



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 19, 2015*

## **Sabres-Flyers preview**

Associated Press

February 18, 2015

The Philadelphia Flyers' Jakub Voracek and Claude Giroux are among the league leaders in points, but they haven't been productive lately.

The Flyers hope their high-scoring duo can end their scoring woes Thursday night at home against the Buffalo Sabres.

These players have been very productive with Voracek registering 60 points - two shy of his career high - and Giroux 55. Voracek is second on the team with 18 goals and Giroux third with 16.

The problem is that neither has been able to light the lamp lately. Voracek's only goal in his last 14 games went into an empty net, and Giroux has gone a season-worst nine straight games without scoring.

Those woes continued in Tuesday's 5-2 home loss to Columbus. Philadelphia (24-23-10) had gone 6-0-3 in its previous nine games.

"I think that's what we did in the beginning of the season even if we didn't have a good game, we find a way to score the goals which obviously we don't do lately but like I said as a team, we've played well over the last 10 games which is really important," Voracek said.

Coach Craig Berube has shuffled his top line to include Michael Raffl with Voracek and Giroux. Raffl is fourth on the team with 13 goals.

"I think we created a lot of chances, just couldn't find the net yesterday," Raffl said. "I have been playing with them for a couple games now so I think it's good chemistry there, everybody sees that and it's fun to play with them."

Wayne Simmonds has four goals and three assists during a five-game point streak. He leads the club with 22 goals but has none in his last nine games against Buffalo.

The Flyers seek to recover with a sixth straight win over the Sabres. Philadelphia has taken the first two meetings this season on the road, including Sunday's 2-1 victory in which Raffl and Matt Read scored.

The Sabres (16-37-4) spend a lot of time defending, allowing a league-worst average of 3.39 goals and blocking an NHL-high average of 18.70 shots. Their average of 1.74 goals per game would be the lowest since Montreal averaged 1.71 in 1935-36.

Michal Neuvirth is 0-10-1 with a 3.35 goals-against average in his last 12 starts. He has surrendered six goals in losing both 2014-15 matchups with the Flyers.

Buffalo fell to 0-3-1 in its last four with Tuesday's 2-1 shootout loss at New Jersey. Tyler Ennis scored his 14th goal to tie Zemgus Girgensons for the team lead and Neuvirth made 34 saves.

"I felt pretty good," Neuvirth said. "I only let one get by me, so I'll take that as a positive. The more I play, the more comfortable I feel."

The Sabres also have the NHL's worst penalty kill at 73.8 percent while the Flyers have one of the league's best power plays at 23.2 percent. Philadelphia is 2 for 5 in the season series.

Buffalo has dropped five straight at Philadelphia.

## **Mitchell weathers trade chaos**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 18, 2015

PHILADELPHIA – It's two weeks before the NHL trade deadline.

Torrey Mitchell has been here before.

He experienced the deadline chaos last year, arriving in Buffalo, along with second-round draft picks in 2014 and 2016, from the Minnesota Wild in exchange for Matt Moulson and Cody McCormick.

He again is a potential trade asset as the Buffalo Sabres are sure to make more deals before the March 2 cutoff.

"I'd be lying if I said it hasn't crossed my mind whether I'll be here after the trade deadline or not," Mitchell said. "It doesn't eat away at me that's for sure. I've been through it before. I think I'm mature enough at this stage to know that hockey's a business first and crazy things happen. ... Whatever happens, happens. Obviously I'd like to be a Buffalo Sabre. I enjoy my teammates and I enjoy Buffalo."

Coming into Thursday night's game against the Philadelphia Flyers in Wells Fargo Arena, Mitchell has eight points (three goals and five assists) in 45 games.

But Mitchell's pro game has never been about scoring. His best production year in the NHL was 23 points (nine goals, 14 assists) in 2010-11 for the San Jose Sharks.

What he brings to the game are qualities coach Ted Nolan would like to see younger players, like Nikita Zadorov, emulate.

"Mitchell's bringing energy," Nolan said. "Every time he goes out, he goes out with a purpose and he's competing hard. He's skating. He's doing everything we ask of him. ... Can you imagine Zadorov working as hard as Mitchell with the skill set that he has? Those are definitely qualities we're looking for. If skill doesn't work, there's no sense having it. Certain guys are blessed with certain talents and if they don't bring what they can bring, they're cheating themselves. But a guy like Mitchell, he's limited on his skill set, but he's not limited on his determination, and put in the right situations he's as good as anyone."

Lately the right situation for Mitchell has been playing center between Brian Gionta and Moulson, who along with McCormick re-signed with the Sabres as free agents in the summer.

Mitchell came to Buffalo primarily as a winger, although he played center in college at Vermont and in his first full season for the San Jose Sharks in 2007-08. He played the middle here and there throughout his career, never quite sure why coaches moved him to the wing. Truth be told, his preference is center where he feels he can best use his skating ability, but wherever he is on the ice is just fine.

