



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Coyotes Preview

AP

January 17, 2016

(AP) -- - Mike Smith's injury should have sent the Arizona Coyotes into a tailspin. The loss of a No. 1 goalie is tough for any team, and it figured to be crippling to a club that relies so much on defense.

Louis Domingue changed Arizona's fortunes. Instead of tumbling down the standings, the Coyotes have climbed within reach of the Pacific Division lead behind their confident-beyond-his-years rookie goalie.

After getting a much-needed rest, Domingue will be back in net Monday night against the visiting Buffalo Sabres looking to help the Coyotes earn at least a point for the eighth time in nine games.

Domingue made a brief stop in the NHL last season, going 1-2-1 with a 2.73 goals-against average in seven games. With that short stint, he realized he belonged in the NHL and worked harder than ever over the summer - on his game and his conditioning.

"You never know you can play in the NHL until you actually do," Domingue said. "Last year, I had a chance to measure myself against the best players in the world and it showed me that I could be here and made me confident for sure."

Domingue didn't make the roster coming out of training camp, though he wasn't too surprised about it. The Coyotes already had Smith and veteran backup Anders Lindback, so he kind of expected to be sent to Springfield of the AHL to get more playing time.

Domingue took advantage of that extra playing time and was confident when he was called up after Smith underwent abdominal surgery Dec. 15. He's 7-2-3 with a 2.21 goals-against average in 10 starts and two relief efforts, and he's the first rookie goalie in team history to win three straight starts.

Arizona (22-17-5) has gone 8-2-3 since Dec. 19 to climb into second in the Pacific. It suffered a rare regulation loss Saturday, 2-0 to New Jersey with Lindback in net.

Coach Dave Tippett confirmed Domingue will be in goal against the Sabres (18-23-4).

"There's two things when (a rookie replaces a veteran goaltender)," Tippett said. "A team will look at that situation and say we've got to hunker down and make sure we play a good team game to help the goaltender, and the goaltender feels confident that the group is going play well in front of him. It's been a good match."

Domingue will get his first crack at Buffalo, which beat the Coyotes 5-2 on Dec. 4 behind two goals from Evander Kane. The Sabres have won all five meetings in Arizona since last losing there in 2008.

Kane scored and had an assist Saturday to help Buffalo win for the third time in four tries with a 4-1 victory over NHL-leading Washington. The Sabres had dropped six straight prior to this run, with Kane having a goal and three assists in that stretch.

He went without a point during the losing streak.

"We lost the one (Friday) against Boston, so we were really just trying to come out with a solid effort," said Cody Franson, who had a power-play goal. "We knew they were going to keep coming at us and we had to play solid systematically. For the most part, I think we did that."

Chad Johnson made 33 saves, getting the start despite presumed No. 1 goaltender Robin Lehner returning Friday from a lower-body injury that caused him to miss 39 games. Lehner could be back in net for this one.

Josh Gorges missed Saturday's contest with an upper-body issue but will make the trip. Zemgus Girgensons will miss his second straight with an upper-body injury.

Sabres working under parental control as they head to Arizona

By Jay Skurski

The Buffalo News

January 17, 2016

Phoenix in January is not a hard sell.

Perhaps that's part of the reason why the Buffalo Sabres have chosen to make it part of this year's annual "parents trip."

The Sabres departed Sunday morning for sunny Arizona, where they were greeted by temperatures in the upper 60s upon arrival. No doubt, they were feeling good following perhaps their best performance of the season – a 4-1 win over the NHL-leading Washington Capitals on Saturday night.

Buffalo will look to win for the fourth time in five games Monday night against the Coyotes (9 p.m., MSG, Radio 550 AM). They'll have some special guests in attendance, as each player can bring their mom or dad on the road trip – which also stops in Colorado on Wednesday – continuing a tradition that has become an annual occurrence across the NHL.

"It's a rare time to acknowledge and give back to your parents for everything they've done and everything they continue to do for you as a person and as a player," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "I find you get some of your most inspired hockey when you're giving that back to your parents on these trips."

Rookies Sam Reinhart and Jack Eichel will be taking part in the trip for the first time. Reinhart brought his mom, Theresa, while Eichel brought his dad, Bob.

"It's exciting, having my dad be able to come on the trip," Eichel said. "It'll be a new experience for us. It's not a bad spot to be going, either, so he really can't complain."

"It's a great time to think about everything they've done for you, on a trip like this."

The Sabres' road schedule is not overly taxing. The team does not have any trips longer than three games. But they are in a stretch of eight games in 14 days, so any kind of boost that comes with having mom or dad in the crowd is welcome.

"That frequency of games, we're playing a lot more back-to-backs, or four games in a week, you do need to ... get up mentally and physically for all the games," Eichel said.

Theresa Reinhart knows better than most parents on the trip what life on the road is like. Her husband, Paul, spent 11 seasons in the NHL, while her three sons – Sam, Max and Griffin – have all also played in the league.

"She's been a hockey mom all my life," Sam Reinhart said. "I know she's looking forward to it. It'll be a fun time."

If Bylsma's theory on inspired hockey with parents in attendance is correct, it could be a boost for Eichel, who has been held to just one assist in his last five games. Reinhart, meanwhile, has been held without a goal in the last three games since recording his first career hat trick Jan. 10 at Winnipeg.

"The growth of Sam has been immense in the first four months of his career," Bylsma said. "I think right now we're seeing maybe a little dip in it. We're going through a lot of hockey ... but where he's come from, it's been huge strides in his game."

Reinhart has 20 points, tied for fourth on the team. Eichel's 27 ranks third, as does his 13 goals behind Ryan O'Reilly's team-leading 17 goals and 38 points.

Like Eichel, O'Reilly hasn't scored a goal in the Sabres' last four games, but Buffalo is 3-1 in that time in large part because the team is finally starting to get some scoring from other players on the roster.

Against Washington on Saturday, recent call-ups Phil Varone and Tim Schaller gave Buffalo a 2-0 lead in the first period.

"Getting goals from Varone and Schaller, no one would have taken that bet," Bylsma said. "To get positive results we leaned on O'Reilly and Jack Eichel to get us goals, and our last few wins have come with our team scoring."

In addition to Varone and Schaller, captain Brian Gionta, winger Evander Kane, veteran forward David Legwand and defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Cody Franson also have goals in Buffalo's last three games.

If that kind of production continues, the Sabres will have a good chance of extending their winning streak in Arizona to six games.

And give their parents something to smile about.

Trade and demotion not so great for ex-Sabre Scott

By Jay Skurski

Buffalo News

January 17, 2016

There was a pretty good chance the Buffalo Sabres weren't going to see John Scott on Monday night, anyway, but the Arizona Coyotes made sure of that last week.

Scott, the former Sabres enforcer, was traded from Arizona to Montreal in a deal that normally wouldn't have registered on the NHL radar. It did, though, because of an ongoing controversy.

Scott was elected captain of the Pacific Division's All-Star team in a vote by fans. The NHL clearly wasn't cool with the gag – upset that a player with five career goals would participate in the league's new 3-on-3 format that's designed to showcase the most skilled players in the world.

