



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 29, 2015*

## **Akeson hopes to skate his way onto Sabres roster**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

September 29, 2015

This summer was filled with skating. Lots of skating. More skating than he's probably done in a very long time.

It's what Jason Akeson thought would help his game. The 25-year old is looking for that edge to take him from American Hockey League player with special guest appearances in the NHL to full-time in the show.

The forward made it through the first round of sending players to Rochester to start the season in the AHL.

And he's hoping to earn his keep on an NHL roster.

That's where the summer work comes into play.

"There was a lot more skating for me this summer," Akeson said. "Before I never skated much in the summer, just come July and August. This year, I did a lot of on-ice stuff and a lot of quick feet stuff.

"You can never be too fast for the game right now. The way the new game is going, everyone just wants to use speed and size. I wasn't gifted with a tall suit so just trying to take the body when I can and be good positionally and also be quick off the first two steps."

Akeson is a small forward – listed at 5-10 and 190 pounds. But he's not afraid to use every ounce of his frame. That was evident in the game against Ottawa at First Niagara Center where his hit on Colin Greening sparked a fight and a hearing with the Department of Player Safety. There was no supplemental discipline issued.

"He's a very skilled player and he can play a harder game and he showed it in the game against Ottawa where he throws a big hit and still stands in there for himself when the stuff came," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "But again, almost every day you see his skill and ability with the puck and being able to play that game. That's why he's been able to bring what he needs to bring. ... He's got to take a page out of Tyler Ennis' book – The smaller guy with skill and be able to play that game for our team."

Akeson can put up points. The native of Orleans, Ont., notched 108 in his final year of juniors with the Kitchener Rangers in 2010-11. He was signed by the Philadelphia Flyers to a three-year entry-level contract. In his rookie season with the Adirondack Phantoms, he had 55 points (14 goals, 41 assists) in 76 games.

The next three seasons were spent primarily in the AHL. Last year, he earned him some time with the Flyers, playing 13 NHL games. He was scoreless in those games and returned to the Phantoms (now in Lehigh Valley), where he threw up 53 points in 57 games.

In the summer, Akeson found a chance for a fresh start, signing a one-year deal with the Sabres.

"It's fun because you have to prove yourself again and show what kind of player you are," Akeson said. "I'm happy to be here, happy to be part of the organization. It looks like things are moving in the right direction. If there's opportunity here I want to jump on that."

He's happy to be in Western New York but frankly it didn't occur to him that the move would bring him closer to his brother.

While Jason is an offensive-minded forward, Tyler, three years younger, is a stay-at-home defenseman at Niagara University. Tyler played in just 10 games last season with a lower body injury. He had off-season surgery and had

returned to the Purple Eagles healthy and ready for his junior season just up the road from where Jason is trying to make an NHL opening night roster.

"I didn't really think about it at first and then after it was done I was talking with my dad and he was mentioning that now we're close," Akeson said. "It's pretty neat especially if I can get up there to see him play a game or something like that. I haven't seen him play in a long time. I didn't think about it at first but now that it's happened, it's pretty neat."

## **Sabres injury updates: Ristolainen back on the ice**

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

September 29, 2015

For the first time this training camp Rasmus Ristolainen took the ice with his Buffalo Sabres teammates.

The defenseman missed the first 10 days with an upper body injury. Back at practice, look to see Ristolainen in two of the three preseason games remaining on the schedule and from the sounds of head coach Dan Bylsma in Tuesday's game when the Sabres host the Toronto Maple Leafs at 7 p.m.

"His upper body injury didn't preclude him from skating," Bylsma said of Ristolainen. "He hasn't had the contact and the physical contact until two days ago and today. He should have done quite a bit of skating, he's got some conditioning in. You want to see him play somewhere in that 18-20 minute range for this game. Plan on getting him in another two of the next three."

Ristolainen felt comfortable physically on the ice at HarborCenter since he's been skating on his own. The difficulty came as practice centered on special teams and he is still learning the new system.

"I expect to be better," Ristolainen said. "I feel pretty good but like the power play stuff I try to learn where the guys are. I want to be better. ... Maybe a couple of practices. First practice and the power play right away. I think a couple more practices and I know where the guys are."