"With Gio, it seems like you know what you're going to get every time he steps on the ice," Mitchell said. "He's such an honest player. I try to be really responsible in all three zones and Moulson, we like to think he's our goal scorer. He's our shooter and we gotta try to find him. It hasn't been that way in the last couple of weeks, but we've been sound and solid when we've been out there."

The play hasn't evolved into goals or wins. The line doesn't have any points together over the last five games as Moulson's two assists in that span came on the power play. The team has only two wins in its last 21 games.

The last five games have been decided by one goal. The Sabres have one win (3-2 over Dallas), three losses (3-2 to the Islanders, 2-1 to the Senators, 2-1 to the Flyers) and one shootout loss (2-1 to the Devils).

That might be a sign of improvement, of younger players learning what it takes to compete in the NHL, but the losses are still frustrating, disappointing and have the danger of sucking the joy out of the game.

Mitchell is very aware of that potential and finds new ways to focus his game.

"We have talked about it quite a bit, trying to find your purpose at the rink that day or trying to find motivation for this game or whatever game," Mitchell said. "I think it just comes down to character and playing for one another. Even though we're not going to make the playoffs, I still think it's important for whoever you're sitting next to or whoever you face in the locker room that you want to play hard for them and you want to play hard for yourself.

"Guys at the end of the day still have careers they're playing for, and young guys are trying to develop and get better. Guys in my situation, you never know who's watching and you need to try and bring your best every night."

## **Sabres notebook: Ellis savors mentoring younger players**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 18, 2015

Matt Ellis has been a captain three different times in his pro hockey career.

He wore the "C" twice with the American Hockey League Grand Rapids Griffins in the Detroit Red Wings organization, then again last season with the Rochester Americans.

His career has been a bit of a yo-yo, but not just anyone gets to be a captain. He's a professional hockey survivor with 13 years experience.

If you love a good, scrappy underdog story, Ellis is your guy.

"I've always been a so-called underdog. Never drafted. I just kinda scratched and clawed my way up the ladder," said Ellis, who has played in 441 AHL games and 331 NHL games in three organizations. "Those are all lessons I've learned just through experience. But I also know that on good teams everyone has a role and that's all part of it – being a good teammate, doing the extra work, having those day-to-day habits and being positive. That's all part of the package and it all fits together."

Ellis has been playing on the fourth line with Cody Hodgson and Johan Larsson. He had two shots and pretty decent scoring chances in Tuesday's loss at New Jersey. He was on the ice for the game-winning goal on Sunday when the Flyers earned a 2-1 win in Buffalo.

"He was really apologetic with that goal," coach Ted Nolan said earlier this week. "He was part of it. He wasn't the total cause of it, he was just part of it. But he took full responsibility and said he'd try not to let that happen again. He's a true pro."

Part of being a pro is understanding his role, not just on the ice but off it. He's been a mentor for young players in Rochester and continues to do that in the Sabres dressing room as the organization tries to guide the development of young, inexperienced talent.

Being a mentor is "part of my makeup. It's a role I really enjoy," said Ellis, who took an optional practice Wednesday at the University of Pennsylvania with Hodgson, Larsson and defenseman Tyson Strachan. "As a veteran of 13 seasons I've seen a lot. I've been through a lot, and it's something I embrace. I like working with the younger players, just day-to-day talking about some of the ups and downs and some of the things that they're going through that I've seen ... whether it's in practice or in the weight room or just getting a coffee in the locker room. That's a part of the role that I really enjoy – helping the younger guys get better on a day-to-day basis."

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All hail the pregame ceremony.

The puck drop for Thursday's game in Philadelphia has been moved to 8 p.m. to accommodate the Flyers' pregame ceremony honoring Eric Desjardins in Wells Fargo Center.

Perhaps that ceremony will take some of the sting out of the Flyers last game – a 5-2 home loss to Columbus. That ended a nine-game point streak for the Flyers and was the team's first loss in regulation since Jan. 9 against the New York Islanders.

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Your Sabres pocket schedules will be missing Friday's game against the New York Rangers in First Niagara Center. The game, originally scheduled for Nov. 21, was moved after the November snowstorm caused some scheduling havoc.

Fans unable to attend the rescheduled game can exchange their unused tickets at the First Niagara Center box office for any available home game.

Fans attending the game with tickets from the Nov. 21 scheduled game with the Rangers can use their original tickets for Friday's game.

Tickets for the Feb. 20 game against Ottawa were only valid for the game on Dec. 15. They are not valid for Friday's game.

## **Flyers try to extend recent mastery of Sabres**

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

February 18, 2015

**SABRES (16-37-4) at FLYERS (24-23-10)**

**TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, CSN-PH**

**Season series:** The Philadelphia Flyers are attempting to sweep the Buffalo Sabres for the second consecutive season. The Sabres have lost five in a row to the Flyers. Michael Raffl has the game-winning goal in each victory this season for Philadelphia, while Zemgus Girgensons has scored twice for Buffalo.