According to TSN's Bob McKenzie, both the Coyotes and NHL asked Scott to bow out of the game, which will be held Jan. 31 in Nashville. He reportedly refused.

By being traded to the Canadiens – who assigned him to their AHL team in St. John's – Scott may not be eligible for the All-Star Game if he's not on an NHL roster. The league announced after the trade that it is reviewing what should happen to the Pacific Division roster.

So what started as a gag has turned into something of a mess for all parties. Scott was within his rights to say he was going to participate in a game fans voted him into, but McKenzie suggested that doing so was at least part of the reason he was traded.

"If I was in his shoes, I would have accepted it also," said Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, who played with Scott for two seasons. "It's one of those things where, the fans voted for it. That's part of what the All-Star Game is about."

Scott's situation is somewhat reminiscent of what happened last season with Sabres forward Zemgus Girgensons. Fans in Girgensons' home country of Latvia started an online campaign that ultimately made him the game's top vote-getter. Girgensons, it should be noted, was arguably an All-Star on merit, something that can't be said for Scott, who had just one assist in 11 games with the Coyotes this season.

"When the league opens it up to fan voting, you're leaving it open for things like that to happen, right?" Weber said. "It's an unfortunate situation John is going through."

Scott's banishment to Newfoundland is even more difficult because his wife is pregnant with twins.

"I feel pretty bad for him," Sabres winger Marcus Foligno said. "He's one of the best teammates I've ever played with. He's a great guy off the ice, and on the ice he works hard."

"He's probably not enjoying this too much right now, but he's the type of guy that makes the best out of every situation. His time here with us, he was an older guy in the dressing room that us young guys looked up to big time."

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The Sabres' game-winning goal in Saturday's 4-1 victory over the Washington Capitals came on the power play. It just so happened to belong to the Capitals.

Tim Schaller's short-handed breakaway goal in the first period was part of a superb job by Buffalo's penalty killers, who went a perfect 4 for 4 against Washington. The Capitals rank second in the NHL with the man advantage.

"That's a dangerous power play, and not only were we able to kill them off, we get the game-winning goal," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said. "We had a few more kills later on in the game that were big points for our penalty kill and our team. Keeping them off the board with that dangerous power play was a big part of the game."

The Sabres' penalty kill has been perfect in four of the team's last five games.

"As a group, we knew we needed to be better if we're going to get some wins against these top teams," goaltender Chad Johnson said. "We have a good penalty kill. Sometimes you don't get the results. Right now we're getting it, and we just want to build off it and keep it going."

Buffalo's penalty kill ranked 24th in the league entering Sunday's games.

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The Sabres handed Capitals goaltender Braden Holtby his first loss since Nov. 10. He had been 20-0-2 in his last 22 decisions.

Holtby leads the NHL in wins (28), is second in goals-against average (1.97) and third in save percentage (.931). He was pulled after Evander Kane's goal in the second period.

Inside the Sabres: Setting's changed but Jakubowski still delivers

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
January 17, 2016

The best curveball of Mark Jakubowski's life actually came away from the baseball diamond. It was a pitch to Darcy Regier, and it changed Jakubowski's career path from math teacher to NHL executive with his hometown team.

Jakubowski, who is in his 11th season with the Sabres and second as assistant general manager, never planned to spend a day working in professional sports. The Frontier High School graduate studied economics while playing baseball for the University of Rochester, and he was going to use his degree to get a teaching job.

As Jakubowski was attending classes in the early 2000s, the "Moneyball" concept exploded. Sports teams read about the successful analytics plan put in place by Billy Beane and the Oakland Athletics, and they wanted in. So did Jakubowski, who loved sports and numbers.

"I said why don't I combine the business interests I had with the athletics and see if I could put it together?" the 32-year-old said. "I sent out a bunch of resumes to pretty well every professional team in the major four sports.

"I ended up getting an interview with the Minnesota Wild. They offered me a position."

Jakubowski's heart, however, was in Buffalo. Among his earliest memories is sitting on his father's lap in Memorial Auditorium with his brother next to him, the three of them sharing the family's two season tickets. He got a chance to intern with the Sabres during his junior year of college, helping the organization break down video for the 2004 NHL Draft. It was then that he got to know Regier, who was serving as the Sabres' general manager.

"I called Darcy and said, 'The Wild offered me a job, what do I do? I'd like to work for you,'" Jakubowski said. "Then he offered me a job. I don't want to say it was a negotiation right off the hop, but I had two options. I knew Darcy and I was comfortable with him and the people here. Obviously, they gave me an opportunity to intern here, and I wanted to stay home and be part of the Sabres."

The Sabres hired Jakubowski as a hockey department analyst in 2005. He arrived at the same time as the salary cap, and his fondness for numbers soon became a huge help to the Sabres. As Buffalo went to its second straight Eastern Conference final in 2006-07, the organization spent right to the cap. Money was so tight that rookie Drew Stafford practiced with Rochester and played in Buffalo just so the Sabres could save vital pennies on a day-to-day basis.

Jakubowski helped Regier make sure the Sabres remained under the cap limit with every trick allowed in the collective bargaining agreement.

"I got thrown right into the fire a little bit," Jakubowski said, "but Darcy was the guy managing at the time and I was just helping."

Regier obviously appreciated it, promoting Jakubowski to director of hockey administration for a year, followed by assistant to the general manager. In addition to analyzing the cap and the CBA, the Hamburg resident began helping with contracts. He provided stats and salaries for players comparable to the Sabres' free agents, and by 2008 he was negotiating deals on his own.

"I've kind of gotten a couple breaks along the way," he said.

Jakubowski's biggest break came after a time of uncertainty. The Sabres fired Regier in November 2013 and replaced him with Tim Murray in January 2014.

"Anytime there's a transition with someone's boss, you're obviously concerned, especially in this business," Jakubowski said. "You start to wonder if you'll make it through."

He not only made it, he got a promotion. Murray named Jakubowski as his assistant general manager in August 2014.

"Bright guy, hard-working guy, smart guy," Murray said. "I wanted help in contracts and CBA and that type of deal. After I got to know him a little bit, I felt he was a good man for the job."

Jakubowski travels with the Sabres when Murray scouts games elsewhere. While Jakubowski knows the sport, he's never played it.

"I've never played ice hockey and can't skate," Jakubowski said. "I remember Maxim Afinogenov at one of our holiday parties was carving me a bit there because I couldn't skate."

He could have carved Afinogenov on a baseball diamond, however. Jakubowski was named a Liberty League first-team pitcher during his senior year at Rochester. The reliever held hitters to a .246 batting average while leading the team with 34 strikeouts in 17 appearances.

He tossed a strike when he opted for hockey over teaching.

"This has been a real good ride, and I'm enjoying every minute of it," Jakubowski said. "I hope it continues. We'll see how long this ride goes."

Ristolainen making big impression with Sabres

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

January 17, 2016

BUFFALO -- Buffalo Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen has been a revelation for the Buffalo Sabres this season, breaking out in a big way and delivering on the potential that made him a first-round pick three years ago.

Ristolainen, 21, is a completely different player than the one who struggled last season in his first full tour of duty in the NHL. This season, he leads the Sabres in average time on-ice with 24:48 per game and tied his NHL career-high in goals when he scored his eighth of the season in a 3-2 win against the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday.

