



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres' Lehner looks to maintain cool vs. Senators

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OTTAWA -- Buffalo Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner will have "comfortable" surroundings as he tries to back up his talk with action at Canadian Tire Centre on Tuesday night.

Lehner, who called out his team after Sunday's loss to the Vancouver Canucks, is sure to get the start against the Ottawa Senators, the organization that drafted him with a second-round pick eight years ago.

Since being traded to the Sabres in the summer of 2015, Lehner owns a 3-0-2 mark with a 1.18 goals-against average and .961 save percentage versus his old team.

Lehner's last outing against Ottawa was Feb. 4, a 37-save shutout that marked the first time a former Senators goalie had blanked his old team.

"I don't know, he might have left some voodoo dolls in the back there ... we've got to find some in the lockers and get those pins out of them," Senators coach Guy Boucher joked on Monday.

"I know he's buddies with the players. He's probably extremely motivated because he got traded. I can't talk for him. All I know is we have not been our best against Buffalo. We've won one game out of six, if you include the exhibition games. All I know is we've got to do better against them. That's clear."

To do that, winger Bobby Ryan said the Senators have to get to the Buffalo net and make life more difficult for Lehner.

"He's really comfortable playing against us," Ryan said. "We've got to make him uncomfortable. We've gotta try to talk to him."

The Sabres (23-23-10) had hoped to pick up some ground Sunday, but the loss to the Canucks left them five points back of the last wild-card spot.

Lehner, who has faced an average of 39 shots over his last nine starts, did a lot of talking after the game.

"We make two plays, score two goals and that's about it," said Lehner, who ranted about the lack of team play. "It's not even disappointing anymore. I'm starting to get angry."

The Senators (29-18-6) were more than pleased with their most recent outing, Saturday's 3-0 win over the New York Islanders that Boucher called one of their best team efforts of the season. Ottawa sits six points back and has five games in hand on the Atlantic Division-leading Montreal Canadiens, who are now on their bye week.

Back in goal Tuesday for the Senators will be Craig Anderson, who earned the shutout against the Islanders while making his first start in two months. Boucher says he's going to be smart with the way he brings his No. 1 goalie back to full stride.

"You want to give him his rest that he wants," Boucher said, "but you want to make sure maybe at first you give him a reasonable amount of games to be able to recuperate."

The Senators are expected to stray from the 11-forward, seven-defenseemen alignment they've used in winning their last two games as Boucher said Chris Neil will return to the lineup.

The Sabres, meanwhile, want to move forward as quickly as possible.

"We've got to stop blaming each other, blaming whatever we're blaming," center Jack Eichel told The Buffalo Daily News on Monday. "Just come to the rink every day, enjoy the fact that you play in the NHL. I don't know. For me, I think I'm more than past just getting worked up about it. I'm not going to change last night's outcome with my attitude today, so there's nothing I can do other than come to the rink today and try to get better at the things that I need to get better at, bring a positive attitude and prepare myself to play against Ottawa."

Sabres need to get something out of their system

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

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There are plenty of things wrong with the Sabres, but captain Brian Gionta literally laughed at one prevailing theory.

"Systems don't matter one bit," Gionta said Monday. "Teams that make the playoffs year in and year out, it's not because of their system. It's because of how they're playing in that system."

Minutes later, Buffalo coach Dan Bylsma echoed the comments.

"You would be real shocked at how similar the systems are from team to team," Bylsma said in KeyBank Center. "There are some variances and there are different ways to play D-zone coverage, but they're strikingly similar from team to team. The difference is in the mentality of how you bring it and how you execute within that system."

At least the coach and captain are on the same page. Judging by the results heading into Tuesday's game in Ottawa, it's clear not everyone is.

"We get ourselves in trouble by not executing the way we're supposed to, the way we want to as a group," defenseman Josh Gorges said. "When we get away from that and we get individualistic, as a group we're not a good team."

It showed Sunday during a 4-2 loss to Vancouver, a setback accompanied by the words "gross" and "disrespectful." The Sabres have been good with words, not so good with actions.