In other Sabres injury news:

- Defensemen Josh Gorges and Zach Bogosian are both out with lower body injuries which Bylsma characterized as "week to week" which could put them in danger of missing the season opener on Oct. 8.
- Defenseman Chad Ruhwedel is a lower body day-to-day injury while forward Patrick Kaleta is close to returning. "He skated this morning on his own and it should be a situation where we see him return to practice hopefully," Tuesday, Bylsma said of Kaleta. "He hopeful will be able to get back on the ice then possibly by the weekend get into games."
- Jake McCabe missed practice with an upper body injury. "We're kinda waiting to see where he's at with that," Bylsma said. "It happened very late in the game in Ottawa. He was better yesterday and better today. Some good news we just don't know quite yet on him."
- Forward Jamie McGinn missed practice with illness.

## **Sabres suddenly possess impressive center depth**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 29, 2015

BUFFALO – Dan Bylsma wanted to count them all first. So before the coach talked about the impressive center depth the Sabres have quickly assembled, he rattled off each one on the roster.

When Bylsma stopped, he had named eight: Ryan O'Reilly, No. 2 overall pick Jack Eichel, Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson, David Legwand, Sam Reinhart and Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno, two wingers with experience down the middle.

"You're usually fighting to find two or three in an organization," Bylsma said Monday inside HarborCenter after the Sabres prepared for tonight's home preseason game against the Toronto Maple Leafs. "They're coveted, they're valuable assets."

For the past two seasons, as the hapless Sabres set records for goal-scoring futility, they possessed the NHL's weakest crop of centers. Now, with O'Reilly and Eichel, who joined the Sabres minutes apart June 26, they might have one of the best.

"For the longest time since I've been here we've struggled a little bit at the center position," Ennis said. "We've been a little thin, and now it seems like we have five, six guys that can play center, play it really well. So that's huge, and I think teams that win are deep through the middle."

Incredibly, only one regular pivot last season, Girgensons, scored double-digit goals or hit the 20-point mark. In March, after more trades decimated the league's worst lineup, Phil Varone briefly became the Sabres' No. 1 center. He had four NHL points.

"You look back last year, we were trying out a lot of different centers," said Sabres captain Brian Gionta, a winger. "We just didn't have the depth at center."

These days, the Sabres have so many centers they're shifting guys around.

"It's a nice problem, if you could call it that," Reinhart said.

Bylsma switched Girgensons to right wing early in training camp, although he put him back at center Saturday. He moved Reinhart to left wing Friday, and the No. 2 pick in 2014 responded with three assists in the Sabres' 6-4 win in Toronto.

Putting an extra center on the ice as a winger has special benefits.

"We're going to have two centers on the ice for draw situations, protection situations," Bylsma said. "If you get kicked out or one guy's not having a good night in the faceoff circle, you're going to have a guy go in and be able to win draws for you. It's a luxury that we have. But it also is an adjustment for some of those centermen that are going to be playing the wing."

Reinhart adjusted well against the Maple Leafs, playing perhaps his best game as a professional. The 19-year-old, who played nine games early last season, said he doesn't care which position he plays.

"I just want to be out there," Reinhart said. "I feel comfortable in both situations. ... It is a little different game out there."

What's different?

"I think center, you're in the middle of the ice, you're kind of working underneath the puck, building up speed that way, as opposed to wing, you may not be at top speed when you get it but you kind of have to carry," Reinhart said. "I think that was the biggest thing, when I did get the puck on the wing, I think I had more time than I thought."

The new faces have pushed Johan Larsson, the Sabres' top center late last season, down the depth chart a bit. Still, the Swede could have a spot in the opening-night lineup next week, possibly between Foligno and Nick Deslauriers. Right now, Larsson and Legwand might be the third and fourth centers.

Larsson struggled last season until former coach Ted Nolan, with no one else to play, gave him top billing between Ennis and Matt Moulson. He finished with five goals and 14 points in his final 20 games.

"I really felt good after that ending," Larsson said. "I knew I could play in this league. I had good success in the end."

While O'Reilly, Eichel and Reinhart – if he plays center – give the Sabres three playmakers, Larsson offers them something a little different. In addition to some slick ability, he can also be a tenacious presence.

Bylsma talked to some observers he knew about Larsson's late-season run.

"They liked him a lot," he said. "They thought he played a hard, kind of sandpaper, gritty game. They scouted him as such. They're like, 'That's what's he's going to bring to the table, hard to play against.' That's what he's got to bring to our team."