**Sabres team scope:** Forward Marcus Foligno, in his fourth game back after missing 19 games with a hand injury, was hit in that same hand by a shot Tuesday against the New Jersey Devils, but returned to finish out the 2-1 loss. Coach Ted Nolan said Wednesday that Foligno was OK. It's been more than a month since a goalie on Buffalo's current roster won a game. That would be Anders Lindback, who is looking to make his Sabres debut after being acquired from the Dallas Stars on Feb. 11. He earned a win in relief for the Stars against the Ottawa Senators on Jan. 13. Michal Neuvirth, who started Tuesday and lost to the Devils 2-1 in a shootout, is 0-10-1 since defeating the Toronto Maple Leafs on Nov. 15. He does have a .927 save percentage over his past six starts.

**Flyers team scope:** Defenseman Kimmo Timonen was on the ice for a second straight day, skating for about 20 minutes Wednesday according to CSNPhilly.com. He was paired with Carlo Colaiacovo, a healthy scratch the past two games. Defenseman Nick Schultz signed a multiyear contract extension. Philadelphia captain Claude Giroux has gone nine straight games without a goal. Linemate Jakub Voracek has one goal, an empty-netter, in his past 15 games. "When you don't score, you kind of overwork things instead of keeping them simple," Voracek said, according to CSNPhilly.com. Forward Vincent Lecavalier is looking to snap out of a career-long 18-game goal drought. "You gotta stay positive," Lecavalier told NJ Advance Media about his line, which includes Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Chris VandeVelde. "Obviously, we want to do more. We want to contribute more. ... We're doing a lot of good things. We've getting opportunities. But we're just not burying them."

## **Rumblings: Deal for Chris Stewart could wait until the deadline**

By Pierre LeBrun

ESPN.com

February 18, 2015

Chris Stewart still hasn't been dealt even though he's been on the trade block since before the puck dropped on this season.

Buffalo Sabres general manager Tim Murray will be proved either right or wrong in deciding to not accept the offers he had back in the fall, including one from the Boston Bruins. Murray is sticking to his price demand, which is believed to be a second-round pick plus a prospect in exchange for the pending unrestricted free-agent power winger.

My guess is that Murray has a better chance of being proved right.

A source said Wednesday that nothing is imminent on the Stewart trade front, which suggests to me that the obvious play at this point is to drag this out right to the deadline and see if teams blink before 3 p.m. ET on March 2.

Say what you want about Stewart, who has struggled for large chunks of this season, but he's played better over the past month. You have to believe that once he's on a contender, he'll be a motivated player with a future contract on the line. He could be a difference-maker.

I have to believe that the struggling Bruins will circle back to Buffalo at some point on Stewart, but they won't be alone.

## **Newest Buffalo Sabre is a Massena native**

By David Sommerstein

North Country Public Radio

February 18, 2015

The newest member of the Buffalo Sabres is from St. Lawrence County, N.Y.

After being part of a blockbuster trade between Buffalo and the Winnipeg Jets, Zach Bogosian of Massena played his first game as a Sabre Sunday night.

"You kind of have a few butterflies at the start," Bogosian told the media after the game. He said, "I guess adrenaline kicks, and that's the way I like to play so it felt good to get out there." That adrenaline must have worked. Bogosian led the team in hits and ice time, and came away with the second star despite a 2-1 loss to the Philadelphia Flyers.

Bogosian was traded from a playoff contender to the worst team in the league, but he told the Buffalo press he was excited to be playing closer to home in upstate New York. It makes it easier for his family to watch him on home ice. Zach's father, Ike Bogosian, who owns BC Cleaners, drove from Massena to see his son's debut in person. "Family is really important to him and us and it's great to have him close by within striking distance," Ike Bogosian told David Sommerstein upon returning home to Massena. "Buffalo has a great franchise and a great history. They'll get the ship going in the right direction."

**Ike Bogosian:** You know of course he went from Winnipeg where they were fighting for a play-off spot and then you go to a last place team but you know like he said you can look at it two ways, you can either be unhappy be with it or you can grab the bull by the horns, and this is what you're dealt and it's a great opportunity for him and he is really, really excited.

**David Sommerstein:** What's been the reaction of some of your friends and family in Massena? I'm sure at least some of them are Sabres fans

**IB:** There's quite a few of them that are, along with the other New York teams. They're excited because they know family is really important to him and us and it's great to have him within striking distance, so it's kind of a win-win for us. Buffalo has a great franchise and a lot of history, and they'll get the ship going in the right direction.

**DS:** Now, you went to his debut game as a Sabre on Sunday night. Tell me a little bit about his play that night and what it was like to watch him.

**IB:** When you see your son in a different uniform it's always a little bit odd at first, but for the thirtieth placed team I think they had 18,900 or whatever it was, so they still get supported by the community and the city of Buffalo. So it's great to see.

