in ice time in a season during his rookie campaign in 2009-10, when he averaged 23:44 per game.

"Physically, it wasn't a problem at all. Whatever they decide to give me coming back here, I'm just going to play the way I was before the injury," he said after practice. "It's just a matter of coming in with a mindset and whether that's 19 minutes or 30 minutes, it's the same mindset the whole time."

He has eight points (1+7) on the year and has been a key contributor in all facets of the game, especially on special teams. When Myers was out, Sabres coach Ted Nolan gave some of his ice time to 2013 first-round picks Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov.

"It's a huge factor when one of your top players is out of the lineup. It just shows you how much we really missed Tyler," Nolan said. "He's an anchor back there. He controls a lot of minutes. Even when he's playing his off-game, his off-game is pretty good."

Jhonas Enroth will start in net for Buffalo. Faceoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. with the Tops Gamernight pregame show beginning at 6:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. Tuesday's game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

OTHER FRESH FACES

On Sunday, the Sabres recalled Tim Schaller and Philip Varone from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League. They skated with the team Monday afternoon. Cody McCormick was absent from practice with a lower-body injury so Schaller took his place on a line with Nicolas Deslauriers and Patrick Kaleta. McCormick may be in depending on how he feels tomorrow.

"When things are going the way they are, you have to try to shake it up a little bit and get some new blood in and a new approach," Nolan said. "As I've always mentioned on this team, we have good characters. Unfortunately things are going bad for us right now. We just have to find a way to get out of it."

Varone skated between Cody Hodgson and Brian Flynn. Johan Larsson was sent back down to Rochester.

Varone is back with the Sabres for the first time his first time this season. He currently leads the Amerks in total points (29) and assists (21) through 35 games played. In four AHL seasons, he has amassed 177 points (48+129) in 242 games played.

Last season, he played with the Sabres for a nine-game stint, during which he recorded two points (1+1).

Varone said he isn't as nervous as he was during that first call-up, but will try to match that eagerness.

"I'm going to treat it like it's my first time, bringing that enthusiasm," he said. "I'll just try to bring what I can to the table, some skill but most importantly, just work hard. It's an audition every time you're playing, whether it's regular season, training camp or in Rochester. I'm just going to try and do what I can to try to make this a permanent home."

Schaller scored his first NHL on Dec. 21 against Boston when he was up for a recall. He currently leads the Amerks in goals (10) and is tied for second on the team with 23 total points through 34 games played. He's played four games for the Sabres so far this season.

MONDAY'S PRACTICE

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis
21 Drew Stafford – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 80 Chris Stewart
19 Cody Hodgson – 84 Philip Varone – 65 Brian Flynn
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 59 Tim Schaller – 36 Patrick Kaleta

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

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

Sabres prospects report

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

January 5, 2015

Brendan Lemieux (2014, second round) continued to burn out OHL goal lamps, adding four more tallies to his season haul last week as Barrie barreled their way to four consecutive victories.

After going without a goal Monday versus Owen Sound, the powerful winger scored twice Wednesday in a 6-1 pasting of Belleville. On Friday, Lemieux scored the game-winning goal plus an assist in the Colts' 4-3 victory at Kingston. He kept it going on Saturday with a power-play marker in a 10-3 blowout of London.

Lemieux ranks third in the Ontario Hockey League with 29 goals in 32 games, exceeding the 27 in 65 games he posted in all of 2013-14. His 16 power-play goals are tops in the league, while his 89 PIMs are second-most among all skaters.

OHL

Nicholas Baptiste (2013, third round) was named the game's number one star Wednesday, collecting two goals including the game winner and adding an assist as Erie edged Guelph 4-3. Baptiste notched a pair of assists on Friday as Erie doubled up Mississauga 6-3, but saw his six-game point streak snapped the following day in a 6-3 loss to Windsor. The speedy winger has 26 points (12+14) in 25 games this season.

Justin Bailey (2013, second round) posted two goals and an assist Saturday to earn the game's second star as Kitchener dropped a 6-5 shootout decision at Niagara. Bailey, who was kept off the scoresheet in Thursday's win over Owen Sound and Friday's loss to Niagara, increased his team-leading totals to 22 goals and 41 points through 35 games.