"It's to the point where you're beating a dead horse with what you're saying," defenseman Jake McCabe said. "You can say all you want, but guys have got to perform."

With a 23-23-10 record and sitting in 24th place overall, the Sabres are not performing. The question is why.

It sure seems like the Sabres have an identity crisis, a disconnect between some players and the coaches. When they go off script, it's usually because of the individualistic tendencies that Gorges referenced. Rather than chip in the puck, make an easy pass or defend the slot, players try an extra juke, a long pass or chase the puck-carrier.

It happens way too often, a sign of players not embracing or believing in the system – hence the theory that Buffalo is playing the wrong system.

"It's on us to take the system that's in place and play it for each other," Gionta said. "There's very subtle differences between systems. We look at tape every single day of every other team. There's maybe two types of forechecks. There's maybe a couple different ways to play D-zone. It's a matter of doing it as a group, not having one guy do one thing and two other guys doing a different thing."

"It's nothing that we haven't talked about as a group. You can beat it down, but it's us playing within the system, playing into our strengths. Those strengths are forechecking, playing in our zone. When we get away from that after having talked about it, it gets frustrating."

"There's a point when we have to look in the mirror and figure out what you're doing as an individual to help this team."

During Bylsma's first training camp, the buzzword was "pace."

"We want to execute and play at a pace that's higher than the opposition, one that forces them to deal with our team and our speed," Bylsma said in the fall of 2015.

This season, the Sabres have talked about slowing things down. They say they're not a run-and-gun team. After Sunday's loss, goaltender Robin Lehner referred to Buffalo as a "grinding hockey team."

That seems like a huge shift in philosophy in 17 months.

"I don't think it's any different," McCabe said. "We still want to challenge guys with our speed in the right situation. Speed and grinding can go hand-in-hand with forecheck."

Gionta concurred.

"Playing with pace, playing with speed is just as much about grinding," he said. "Everyone thinks playing a grinding game is a boring game, but it's making the right read and getting the puck behind their D, wearing their team down."

"We have to take advantage of making the right play, the simple play at times. Not dumbing it down. It's none of that. Make the play when it's there, and the time's that it's not there, we need to stick with the identity that we're pushing it behind their D and we're using our forecheck."

"We're a good forechecking team. We're a good offensive-zone team. The more that we can get to that, the better we're going to be, the more momentum we're going to have in games and the better chance we're going to give ourselves to win games."

Teams that don't win games endure changes. The trade deadline is two weeks away. Buffalo is sitting in seller status.

"We obviously want to make the playoffs," McCabe said. "To go along with that, we have a good group of guys in here. It's no fun outside looking in, then come trade deadline you see guys go to other teams and you see buddies leave. That's no fun."

"That's almost a little extra motivation to string some games together here. Not only to get in the playoff race, but to show that this is the group that can get it done. We want to stick together and make things happen."

The Sabres have had plenty of chances to make things happen. Instead, they have losses like the one Sunday.

"We've had opportunities at different times this year, big games to get back in the playoff picture," Bylsma said. "It's disappointing to see at pretty much every one of those situations we haven't risen to the occasion. That's the challenge and the growth of our team. We've got to get ourselves into these big games and we have to respond in those big games, with not only our play but how we play."

"That's been the struggle of our team, and that's a tough one to keep the even-keel face through."

Sabres Notebook: Risk, reward for Eichel; Bogosian healthy

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

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Jack Eichel knows what got him to the NHL. He's an offensive player who thrives on speed and creativity.

He's not going to change because of turnovers or perceived criticism.

"Whether it's minute one or minute 60, I'm going to play the same exact way," the Sabres center said Monday. "We're all in the NHL for a reason. We all built our identity at a younger age. We're here. We do something very well, and that's why we play in the NHL. Whatever that is, just try to bring that to the rink every day.

"I'm a guy that needs to produce offensively. I need to play a 200-foot game and make a difference for this team. Whether it's in our own zone or setting somebody up or scoring a goal, that's what I'm looked at for. I'm a creative player. I take risks trying to make plays. That's how I've always been."

The thing with risks is sometimes they don't pay off. During the first period of Sunday's 4-2 loss to Vancouver, Eichel tried to stickhandle next to the Buffalo net. The Canucks knocked the puck away and scored.