Larsson added: "(Bylsma) wants to play fast, aggressive. It kind of fits my style."

## **Sabres' Rasmus Ristolainen ready to return**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
September 29, 2015

BUFFALO – Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen practiced today and should play in Tuesday's preseason game against the Toronto Maple Leafs inside the First Niagara Center.

The Sabres suddenly need the Finn, who had been sidelined by an upper-body injury all of training camp, badly. Four defensemen are injured 10 days before opening night.

Zach Bogosian and Josh Gorges are both week-to-week with lower-body injuries, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said inside HarborCenter. Bogosian was originally labeled day-to-day last week.

Jake McCabe, meanwhile, suffered an upper-body injury in Saturday's 6-4 win in Ottawa. Chad Ruhwedel has a lower-body injury and is day-to-day, Bylsma said.

In other news, winger Patrick Kaleta, out with a lower-body ailment since early in camp, skated on his own today and could practice Tuesday. Bylsma hopes the agitator can get into an exhibition game later this week.

Bylsma also said illness sidelined winger Jamie McGinn on Monday.

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The Rochester Americans have named Paul Fixter an assistant coach. Fixter, 52, has been a head coach with the AHL Hershey Bears and the Ontario Hockey League's Sudbury Wolves.

## **Sabres getting thin on D**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 29, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres got one defenseman back from injury, but lost four more.

Rasmus Ristolainen participated in his first training camp practice and is cleared to play Tuesday versus Toronto.

Zach Bogosian has been out, but he is now week to week and could miss some regular season time.

Josh Gorges has a lower body injury which is not related to the knee he had surgery on and he too could miss regular season time.

Jake McCabe got hurt late in Ottawa and has an upper body injury. Dan Bylsma said McCabe is already feeling better.

Chad Ruhwedel has a lower body injury and is day to day.

Winger Jamie McGinn is sick and was held out.

Bylsma practiced with a few new wrinkles up front and confirmed this is what you'll likely see against the Leafs,

Kane R.O'Reilly Ennis

Moulson Eichel Gionta

Larsson Reinhart Rodrigues

Deslauriers Legwand Foligno

Robin Lehner will go the whole way in net backed up by Nathan Lieuwen

## **Ristolainen practices for first time in camp**

By Jourdon Labarber

Sabres.com

September 29, 2015

As the Sabres gathered on the HARBORCENTER ice for practice Monday morning, a familiar face joined them for the first time. Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who sustained an upper-body injury prior to the start of camp, was able to participate in his first practice of the preseason.

Ristolainen's presence comes at a good time for the Sabres as their defensive depth has taken a hit in recent days. Coach Dan Bylsma announced Monday that Josh Gorges and Zach Bogosian were both week-to-week with lower-body injuries. Gorges' injury was new while Bogosian's was announced last week but originally labeled as day-to-day.

Defensemen Chad Ruhwedel and Jake McCabe were also absent on Monday. Ruhwedel is day-to-day with a lower-body injury and McCabe's status is still to be determined after he was injured late in Saturday night's preseason game in Ottawa.

"He was better yesterday and better today so some good news but we just don't know quite yet on him," Bylsma said of McCabe.

Ristolainen, meanwhile, returns with expectations of being one of the team's top four defensemen, according to Bylsma. His injury hasn't kept him from skating during camp and he's also been taking part in contact drills for the past few days.

Bylsma said that he would like to see Ristolainen play 18-20 minutes in two of the team's final three preseason games.

The biggest adjustment for Ristolainen in his first practice was getting used to the tendencies of his new teammates. He was put to an immediate test on Monday when the team worked on its power play, but he expects that it will take a few practices before the chemistry develops.

Physically, however, Ristolainen feels good after a summer of improvement.

"I like my workouts, I had a great summer, and I feel pretty good now," he said. "I think I got stronger, faster. That's two big things I tried to work on."

Last season, his second with the Sabres, Ristolainen averaged 20:36 per game at age 20. Earlier in camp, Bylsma mentioned that only one defenseman was able to make it to the NHL as a teenager under his watch as Ristolainen did two years ago in Buffalo. That player was Olli Maatta, who Bylsma coached with the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"Just meeting him, [Ristolainen] gives me the same feeling that Olli Maatta had," Bylsma said. "Real calm demeanor, real confident, his ability on the ice. You can see why, at a young age, he has been able to step into the National Hockey League and be effective."

