



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 18, 2017*

## Sabres' Girgensons seizing chance at expanded role

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 17, 2017

If the Sabres score a goal for every time they say "fresh start," the franchise record will be set by November. But for Zemgus Girgensons, it's clear those words really mean something.

No player had a bigger drop-off during the Dan Bylsma era than Girgensons. He went from a top-four point-producer to an offensive afterthought.

When new Buffalo coach Phil Housley filled out his training-camp lineups, he put Girgensons alongside center Ryan O'Reilly and right wing Kyle Okposo. Couple that enviable spot with the fact General Manager Jason Botterill protected Girgensons in the expansion draft, and it's easy to assume the new regime believes in the 23-year-old.

"I'm seeing some great things out there," Housley said Sunday. "I like what I've seen from that line. They've really set the bar.

"They're doing everything right in the practices."

Back in 2014-15 when Ted Nolan was Buffalo's coach, fans voted Girgensons to the NHL All-Star Game. He had 15 goals and 30 points in 61 games while skating 19:04 per night. The future seemed bright.

It quickly dimmed when the Sabres changed coaches. With Bylsma at the helm, Girgensons skated 14:04 per game and totaled 14 goals and 34 points in 146 outings.

Clearly, he's excited by this summer's overhaul.

"It's new coaches, new management, so I think it's fresh start for everyone," Girgensons said in HarborCenter. "You can't come in thinking that you have a spot. You have to prove it in the practice, off the ice, so I think it's good for everyone."

Girgensons is getting the first shot at a spot that's definitely available. Evander Kane is the No. 1 left winger. After that, it's a competition among Girgensons, Benoit Pouliot, Matt Moulson, Seth Griffith and C.J. Smith.

Girgensons is seizing his chance. His shift-by-shift determination has been intense through his physical play and getting to the net. There's a clear difference from the past two seasons.

"It's like he's confident or something," O'Reilly said. "It's just his excitement. Playing on a line right now with him, it's awesome. Every play you know you're getting 110 percent. He competes on everything.

"Maybe with the new look, new staff, he's got this excitement in his game that he's just feeding off. Okie and I love playing with him with the way he competes and is moving his feet out there. He's winning every battle, and it makes our job so much easier."

Girgensons admits there's a jump in everyone's practice intensity.

"When you're on the ice, you can feel the guys going 100 mph," he said. "You didn't see that the last two years. I think every single player is going to improve, and we're going to do big things."

Drafted in the first round by Buffalo in 2014, Girgensons' spot in the organization seemed tenuous heading into June's expansion draft. He was a restricted free agent coming off two bad years.

But Botterill included him on the seven-forward protected list, then signed Girgensons to a two-year, \$3.2 million contract in August.

"I've been in Buffalo for a decent amount of time, and I love it here," Girgensons said. "I'd love to stay here as long as I can."

He'd love to stay alongside O'Reilly and Okposo, too.

"I don't think anyone on the team would complain about playing with those two guys," Girgensons said. "They're top guys, and to get the opportunity to play there is nice. I think I've done a pretty good job so far."

While the practices have been impressive, this will be a big week. The Sabres play four of their six exhibition games. They host Carolina at 7 p.m. Monday in KeyBank Center, then meet Pittsburgh on Tuesday at Penn State. They visit Toronto on Friday and host the Maple Leafs on Saturday.

If Girgensons retains his determination, it could clear up the question of who starts the season second to Kane on the depth chart.

"Everyone is working," Girgensons said. "There's no messing around, and that's how it should be."

## **Sabres Notebook: Buffalo to split into game, scrimmage groups; Scandella sits**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 17, 2017

One way or another, all of the Sabres will get a taste of game action Monday.

After just three days of training camp, Buffalo will open its exhibition schedule. The Sabres will welcome the Carolina Hurricanes to Key Bank Center at 7 p.m. (WGR-AM 550). Tickets range from \$22 to \$45, though they were at low as \$6 on StubHub.com.

Coach Phil Housley didn't announce his lineup, but he did say Sunday he may transfer an entire practice group to the game.

"I like that they've practiced together, so they've got a little camaraderie and consistency with their linemates," Housley said in HarborCenter.

One group Sunday included veterans Ryan O'Reilly, Kyle Okposo, Sam Reinhart and Rasmus Ristolainen. The second group featured Jack Eichel, Evander Kane, Jason Pominville, Nathan Beaulieu and Zach Bogosian.

While 20 players will prepare for the Hurricanes, the remaining 47 will get ready for each other.

The players not skating in the game will practice from 9:15-9:45 a.m. in HarborCenter, then scrimmage from 9:50-10:30 a.m. The intrasquad game will be streamed live on Sabres.com.

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The Sabres had one notable absence Sunday: Marco Scandella. The defenseman, who had arthroscopic surgery on his left hip in May, took a maintenance day.

"He's a little sore, so it's no sense in rushing him back to play," said Housley, who liked Scandella's effort Saturday. "He really went after it, just testing it out."

The Sabres' opening practices have been high-tempo, skate-heavy affairs. While Scandella is expected to be recovered by the season opener Oct. 5, Housley saw no reason to push the defenseman early.

"You've got to think he hasn't a full summer of training, so we're really being cautious with it," Housley said. "It's one of those things where you're stepping in, trying to catch a moving train, so we're just going to make sure in his progression it's the right state of mind for him every day."

## **Reading between the Sabres' lines as forwards start quickly at camp**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 16, 2017

Lindy Ruff probably would have split up The French Connection after a few bad periods. Dan Bylsma might never have even put Gilbert Perreault, Rick Martin and Rene Robert together.