"Obviously, a big part of my game is carrying the puck and what I create when I have it on my stick," Eichel said in KeyBank Center, "so I think you're going to make mistakes, you're going to turn pucks over. It's just how you respond. Unfortunately, that one ended up in the back of our net. Just try to learn from it and be better."

After the game, goaltender Robin Lehner took the whole team to task. At one point, it seemed he criticized Eichel's play.

"We have a structure, but we don't play it," Lehner said Sunday. "Let's do another deke, let's do another play. Get out of our zone? No, let's do the fancy thing."

The goalie said Monday he was not singling out Eichel.

"People can assume whatever they want," Lehner said. "I didn't name anyone. I said a lot as we. It's not about them. It's not about Jack's line. It's not about me. It's not about Rasmus Ristolainen. It's about all of us as a team.

"Jack is our best player. End of story. When he's going, we're all going. When he's not going, we've got to have other guys going. We've got to help each other out.

"I would never put anyone in the spotlight. That's never what I said. At the end of the day, it was a team loss. It wasn't a line loss. It wasn't an individual loss. I think we were all flat, and that's from everyone."

Even if the criticism was directed at Eichel, the 20-year-old shrugged it off.

"We've just got to put our nose to the grindstone here and start working," he said. "We've got to stop blaming each other, blaming whatever we're blaming. Just come to the rink every day, enjoy the fact that you play in the NHL.

"I'm more than past just getting worked up about it."

While Eichel's first-period decision was costly, a few plays in the second period showed why he has an aggressive mindset. He carried the puck into the Vancouver zone twice during the opening minute, and Buffalo got scoring chances on both.

For nearly everyone else in the period, the results were dump the puck in and lose it; try a long pass and miss; or carry the puck and turn it over.

Coach Dan Bylsma admitted it's a balancing act for Eichel.

"Even if you make that play, it doesn't mean it's a good one," he said of the net-side stickhandling. "That's a little bit of the balance when you're talking about puck management and executing and having the freedom with the puck. It's the balance of understanding the time, the place and the situation the team is in."

Eichel said he'll learn from it as he turned his focus toward Tuesday's game in Ottawa.

"There's definitely areas of my game I need to clean up," he said. "I need to get better in my own zone. I need to be more responsible. Maybe my timing coming out of our zone. There's obviously areas of my game I need to get better at. It's a work in progress with our whole team, and I'm the same way."

The Sabres' blue line may get a boost. Zach Bogosian, who has missed five games with a rib injury, made the trip to Ottawa.

"I'm mentally getting ready for the game," Bogosian said after taking part in an optional skate. "It's been feeling a lot better. I got some contact in at practice, so that was really the last test for me. The contact was what was kind of holding me back a little bit.

"All that checked out today, so we'll just see how it goes and have a conversation with the trainers and coach and go from there."

Injured forwards Zemgus Girgensons (full body) and William Carrier (knee) did not make the trip. Neither has been skating.

Tyler Ennis is an entrepreneur who is bringing a condiment to the dinner table. The winger and the Sabres have introduced "Enzo Sauce," a hot sauce/ranch hybrid created by Ennis.

"I made my own special blend of hot sauce and creamy buttermilk ranch, which turned out to be a winning combination," Ennis said. "Before long, teammates, friends and neighbors were asking for more sauce, and I decided it was time to make it official."

The 12-ounce jar features a caricature of Ennis, who is wearing a hockey helmet and chef's hat. An autographed jar is available for \$20 at EnzoSauce.com or at Dave and Adam's Card World on Sheridan Drive in Williamsville. The product is also available at Tops Markets and Wegmans.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the Matt Cook Foundation, an organization that makes life more normal for young adults as they fight cancer.

Enzo Sauce will be available in KeyBank Center during Saturday's game against St. Louis. Ennis will sign autographs and promote the sauce from 6-7:15 p.m. Friday in Wegmans on Transit Road in Williamsville, and in the Tops on Transit Road in Depew from 6-7:15 p.m. March 3.