**DS:** What's it like to be the father of a professional hockey player? I mean we have so many North Country players around the region who dream and aspire to that. What's it like to be the parent of a professional hockey player?

**IB:** It's just fun to watch him. He's been lucky and blessed to be where he is and it is fun watching him and watching him grow up and everything. So that's the more important part, really. I don't really look at it that "God, he's in the National Hockey League." He is, but you almost sometimes you feel like pinching yourself, but in the long run, time goes by pretty quick, so you try to enjoy it as much as you can.

## **Sabres' Mitchell wants to be a good teammate**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 18, 2015

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- In the beginning of the season Torrey Mitchell was battling Brian Flynn for playing time. Mitchell moved to center and things have gone pretty well ever since. Ted Nolan looks at him and likes what he sees, "Mitchell's bringing energy, every time he goes out he goes out with a purpose and he's competing hard, he's skating, he's doing everything we ask of him."

The Sabres don't have a lot of leaders past Brian Gionta, Josh Gorges, Mike Weber and Tyler Ennis, but Nolan thinks the kids on the team can learn from Mitchell, "No question, can you imagine Zadorov working as hard as Mitchell and the skillset that he has? Those are definitely qualities we're looking for. If skill doesn't work, there's no sense having it, certain guys are blessed with certain talents and certain attributes and if they don't bring what they can bring, they're cheating themselves, but a guy like Mitchell, he's limited on his skillset, but he's not limited on his determination."

Nolan likes to say Mitchell has never played center before, but he spent his rookie season in San Jose there as well as two out of three seasons at Vermont. Nolan said, "We asked him if he would try center ice for us and he jumped at the opportunity, he seized the opportunity and right now he's on our second line and he's bringing what this organization needs, he's bringing some work ethic and some determination and some grit."

Mitchell didn't mind and he said the transition has been fine, "It's been great, I hadn't really played center since my rookie year so it was a little bit of an adjustment at first, but it's been a lot of fun."

So if given the choice, which would #17 prefer? He said, "I like playing center, I like supporting the puck. It was an adjustment at first, but it's been a lot of fun." He added, "I would prefer to play center just because I can use my skating ability a little bit more, but it's not much of a preference."

Mitchell centers Brian Gionta and Matt Moulson. They haven't scored a boatload of goals, but they've looked good at times. Mitchell says it works because all three players bring something to the table, "With Gio it seems like you know what you're going to get every time, he's such an honest player, I try to be really responsible in all three zones and Moulson, we like to think he's our goal scorer, our shooter and we've got to try to find him. It hasn't been that way the past couple of weeks, but we've been sound and solid when we've been out there."

Nolan considers Mitchell a leader, but the player doesn't put emphasis on it, "It's something I try not to think about. I like to think that it just happens naturally, so whenever you're getting to eight, nine years in the league, you're a veteran now and you need to be a good professional and if that's leading by example or just for me it's just show up at the rink every day and being positive around people and working hard, so if that's leadership, then that's easy for me."

"We've talked about it quite a bit, trying to find your purpose at the rink that day or trying to find motivation for this game or any game and I think it just comes down to character, playing for one another. Even though we're not going to make the playoffs, I still think it's important for whoever you're sitting next to or who you're facing in the locker-room, you want to play hard for them and you want to play hard for yourself."

We all know the trade deadline is near and of course a player like Mitchell could be in play. Mitchell knows this, but he wouldn't mind staying either. Mitchell says the thought has crossed his mind, "I'd be lying if I said it hasn't crossed my mind, but it doesn't eat away at me, that's for sure. I've been through it before and I'm mature if at this stage to know that hockey's a business first and crazy things happen, but I'd like to remain a Buffalo Sabre, I enjoy my teammates and I enjoy Buffalo."

Join Pat Malacaro on Thursday at 7:00 when he starts the pregame show between the Sabres and the Flyers.

## **Light day for the Sabres**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 18, 2015

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- With three games in four nights and Thursday's game being changed to 8:00 with travel afterwards, Ted Nolan decided to meet with his team and give them the rest of the day off. Players could go to The Class of 1923 Arena, but only a few did. Nolan said, "It's to change things up, our morning skate is going to be a little bit different, we'll do different faceoff plays to keep them enthusiastic."

"When things are going the way they are, you get monotonous once in a while and last night a lot of guys played 22 minutes (Bogosian, Weber and Girgensons) and Zach almost played 30 minutes (29:14), so as long as their energy level stays up, we'll be able to compete every game."

Marcus Foligno took a shot directly on the hand he broke, but Nolan said he's fine, "Thankfully T-Mac got good coverage on that hand and he got hit exactly where the injury was, but thank god he was protected well."

Nolan said there were no other injuries from the Devils game.

## **Sabres find themselves in tight games**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 18, 2015

**PHILADELPHIA** – Seven of the Buffalo Sabres past nine games have been decided by just one goal. While the team would like to get back on the winning side of things soon, being in close games is a sign of progress.