He already has a career-high in points (29) and is second in scoring on the Sabres behind forward Ryan O'Reilly, who is their representative in the 2016 Honda NHL All-Star Game.

A change in team structure instituted by coach Dan Bylsma, who replaced Ted Nolan this summer, has helped Ristolainen develop, according to defenseman Josh Gorges.

"Last year, it seemed like we're all over the place as a group, as a team, and he's probably no different," said Gorges, who is Ristolainen's defense partner. "Whereas this year, he's really taking control of his own game and trying to get better and using those details of stick position, feet position, when to attack, when to be patient, finding plays; all those little things has made the structure in his game.

"When he has that base, his skill and talent is able to do the rest of the work. When he gets those little things down, he's now able to do those things that make you go, 'Wow, he's a special player.'"

After playing 34 games for Buffalo in 2013-14, Ristolainen struggled in his first full-time shot with the Sabres. His minus-32 rating was the worst on the team. But this season has been a huge turnaround.

Now he likely is on the short list of players being considered for Finland's roster at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, which will take place in Toronto in September.

"Of all the parts that have gotten better, I think the most is the defensive-zone game," Ristolainen said. "I think I play better defense than I did last year. I've been playing against other teams' top lines and most of the nights I've done pretty well and I just try to still get better and there's a lot of games left."

The path toward improvement looks clear of obvious obstacles. The 6-foot-4, 207-pound defenseman is growing into his body but certainly has the skills to be dominant, according to those who watch him on a daily basis.

"He's a big man who can skate," Bylsma said. "He's a big-bodied guy and he uses it in all aspects of his game. I think [when] he goes back for pucks, he's strong and skates away from danger. Last game in Minnesota, he's a big-body defender thrown in a battle with [Zach] Parise and [Mikko] Koivu at the net down low and that's been impressive.

"But the other thing is, he's really impressed me with his willingness and [his desire] to want to get better and want to grow as a defender. It's an insatiable appetite he has for wanting to be better and wanting to be the best."

Ristolainen has shown his strength on the power play. He has scored four power-play goals and has eight assists. His ability to handle the puck, read plays, and get off a hard shot has made him a viable quarterback.

Sabres defenseman Cody Franson said he believes it is the versatility shown by Ristolainen from the point on the power play that has served the Sabres so well. Ristolainen has the ability to uncork a hard shot, hoping for a clean goal, or feather one in an attempt to create rebounds for his forwards.

"He's been fortunate in having a couple go in for him," Franson said. "I think he's developing at a pretty high rate right now and he's playing well."

Ristolainen's possession metrics also have greatly improved. Ristolainen's shots-attempted percentage, a metric to determine possession of the puck, improved from 36.92 percent in 2014-15 to 45.59 percent this season, despite the fact he's playing against better competition.

"I think it's his ability to make good, clean passes in his end under pressure," Gorges said. "It's the hardest thing for a [defenseman] to do; you're going back for a dumped puck, you've got a guy coming in trying to crush you, you're trying to read the forecheck, find out where our guys are and still make the play."

"There's a select few guys in the League that can do that all the time and he's starting to become one of those guys. You watch him go back, he knows what he wants to do with it, he puts himself in a position where he's able to do it, and then he goes out and makes the play. That's not an easy thing to do and I think he does it extremely well."

Domingue back in goal for Coyotes vs. Sabres

By David Satriano

NHL.com

January 17, 2016

Season series: The Buffalo Sabres and Arizona Coyotes split two games in a four-day span late last season. Coyotes defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 overtime win on March 26. Sabres captain Brian Gionta had a goal and an assist in a 4-1 win on March 30.

Sabres team scope: Robin Lehner likely will be in goal after Chad Johnson made 33 saves Saturday in a 4-1 home victory against the League-leading Washington Capitals, Buffalo's third win in four games. Lehner played Friday after missing more than three months with a high ankle sprain. The Sabres were 1-for-5 on the power play after scoring once with the extra man in their previous four games. "We just had a couple bounces go our way. ...half the battle of the power play is confidence and when you get those bounces it's easier to feel a little better about yourself," said defenseman Cody Franson, who scored the power-play goal. Buffalo has gotten goals from different lines, which has pleased coach Dan Bylsma. "To get positive results we have leaned on Ryan O'Reilly and Jack Eichel to get us goals and our last few wins have come with [other players] scoring goals," Bylsma told the Sabres website.

Coyotes team scope: Arizona did not practice Sunday after being shut out for the second time this season, 2-0 by the New Jersey Devils on Saturday. Defenseman Jarred Tinordi, acquired from the Montreal Canadiens last week, could make his debut with the Coyotes. Arizona has eight defensemen; Tinordi and Klas Dahlbeck were scratched on Saturday. Coach Dave Tippett said goaltender Louis Domingue would start after Anders Lindback made 15 saves against the Devils, a game in which Arizona had 38 shots on goal and 96 total shot attempts. "The positive was we were creating a lot and we just have to find a way to put it in the back of the net," forward Max Domi told the Coyotes website after the game. Forward Steve Downie was placed on waivers Sunday.

Former Sabres tough guy John Scott an All-Star teammate

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 18, 2016

BUFFALO – There's little middle ground when it comes to John Scott, the popular former Sabres tough guy whose election as an NHL All-Star captain has created an embarrassing episode for the league and left an eight-year veteran on an AHL roster in Newfoundland.

The 6-foot-8 Scott, one of the league's last true enforcers, is a polarizing figure.

In Buffalo, where he played 90 games over two seasons, Scott is still a folk hero and adored by his ex-teammates. He joined the Sabres after they had deservedly developed a reputation as a soft team, and he quickly helped end that.

Scott, however, isn't loved by the league's higher-ups, who apparently didn't want one of the Arizona Coyotes' spare forwards grabbing attention Jan. 31 in Nashville.

Of course, Scott would never earn an All-Star spot from his skill. He had one assist in 11 games this season. But the game is a meaningless exhibition, so fans decided it would be a blast to see a hulking winger with five goals and 543 penalty minutes in 285 NHL games play three-on-three with the world's best talent.

Scott, an affable personality, had some fun and said he would graciously accept if fans voted him in as the Pacific Division captain. They did, and league and his team, according to TSN's Bob McKenzie, asked the leading vote-getter to bow out. Scott refused, so the Coyotes, who host the Sabres tonight, sent Scott to the Montreal Canadiens on Friday as a throw-in with a real trade.

The Canadiens promptly buried Scott, whose wife, Danielle, is pregnant with twins, by jettisoning him to the St. John's IceCaps. Scott hasn't played in the AHL since 2008-09.

Apparently, not only is Scott out of an NHL job, he's also out of the All-Star Game. The backlash, naturally, has been harsh.

Remember, Scott, 33, never asked for votes. To him, the idea fans wanted "to throw me in the All-Star Game" was "cool and fun."

"I'll definitely go," Scott said Dec. 4 when the Coyotes visited Buffalo. "It's kind of an honor. It's one of those things where not everybody gets to go, so I'm not going to be upset about it and pout about it. You've got to roll with it and have fun with it."