In Saturday action, **Eric Cornel** (2014, second round) scored off a wrist shot to snap streaks of four games without a point and 10 games without a goal as Peterborough smoked Belleville 6-2. Earlier in the week, Cornel connected for the shootout winner as Peterborough defeated Mississauga 5-4. Cornel has amassed 29 points in 35 games, including a team-high 20 helpers.

Sault Ste. Marie assistant captain **Jean Dupuy** had two assists as the West Division-leading Greyhounds won twice in three tries. The gritty 20-year-old has gathered eight goals, 25 points and a plus-19 rating in 30 appearances while dropping the gloves on two occasions.

OMJHL

Vaclav Karabacek (2014, second round) made his Baie-Comeau debut Saturday, logging three shots on the goals as the Drakkar edged Rimouski 2-1. The winger would pick up an assist Sunday for his point in a Baie-Comeau uniform in an overtime loss to the Oceanic. Karabacek, who was traded on Friday as part of a package that sent Valentin Zykov (LAK) to Gatineau, has collected 26 points (11+14) in 33 games.

WHL

Swift Current defenseman **Brycen Martin** (2014, third round) netted a minus-one rating in the week's three outings. The 18-year-old defender has two goals, 16 points and a plus-three rating through 38 games.

NCAA

In Friday action, **Judd Peterson** (2012, seventh round) scored the game winning goal as St. Cloud State got past Quinnipiac 3-2. The even-strength marker was the second goal and fourth point of Peterson's young NCAA career. The freshman forward returned the following night, producing one shot on goal as the Huskies fell to Quinnipiac 4-1.

In Saturday action, **Anthony Florentino** (2013, fifth round) scored his first goal of the year through a screen as Providence edged Colorado College 5-4 in overtime. The sophomore finished the weekend Sunday with a plus-two rating as the Friars earned the non-conference sweep of the Tigers with a 5-3 win. Florentino has six points (1+5) and a plus-nine rating in 19 games while skating on the Friars' middle defensive pair.

Providence defenseman **Mark Adams** (2009, fifth round) did not dress over the weekend in the Friars' victories over Colorado College. The fifth-year senior has one assist this season while suiting up in 16 of 20 contests.

Hudson Fasching returned from his World Junior Championship experience, assisting on the overtime winner as Minnesota got past RIT 3-2 in overtime. The helper gives Fasching eight points (5+3) in 15 games with the Gophers.

Minnesota forward **Christian Isackson** (2010, seventh round) had an assist for his second point of the season in the Gophers' Saturday win over RIT. Isackson, who did not factor in Minnesota's 3-2 loss to Merrimack on Friday, now has 26 points in 86 career appearances.

Brad Navin (2011, seventh round) posted a team-high four shots on goal Friday as Wisconsin was throttled by Michigan Tech 8-1. On Saturday, the senior co-captain finished with a plus-one rating as the Badgers upset Michigan Tech 2-0 to earn the weekend split. Navin has three points (1+2) in 14 games for the Badgers, who have just two wins in their first 14 contests.

Freshman winger **Max Willman** (2014, fifth round) helped a banged-up squad by playing as a defenseman as Brown was defeated by Boston College 4-1 on Friday, and dropped a 5-3 decision to Denver on Sunday at the Ledyard Bank Classic at Dartmouth.

USHL

Christopher Brown (2014, sixth round) scored a pair of markers in a span of 22 seconds Tuesday as Green Bay doubled Madison 8-4. Brown connected for one goal and one assist on Friday as Green Bay was defeated by Team USA 5-4 in overtime, but was unable to get a point the next night in another overtime loss to Team USA. At the 30-game mark, the rookie forward has a team-high 13 goals to go along with 25 points.

SHL

Gustav Possler (2013, fifth round) snapped a six-game goal slumber Saturday with his ninth of the year as MODO was doubled by Skelleftea AIK 6-3. On Tuesday, Possler posted three shots in a 6-3 loss to Frolunda HC. Possler has connected for 16 points in 32 games while firing 82 shots on goal.