Sabres' Lehner said he would never call out a teammate

WGR 550

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Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Robin Lehner is one of those athletes that's honest in his answers. After a tough 4-2 loss to Vancouver on Sunday, Lehner was very angry as he spoke on our postgame show. He talked about how players try to get fancy instead of making the easy play. He talked about how after one win, they act like they're the Chicago Blackhawks. Some people took his comments as being critical of Jack Eichel. Lehner said that couldn't be further from the truth, "What I said yesterday was to be aimed at us as a group starting with myself all the way through the lineup. We've got to take more responsibility. It's not certain lines, it's not certain people, it's literally all of us on a day-to-day basis."

"I didn't name anyone, I said we. It's not about Jack's line, it's not about me, it's not about Ristolainen, it's about all of us as a team, it's about doing the small things. It's about me making an extra save, Jack is our best player, end of story. When he's going, we're all going, but when he's not going, we've got to have other guys going. We've got to help each other out, if he makes a mistake or I make a mistake, we've got to bail each other out and I would never put anyone in the spotlight, that's never what I said, and at the end of the day, it was a team loss, it wasn't a line loss, it wasn't an individual loss."

When it comes to what was wrong Lehner said, "I think we were all flat and that was from everyone."

Brian Gionta has won a Stanley Cup so he knows what it takes to be a winner. The captain said, "It's looking at yourself and what you contribute to the problem or the solution. It's on each one of us to be better as individuals and bring what we can to the team and it's not blaming outside sources, it's not blaming the guy next to you, it's looking in the mirror."

Gionta was very firm in saying that Bylsma's system isn't a problem. The captain said, "No, systems don't matter one bit, there's very subtle differences between systems. There's maybe two types of forechecks, there's maybe a couple different ways to play D-zone, it's a matter of doing it as a group, not having one guy to one thing and two other guys doing a different thing."

"Teams that make the playoffs year in and year out it's not because of their system, it's because of how they play within that system."

Dan Bylsma thinks systems are overblown, "You'd be real shocked at how similar the systems are from team to team. There are some variances and there are different ways to play D-zone coverage and really the difference is in the mentality of how you bring it and how you execute within that system and that makes it the variances of the system."

Bylsma said it's more about the opportunities that they haven't taken advantage of, "As a team we've had opportunities at different times this year in big games to get back in the race and it's disappointing to see that in almost every one of those situations, we haven't risen to the occasion and that's the challenge and growth of our team."

Some coaches want their players to be very vanilla when they speak to the media. Bylsma said that what was said after the Canucks game did not bother him, "I think that's part of your leadership group, us getting to where we want to go and be the team that we want to be is not going to be an easy process and I don't mind our leaders voicing that, but it's also got to be meaningful, so I don't have a big issue with the voices coming out."

Josh Gorges is never afraid to give his opinion as one of the team leaders. The defenseman said, "I think if anything it's guys speaking the truth about what's going on in the situation we're in and how it shouldn't be acceptable, it's not acceptable and there's nothing wrong with calling a spade a spade."

"Until we decide as a group that we're going to play a certain way, one through four lines and six D and our goalies are all going to do the same thing, that's when we'll have continued success," Gorges said. "I don't think anybody is sitting in the room pointing fingers at the next guy saying it's your fault not mine, we're all saying collectively that it's all of us."

"Sometimes you want to do so much, you know you try so hard and you want to be the guy that makes the difference, you want to be the guy to go out there and get the job done and sometimes it's too much and its not to say that we don't care, it's such a willingness to want to go out there and do things, you get away from what we're doing as a group."

So here we are in February and the Sabres are five points in back of Toronto and Philadelphia for the final Wild Card spot in the Eastern Conference. To get there they still have to leap over the Islanders, Florida, Tampa Bay, and New Jersey. They also have to hold off Carolina and Detroit. Gorges thinks it can be done, "I still believe in this group. I still believe that this is a playoff team. We've played against the top teams in the league and we always play well. There's lots of hockey left to be played, I believe this team has the ability to go out and get the job done."

Dan Bylsma said he spoke to Zach Bogosian and the medical staff and decided to take him on the trip to Ottawa. Bogosian took part in Monday's optional skate and said feels well enough to play on Tuesday.