It remains to be seen how Phil Housley juggles and assembles his forward lines, but the Sabres' new coach is off to an intriguing start.

"We're trying to get our guys used to some sort of lines, but I'm sure there's going to be changes," Housley said in HarborCenter. "Hopefully, we can find a combination or two that works and give them the best opportunity to succeed."

During the opening two days of training camp, Buffalo essentially stuck with the same forward units. Here's a line-by-line look at what Housley has put together so far.

### **\* Evander Kane-Jack Eichel-Jason Pominville**

Eichel and Kane are the Sabres' most prolific scorers. Their speed and size can make defenders quake.

Bylsma hesitated to put them together because both like to carry the puck. Housley hopes to spend more time in the offensive zone, so fewer breakouts would mean less jockeying for the puck at center ice. Eichel should do the majority of the lugging anyhow. He's one of the most effective in the NHL at carrying the puck across the blue line. Kane has a tendency to loft a shot at the goaltender as soon as he crosses the line, stopping play. When the puck keeps moving, he's the Sabres' top sniper.

Pominville is clearly the responsible player on the unit. When Eichel and Kane freewheel, they'll be confident Pominville is in the right spot for one-timers. He also brings a defensive presence.

### **\* Zemgus Girgensons-Ryan O'Reilly-Kyle Okposo**

Girgensons couldn't have asked for a better opportunity to show what he can do. He seems to realize it. He's been driving the net hard, including a big-time hit Saturday on defenseman Taylor Fedun.

Girgensons has been an offensive disappointment the last two seasons (14 goals and 20 assists in 146 games), but the 23-year-old is getting an early chance to shine.

O'Reilly and Okposo were linemates last year and work well together.

### **\* Benoit Pouliot-Sam Reinhart-Stevie Moses**

One of the big questions in training camp is whether Reinhart will [remain in the middle](#). He has the smarts to contribute at both ends.

Pouliot is a bonafide finisher with a career shooting percentage of 13.2 percent. Reinhart might be the Sabres' best passer, so the combo makes sense.

The placement of Moses is a surprise because he's on an American Hockey League contract with Rochester. He was a scorer in the Kontinental Hockey League during the last three seasons. If it translates to the preseason, he could earn an NHL deal.

**\* Matt Moulson-Johan Larsson-Hudson Fasching**

Three of the Sabres' top prospects play right wing – Fasching, Justin Bailey and Nick Baptiste – so it bodes well for Fasching that he's the one skating with established NHLers. Fasching made the Sabres' opening-night roster last season before a groin injury derailed his rookie year.

Larsson's season ended Dec. 31 after he dislocated his elbow and wrist. He was making strides as a two-way center, and this is a solid spot to show the new regime he can defend.

Moulson was used almost exclusively on the power play last year, and he responded by scoring 11 of his 14 goals with the man-advantage. It'll be interesting to see how much five-on-five time he gets under Housley.

**\* Seth Griffith-Jacob Josefson-Nick Baptiste**

All three have hopes of making the Sabres. If not, this could be the Amerks' top line.

Baptiste had his moments during the Sabres' Prospects Challenge, but he didn't dominate. He has speed and a knack for scoring, but he'll have to show it.

Josefson has been a fourth-line regular for New Jersey during the last seven years, putting up 18 goals and 60 points in 276 games. He hasn't played in the AHL since 2012-13, but he recorded 10 goals and 25 points in 38 games with Albany.

The 24-year-old Griffith flip-flopped between Toronto and Florida last season. He had no goals and five assists in 24 NHL games, but he was a minor-league star with 10 goals and 44 points in 38 games for the Toronto Marlies.

**\* Nicolas Deslauriers-Kevin Porter-Justin Bailey**

Bailey was the best forward during the Prospects Challenge. There's room in Buffalo for two right wingers if Reinhart stays at center, and Bailey will challenge for a spot.

Although fighting is heading toward extinction, there are times it's a necessity. The Sabres don't have many guys who can drop the gloves. Deslauriers' pugilistic prowess gives him a shot at being the 13th forward who dresses against tough teams.

Porter is back for his second go-round with the Sabres' organization. It wouldn't be a surprise if he was the Amerks' captain again.

**\* C.J. Smith-Evan Rodrigues-Cliff Pu**

Rodrigues played 30 games with the Sabres after Larsson went down. His contract is a two-way deal, allowing the team to pay him less in Rochester, so the 24-year-old could go to the Amerks for more seasoning as a go-to guy.

Smith joined the Sabres out of college at the end of last season and played twice. He's expected to get needed time in the minors.

Pu was another standout during the Prospects Challenge. As a 19-year-old, his only options are Buffalo or London of the Ontario Hockey League. He'll start his pro career in 2018-19.

**\* Vaclav Karabacek-Kyle Criscuolo-Eric Cornel**

Criscuolo signed a two-year, two-way deal after an impressive start to his pro career. The Harvard product had 17 goals and 41 points in 76 games for Detroit's minor-league team, then added five goals and nine points in 19 playoff games.

Cornel, a second-round pick in 2014, had five goals and 14 points in 67 games for the Amerks as a rookie. Karabacek is also a second-year pro. He had three goals and eight points in 23 games with Rochester.

The forwards will certainly move around throughout camp and the regular season, but Housley likes how they've started.

"They've been really bringing a lot of energy and enthusiasm," the coach said Saturday. "That's what we asked of them as an expectation heading into camp. I think they're having fun out there. It's a new style of game that I think they're going to enjoy."

## **Sabres Notebook: Pouliot sees potential for growth; Antipin a quick study**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 16, 2017

Benoit Pouliot has seen a team rise from the depths. The Edmonton Oilers were a laughingstock in 2014. They were a goal away from reaching the Western Conference final last season.