Linus Ullmark (2012, sixth round) stopped 32 of 34 shots Tuesday but MODO couldn't provide any goal support in a 2-0 loss to Frolunda HC. He came on in relief late in the second period on Saturday, making four saves in 23 minutes of work to close out the loss to Skelleftea AIK. Ullmark has won seven of 21 starts this season while posting a 3.24 GAA and .904 save%.

Women's U18 World Championship Tournament guide

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

January 5, 2015

TOURNAMENT HISTORY

This year marks the eighth edition of the IIHF Women's U18 World Championship, and the second to be played on US soil since 2010 in suburban Chicago. All 22 games of the 2015 tournament will be played at the HARBORCENTER complex in downtown Buffalo.

Since the tournament's inception in 2008, the United States and Canada have won gold and silver every year. Canada has won gold the last three years, along with 2010. Team USA's gold medals were won in 2011, 2009 and 2008.

Sweden has won four bronze medals, with Czech Republic (2) and Finland winning the others.

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

Group A: United States, Canada, Czech Republic, Russia

Group B: Finland, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland

TEAM USA FYI

- Team USA's roster features nine players who helped the 2014 U.S. Women's National Under-18 Team earn a silver medal at the IIHF Under-18 Women's World Championship in Budapest, Hungary. They are: Grace Bizal, Kaitlin Burt, Jincy Dunne, Rebecca Gilmore, Caitrin Lonergan, Patricia Marshall, Abby Roque, Melissa Samoskevich and Sophie Skarzynski.
- Thirteen players are making their debut in this particular tournament, including three players - Mikaela Gardner, Kenzie Prater and Paige Voight - who are representing Team USA for the first time in their career.
- Jincy Dunne is serving as team captain and the alternate captains are Grace Bizal and Samantha Davis. It is the second consecutive time at the IIHF U18 Women's World Championship and third time overall that Dunne has served as team captain for Team USA.
- The average age of Team USA is 16.7 years old. Alyssa Gorecki, 17, is the oldest member of the team, while 15-year old Cayla Barnes is the youngest.
- Members of Team USA represent 10 different states. Minnesota leads the pack with eight representatives, followed by Massachusetts with four and Illinois with three. California, Connecticut, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin all have one.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT

The tournament's top four seeded teams are in Group A, and the others are in Group B. Round-robin play runs from January 5-8 with each team playing three games within their pool.

[CLICK HERE FOR TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE](#)

The four teams from Group A and the best two teams from Group B advance to the Playoff Round.

The two top-seeded teams from Group A will receive an automatic bye to the Semifinals. The remaining four teams will take part in two Quarterfinal games on Friday, Jan. 9 at 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The two Quarterfinal winners will advance to the Semifinals to face the top two teams from Group A. The Semifinal games are set for Sunday, Jan. 11 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The Gold Medal game is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 12 at 7 p.m., while the Bronze Medal Game will take place earlier that day at 3 p.m.

The third- and fourth-placed team in Group B will play a best-of-three relegation series beginning January 9. Game Two is on Jan. 11, with Game Three (if necessary) scheduled for Jan. 12. All games will be played at 12 Noon.

HOW ARE POINTS AWARDED?

The three-point system is in effect during the round-robin portion. A regulation win is worth three points; shootout and overtime victories are worth two. Each team will receive one point for a regulation tie, with the extra point awarded following overtime or shootout.

OVERTIME

During the round-robin portion, the teams will play a five-minute sudden-death overtime if they remain tied after regulation.

The quarterfinals, semifinals and bronze-medal game will each have 10-minute overtime periods.

The gold-medal game will have a 20-minute sudden-death overtime if the teams are tied after regulation.

SHOOTOUTS

Known in IIHF terminology as "game-winning shots," teams will revert to this format if any game cannot be decided in overtime.

Three different players from each team will alternate shots until a winner is decided. If the teams remain tied after the first three shooters, they will reverse order and the format will now be sudden-death. The one nuance to the sudden-death format is that shots can be taken by any player, including multiple shots by the same player if necessary.

TICKET INFORMATION

All round-robin games and the relegation playoff series are \$5 each. The semifinals are \$10, and the gold and bronze medal games are \$20. Tickets are available for purchase online at Tickets.com, or at the First Niagara Center box office.