Still, Scott even issued a statement saying he was "flattered" and "grateful" for the votes but there were other Coyotes more deserving of a spot.

"If I was in his shoes, I would've accepted it also," said Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, Scott's good friend. "That's one of those things where the fans voted for it. That's part of what the All-Star Game is about. ... I think Johnny was right in obviously accepting and going."

So what about Scott's NHL career? Could getting elected to the All-Star Game really end it? Enforcers are a dying breed. Scott's greatest asset, besides his size and toughness, is his personality.

His people skills, perhaps more than his fighting skills, landed him gigs this season and last year with the San Jose Sharks. Teammates love him. He keeps the dressing room loose while still acting like a pro.

"Johnny's one of those guys ... that's a very personable guy," Weber said. "He's a good guy in the locker room, great guy in the community and for his family. I think it would've been an enjoyable time that he would've had. He would've had some fun with it and (been) professional with it."

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The Sabres practiced Sunday in Arizona, where they begin a two-game road trip. They also play the Colorado Avalanche on Wednesday.

Defenseman Josh Gorges, who missed Saturday's 4-1 home win against the Washington Capitals with an upper-body injury, traveled with the Sabres and is day-to-day. Winger Zemgus Girgensons (upper body, day-to-day) stayed home.

Kane and Johnson help Sabres beat Capitals and Holtby, 4-1

By Nick Mendola

Associated Press

January 16, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Phil Varone barely slept last night and Tim Schaller hadn't scored in more than a year. Together, they helped the Buffalo Sabres hand Washington goalie Braden Holtby a rare loss.

Varone and Schaller scored in the first period, and Evander Kane had a goal in the second to chase Holtby as the Sabres went on to a 4-1 win over the Capitals on Saturday night.

Varone was called up to Buffalo after playing Friday night for AHL Rochester in Binghamton. His rebound goal 10:30 into the first period gave Buffalo a 1-0 lead.

"I didn't get much sleep last night, I was trying to remember everything to pack," Varone said. "I just tried to make sure my legs were going well."

Holtby hadn't lost in his last 22 decisions, going 20-0-2 since a Nov. 10 loss to Detroit. The Sabres emphatically ended his run of 23 games without a loss in regulation by scoring three times on 16 shots.

"You gotta get excited for every game," said Schaller, who last scored Dec. 21, 2014, against Boston. "But a little more excited for one of the best teams in the NHL right now. We took it to them and it was a great win."

Chad Johnson stopped 33 shots and Cody Franson also scored for Buffalo, which snapped a six-game home losing streak and has now won three of four overall.

Marcus Johansson ruined Johnson's shutout bid 2:54 into the third period with an unassisted goal. The Sabres' goalie got his first win since Dec. 26.

"To score two goals in the first period against that team, it definitely helps us to generate more momentum in our own arena here so it was huge for us," Johnson said.

The loss also snapped Washington's five-game winning streak.

"We didn't invest enough to win a hockey game," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. "We were really easy on them in the first. We didn't touch anybody, we just played."

Buffalo opened the scoring when Rasmus Ristolainen's hard slap shot rebounded to the right of Washington's goal, where Varone raced to slap the rebound past Holtby.

Schaller made it 2-0 at the 16:00 mark when he seized a Capitals turnover and shoulder faked Holtby before snapping a shot over the goaltender's right shoulder.

"I noticed how much time I had," Schaller said. "I didn't want to fake myself out, so I gave him a little head fake and luckily he went down a little bit and I threw it over his shoulder."

The Sabres kept it up in the second period, with Holtby denying Mike Weber and Jamie McGinn during an early flurry.

Buffalo made it 3-0 when Kane's shot through traffic changed directions and dribbled past Holtby. That was the last action for Holtby, who was pulled in favor of Philipp Grubauer.

Trotz said the move had little to do with Holtby's performance.

"I was just trying to change the momentum because I didn't like what I was seeing," he said.

Varone took a tripping penalty to send Washington to the power play midway through the period, but Johnson stopped T.J. Oshie's point shot before snaring Alex Ovechkin's hard snap shot from the slot.

"I knew it was an important time in the game," Johnson said. "We knew as a group we had to be strong, everyone had to be big tonight to get a win against that team."

The Sabres made it 4-0 on the power play, as Franson wired a funny bounce off the end wall over Grubauer's left shoulder. Bogosian picked up his second assist of the night on the goal, giving him 100 for his career.

Washington opened the third period with possession in Buffalo's zone, and Jason Chimera teed up Johansson for a one-time goal. It was the 200th assist of Chimera's career.

Buffalo's penalty kill stood strong, holding the Capitals scoreless on five chances.

NOTES: Buffalo held a moment of silence for longtime scout and Sabres Hall of Fame member Rudy Migay, who died Saturday at the age of 88. ... Washington C Mike Richards played his first game since the Kings terminated his contract this summer after a border arrest for possession of a controlled substance. ... Capitals C Brooks Laich was scratched for the first time this season.

Sabres shock Capitals 4-1

By Nick Wojton
Batavia Daily News
January 16, 2016

BUFFALO – The Buffalo Sabres hit the ice as huge underdogs against the top team in the NHL on Saturday, but that didn't matter to them as the Sabres took home a 4-1 win over the Washington Capitals.

For Buffalo (18-23-4 overall, 40 points), Tim Schaller, Phil Varone, Cody Franson, and Evander Kane scored. Goalie Chad Johnson was named the first star of the game, making 33 saves.

Washington's lone goal came from Marcus Johansson in the third period.

Varone, a call up from Rochester just hours before the game because of an injury to Zemgus Girgensons, scored off a rebound from a Rasmus Ristolainen shot 10:30 into the game.

Putting Buffalo up 2-0 was another call up from Rochester, Schaller. On the penalty kill, Schaller went down on a breakaway after forcing a turnover at the blue line. Alone, he went top corner on Braden Holtby with four minutes left in the period.

In addition to Schaller's goal, the penalty kill went 2-for-2 in the opening 20.

In the second period, the same script took place. Buffalo scored twice and went 2-for-2 on the penalty kill.

With 7:14 gone in the period, Ryan O'Reilly sent a drop pass to Kane on a rush into the zone. Kane fired a shot from the top of the circle and Holtby got a piece but not enough. Following the goal, Holtby was replaced by Phillip Grubauer in net after getting in three goals on 16 shots.

A change of goalies didn't stop the Sabres though, as Franson fired home a goal on the power play after a lucky puck bounce off the boards in the corner went right to Franson inside the circle.

In the third period, the Capitals managed to get one back and Jason Chimera made a spinning pass along the boards to Chad Johnson's right to Johansson alone out front. Johansson scored on a one-timer 2:54 into the final period, but that's all the capitals could muster offensively as the Sabres took the 4-1 win.

Quick hits: Sabres 4, Capitals 1

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
January 16, 2016

No team has been better than the Washington Capitals. No goaltender -- heck, maybe no player -- has been better than Braden Holtby.

The Sabres made them look like minor-leaguers. Most shocking of all, they did it in Buffalo.