Pouliot sees no reason why the Sabres can't do the same thing.

"In Edmonton when I got there, I think it was the worst year I've ever had playing in the NHL," the left winger said Saturday. "We were so down. The coach got fired during the year, and things weren't going well.

"But we had so many good draft picks. We had so many young guys coming up and learning experience. I think the situation here is the same."

Pouliot quickly pointed out how Jack Eichel can make an impact like Connor McDavid. He likened Sam Reinhart to Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

Essentially, Pouliot is a believer in Buffalo.

"Things can turn around quickly, especially when you get new management, new coaches and everything," he said in HarborCenter.

Pouliot joined the Sabres on July 1, signing a one-year deal after the Oilers bought him out. The 30-year-old was perennially in the 15-goal, 35-point range, but he struggled with just eight goals and 14 points in 67 games last year.

The Sabres hope they got a bargain at \$1.15 million.

"Last year was a tough year personally," Pouliot said. "It was my worst one ever. It was a frustrating year, long year. The only good thing is we went pretty far in the playoffs and it was a good jump for the team.

"My role is the same as I used to play, create the speed, push their D back, (make them) turn the puck over. The young guys are going to stickhandle. For me, it's just turning the puck over, go in front of the net and create some chances."

Pouliot spent the first two days of training camp with Reinhart as his center and former Kontinental Hockey League scorer Stevie Moses on the right wing. As someone who used to have McDavid and Nugent-Hopkins as his centers, Pouliot has been impressed with Reinhart.

"He's very intelligent with the puck," Pouliot said. "That's nice when you get a chance to play with a guy like that because it makes your game a little easier. You just put yourself in a good position and he's going to get it back to you or put some pressure on their D for me and then he'll make the play."

Pouliot sees the potential. He hopes it translates when the puck drops for real next month.

"The past few years haven't been very good here," Pouliot said. "It was the same situation as I was in Edmonton when I first signed there, and things got better every year that I was there. It's just fun to see the turnaround. It's fun to see how guys can pick it up and have a good year and at least make the playoffs."

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Victor Antipin is quickly gaining a reputation as a studious guy. That's good because he has little choice.

No Buffalo player is experiencing more of a culture change than Antipin. The defenseman from Kazakhstan arrived with almost no knowledge of English. Having played his entire career in his Russia, he's adjusting to a smaller rink and completely different style of play.

Needless to say, it's a lot. The 24-year-old is handling it better than could be expected.

"He's a student of the game," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He really absorbs a lot, likes to watch a lot of video trying to understand our concepts. He's like a sponge, and it's great to see."

On the ice, Antipin (pronounced "an-TEE-pihn") has formed a bond with assistant coach Chris Hajt. Off it, he's leaning on forward Vasily Glotov, who is from Russia, and Chris Bandura, the Sabres' vice president of media relations. They've helped him learn English and get ready for interviews.

"He wants to learn," Glotov said. "He wants to be better. He wants to be in the NHL full time. That's his goal, and if you want to be here you have to have better communication. He's working on it."

Glotov is impressed that Antipin doesn't want to use a translator for his talks. The defenseman wants to dive in and swim on his own, which he did after Saturday's workout.

"My English is not good, but I learn every day," said Antipin, who added a similar thought on the adjustment to North American rinks. "In the NHL, it's more fast, more quick. I think yes, it's different, but every day I feel better and better."

During the opening two days of training camp, Antipin was paired with Justin Falk, a stay-at-home defender. It's a nice complement since Antipin has skating ability and a mind for offense. During last year's Kontinental Hockey League playoffs, he had seven goals and 11 points in 18 games.

Once he settles in, he should be a solid fit for Housley's brand of hockey. In fact, during Antipin's studies, he looked up Housley.

"He was a very good player," Antipin said. "He played like me. I like to play this hockey."

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The Sabres are using the two-rink pad at HarborCenter to their advantage. They are skating for 45 minutes on the auxiliary rink before immediately moving to the main rink for another 45 minutes.

The sessions Sunday, which are open to the public, are scheduled to start at 9:45 a.m. on the side rink. The Sabres will complete their final workout by 1:15 p.m. on the main ice surface.

"It's an advantage that we have over other teams," Housley said. "We get to utilize our resources here at the HarborCenter. I just like it. The execution's much better. The puck sits flatter. Guys look faster, and they are faster because of the fresh ice. We're going to utilize that a lot this year."

## **Sabres' blue-liners embrace theory that best defense is a good offense**

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 15, 2017

Before the Sabres took the ice, they got together on the golf course. There was a long-drive contest, and Phil Housley was interested to see who bombed the ball longest.

Once he learned it was Marco Scandella, the coach broke into a big grin.

"It was good to see a D-man hit the long drive," the former defenseman said.

The blue-liners have to keep soaring for Buffalo to end its six-year playoff drought.

The Sabres' defensive additions were the talk of the offseason, and they finally paired up Friday as the team started training camp. Buffalo's depth was immeasurably better than the past few years.

No. 1 defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen started with prized rookie Brendan Guhle. Marco Scandella skated with Zach Bogosian. Nathan Beaulieu worked alongside free-agent signee Matt Tennyson. Jake McCabe joined Taylor Fedun. Justin Falk skated with Russian import Victor Antipin. Throw in Josh Gorges, Casey Nelson and Cody Goloubef, and the Sabres had plenty of experience and mobility at their disposal.

"This team has a lot of talent," Scandella said in HarborCenter. "Now it's up to us to make it happen."