Buffalo's past three games have been 2-1 affairs. Now they just need to figure out how to get over the hump and close them out.

On Tuesday, the Sabres played a tight game with the New Jersey Devils, but ended up falling in the shootout.

"When you're losing games, it's not fun. It doesn't matter if it's 5-1 or 2-1," forward Torrey Mitchell said. "You can call them moral victories if it's just a one-goal loss or an overtime loss or a shootout loss. But at the end of the day, I think we have enough character and pride in the room that we want to get the two points and if we don't get the two points, we're frustrated and disappointed."

Even though Buffalo is at the bottom of the League standings, they've been competitive and have been hanging in games. Tuesday's loss to New Jersey marked their first shootout since December. It's in the shootout where Buffalo has been able to pick up some extra points this season, with a record of 6-2.

How have the Sabres been able to stick around in these games? There are several reasons.

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### **IN GOOD HEALTH**

For the most part, the Sabres forwards have been able to stay healthy since the All-Star Break. Most notably, they got captain Brian Gionta back from an upper-body injury and Marcus Foligno back from a broken hand. Foligno has one goal and two assists in his four games since returning.

They are missing Patrick Kaleta for 4-6 weeks with a lower-body injury that required minor surgery and Cody McCormick, who will miss the rest of the season due to blood clots. But Buffalo's top three lines have remained relatively consistent over the past few weeks.

Chris Stewart has been up with center Zemgus Girgensons and right wing Tyler Ennis. Torrey Mitchell has been the pivot between Matt Moulson and Brian Gionta. Foligno has been with Brian Flynn and, since a trade last week, Nicolas Deslauriers.

"I think Teddy's trying do as good of a job of trying to keep guys together and trying to get some chemistry that way," Mitchell said. "I know I've been with Gio and Moulson for at least the last two weeks so it's good to have some chemistry that way, even if the wins and goals aren't exactly coming. But it's been good that way."

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### **MORE CONSISTENCY**

Newly acquired Bogosian has been able to step right in and help fill the void left not only by Tyler Myers, but by alternate captain Josh Gorges as well. Gorges has been out for a week now due to a lower-body injury and no timetable has yet been set for his return.

On Tuesday, Bogosian played a game-high 29:14, but the rest of the minutes on the defense was pretty spread out.

Nolan would like to keep the minutes of young guns Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov in check so that they aren't put in bad situations.

"It's going to be a real haul on us coming up so we've got to make sure we manage our rest, our practice time, how many minutes we play – as long as we're full of energy every time," Nolan said.

The Sabres lost two veteran pieces in Myers and Drew Stafford as part of a trade last week and they received Bogosian, left wing Evander Kane and a goaltending prospect in return.

Kane will not play this season due to shoulder surgery and while having a former 30-goal scorer healthy now would be preferable, that's not the situation the team is in right now.

As Nolan has often said, he can only focus on what he can control – and that is coaching the players given to him on the roster to the best of his ability. The team is well aware that more trades and changes could be on the way as the March 2 NHL Trade Deadline inches closer and closer.

"As I just learned a long, long time ago, you have to learn to live with what you've got. And you can't complain," Nolan said. "You have to just work with what you've got and be thankful for what you've got. But on the flip side of it, you don't cheat yourself either.

"If you're blessed with a certain amount of skill set, you're cheating yourself, you're cheating your teammates and you're cheating the organization if you don't give what you have to give.

"That's my big thing, is just making sure you're patient and understanding and nurtured and grow and develop. And within time, if all those things work out, you'll be raising a trophy over your head and not just playing in the playoffs, but raising a trophy over your head. That's what it takes."

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## **GOALTENDING**

Michal Neuvirth is now the man Buffalo will lean on in net for the foreseeable future. Buffalo traded Jhonas Enroth to Dallas for a conditional third-round pick and goalie Anders Lindback, all but ending the starting goaltender battle for the Sabres.

Nolan has said that they'll let Neuvirth carry the ball for as long as he can. So far, he's done a fairly good job. In his last two starts, he's stopped 62 of 65 shots

However, he hasn't been able to pick up a win since Nov. 15. He feels as if that will come soon though and that the team can really build off their effort against the Devils on Tuesday.

It's tough but I don't think about it. I don't need to put any more pressure on me," he said. "I'm just going game by game and eventually, if you're going to play like that, we're going to have to win sometime soon."

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## **POWER-PLAY PRODUCTION**

Production on the power play has been an issue all season, but in the past four games, Buffalo has gone 3-for-15 (20 percent). The units have changed a bit with the trades as Bogosian is now getting first-unit minutes and Zadorov and Ristolainen are manning the points on the second unit.

Overall, over the past nine games, Ristolainen and Zadorov have been Buffalo's most consistent defensemen when it comes to putting up points. Offensively, Zadorov has been on a tear with one goal and four assists over that span while Ristolainen has a goal and an assist.