The Sabres rolled to a 4-1 victory Saturday night in First Niagara Center, ending a six-game winless streak at home. The Sabres scored twice in each of the first two periods to treat the sellout crowd to a rare beatdown of a Washington squad that entered with a record of 33-7-3, including 14-1-1 in the last 16.

Holtby is playing his way toward a Vezina Trophy, but the Sabres sent him to the bench after 27:14. Buffalo beat the goaltender three times on 11 shots and dealt Holtby his first regulation loss since Nov. 10. He was on a 20-0-2 run, putting up a .939 save percentage and 1.85 goals-against average during the streak, but the Sabres left him one game short of Washington's franchise record. Jose Theodore went 20-0-3 in 2009-10.

The Sabres improved to 3-1 in their last four games, bumping their record to 18-23-4 overall and 9-14-2 at home.

Amerks alert: Maybe the Sabres should call up more forwards from Rochester. Two players recently summoned, Phil Varone and Tim Schaller, scored in the first period to give Buffalo a 2-0 lead at intermission. The Sabres had just 21 first-period goals in their opening 44 games.

Sudden impact: Varone, recalled Saturday morning to replace injured Zemgus Girgensons, made the most of an early line switch. The winger started on the fourth line with Schaller and Matt Moulson, but by the midpoint of the first period he had slid into Girgensons' role alongside Jack Eichel and Jamie McGinn. The line created offensive pressure, with defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen taking a slap shot from the point. Varone streaked through the left side of the zone to score on the rebound with 9:30 left.

McGinn, who is in his debut season with Buffalo, thought it was Varone's first NHL goal and picked up the puck for a souvenir. He dropped it upon being informed there were other goals for Varone, who scored four times during the previous two seasons.

Schaller short-handed: With Eichel in the penalty box for tripping, Schaller went to work for the Sabres' second short-handed goal of the season. He swiped the puck from defenseman Dmitry Orlov at the blue line, then skated three-quarters of the ice on a breakaway. He picked the top corner on Holtby with four minutes left in the opening period.

So long, Holtby: Evander Kane sent Holtby to the bench with 7:14 gone in the second period. The left winger sent a low shot through the tangled duo of Sam Reinhart and Nate Schmidt, and Holtby got only a piece of the puck.

Power play strikes: The Sabres got to relief goalie Philipp Grubauer on the power play with 4:23 left in the second, extending their lead to 4-0. A pass to the slot failed to connect for the Sabres, with the puck sliding to the boards. Cody Franson quickly corralled it and fired a shot into the top corner to end a drought of 10 games without a goal.

Salute to Johnson: The goaltender received a loud partial standing ovation when he flashed the leather on Alex Ovechkin to keep Washington off the scoreboard during the second period. Ovechkin twice kept the puck in the Buffalo zone during a power play, then got open in the slot. Normally, that means a goal for the 500-goal scorer, but Johnson reached out to snare the high shot with 8:38 left.

Johnson also made a glove save on Ovechkin's center, Nicklas Backstrom, early in the second.

Breaking the shutout: Washington finally solved Johnson on their 25th shot of the night, and it was a beauty. Jason Chimera sent a pass to a wide-open Marcus Johansson in the slot, and his one-timer sailed into the top corner with 2:54 gone in the third period.

Bogosian milestone: Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian assisted on the first and fourth goals, giving him 100 helpers in his career.

Whites at home: The Sabres went to the past by petitioning the NHL to allow them to wear white at home. Saturday's game was the first of six, with Buffalo also schedule to wear the traditional white Friday against Detroit, Feb. 4 against Boston, Feb. 12 against Montreal and March 8 against the New York Rangers.

Payback: Washington tough guy Tom Wilson, who entered with 102 penalty minutes, drew the Sabres' ire by throwing jabs at rookie Sam Reinhart when they tumbled to the ice at the end of the second period. Marcus Foligno fought Wilson with 9:17 to play, then exhorted the crowd to loud after a hard takedown of the Capitals forward. Nicolas Deslauriers angered Washington when he celebrated similarly during a fight in the teams' first meeting.

Changes in the back: Defenseman Josh Gorges was out with an upper-body injury suffered late in Friday's 4-1 loss to Boston. It was the first game he's missed this season. Bogosian slid into Gorges' spot on the top pair with Rasmus Ristolainen. Jake McCabe skated with Cody Franson. Mark Pysyk, who played for the first time since breaking a bone in his foot Nov. 17, skated alongside Mike Weber.

Migay dies: Longtime scout Rudy Migay, who was elected to the Sabres Hall of Fame in 2004, died Saturday at age 87. The Sabres held a moment of silence in his honor prior to the game.

"My condolences to his family on the passing of Rudy Migay," Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman said on Twitter. "He was a great head scout for the Buffalo Sabres during the 1980's and 1990's. Rudy Migay was instrumental in the Buffalo Sabres drafting" Phil Housley, Tom Barrasso, Daren Puppa, Dave Andreychuk, Adam Creighton, John Tucker, Pierre Turgeon, Alexander Mogilny and many more.

On this date: Saturday was the 46th anniversary of the Sabres naming Punch Imlach as their inaugural coach and general manager.

Up next: The Sabres have won two straight games on the road, and they'll try to extend that to four this week. Buffalo will fly to Arizona on Sunday and visit the Coyotes on Monday night. Then it's off to Denver, where Ryan O'Reilly and Jamie McGinn will get to face the Colorado Avalanche for the first time since the summer's blockbuster trade that sent them to the Sabres.

Sabres notebook: Recalled Varone returns with a flourish

By Jay Skurski
The Buffalo News
January 17, 2016

Like so many other forwards in the Buffalo Sabres' organization, Phil Varone's 2015-16 season has not gone to plan.

He got a great chance to change that Saturday night.

Varone was called up from the Rochester Americans to replace injured forward Zemgus Girgensons, who is day to day with an upper-body injury and did not play in the Sabres' 4-1 victory over the Washington Capitals at First Niagara Center.

Varone made the most of his opportunity, opening the scoring in the first period by burying a rebound off a point shot from defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen. Varone started the play by winning a battle for the puck behind the Washington net and cycling it back to defenseman Zach Bogosian, who sent it across ice to Ristolainen. Varone was in the perfect spot to cash in the rebound.

"A nice bounce for me," he said. "Just lucky to be there and happy to put it in."

Varone, 25, played 28 games with the Sabres in 2014-15, at one point serving as the team's No. 1 center. He led the Amerks with 15 goals and 44 points last season, and this year is again Rochester's leading goal-scorer with 10.

He's also a team-worst minus-20, however, as Rochester has been plagued with the same goal-scoring problem that has afflicted the parent club. Varone is one of eight Amerks with more than 260 games of professional experience, which has put the farm club in a bind. AHL rules prohibit teams from playing more than six such players on a given night. Varone and others have had to deal with being a healthy scratch.

"It's definitely different, my first time going around being a vet," he said. "It's tough for all of us. It's tough for Matt Ellis, Patrick Kaleta, Jason Akeson, all of us.

"But that's the cards we were dealt and we have to deal with it. We're professionals. It's tough at times. You want to play every day but there's quality guys sitting out. As much as it is unfair at times, you have to take it with a grain of salt, come to the rink every day and work hard."