Scandella was the marquee addition during the summer. Acquired from Minnesota along with right wing Jason Pominville, the 27-year-old is expected to blossom into a top-pair defender.

"Coming to a new team, it feels like my first year again," the eighth-year pro said. "Just the hunger to get out there and be the best.

"I just want to show what I can do on the ice and work my way into the role that I earn."

It wouldn't be a surprise to see Scandella skating with Ristolainen by the time camp ends. Both have offensive flair combined with stay-at-home ability and a nasty streak. It could be the long-sought top pairing Buffalo needs to shut down opponents.

Having reliable second and third pairs is just as important. Ristolainen has started at an All-Star pace the past two seasons, but an avalanche of minutes wore him down. On paper, the Sabres finally have the pieces to give Ristolainen a break.

"It takes a lot of pressure off Risto, for sure," McCabe said. "A guy playing 27, 28 minutes a night, it's hard on your body. I know he would never say he wants to play less because he wants to be out there every shift just because of the competitor he is, but to have that depth on the back end is huge."

To a man, the defenders are excited to have Housley at the helm. They know how much success Nashville had with him coaching them to be aggressive. They've seen this year's game plan, and they relish the thought of rivaling the Predators' back end of P.K. Subban, Roman Josi and Ryan Ellis.

"They played with the puck a lot, so I hated to play against them because we really didn't have the puck," Ristolainen said. "We talked about the system, and it sounds great. I like to play offense. I like to skate. I like to jump in the play, so it's going to be good."

Skating ability will be imperative for the Sabres' defense corps. Once a blue-liner makes a pass from his own zone, he'll be expected to turn on the jets and join the play. Sometimes, he'll get in position to shoot. On other occasions, he'll be expected to hold the blue line and prevent the puck from getting back out.

Either way, lollygagging will be unacceptable.

"Once you make that first pass, you're making those three hard strides to get up the ice," McCabe said. "We have to get a better habit of taking those three hard strides."

"You watch Nashville last year and it was the D driving the offense, and us defensemen were kind of watching that. That alone was fun to watch. We want to play that style."

## Sabres Notebook: O'Reilly sounds like a captain; injured Nylander is 'week-to-week'

By John Vogl

The Buffalo News

September 15, 2017

Ryan O'Reilly knows the Sabres' captaincy is available. While he says it would be an honor to wear the "C," he's not going to campaign for it.

As usual, his words suggest he's a top candidate.

The Sabres struggled with communication last season, and O'Reilly is determined to change that.

"Leadership is a big part, hold everyone accountable, myself being accountable more," O'Reilly said Friday in HarborCenter. "It's all of us together, and speak up when things don't work.

"As a group we have to have more dialogue between each other and also with the coaching staff, too. As a group we have to go to them and say, 'OK, we're struggling with this. We need to change and do this.' We have to be confident doing it.

"I think me and a few other guys will take control on that."

O'Reilly was hard on himself [during last season's farewell address](#), saying he wasn't the vocal leader he needed to be. It's clear the 26-year-old wants to take steps to change that.

"Also, too, my own play," said O'Reilly, who had 20 goals and 55 points last season. "I've got to create more. I have to be a little more consistent getting on the board. It's going to start with myself."

New General Manager Jason Botterill and coach Phil Housley say they're in no hurry to name a captain. They'll get a feel during training camp for how guys lead on the ice and in the dressing room.

O'Reilly took a clear first step.

"The mindset of a lot of guys is we're moving in the right direction," the center said. "Whether they do (name a captain) or not, it doesn't really affect us. We made our changes, and we know what we need to do now. I think it's going to be a lot better either way.

"It would be an honor. Obviously, you look at the guys that have worn it in the past in this organization, obviously it's something very special. Letter or not, the stuff that needed to change I think has. That's what we want."

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There's a prime spot at left wing for the Sabres, and Alex Nylander was eager to prove he deserved it.

He'll have to wait.

Nylander suffered a lower-body injury during the Sabres' Prospects Challenge last week, and Housley said Friday that Nylander is "week-to-week." That's a downgrade from Monday when General Manager Jason Botterill seemed hopeful Nylander would be ready for the start of training camp.

"It's unfortunate," Housley said. "He'll be assessed. Guarding on the side of caution because it's so early in the season."

The Sabres selected Nylander with the No. 8 overall pick in the 2016 NHL Draft. He had two drawbacks during his rookie season last year – a lack of size and inconsistent play – but he entered the prospect tournament looking noticeably bigger. He played in just one game, then missed the final two because of the injury.

Center Sean Malone missed the entire Prospects Challenge because of injury, and he was absent when Buffalo took the ice for the first time.

"That's another week-to-week decision," Housley said. "He's responding well now. He's starting to do exercises, so he's close to getting back on the ice."

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Sam Reinhart is no stranger to shifting from right wing to center. He was in the middle Friday and excited about it.

He is also aware he could be a right winger before camp is over.

"I've spent my whole career back and forth. I've been ready for it," Reinhart said. "Like I've said in the past, I'm ready for every challenge thrown at me."

Reinhart centered for left wing Benoit Pouliot and right wing Stevie Moses, who spent the last three seasons in Russia.

"There's a long way to go before the season starts," Reinhart said. "I'm going to let my play do the talking for me. I'm going to try and earn every opportunity that I get."

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The Sabres will play six preseason games. Fans can hear them all and watch three.

Buffalo announced that all of its exhibition games will be carried on WGR-AM 550. The final three games will also be shown on MSG.

Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray will serve as the announcers for the opening four games, and Rick Jeanneret will join Ray for the final two.