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**RIGHT BACK AT IT**

After a team meeting at the hotel followed by an optional skate at Class of 1923 Arena, home of the University of Pennsylvania Quakers, the Sabres will be back on the ice Thursday in preparation for their game against the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center.

Buffalo played the Flyers on Sunday and, as things have gone lately, it ended with a 2-1 Flyers win.

Puck drop is now scheduled for 8 p.m. with the Tops Game Night pregame show beginning at 7:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

## **College hockey report**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 18, 2015

### **RIT TIGERS (12-13-5 overall, 11-8-5 Atlantic Hockey)**

RIT split its final road series of the year at Holy Cross, falling 3-1 on Friday before rebounding with a 2-0 victory on Saturday. With two weeks remaining in their regular season, the Tigers hold sole possession of fifth place; the top five seeds in the conference earn a first-round bye in the Atlantic Hockey Tournament.

Friday night began well for the Tigers, closing the first frame with a 1-0 lead thanks to an early goal from Brandon Thompson. But things fell apart when Holy Cross scored three unanswered goals and cruised to victory. RIT failed to score again despite registering 36 shots.

Things went exactly the opposite for RIT the following night. This time, they scored a pair of unanswered goals, first from Brad McGowan and then from Mark Golberg. That'd be all the offense they'd need paired with a strong defensive effort that allowed Holy Cross to take only 16 shots, making it easy for goaltender Jordan Ruby to pitch the shutout. Even after the win, however, the team was reeling at the missed opportunity from the night before.

"I just thought we were consistent," Tigers Head Coach Wayne Wilson said about Saturday's win. "Quite frankly, if we could have played like we did in the first and the third in the second period of the first game, then we would have won that game. We lost two points because of that one period and so it was a good lesson that 60 minutes, against Holy Cross or any team in our league, is what you need to win."

Senior Matt Garbowsky registered the assist on McGowan's goal, marking his 100th career point. Garbowsky becomes only the seventh player in Tigers history to reach that mark, made all the more impressive by the fact that he played only 13 due to injury last season.

In the midst of a contested playoff race, RIT faces as big a test as they have all season when they host No. 19 Robert Morris this weekend. A sweep could mean a jump in the standings – the Tigers trail second-place Bentley by only four points – but a loss or two could cost them a first-round bye. Air Force trails RIT by one point and Holy Cross trails by just two. Despite having lost twice to the Colonels earlier this season, Wilson expects to compete this time around.

"We'd like to give them a little adversity, to be honest with you," Wilson said. "They haven't faced a lot of adversity this year, they haven't been banged up or injured at all this year, and they've been fighting and clawing. They've had a lot of success in overtime and close games, which is the mark of a good team, but they're not running away with anything."

### **Upcoming Games**

- February 20 vs. Robert Morris (7:05 p.m., Gene Polisseni Center)
- February 21 vs. Robert Morris (7:05 p.m., Gene Polisseni Center)

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### **CANISIUS COLLEGE GOLDEN GRIFFINS (13-10-7 overall, 12-6-6 Atlantic Hockey)**

Canisius dropped another spot in the Atlantic Hockey standings, to fourth, after a split with ninth-place Army at HARBORCENTER. The Griffs were upset by the Black Knights 2-1 on Friday then rebounded with a 3-1 win on Saturday.

Friday night began well for Canisius, with sophomore Shane Conacher breaking a scoreless tie in the second period with a power play goal. Army scored a goal of their own less than 10 seconds later, however, and added

the game-winner on a power play midway through the third period when Canisius was called for having too many men on the ice. All in all, Army outshot the Griffs 26-25.

"We played well, the season is full of ups and downs," Canisius Head Coach Dave Smith said. "We did enough things well to win the game; Army played better than us that night. They have talented players there and they have always had a great work ethic."

Conacher opened the scoring again on Saturday, this time netting his ninth goal of the season late in the first period. C.J. Reuschlein, who scored the game-winner for Army on Friday, tied the game early in the second, but Ralph Cuddemi took advantage of a power play later in the period and Tyler Wiseman added a goal in the third for good measure. This time, the Canisius defense held Army to only 18 shots on the night.

"I thought we just played harder in the offensive zone," Smith said. "I thought we ended plays a little sooner, I thought we got the puck back on our stick a little sooner, I thought we did a little better job with possession on Saturday night and we were also able to block some shots and to get some pucks down the ice."

Despite coming out of the weekend with two points, Canisius was jumped in the standings by Mercyhurst, who they'll play in a home-and-home series this weekend. After that, the Griffs have one regular season series left: the following weekend at sixth-place Air Force, who is within four points of Canisius. Best case scenario, Canisius climbs back to the second seed that they held for most of January; the worst case scenario could see them miss out on a first-round bye in the playoffs.

"It is so much fun to know that these points, even though they count the same as the ones in October and November, they really see the movement in the final standings. And our guys, based on when we first met as a team in September, we wanted to play for home ice and a top-four spot," Smith said. "Now it's within your reach, and it's important to stay grounded and go after the task, and that makes those two points just fun."