Varone is playing on a one-year contract and may not have many opportunities left to show the Sabres he should be a part of their long-term plans.

"I think I proved to myself last year the first 10 games here that I can make things happen," he said. "I think I kind of hit a rut towards the end of the season when I was here. I think I can make plays and I'm just going to play a 200-foot game, try to make things happen with the puck, create havoc out there and bring some energy."

Varone scored two goals in just his second career NHL game a little more than a year ago, but found the net just once more the rest of the season, finishing with three goals and five points in his first stint with the Sabres – including just one assist over his final 17 games.

"It's picking your spots, understanding the time of game, how long you've been on the ice, situations you're up against," Varone said. "I think over the years it's something I've really learned. There have been times I've tried to do too much and make it happen all at once and that's a direct reflection of being hard on myself. Sometimes you've got to be patient."

Prior to the game, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said he wanted to see Varone play more than just a checking role.

"I'd like to see him use his skill and ability with the puck," Bylsma said. "Hope to give him some opportunity to do that."

The coach did just that by putting Varone on a line with rookie center Jack Eichel and winger Jamie McGinn.

Girgensons will not make the Sabres' upcoming two-game road trip to Arizona and Colorado, so Varone will have at least a couple more chances to impress.

...

Defenseman Mark Pysyk returned to the Sabres' lineup after missing 26 games because of a broken foot. He took 21 shifts, playing 15:16, all at even strength. He was called for two penalties.

"I felt pretty good," Pysyk said before the game. "I was getting better as each game went on. Unfortunately I had the injury and a little bit of a setback. Hopefully I can pick up from where I left off. I try to play simple and keep the puck out of our net."

Pysyk returned to the Sabres on Monday, but was a healthy scratch for games against Minnesota and Boston. Bylsma elected to keep the same lineup together against the Wild that had broken a five-game losing streak, and a victory against Minnesota meant Pysyk sat again Friday.

"Obviously you want to be in the lineup but the boys are winning, everybody was playing well and it's not easy to get back in," he said. "That's just the way things go. You're not going to be in the lineup if you're injured and something happens."

Pysyk ended up taking the place of Josh Gorges. Gorges suffered an upper-body injury Friday against the Bruins and is day to day.

...

Sabres forward Marcus Foligno dropped the gloves in the third period with Capitals agitator Tom Wilson. The scrap was a direct result of Wilson going after Sabres rookie Sam Reinhart at the end of the second period.

"He's a young kid. He gets bullied over by Wilson, who's a tough competitor," Foligno said. "You need an answer. You need someone to step up."

The fight fired up the crowd, and the Sabres.

"When you're having a game like we did, it's 4-0, they get a goal, you don't want things to slide away," Foligno said. "I think it was right to answer in that moment. It settled our bench down, got the guys back into it and we were able to close it out."

...

Capitals center Mike Richards made his debut with Washington 10 days after being signed and just eight days after his first practice with the team.

Richards hasn't played in the NHL since April with the Los Angeles Kings. He had his contract terminated by the Kings last June after being pulled over at a border crossing between the U.S. and Canada and being found to be in possession of controlled substances. The case is still pending.

The NHLPA filed a grievance on Richards' behalf after his contract was terminated and a settlement made Richards a free agent. The Capitals signed him to a one-year, prorated \$1 million.

Sabres dominate Washington, take good feeling on the road

By John Vogl
The Buffalo News
January 17, 2016

The applause was well-deserved, so the Sabres soaked it in at center ice. They waved to the cheering crowd following a 4-1 victory over Washington, then retreated to the dressing room.

The shouts of joy continued back there. It may have trumped the noise made in the seats of First Niagara Center.

Buffalo's players haven't had a lot to celebrate this season. A convincing win over the NHL's top team was a good reason to party Saturday night.

"Anytime you get on the winning side of things, it's a good feeling," defenseman Zach Bogosian said. "We've just got to keep it going here."

That's the trick for the Sabres. They've won three of four games, but they've had a tendency to fall flat after successes. They went on slides of 0-4-1, 0-3 and 1-6-1 following similar stretches of three wins in four games. It can't happen again if they want to prove they're better than 27th place.

They've got confidence after checking all the boxes against the Capitals. The Sabres scored at even strength, short-handed and on the power play. They were physical. They got fantastic goaltending from Chad Johnson, who stopped 33 of 34 shots against a team that had scored 19 goals in four games.

"We took it to them, and it was a great win," said center Tim Schaller, who recorded his first career game-winning goal by putting Buffalo up, 2-0, with a short-handed tally.

While it was definitely a team effort, the unquestioned star was Johnson. One night after Robin Lehner returned to Buffalo's crease, Johnson showed he has no desire to be just a backup.

Johnson brought many in the crowd of 19,070 to their feet with a glove save on Alex Ovechkin midway through the second period. It looked like the Capitals would cut the Sabres' lead to 3-1 with a power-play goal, but Johnson reached out to snare Ovechkin's wide-open chance from the slot.

"You know when you give a guy like Ovechkin that time and space in the slot, it's challenging," Johnson said. "I just tried to square up to him, try and make a reaction save. He's so quick with his release, I knew I had to be there and just try and make sure I was in position."

It was a statement to the Capitals that it wasn't going to be their night. It was also a message to front-office folks in every NHL city that Johnson has skills. He'll be an unrestricted free agent this summer and will likely get attention at the trade deadline.

He improved to 11-12-2 with a .919 save percentage and 2.41 goals-against average while tying a career high with his 27th appearance.

"I hope I don't get lost in the shuffle," Johnson said. "I've had a good season this year, and I think I've proven I can play stretches. You just have to build trust with an organization or coach or whatever it is to kind of generate more starts. That's pretty much what it comes down to is get that opportunity more consistently, and that comes from games like this.

"For us, it comes down to getting wins. It doesn't matter who it is. It can be a 10-year-old kid. If he's winning games, he plays whether he's a good goalie or not a good goalie. In this league it just comes down to results. I just do what I have to do.

"I believe I'm a really good goalie in this league and can be. I'm just thankful for the opportunity tonight and hopefully going to play some more here in my career."

His teammates certainly noticed the effort.

"He made a couple huge saves for us, especially on the kill," captain Brian Gionta said. "That's the difference in the game. He was feeling it."

The Sabres as a group were feeling good. They'll head to Arizona for a game Monday, followed by a visit to Denver on Wednesday. They want to come back to Buffalo feeling equally fine.

"That's a good team effort," Bogosian said. "All four lines were buzzing. Our defense was involved, and Johnny played a great game. Anytime you get everyone involved like that and control the play that way, it's a lot more fun."

RECENT RECALLS PAVE THE WAY IN VICTORY OVER WASHINGTON

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 16, 2016

Maybe it's the white sweaters. Dressed in their usual road attire, the Buffalo Sabres turned in one of their best home performances of the season at First Niagara Center on Friday night – and they did it against the League's best team.

Recent recalls Philip Varone and Tim Schaller each scored their first goals of the season to begin a stretch of four-straight tallies to begin the game for the Sabres on their way to a 4-1 win over the Washington Capitals. Evander Kane and Cody Franson also scored for Buffalo while Zach Bogosian tallied two helpers to reach 100 career assists.