The Sabres start their preseason at 7 p.m. Monday when the Carolina Hurricanes visit KeyBank Center. The Sabres and Pittsburgh Penguins will meet at Penn State at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Buffalo will visit Toronto at 7:30 p.m. Friday. The Maple Leafs will come to KeyBank Center at 7 p.m. next Saturday. That MSG game will be a simulcast of the Leafs' Sportsnet broadcast.

The Sabres will visit Pittsburgh at 7 p.m. Sept. 27 and will close the exhibition schedule at home against the New York Islanders at 7 p.m. Sept. 29.

## **Sabres' Pouliot wants to improve on a bad season**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 17, 2017

**Buffalo, NY (WGR 550)**- Benoit Pouliot has had a lot of first days with teams around the NHL. The winger has played with Minnesota, Montreal, Boston, Tampa Bay, the Rangers and Edmonton.

On Sunday, Pouliot began his third day on the ice as a Buffalo Sabre. He said, "It's been good, everything is new and for most of the guys too with a new coaching staff, so there's things we've got to learn, things we've got to work on and that's what we're doing right now."

Pouliot was on an Oilers team last year that made the playoffs for the first time in years and is on the upswing with Connor McDavid. He only had eight goals and six assists in 67 games and he said the Sabres were attractive to him for many reasons, "The past few years haven't been very good and it's the same situation as I had a few years ago in Edmonton when I first signed there (2014). Things got better and better every year that I was there and I think it's just fun to see the turnaround, it's fun to see the guys have a good year and at least make the playoffs."

"It's also close to home for me (born in Alfred, Ontario), being in the east makes it a lot better too, but just getting a chance to be in Buff because I've heard so many good things about being here. I've talked to guys like Sekera, guys who have been here for a long time and they loved it, so it was an easy thing for me to sign here."

We all know Edmonton has McDavid and Buffalo has Jack Eichel so both teams have their franchise player. Pouliot said, "The first year I got there, I think it was the worst year I ever had playing in the NHL. We were so down, the coach got fired during the year and things weren't going well, but we had so many good draft picks and had so many young guys coming up and learning and I think the situation here is the same. You've got a great player here in Eichel coming up, just like Connor did and things can turnaround quickly."

Pouliot has been playing left wing in camp with Sam Reinhart at center and Stevie Moses on the right. Pouliot has liked his first experience with Reinhart, "He's a very, very good player. He's got some quick hands, he's very intelligent with the puck, so that's nice. It's makes the game a little easier. Just put yourself in a good position and he's going to get it back to you or put some pressure on their D for me and he'll make the play."

"I was in the same situation in Edmonton when playing with Nugent-Hopkins or Eberle, they're the guys that are going to make the play, but you need that guy that's going to go get it."

The team did a little scrimmaging on Sunday and the pace I saw was the fastest by far that I have ever seen in any training camp so far.

Marco Scandella, Alex Nylander and Sean Malone did not practice on Sunday. Scandella had hip surgery in May and Housley isn't taking any chances, "You've got to think he hasn't had a full summer of training, so we're being cautious with it."

"It's one of those things where you're stepping in trying to catch a moving train, so we're going to make sure in his progression it's the right state of mind for him every day."

### **Group A:**

Girgensons - O'Reilly - Okposo

Pouliot - Reinhart - Moses

Smith - Criscuolo - Bailey

Rodrigues - Pu - Griffith

Guhle - Ristolainen

McCabe - Fedun

Goloubef - Nelson

Osmanski - Stephens

**Group B:**

Kane - Eichel - Pominville

Moulson - Larsson - Fasching

Deslauriers - Porter - Cornel

Hagel - Glotov - Josefson / Baptiste

Beaulieu - Bogosian

Falk - Antipin

Gorges - Tennyson

Budik - Martin

## **O'Reilly ready to step up as leader**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 16, 2017

**Buffalo, NY (WGR 550)** - Ryan O'Reilly comes in ready to be captain if asked and ready to take on more of a leadership role. On Friday and Saturday, O'Reilly and his teammates took to the ice for the first time with new head coach Phil Housley.

O'Reilly is always hard on himself, but the biggest improvement that he wants to see in himself is leading this team. The centermen said, "The leadership is the big part, to hold everybody accountable, hold myself accountable more and to have that mentality coming in."

"I need to speak up when things don't work. As a group, we have to have more dialog between each other and also the coaching staff. As a group, we have to be able to go to them and say, 'OK, we're struggling with this, we need to change, we need to alter something' and we have to be confident doing it. I think me and a couple of other guys really need to take control."

O'Reilly didn't stop there. He also thinks his on-ice must improve too, "My own play, I've got to create more, I've got to be a little more consistent and it's got to start with myself."

"We can't expect someone to come in and make all the difference."

Many have told me that they want O'Reilly to be the Sabres new captain. If asked, number 90 says he's ready, "Absolutely, I think it would be an honor, it's something very special, but letter or not, the stuff that has needed to change has and that's what we want."

"I think when you had the season like we did, a really disappointing one, you know a lot of things are going to happen. People are going to lose jobs, guys are going to get traded and it happened."

Those things are over and O'Reilly thinks they're ready to move forward, "I like our look right now, I think we got a lot of good, new pieces, there's a great feel, there's a lot of excitement with us right now."

Cliff Pu missed Day 2 of training camp for personal reasons.

On defense Brendan Guhle spent the whole day paired with Rasmus Ristolainen. Both Guhle and Ristolainen like to gallop up ice with the play and I was thinking that could be a problem. Phil Housley disagrees, "No, they just have to read off each other. There's going to be one time that a guy is going to be digging a puck out of a corner and the other guy will be free and he'll be able to join the rush. Certainly we don't want to have them both joining the rush, but that's great, I like their offensive instincts, I like the way they passed the puck today, so that's something to look at as we move forward."