### **Upcoming Games**

- February 20 @ Mercyhurst (7:05 p.m.)
- February 21 vs. Mercyhurst (7:35 p.m., HARBORCENTER)

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### **NIAGARA UNIVERSITY PURPLE EAGLES (3-24-3 overall, 3-18-3 Atlantic Hockey)**

Slow starts buried the Purple Eagles in a pair of road losses to Mercyhurst, falling to the Lakers 5-2 on Friday and 4-1 on Saturday. With only four games remaining in the regular season, Niagara is now winless in its last 18 contests.

Niagara fought back falling behind 2-0 in the first period on Friday. Senior Chris Lochner scored for the Purple Eagles to cap off that period, and then Hugo Turcotte opened the scoring in the second to even to score at two goals apiece. Lakers senior Matthew Zay scored less than three minutes later, however, regaining a lead that Mercyhurst would never relinquish. Zay assisted on the team's next goal, in the third, and later scored again on his way to being named Atlantic Hockey Player of the Week.

"When you're in one of those funks, that's what happens," Niagara Head Coach Dave Burkholder said. "We're just not strong enough mentally, as a group, to battle for a complete 60 minutes, and when something bad does happen we haven't found a way to respond and hang in there."

The Purple Eagles fell behind in the first period again on Saturday, this time allowing three goals to Mercyhurst in the opening frame. T.J. Sarcona scored a power play goal in the second period to inch Niagara closer, but Mercyhurst pulled away again with an early goal in the final frame. Mercyhurst goaltender Brandon Wildung stopped 46 of the 49 shots he faced in the two games combined, earning him Atlantic Hockey Goaltender of the Week honors.

Niagara is still reeling from injury with six players out of the lineup and has only two series left before the playoffs. Burkholder says that the team recognizes that time is running out for them to right the ship.

"There's no one inside our program that thinks we're just going to turn it on come playoff time, that's not how it works," he said. "But, I think if you were to ask our opponents the last two weekends about our team, we're a physical crew, we work really hard, and that's our MO. That's what we're trying to do, and I think once we get one we'll get many."

### **Upcoming Games**

- February 20 vs. Air Force (7 p.m., Dwyer Arena)
  - February 21 vs. Air Force (7 p.m., Dwyer Arena)
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### **BUFFALO STATE BENGALS (10-11-2 overall, 6-6-2 SUNYAC)**

With a pair of victories over Battle of the Lake rival Fredonia, Buffalo State clinched a SUNYAC playoff berth for the fifth-consecutive season. Fittingly, it was team captain Brett Hope who led the way over the weekend, combining for two goals and five assists on his way to being named the conference's Player of the Week.

Hope contributed to all three of Buffalo State's goals in its 3-1 victory over the Blue Devils on Friday. He opened the scoring with his seventh goal of the season in the first period and helped pad the lead with an assist to line mate Ryan Salkeld in the second. When Fredonia pulled within one, Hope fed Salkeld again for an empty-netter in the game's final minute. The Bengals were outshot 29-25, but sophomore goaltender Mike DeLaVergne stopped 28 shots and their special teams killed six penalties.

"Hope is a guy that plays hard, plays the right way and goes to the tough areas. He's one of the more physical players consistently that I've ever coached," Bengals Head Coach Nick Carriere said. "He's surrounded by good teammates that I think support him well and allow him to do good things and he's been executing."

Saturday, at Fredonia, Buffalo State outshot the Blue Devils 42-35 and this time ran away with a 6-2 victory. Hope fed Salkeld yet again to take the lead early, but Fredonia scored to tie the game at one just a minute later. From that point on, it was all Bengals: Anthony Beaumont, Jason Zaleski, Hope, Brody Power and Taylor Pryce all scored for Buffalo State. The Bengals scored on two of their eight power plays and even netted one goal, Pryce's, shorthanded. DeLaVergne took the win again, this time with 33 saves.

The Bengals enter their final weekend of the series as the four seed in the SUNYAC standings; the conference's third and fourth seeds host playoff games in the quarterfinal round on Feb. 25. Right now, they're two points behind third-seed Geneseo, tied in points with fifth-seed Potsdam, and two points ahead of sixth-place Brockport.

The Bengals host two of those teams in a weekend with huge playoff implications, starting with Brockport on Friday, and then Geneseo on Saturday.

"We have another goal in mind, and if we can strive to host another playoff game, that's something we're going to aim for," Carriere said.

### **Upcoming Games**

- February 20 vs. Brockport (7 p.m., Buffalo State Ice Arena)
- February 21 vs. Geneseo (7 p.m., Buffalo State Ice Arena)

## **Memories of Monty**

By Chris Bandura

Sabres.com

February 18, 2015

Late Sunday morning, I was checking Twitter before lunch and saw a post from TVA Reporter Renaud Lavoie that stopped me in my tracks. "It is with sadness that I just learned of the passing of Steve Montador."