Bylsma said Will Carrier is still resting his knee and Zemgus Girgensons will be updated on Wednesday.

Sabres' Eichel said he can only do his part

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

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Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Things boiled over in the locker room after the loss to Vancouver. Kyle Okposo was very angry saying that they spent a lot of time in the morning talking about how they must play in the second period and they did the exact opposite. He called the second period effort, "gross". Robin Lehner said the way they play is disrespectful to the coaches and disrespectful to the game. Jack Eichel was one of the players that took part in Monday's optional skate. He said, "We've got to stop blaming each other or blaming whatever we're blaming it on and just come to the rink every day and enjoy the fact that we play in the NHL."

Eichel is very hard on himself after losses and is one of the few that shows anger and emotion after bad games. He said, "For me I'm more than past getting worked up about it, I mean I'm not going to change last night's outcome with my attitude today, so there's nothing I can do except come to the rink today and try to get better at the things I need to get better at and bring a positive attitude."

"If you aren't happy with where you are, change it and make a difference."

As I try to figure out what's wrong with this team I sometimes wonder if they're afraid to make a mistake because they'll get yelled at. Eichel said, "To be honest with you no I'm not. Maybe that's one of the downfalls, even looking at a game like Toronto, we get up 3-0 and it seems like we just sit back and we're almost afraid to push against them and try to score the fourth goal. We're too nervous to play in the offensive zone and make passes and we're just sitting back and letting them come at us."

Eichel is only 20, but he knows what is expected from him and he has no problem with that, "For me whether it's minute one or minute 60, I'm going to play the same exact way." Eichel added, "We're all in the NHL for a reason and we all built our identity at a younger age and we're here because we do something very well, so whatever that is, we try to bring it to the rink every day."

"I'm a guy that needs to produce, I need to play a 200 foot game and I need to make a difference for this team, whether it's in the defensive zone or setting somebody up to score a goal, that's what I'm looked at for. I'm a creative player, I take risks to try to make plays and that's how I've always been, but there are areas of my game I need to clean up. I need to get better in my own zone, I have to be more responsible."

Eichel is never satisfied unless he's the best. He strives for that in his play and takes a back seat to no one. Eichel said, "I can't look at somebody else to try to make themselves better if I'm not trying to make myself better."

A win over Vancouver would've pulled the Sabres to within three points of a playoff spot. That's amazing since they went 0-2 against a team like Vancouver and never could beat Boston or Carolina. A team they have had success against is next on Tuesday in Ottawa.

Sabres know style they must showcase

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
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BUFFALO – To witness the Sabres' blueprint for success, go back to the first 20 minutes of Saturday's 3-1 win in Toronto, a period in which they jumped out to a 3-0 lead by playing fast and hard against the Maple Leafs.

"If you look at the first period in Toronto, we didn't do anything special," Sabres goalie Robin Lehner said Monday inside KeyBank Center.

The Sabres dictated the pace by pouncing on loose pucks. Their shifts were short.

Everyone, defenseman Josh Gorges said, rolled over and kept doing the same thing.

"When you do that, you put the other team back on their heels, you get some momentum, you start feeling good and you just kind of go wave after wave," he said after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road tilt against the Ottawa Senators.

That first period proved the Sabres can execute coach Dan Bylsma's system.

The excitement over that win, of course, was short-lived. The Sabres looked downright awful at times in Sunday's 4-2 home loss to Vancouver.

"Part of the frustration is we have a group of guys that can do it," Sabres captain Brian Gionta said. "We show we can do it. We know we can do it. It's just doing it day in and day out."

Following the troubling setback, Lehner passionately called out his teammates for their inability to follow the game plan, which he believes is "disrespectful" to the coaches.

Lehner said Monday he directed the comments at everyone, including himself, not specific players. But he didn't back off them.

"You got to learn to do your job and not do too much," Lehner said. "Sometimes you want to do too much and it hurts you. It's the same with my game. ... We just got to start sharing the workload, sharing the structure out there and it's going to be fine. ..."