Zach Bogosian told me a few weeks ago that he hasn't liked his last two seasons and he'd like to be utilized better. Housley said Bogosian has been noticeable, "He's doing all the right things. He's being a leader out there, he's leading the skates, he's talking to the guys and helping out the younger guys and that's what we want and he's in great shape. You can see him out there, he's explosive and he's enjoying himself and that's what I want the guys to do."

Zemgus Girgensons stayed on the left wing with O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo while Jason Pominville skated with Jack Eichel and Evander Kane.

The team continues camp on Sunday in HarborCenter at 9:45 a.m.

## **Sabres' Scandella is enjoying his new team and city**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

September 15, 2017

**Buffalo, NY (WGR 550)**- Marco Scandella had his first day on the ice as a Buffalo Sabre on Friday. "It was a great first day. The first day of camp is always pretty tough, but you just get the legs going and get to know everybody."

"I think it's just the hunger, coming to a new team, it feels like my first year again."

Scandella came over in the trade from Minnesota with Jason Pominville. Scandella said that always makes things easier, "Yes for sure, I played with him for a bunch of year in Minnesota and he's played here before too, so I'm just asking him a lot of questions like where to live, what restaurants to go to, it just makes me feel a lot more comfortable."

Scandella has also played with Johan Larsson, Matt Moulson, Justin Falk and Benoit Pouliot. He also works out with Nick Deslauriers in Montreal.

Scandella had hip surgery in May. He's able to practice fully, but it doesn't sound like he's at total 100-percent, "I'm just starting the skate hard again and battle, so it's getting better."

Scandella has played many times against Nashville, so he knows how Phil Housley coached their defense. Buffalo's new defenseman is very much looking forward to Housley coaching him, "He wants north-south hockey and he definitely wants the D to be involved, so I feel like I have pretty good skating ability, so I think I'm going to mold pretty well into this system."

It seems pretty obvious that Housley has told this team not to talk about what they're going to do, but show it. Scandella said, "I don't want to talk right now, I just want to show what I can do on the ice and work my way into the role that I earn."

Sam Reinhart was the other player that said that "We've been talking about letting our play do the talking," Reinhart said. "We know we have a lot to prove. You can stand here and say, 'I had the best summer of my life, I'm ready,' but we're all going to let our play do the talking this year."

Scandella is settling into his new city after arriving from his summer residence in Montreal. He said he's loved it so far, "So far the weather's been great, everyone says that it's going to be terrible weather here, but you know what? It's a small town with really friendly people. I'm just living out here by the water and I feel like there's a lot of green space, a very beautiful place, so I'm excited."

Housley got very upset during practice with Group B and called them to center ice. Housley really lit into them and he said there was a big reason why, "The second group started a little slow. It was tough on them because it was getting warmer outside and because of the testing we did before, so we tried to push the pace a little bit with them and they responded well."

"I just thought it was a little sloppy, our execution needed to be better and I just thought I'd address that because we want to play fast and if you don't execute, you're not going to be able to play fast."

Alex Nylander and Sean Malone did not practice due to injuries. Housley said Nylander isn't getting better as quickly as they hoped, "He's probably a week-to-week thing. It's unfortunate that in the first game of the Prospects, he got a lower body injury, so he'll be assessed."

"We're guarding on the side of caution because it's so early in the season for him and will reevaluate him on a day-to-day basis."

Housley said Malone is week-to-week too.

Victor Antipin has been in town practicing with some of his new teammates. I got a chance to do the first English interview with him about three weeks ago and Housley said they are having no problems communicating, "He's a student of the game. He was talking to Chris Hajt and he really absorbs a lot, he likes to watch a lot of video, trying to understand our concepts, so

he's like a sponge." Housley added, "Obviously you've got to speak more slowly and really get the message across, so he does understand it and he absorbs it quickly and relays it to the ice."

The Sabres are back on the ice Saturday in HarborCenter at 9:45 a.m., but be aware that both sessions on Friday started early .

## Sabres announce preseason broadcast schedule

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

September 15, 2017

Training camp is well underway for the Buffalo Sabres from HarborCenter as they get ready for Monday's preseason opener against the Carolina Hurricanes at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres announced on Friday the broadcast schedule for all six preseason games this season. All six games can be heard on WGR Sports Radio 550, while the final three games of the preseason can be seen on television on the MSG Network.

Sabres' long-time play-by-play broadcaster Rick Jeanneret will call the final two games of the preseason on September 27 and September 29. Dan Dunleavy will call the first four games of the preseason, beginning with Monday's game against Carolina. Rob Ray will provide the color commentary for all six games.

Check out the full schedule below:

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>	<b>Opponent:</b>	<b>TV:</b>	<b>Radio:</b>
Sept. 18	7 p.m.	vs. Carolina		WGR 550
Sept. 19	7 p.m.	vs. Pittsburgh*		WGR 550
Sept. 22	7:30 p.m.	at Toronto**		WGR 550
Sept. 23	7 p.m.	vs. Toronto	MSG	WGR 550
Sept. 27	7 p.m.	at Pittsburgh	MSG	WGR 550
Sept. 29	7 p.m.	vs. NY Islanders	MSG	WGR 550

## **AHL star Seth Griffith focused on sticking with Sabres**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 18, 2017

BUFFALO – A season ago, as Seth Griffith bounced around the Atlantic Division, getting waived and claimed *three times* in a three-month span, the Sabres winger lived a nomadic life out of a suitcase.

Griffith, a stud AHL scorer with 58 games of NHL experience, never settled down, spending time in Boston, Toronto (twice) and Florida.