I stopped right there.

I was speechless. I immediately told my wife. She had a devastated look on her face. She told me Steve had just updated a Facebook picture a day or so before on his page. I called one of our former players and teammates of Steve to see if they had heard the story. Word had spread quickly and I started to receive messages to see if I knew anything.

My mind immediately flashed back to July 1, 2009. We had just announced that Steve had signed with our club as a free agent. I remember calling him on the phone to introduce myself and welcome him to the team. I vividly remember at the end of our conversation him saying, "I'll tell you this right off the hop man: I'm going to ask you for a lot of stuff, but I'll always be there when you need me for anything. Deal? Thanks brother, see you in a few weeks." I remember thinking, 'oh wonderful!'

Sure enough, about two weeks before training camp, I went into the practice rink where a bunch of the players were skating getting ready for the season. I walked into the locker room to say hi to a few players and this guy come up to me with floppy, messy hair, scruffy face and tattoos on his chest and arms. He put his arm around my shoulders and said, "Chris, I'm Steve. We need to talk."

Steve went on to tell me in great detail about a few charities he was working with over the summer that needed some help with. This would be the first of many "talks" we would have. "Talks" would mean that he needed something for this person or "I gave your number to this guy or girl that is going to call you." It was all to help others and it never bothered me. When Steve would talk about a charity like Right to Play or just going to visit a hospital, he would get that look in his eye and that smirk on his face.

Over the next few years, I would have the honor and privilege of working with Steve. He was a very charismatic person that would grab your attention from the moment you said hello or good morning. He had such a passion for the game, and for life in general. Steve loved telling stories of guys he played with or places he had been.

But the one thing that always made him smile more than ever was when he was speaking about helping other people. As our team had its ups and downs, Monty stayed true to his words. Wins or losses, great games or a healthy scratch, Steve would always say, "Need me in the room tonight?"

My thoughts turned to one night after a home game in the middle of Steve's second season with the Sabres. It was a tough loss and Steve had a crucial turnover that led to the winning goal. After the game, I reminded him there was a young fan battling an illness that was going to be visiting our locker room, and asked if he wouldn't mind saying hi to them. Upset and heartbroken five minutes earlier answering media questions, Steve immediately said to me with a smile, "What's her name? I want to make sure I say hi to her and spell her name right on the stick I want to give her. And by the way, can you ask Willie (Equipment manager Dave Williams) for a stick? He will kill me if I ask him for another one! He won't kill you."

So he got showered and sure enough sat down at his stall with the girl. Steve asked her about her family, her favorite things and how she was doing. He spent what seemed like a half hour with her. The next morning I said to him how much I appreciated that he took a few minutes to spend with our guest the night before. He said to me "Bando, there's one thing I know brother - always try to find time for others when you can, because you never know what that time will mean to them."

I finally thought about the last time I saw Steve. I was in NYC for the annual NHL Media Tour in September. I was at the NHL Store looking at t-shirts for my kids when someone grabbed my arm from behind and said "Bando, you better call Kim because you have absolutely no clue what sizes your kids wear!" I turned around and we gave each other a big hug, laughed and caught up for about 10 minutes.

We talked about a lot of things. I knew that Steve had gone through a lot over the past few years, as we would trade texts with each other every few months. We talked about family and the organization. Steve told me about how he was going to be a dad and how he was excited to get things planned out. Steve already knew a lot about my kids, and even shared a birthday with my son, Charlie, who was born in 2009. Steve always got a kick out of that. Ironically, Charlie played in his first ever hockey game over the weekend. He was given a jersey with the number four on it.

Anyone who spent time with Monty knew how much he would overthink things and sometimes tries to be coy about info. You knew that he told everyone the same things, but he would pretend that it was a big secret! I knew this would be no different, especially on things he cared about! I'll never forget that last time we said goodbye to each other.

As I returned to the rink for our game on Sunday, we all shared stories. Some of the players had spoken to Monty less than 48 hours before his death. Shock, disbelief and sadness filled our minds and hearts. The one thing we will always have is the stories and memories we shared with him. As he was sometimes on his "own program," I am honored that I had the opportunity to have spent a little bit of time in Monty's world. Sometime he just did what he had to do.

I have not met many people that constantly wanted to learn and grow as a person as much as Monty did. At times he was all over the map, literally and figuratively, but that was him. "The most interesting man in the world" had nothing on Steve.

Steve had gone through a lot, forged through and changed his life many times before. That's what made the news of his passing so difficult to comprehend. He had battled through so much and was on his way to the next stage of his life. Steve cared so much. He was a true professional and a genuine person. When he spoke to you, he listened and was engaged in the conversation.

To his family, my thoughts and prayers go out to you. Please know the impact he made on all those that crossed his path. He was truly a unique man that loved, cared and respected people.

Steve was a proud man that left more of an impression on people than he ever knew. To mimic his words, I don't think he knew how much the time he spent with us actually meant to us.

Thanks, brother.