"When we talk about certain things and we go over certain things and we end up not doing it, I don't think it's something any of us accept. We're tired of coming to the rink after a good game and just (throwing) it away."

The Sabres, who rank seventh in the Atlantic Division, blew an opportunity to creep within three points of a playoff spot. They've teased throughout the season, earning some impressive victories against strong opponents.

But they haven't won more than three straight games. They stumble whenever they have an opportunity to charge up the standings.

"In pretty much every one of those situations we haven't risen to the occasion," Bylsma said.

Still, players say the Sabres possess enough talent to make the playoffs.

"I still believe this group is a playoff team," Gorges said. "We've played against the top teams in the league and we always play well. There's lot of hockey left to be played."

To make the playoffs – sportclubstats.com gives them just a 4.8 percent chance – the Sabres have to play like they did early Saturday over the final 26 games.

"We want to be a fast-paced, in-your-face kind of team, and that's getting into that offensive zone and being able to grind teams and tire them out," Gionta said. "It may not happen in the first period, but by the end of the second, the third, that's when you start to take over."

Lehner believes successful NHL teams start by grinding and doing the small things right.

"Then it opens up," he said. "The skills comes out, the speed comes out and all these other things click. It doesn't work the other way around. When you try to do maybe the skill things first, the other teams pick you apart. Their structure will pick you apart."

If the Sabres can play with structure, what makes them get away from it?

"Largely the desire to do too much," Bylsma said. "Sometimes the natural inclination is to try do everything you can when you touch the puck or you're on the ice and do too much. That's kind of when we get off our game."

Gorges said: "Until we decide as a group we're going to play a certain way ... and we're all going to play the same way, that's when we'll have continued success. After a loss, we knew the magnitude of the game (Sunday), the position we're in, guys are going to be upset, and rightfully so. I think that shows that guys care."

"I don't think that anyone is sitting in the room pointing fingers at the next guy saying, 'It's your fault, not mine.' ... The only way to get better and to move ahead is for all of us to buy in."

Sabres' Jack Eichel: 'We got to stop blaming each other'

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
February 13, 2017

BUFFALO – No teammate, Sabres goalie Robin Lehner said, was singled out during his passionate postgame chat following Sunday's disappointing 4-2 loss to Vancouver.

"We all, starting with myself, got to take more responsibility," Lehner said Monday inside KeyBank Center. "It's not certain lines, it's not certain people."

Still, some of Lehner's words Sunday – "Let's do another deke, let's do another play ... let's do the fancy thing," he said – seemed to be directed toward the team's talented youngsters, perhaps center Jack Eichel, whose miscue around his own net led to a Canucks goal.

Not so, Lehner said.

"People can assume whatever they want," he said Monday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road contest against the Ottawa Senators. "It's not what I said (Sunday). I didn't name anyone. ... It's about all of us as a team. It's about doing the small things. It's about me making an extra save.

"It's about Jack is our best player, end of story. When he's going, we're all going. When he's not going, we got to have other guys going."

Eichel, it appears, heard Lehner's comments after the Sabres' sixth loss in nine outings.

"We got to stop blaming each other, blaming whatever we're blaming," Eichel said. "Just come to the rink everyday and enjoy the fact that you play in the NHL. For me, I think I'm more than past getting worked up about it. I'm not going to change (Sunday's) outcome with my attitude today."

He added: "If you're not happy with who you are, change it, go make a difference. I think that's it."

Is there finger-pointing among the Sabres?

"It's not finger-pointing," Eichel said. "It's maybe we're looking at some outside things that are the reason we're not getting the result we want. At the end of the day, we're the guys that go on the ice every night and play the game. We win as a team, we lose as a team. I think that's important for all of us to get in our mindset."

Sabres coach Dan Bylsma and captain Brian Gionta said they had no problem with a player speaking up.

Clearly, frustration boiled over Sunday for the wildly inconsistent Sabres, who could've crept within three points of a playoff spot with a victory after Saturday's 3-1 win in Toronto.

Lehner said Sunday the Sabres' inability to follow the game plan was "disrespectful" to the coaches.

Based on comments Monday and throughout the season, some players appear frustrated by the team's style and the constraints it puts on them. They want to play more aggressively.