It's the third win in four games for Buffalo and a strong rebound from their loss to Boston on Friday night. The Sabres got the ball rolling right away once again, scoring twice in the opening period to make it eight first-period goals in their last four contests.

"We lost the one last night against Boston so we were really just trying to come out with a solid effort," Franson said. "With them, we knew they weren't going to quit with all of that offensive power. We knew they were going to keep coming at us and we had to play solid systematically. For the most part, I think we did that."

Washington goaltender Braden Holtby came into the game having earned at least a point in the standings in each of his last 22 starts. On Saturday, he didn't last two periods. The Sabres chased him with Kane's goal 7:14 into the second, their third of the night.

However, it was Buffalo goaltender Chad Johnson who stole the spotlight with 33 saves for his 11th win. Washington did solve him once when Marcus Johansson scored 2:54 into the third period, but the goaltender held strong for the remainder of the contest to seal the win.

ROC BOYS

Varone hadn't even heard about the injury to Zemgus Girgensons when he got a phone call from Rochester coach Randy Cunneynworth after the Amerks' game on Friday night. Cunneynworth told him that he was being called up to Buffalo and that he needed to be there in the morning.

Less than 24 hours later, he was celebrating his fifth-career NHL goal.

"I didn't get much sleep last night. I can't really sleep that much after games to begin with," Varone said. "I had a good nap today, just trying to make sure my legs were feeling well and like I said I just wanted to bring some energy, create some havoc and make some plays with the puck."

Varone did just that, and he did it early. He opened the scoring 10:30 into the contest, initiating the play with a pass to defenseman Zach Bogosian at the blue line and scoring on a rebound off of a shot from the point by Rasmus Ristolainen.

"We got the puck below their goal line, behind their net," Varone said. "[I] just went low to high and it's being the guy back to the net but it's also a nice bounce for me. I was lucky to be there and happy to put it in obviously."

Schaller, the Sabres' other recent call-up, scored the team's second goal of the period. Buffalo took back-to-back penalties, giving Washington's second-ranked power play a chance to tie the game 1-1. Instead, Schaller picked up a loose puck at the Sabres' blue line after it bounced away from Dmitry Orlov and beat Holtby with a breakaway wrist shot.

"It was a big turn of events there," Schaller said. "I noticed [the puck] was bouncing so I took the chance and went at him and luckily it bounced over his stick twice and I pushed it forward and had all the time in the world."

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma has lauded Schaller's efforts on the penalty kill all season, but scoring shorthanded goals wasn't exactly what he had in mind.

"No, but he was fresh," Bylsma said. "He actually won the draw and it got out to his point. A bit of an unfortunate bounce for their team, it gets stuck coming up the wall and on his backhand and Tim jumped on the opportunity. You don't see too many three-quarter ice breakaways."

The Sabres won the special teams battle overall on the night, killing off all four of Washington's power plays and going 1-for-5 on the power play themselves with Franson's goal 15:37 into the second period.

GORGES OUT

After missing the final 5:21 of the loss to Boston on Friday, alternate captain Josh Gorges missed the game on Saturday with an upper-body injury. Bylsma said that the defenseman is day-to-day and will travel with the team to Phoenix on Sunday.

Girgensons, who also missed the game with an upper-body injury that he sustained against the Bruins, will stay back in Buffalo.

HERE'S JOHNNY

Robin Lehner is back for the Sabres, but Johnson reminded everyone on Friday why he'll remain an integral part of the team moving forward. He kept the Capitals at bay with strong saves throughout the game, none better than this glove stop on Alex Ovechkin in the second period:

"I knew it was an important time in the game and we knew as a group we had to be strong," Johnson said. "Defensemen had to be strong, everyone had to be big tonight to get a win against that team so we all were out there battling right to the very end and we want to build off of this."

Johnson earned first-star honors and managed to leave one Sabres Studio Analyst particularly impressed ...

MAYDAY'S MOMENT OF THE GAME

"I was so impressed with Chad Johnson's poise under pressure tonight. We've seen it over and over this year, but this was a different circumstance having watched Linus Ullmark win two in a row, having watched the presumed number one goalie in Robin Lehner return on Friday night and returning to the crease to face the league's best team, the Capitals, here at home – where the wins have been hard to come by of late. He was full marks for being selected the No. 1 star and I couldn't be happier for him." – Brad May, Sabres Studio Analyst

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The Sabres begin a two-game road trip in Phoenix against the Arizona Coyotes on Monday night at Gila River Arena. It's the second of two meetings between the teams this season, with Buffalo taking a 5-2 contest at First Niagara Center on Dec. 4.

Coverage on Tuesday begins at 8:30 p.m. with Tops Sabres Gamenight on MSG-B and Bell TV. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

New guys lead Sabres in blowout of Capitals

By Mark Ludwiczak
The Sports Xchange
January 16, 2016

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- A pair of unlikely contributors took down the NHL's hottest goalie on Saturday night.

Two recent AHL call-ups, right winger Phil Varone and center Tim Schaller, led the Sabres to a 4-1 win over Braden Holtby and the Washington Capitals. The Sabres chased Holtby from the net midway through the second period on their way to a convincing victory.

"I think if you'd leave the first period getting goals from Varone and Schaller, no one would've taken that bet," Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said.

Left winger Evander Kane and defenseman Cody Franson also scored for Buffalo (18-23-4), and goalie Chad Johnson made 33 saves.

Holtby ended a historic run between the pipes for the Capitals and was pulled after allowing three goals on 16 shots. It was Holtby's first regulation loss in 23 games after a 20-0-2 streak. He was one game short of tying Jose Theodore's franchise-record, 23-game point streak from 2009 to 2010. It was just the second point streak of 22 or more games in the previous 20 seasons.

Holtby was replaced by Philipp Grubauer, who made 12 saves.

"I was just trying to change the momentum because I didn't like what I was seeing," Capitals coach Barry Trotz said.

It was a rare lackluster effort from the Capitals (33-8-3), who saw a five-game winning streak come to a close. Washington had won 14 of its previous 16 games and outscored their previous two opponents 11-1.

Left winger Marcus Johansson scored Washington's lone goal.

"There's some days you need to tip your hand to the other team," defenseman Karl Alzner said. "They played good tonight and we need to turn the page."

Varone opened the scoring 10:40 into the first period on a rebound opportunity. After a blast from the right point by defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, the rebound fell directly to Varone, who pounced for his first goal of the year.

"Got the puck below their goal and just went low to high," Varone said. "It's a nice bounce for me, lucky to be there and happy to put it in."

Schaller doubled Buffalo's lead on a short-handed breakaway with four minutes left in the first period. He forced a turnover at the Buffalo blue line and beat Holtby with a high wrist shot to the blocker side for his first goal of the season.

The shorthanded tally capped an impressive evening on special teams for the Sabres. Buffalo also stopped all four Washington power plays.

"I thought really the penalty kill and special teams was a real big factor in the game," Bylsma said.