So after a long day at the rink or a road trip, Griffith couldn't simply go home and unwind.

“That was probably the toughest part, just being in a hotel most of the year, not really having that space to call your own to just kind of get away and relax,” Griffith said Sunday following practice inside HarborCenter. “It's tough with that hotel room every day. It gets a little frustrating.”

Much of the recent spotlight, understandably, has been on the Sabres' wing prospects, most notably Justin Bailey, Nick Baptiste and Hudson Fasching, and if they can crack the team out of training camp.

But the Sabres, who open their preseason schedule tonight against the Carolina Hurricanes at KeyBank Center, don't possess a ton of forward depth. Through three days of training camp, coach Phil Housley has been adamant everyone will get an opportunity.

So the 5-foot-9, 191-pound Griffith, 24, isn't simply an AHL signing for the Rochester Americans. A strong preseason could earn him a roster spot. When the Sabres signed Griffith on July 1, general manager Jason Botterill mentioned he could be in the NHL.

“I've proven my worth in the American Hockey League,” said Griffith, who inked a one-year, one-way contract worth \$650,000. “It's time that I prove myself at the next level. Hopefully, I get that opportunity.”

Having compiled 34 goals and 121 points in his last 95 AHL games, Griffith might be the league's most dynamic player. That skill, however, hasn't translated to the NHL.

Still, Griffith's slick talents are enticing, so teams kept grabbing him last season, his fourth as a pro.

Griffith's whirlwind started Oct. 11, when the Toronto Maple Leafs claimed him from the Boston Bruins. Following three NHL appearances, the Florida Panthers nabbed him Nov. 12. The Panthers played him 21 times, then cut ties.

The Leafs claimed Griffith again Jan. 20 and assigned him to their AHL affiliate, the Toronto Marlies, for the rest of the season.

“Teams want you, but at the same time, you must not have been doing something quite right if you're bouncing (from) team to team, right?” he said.

In 24 NHL games last season, Griffith mustered only five assists. In 38 contests with the Marlies, he scored 10 goals and 44 points.

Griffith understands to some he has developed the dreaded “AAAA” label, meaning he's too talented for the AHL but not quite good enough for the NHL.

“I know I'm capable of playing in the NHL,” he said. “No matter what anyone says, I'm just going to focus on what I need to do, let the rest take care of itself.”

So what can make Griffith stand out this preseason?

“I’m really focused on my defensive play this camp, making sure I’m doing the little things right,” he said. “The little things go a long way in this league.”

Housley said understanding the Sabres’ system can help Griffith stick.

“The system will make him successful, and that’s just not ... offensively, but defensively,” he said. “He’s made some really good adjustments so far ... and we’re going to have to continue to pound away on our message as far as five-on-five play goes.”

As tough as last season quickly became for Griffith, he believes it changed him for the better.

“As a young guy, you don’t appreciate, I don’t necessarily think, the value of coming to the rink and playing hockey every day,” he said. “So I think you just learn to appreciate it a little more.”

**Notes:** Sabres defenseman Marco Scandella, who underwent offseason hip surgery, missed Sunday’s practice. “He hasn’t had a full summer of training, so we’re really being cautious with it,” Housley said. ... Housley said new assistants Chris Hajt and Davis Payne will be behind the bench with him. Hajt will run the defense. ... Housley shared no information on tonight’s lineup.

## **Sabres' Zach Bogosian believes he can thrive under Phil Housley**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 17, 2017

BUFFALO – Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian loves jumping in the rush and utilizing perhaps his most underrated asset, his skating.

“Unfortunately, the last two years in Buffalo I haven’t really had that role,” Bogosian said Saturday following practice inside HarborCenter.

That time span, not coincidentally, was Dan Bylsma’s run as coach. Part of Bylsma’s downfall, of course, was his reluctance to showcase a fast, attacking style.

Following a solid first year under Bylsma, Bogosian, 27, endured perhaps his worst NHL season in 2016-17, losing more than two minutes of ice time a game as he struggled to find a role.

“I was frustrated,” Bogosian said of a campaign in which he scored a career-low 11 points in 56 games. “That’s in the rear view now.”

These days, Bogosian looks refreshed by the team’s new regime. Sabres coach Phil Housley, a Hall of Fame defenseman, is implementing an aggressive five-man attack during training camp, meaning his defenders will be active.

“I’m looking forward to getting up in the play and making sure I’m that second layer of offense,” Bogosian said. “He wants us to get up there. Everyone that’s playing defense on our team can skate, so it’s going to bode well for us.”

It might bode well for Bogosian, the third overall pick in 2008, the Sabres hired Housley, an assistant with the Nashville Predators for four years. If anyone can unlock his potential, it might be Housley, “a hell of a player in his day,” according to Bogosian.

“The guys were pretty excited over the summer when they hired Phil,” said Bogosian, who likes to pick Housley’s brain.

Housley, whose 21-year playing career spanned from the wide-open 1980s to the clutch-and-grab early 2000s, has adapted to the modern game, Bogosian said.

“He seems to be part of that new group with the skating and getting up in the play on the offensive side of things,” the Massena native said. “Guys are looking forward to playing that style.”

Clearly, Bogosian is energized for his 10th NHL season. Through two days of camp, Housley said “he’s doing all the right things out there,” leading skates and helping younger players.

“He’s in great shape,” Housley said. “You can see him out there, he’s explosive, he’s enjoying himself.”

He added: “He can be part of the rush. I can definitely see him pinching down walls and keeping pucks in, and when you say that, it means you have to get up ice.”