So how does Bylsma balance having a system and allowing his best players to showcase their talents?

"That's the challenge," he said. "If you want to play a team game, you can't get off the page, you can't have the inclination to do it all yourself."

Eichel, 20, said the Sabres seemed to sit back after going up 3-0 early Saturday.

"We're almost afraid to push against them and try to score the fourth goal," he said. "We're almost too nervous to play in the offensive zone, make passes. We're just sitting back and letting them come back."

Eichel, of course, is one of the NHL's most talented players, perhaps a future superstar. He doesn't want to change his style much now.

"Whether it's minute one or minute 60, I'm going to play the same exact way," Eichel said. "I ... just try to stick to the same routine every and same game plan. We're all in the NHL for a reason. We built our identity at a younger age. We do something very well, and that's why we play in the NHL.

"Whatever that is, just try to bring that to the rink everyday, and for me – I don't want to speak for anyone else – I'm a guy that needs to produce offensively. I need to play a 200-foot game, whether it's in our own zone or setting someone up for scoring a goal. That's (what) I'm looked at for. I'm a creative player. I take risks trying to make plays, and that's how I've always been."

Eichel said "there's definitely areas of my game I need to clean up."

"It's a work in progress with our whole team, and I'm the same way," he said. "I can't look at someone else to try to make themselves better if I'm not trying to make myself better."

Vancouver went up 2-1 after Eichel tried to stickhandle through traffic beside his net. He accepted blame for the poor decision.

"Not a time to make that play or even try that play," Bylsma said. "Even if you make that play, (it) doesn't mean it's a good one. That's a little bit of the balance when you're talking about puck management and executing and having the freedom with the puck."

Lehner rips Sabres after loss to Canucks

By Jason Brough

NBC Sports

February 13, 2017

Robin Lehner, true to form, had some strong words for his Buffalo Sabres teammates following Sunday's 4-2 loss to the Canucks at KeyBank Center.

"It's not even disappointing anymore, it's starting to get ... I'm starting to get angry," Lehner said, per the Sabres' website. "This is all talk. We've got to look ourselves in the mirror here."

It was an eventful game for Lehner, who allowed four goals on 31 shots and got into an altercation with Vancouver's Alex Burrows.

"I was kind of backing up in a defensive position, asking what he was doing," Burrows explained afterwards. "He looked pretty angry; he's a big man."

Anger has been kind of a common theme for Lehner, who refuses to apologize for his fiery disposition. With a .923 save percentage, he certainly doesn't need to apologize for his play.

The Sabres as a team, on the other hand, have been woefully inconsistent. In the last week alone, they've followed a great comeback victory over the Sharks with a dismal effort against the Ducks. Then, after going into Toronto and getting a big win over the Maple Leafs, they laid an egg against the Canucks.

Lehner called the Sabres' performance "disrespectful" to the game plan that head coach Dan Bylsma has put together.

"The good teams out there, they do the same thing over and over again, and when things happen... they fall back on the structure," said Lehner. "The structure bails them out. And we have a structure, but we don't play it."

The Sabres are in Ottawa to take on the Senators tomorrow.

Former goalie Lehner coming back to haunt Senators

By Don Brennan

Ottawa Sun

February 13, 2017

OTTAWA — Buffalo Sabres goalie Robin (The) Lehner still has a couple of homes in Canada's capital.

There's the one that remains up for sale, which he bought off Daniel Alfredsson a few years back, plus the quaint little spot he lives when facing his old teammates.

It's just off the beaten path, on Psyched Blvd.

Unit number 40.

"Oh yeah, absolutely," Bobby Ryan said on Monday when asked if a goalie really can get in the heads of opposing shooters. "For me, anyway."

Most Senators must think Lehner is the very best netminder in the NHL. Ever.

Since Bryan Murray traded him, while also managing to dump the heavy contract of David Legwand, the 25-year-old Swede has made Ottawa pay.

In 355:14 of action against the organization that took him in the second round of the 2009 entry draft, Lehner has stopped 172-of-179 shots to compile a sizzling 1.18 goals against average and a spectacular .961 save percentage.