Kane made it 3-0 7:13 into the second period. After receiving a pass from center Ryan O'Reilly, Kane flung a long shot from behind the left circle that Holtby got a piece of but managed to trickle over the goal line. It was Kane's ninth goal of the season and his first since Dec. 26.

Franson made it 4-0 with 4:23 left in the second period with a blast from the right circle. Grubauer was out of position, allowing Franson to score on the short side from a hard angle.

The Sabres showed plenty of gumption as well. After a tussle between Sabres center Sam Reinhart and Capitals right winger Tom Wilson at the end of the second period, Sabres left winger Marcus Foligno stepped up with a spirited fight with Wilson midway through the third.

"There was more than one guy who wanted to do that for his teammate and was glad to see someone step up," Bylsma said.

Johansson got the Capitals on the board 2:54 into the third period. After a nifty backhand pass by left winger Jason Chimera along the left boards, Johansson buried a one-timer from the slot for his 11th goal of the season.

The Capitals are hoping to quickly turn the page. Washington has a quick turnaround with a home game against the New York Rangers at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

"Get right back at it and just kind of get rid of that game because that's not our team," Alzner said.

NOTES: D Josh Gorges, C Zemgus Girgensons and D Carlo Colaiacovo were scratched for the Sabres. Gorges was a late scratch because of an upper-body injury. Girgensons suffered the injury in the first period of Buffalo's 4-1 loss to Boston on Friday. ... D Mark Pysyk returned to the lineup for Buffalo missing 26 games. Pysyk was out because of a broken foot, but was a healthy scratch in the previous two games. ... C Brooks Laich, D Ryan Stanton and RW Stanislav Galiev were scratched for the Capitals. ... This was the third and final meeting between the teams this season

Sabres upend Capitals 4-1

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

January 16, 2016

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Buffalo Sabres are right back on the ice after last night's loss, and are looking to rebound against the Washington Capitals. Washington comes to town sporting the highest point total in the NHL. The two teams are scoreless in the first period. Check back for updates, and head inside for Pat Malacaro's live-game blog.

This year's version of the Capitals may be the most complete team in D.C. in a very long time, and it is evidenced by their position in the standings. The visitors are five points better than the Chicago Blackhawks for the top spot in the league. For more stats on the Caps, [click here](#) for Paul Hamilton's pregame primer. Feel free to comment in the thread below and give Brian Koziol and myself each a follow on Twitter: [@BrianWGR](#) and [@PatWGR](#).

First Period

17:23 - I like the energy that the Sabres are showing early in this game. Their speed through the neutral zone is good, and breakouts have momentum, if they can carry it through to the offensive zone that will go a long way to keeping up with Washington tonight.

14:47 - Mark Pysyk makes his presence known early on with a nice defensive play in front of his net. Evgeny Kuznetsov weaved through the white sweaters but it was the young rear guard who is back after injury who swiped the puck away from the net and averted the opportunity.

*9:30 - **SABRES GOAL***. Of course it is **Phil Varone** who slides to the open side of the net and smacked home the rebound attempt after **Rasmus Ristolainen** took a shot from the point. Another player not named O'Reilly or Eichel to get on the score sheet. **1-0 BUF**.

5:41 - Buffalo does a nice job killing Pysyk's minor penalty with relative ease. Alex Ovechkin unleashed a quality blast, but Chad Johnson was up to the task.

*4:00 - **SABRES GOAL***. A shorthanded goal for the blue and gold has First Niagara Center unglued. **Tim Schaller** is able to steal the puck and beat **Braden Holtby** top shelf on a clear cut breakaway. So, if you are scoring at home, both Rochester call ups have scored tonight. **2-0 BUF**.

End of Period

Goal Summary

BUF: 10:30 - Phil Varone (1) (Rasmus Ristolainen, Zach Bogosian). 16:00 - Tim Schaller (1) SHG (unassisted)
WSH: none

Penalty Summary

BUF: 12:14 - Mark Pysyk (2 min., elbowing). 14:33 - Jack Eichel (2 min., tripping)
WSH: 18:05 - Taylor Chorney (2 min., holding)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 8, WSH - 7

Second Period

17:51 - Mike Richards is making his Capitals debut tonight, on the team's fourth line. The two-time Stanley Cup champion logged 3:48 of ice time in the first period. He is another low risk, high reward player brought in by this Washington franchise recently.

15:54 - Both of Buffalo's power play units tonight have had a couple of scoring chances, but have not been able to get a puck past Holtby. Jack Eichel had an opportunity from the slot, but had it deflect off of a defender's stick and into the screen above the glass.

12:46 - **SABRES GOAL**. He does not get the goal, but a very nice drop pass by **Ryan O'Reilly** sets up **Evander Kane** for his ninth goal of the season. That score results in a goaltending switch. **Philipp Grubauer** relieves Holtby. **3-0 BUF**.

4:23 - **SABRES GOAL**. When it rains, it pours. The Capitals are having a night to forget as **Cody Franson** scores on the power play thanks to nice passing from **Evander Kane** and **Zach Bogosian**. The blue and gold are clicking on all cylinders tonight. **4-0 BUF**.

End of Period

Goal Summary

BUF: 7:14 - Evander Kane (9) (Ryan O'Reilly, Sam Reinhart). 15:37 - Cody Franson (4) PPG (Evander Kane, Zach Bogosian)

WSH: none

Penalty Summary

BUF: 9:29 - Phil Varone (2 min., tripping). 20:00 - Sam Reinhart (2 min., roughing)

WSH: 2:25 - Zach Sill (2 min., holding). 14:30 - T.J. Oshie (2 min., slashing). 18:50 - Taylor Chorney (2 min., slashing). 20:00 - Tom Wilson (2 min., roughing)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 15 (23), WSH - 15 (22)

Third Period

17:06 - **CAPITALS GOAL**. **Jason Chimera**'s blind pass to the slot was perfect, and **Chad Johnson**'s shutout bid is over. **Marcus Johansson** made no doubt that that puck would make it to the back of the net. The lead is down to three to start the final stanza for Buffalo. **4-1 BUF**.

14:11 - It has been all Washington, all period here in the third. Buffalo had better be careful, with so much time left in the frame another goal by the Caps would make this one very interesting.

9:17 - Marcus Foligno just stood up for Sam Reinhart and took on Tom Wilson. I would say Marcus got the better of the punches in a fight that really could have turned ugly quickly. Wilson is a tough customer, he only landed a few stiff jabs before being taken to the ice.

5:47 - Buffalo has done a nice job of weathering the Capitals storm this period and are holding onto the three goal lead nicely. If they continue to press the play like they are now, they will walk out with a win.

End of Game

Buffalo 4, Washington 1

Goal Summary

BUF: none

WSH: 2:54 - Marcus Johansson (11) (Jason Chimera)

Penalty Summary

BUF: 7:20 - Mark Pysyk (2 min., interference). 10:43 - Marcus Foligno (5 min., fighting). 14:12 - Zach Bogosian (2 min., roughing)
WSH: 10:43 - Tom Wilson (5 min., fighting). 12:48 - Aaron Ness (2 min., holding). 14:12 - Jason Chimera (2 min., roughing)

Shots on Goal

BUF - 6 (29), WSH - 12 (34)