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### **KALETA MAKING PROGRESS**

There was other injury news outside the defensive realm on Monday, as Bylsma announced that forward Patrick Kaleta is continuing to make progress after sustaining a lower-body injury earlier in camp.

"He skated this morning on his own and it should be a situation where we see him return to practice here hopefully tomorrow. We'll see on that but he hopefully will be able to get back on the ice and possibly by the weekend get into some games," Bylsma said.

Jamie McGinn was also absent from practice, which Bylsma attributed to the forward feeling "under-the-weather sick."

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## **MONDAY'S PRACTICE**

While the Sabres played five lines on Monday, Bylsma hinted after practice that the top four would be similar to what we should expect to see when the team hosts the Maple Leafs on Tuesday at First Niagara Center. The lines were set as follows:

9 Evander Kane – 90 Ryan O'Reilly – 63 Tyler Ennis  
26 Matt Moulson – 41 Jack Eichel – 12 Brian Gionta  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 17 David Legwand – 82 Marcus Foligno  
71 Evan Rodrigues – 22 Johan Larsson – 23 Sam Reinhart  
37 Matt Ellis – 28 Zemgus Girgensons/59 Tim Schaller – 20 Jason Akeson

Defensemen: 55 Rasmus Ristolainen, 38 Jerome Leduc, 6 Mike Weber, 3 Mark Pysyk, 67 Brady Austin, 46 Cody Franson, 25 Carlo Colaiacovo, 65 Matt Donovan, 45 Brendan Guhle

40 Robin Lehner  
50 Nathan Lieuwen

## **POWER PLAY**

### *First Unit*

Kane-O'Reilly-Ennis  
Colaiacovo-Franson

### *Second Unit*

Moulson-Eichel-Gionta  
Ristolainen-Donovan

### *First Unit 5-on-3*

Gionta-Eichel-Ennis  
O'Reilly-Franson

### *Second Unit 5-on-3*

Moulson-Reinhart-Larsson  
Kane-Ristolainen

## Rodrigues earning his stay at Sabres camp

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 29, 2015

When the Buffalo Sabres trimmed their Training Camp roster by 12 on Sunday, Evan Rodrigues was not among the players to be sent down to Rochester. The fact that he's still in Buffalo says a lot about the job being done by the undrafted forward out of Boston University.

It also says, according to Bylsma, that he's earned another preseason game.

"This camp and rookie camp he's gotten to the inside, he's competed. You can see there's some jam and some jump in this guy's game," the coach said Monday. "He's really shown really quite well in the days that he's been here and he will get a chance to play in another game."

At the outset of the Prospects Challenge, it was easy to dismiss Rodrigues as "the other BU guy." He was, after all, undrafted and coming into camp having played college hockey alongside Jack Eichel, the Sabres' top 2015 draft pick. Rodrigues posted 61 points (21+40) in 41 games in his senior season.

While Eichel picked up the Hobey Baker as the nation's top player and has dazzled so far this preseason, Rodrigues, 22, has shown to be quite the skilled player in his own right.

"I've come to the rink every day and just tried to work my hardest and tried to show them the ability to be here and I think I've done that so far," Rodrigues said. "To make it this far is obviously an accomplishment, but I just have to keep going."

There are adjustments to be made anytime a player jumps a level. But so far, Rodrigues has taken them in stride. Playing in scrimmages in the first few days of camp with and against the Sabres' top veterans helped prepare him for his preseason debut, which came against Ottawa at First Niagara Center.

That game was another testament to Bylsma's belief in Rodrigues. Against the Senators, the young forward played alongside Evander Kane, Ryan O'Reilly, Tyler Ennis and Carlo Colaiacovo on the Sabres' top power-play unit.

"I was playing with extremely skilled guys and that's something I think I have in my game. I'm a skilled player; I have some tenacity, I have some smarts, obviously getting that chance was huge," Rodrigues said. "Again, it just keeps building my confidence and kind of lets myself know that I can do this."

His mission since going undrafted has been proving that to everyone else.

"I've said it before, but it's kind of just proving people wrong. I've always believed in myself and I think getting the chance to show that is rewarding for me," he said. "But I've still got a long ways to go."

The Sabres take on the Toronto Maple Leafs in their fifth of seven preseason games Tuesday night at 7 p.m. at First Niagara Center.