His 3-0-2 record would probably be even better had he not left two of the games with injuries, and had he received a little more run support.

The saving grace of that June 26, 2015, transaction for the Senators is they used the first-round pick (21st overall) they received in return to draft Colin White, who has been hyped as the second coming of Patrice Bergeron.

Of the seven goals Ottawa has in seven games against Lehner, Mike Hoffman and Ryan Dzingel each are responsible for a pair, while Ryan, Kyle Turris and Erik Karlsson have scored the others.

Ryan has also added two game-winning shootout goals against Lehner.

"He has absolutely robbed me on a couple of chances when I was like, 'these are going in', and he comes out of nowhere," Ryan said. "He's big and athletic, and he's finding a way to get to pucks.

"I went five-hole in the shootout on him (last season), I remember that," added Ryan, before laughing. "I put him in the other corner this year. It was a good move."

Dzingel does not profess to have Lehner's number by any means, but he does think he uses what he has to his advantage.

"When I come in with speed, I feel like he's back in his net more than a lot of goalies," Dzingel said. "I don't know if that's true, it's just kind of worked that way the couple of times I've scored on him.

"He's a really good goalie, and I think he gets up to play against us because it's his 'ex' team. I'm sure anybody would do that."

Guy Boucher also figures Lehner is "extremely motivated" to take on his "buddies" in Ottawa.

"He might have left some voodoo dolls in the back lockers there ... we've got to find them and get those pins out of them," joked the Senators coach, before moving to what he called a "mind-boggling" issue. "All I know is we

have not been our best against Buffalo. We've won one game out of six, if you include the exhibition games against them.

"So we're going to spend the entire day looking, and making sure we're very specific about what we need to do (Tuesday night). All I know is we've got to do better against them. That's clear."

Just as clear is the frustration Lehner has been experiencing of late with Sabres, who have given up an average of 39 shots per game over his last nine starts. It boiled over following Sunday's 4-2 loss to the Vancouver Canucks that left Buffalo five points back of Toronto for the final wildcard spot.

"We make two plays, score two goals and that's about it," Lehner told reporters. "It's not even disappointing anymore. I'm starting to get angry."

The Senators will attempt to throw some fuel on that fire that is burning inside Sabres jersey No. 40.

"He's really comfortable playing against us," said Ryan. "We've got to make him uncomfortable. That's about us getting to the net and getting in front of him, maybe talking to him a little bit, getting in his head. That's all you can do, try to get him off his game. Gotta try to talk to him."

Whether they are answered merely by the famous Lehner Stare, or a whole lot more, will be determined by how the night is going.

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ROBIN'S REVENGE

How Sabres goalie Robin Lehner has fared in seven games against his former team:

OCT 8, 2015 (in Buffalo)

Senators 3, Sabres 1*

Faced 12 shots. Allowed one goal (Kyle Turris)

*Lehner played 27:30 before leaving with a high ankle sprain after dropping to stop a Mark Stone shot.

JAN. 26, 2016 (in Ottawa)

Sabres 3, Senators 2

Faced 36 shots. Allowed two goals (Erik Karlsson, Bobby Ryan).

FEB. 16, 2016 (in Ottawa)

Senators 2, Sabres 1 (SO)

Faced 26 shots. Allowed one goal (Ryan Dzingel) before losing in shootout (Ryan).

NOV. 5, 2016 (in Ottawa)

Sabres 2, Senators 1

Faced 33 shots. Allowed one goal (Mike Hoffman).

NOV. 9, 2016 (in Buffalo)

Senators 2, Sabres 1 (SO)

Faced 29 shots. Allowed one goal (Dzingel) before losing in shootout (Ryan).

NOV. 29, 2016 (in Ottawa)

Sabres 5, Senators 4*

Faced six shots. Allowed one goal (Hoffman).

*Lehner played 17:48 before leaving with a hip injury.

FEB. 4, 2017 (in Buffalo)

Sabres 4, Senators 0

Faced 37 shots, including 13 in the second period and 16 in the third, while becoming the first ex-Senator to post a shutout against his old friends in Ottawa.