Bogosian saw the ice plenty this summer in Minnesota. He liked the area so much he bought a house on Lake Minnetonka. With so many NHL players in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, workouts became easier. Bogosian said he skated more than he ever had during the offseason.

But Bogosian probably hopes he doesn’t go home until late in the spring. Incredibly, 534 games into his career, he has never played an NHL playoff game, the league’s longest streak.

“Extremely bad,” Bogosian said of his desire to make a postseason appearance. “It (stinks) when you’ve had long offseasons your entire career. I want to play. I feel like that style of play will suit me well, the physical style.”

In Bogosian’s three seasons in Buffalo, the Sabres have finished 44, 12 and 17 points out of the playoffs. In that time, his ice time has dipped from 26 minutes, 34 seconds a game to five ticks over 20 minutes last season, his lowest total since his rookie season.

“It’s been frustrating the last few years in Buffalo,” he said of missing the playoffs. “We’re getting sick of not making the playoffs. There’s no way of getting around that. It sucks when you’re sitting around watching good teams that you know you can try to compete with.”

## **Benoit Pouliot sees Sabres on similar path as Oilers**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO – Sabres winger Benoit Pouliot knows from firsthand experience a bad NHL team can morph from an also-ran into a contender in a short time.

Three seasons ago, after years of ineptitude, the Edmonton Oilers believed they finally had a playoff-caliber team. But instead of contending, they imploded early, losing 35 of their first 45 games.

“It was the worst year I’ve ever had playing in the NHL,” Pouliot said this morning inside HarborCenter. “We were so down that the coach (Dallas Eakins) got fired during the year. Things weren’t going well, but we had so many draft picks, we had so many young guys coming up and learning.”

The Oilers ended their 11-year playoff drought last season, advancing to the second round. Some luck, of course, also buoyed the upstart team, which won the 2015 NHL Draft Lottery and the right to select superstar Connor McDavid first overall.

Pouliot, 30, sees the Sabres, who finished last in the Atlantic Division in 2016-17, on a similar path.

“The past few years haven’t been, I think, very good here,” he said. “It was the same situation in Edmonton when I first signed there. Things got better and better every year that I was there, and I think it was just fun to see the turnaround.”

Pouliot, however, wasn’t a major contributor to the Oilers’ turnaround. The veteran endured a brutal season, scoring only eight goals and 14 points in 67 games before going pointless in 13 playoff contests.

Following the year, the Oilers exercised a buyout on the final two seasons of his five-year, \$20 million contract.

“Last year was tough year for me personally,” he said. “It’s been my worst one ever. The only good thing is we went very far in the playoffs.”

Still, Pouliot possesses speed and can play all over the lineup, huge assets. The Sabres’ new regime signed him to a one-year, \$1.15 million contract on July 1.

Pouliot has skated beside Sam Reinhart, who’s back at center, and Stevie Moses the first two days of training camp.

“(I can) create the speed, push their D back and turn the puck over,” Pouliot said.

Sabres coach Phil Housley added: “Ben’s got terrific speed. He could be first on the forecheck.”

That fits well with a lineup Pouliot said is “fast” and “a good mix of young and old.”

“Ever since I got in here it’s been really easy for me to fit in and talk to the guys,” he said. “They’ve made me feel comfortable. It’s just makes it easy for everyone.”

Sabres center Jack Eichel, the youngster drafted after McDavid, will “come up just like Connor did in Edmonton,” Pouliot said.

“Things can turn around quickly, especially when you get new management, new coaches, a fresh group for everyone,” he said.

Since HarborCenter has two ice pads, Housley has been having the Sabres switch to a fresh sheet about halfway through practice.

“It’s an advantage we have over other teams, we get to utilize our resources here at HarborCenter,” Housley said. “I just like it. The execution’s much better. The puck sits flatter, the guys look faster and they are faster because of the fresh ice, and we’re going to utilize that this year.”

He added: “Mentally as a player, if you’re feeling fast, that’s half the battle. I liked our puck movement today.”

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Sabres forward prospect Cliff Pu missed today’s session for personal reasons, Housley said. Pu will return Sunday.

## Many options for Gionta, including non-playing role with Sabres and Olympics

By Leo Roth

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle

September 15, 2017

Brian Gionta is still without an NHL team for the 2017-18 season but at this point in his career it's by his choosing.

The Greece native and former Buffalo Sabres and Montreal Canadiens captain, 38, isn't likely to re-sign with Buffalo now that training camp is underway his agent, Steve Bartlett, said Friday.

But coming off a productive season in which he appeared in all 82 games scoring 15 goals and 35 points, Gionta is weighing offers from other NHL teams against having to relocate his wife and young family of three children.

"It's not for lack of opportunities, teams want to sign him, but he has to decide if it fits into his family situation," Bartlett said. "I think we'll play it out awhile, see if anything changes in Buffalo, and then decide to go elsewhere or not. But it's not like I don't have opportunities for him to play, I do."

Gionta, who has played in 1,006 NHL games over 16 seasons, completed a three-year, \$12.75-million contract with the Sabres last April.

New GM Jason Botterill was open to re-signing Gionta, one of the most respected players in the game, for a reduced salary to continue his role as veteran leader with versatile skills. But things changed in late June when Botterill swung a trade that brought back Jason Pominville, 34, to the Sabres.

Both Gionta and Pominville are right wingers.

"I don't think it's highly likely but injuries, trades, things can happen," said Bartlett about the chances of Gionta still returning to Buffalo. "Nobody's played a game yet so we'll see. But there are other options to look at."

One is playing for the United States in the Olympic Games in South Korea in February.

After participating in five Winter Olympiads, the NHL, citing the negative impact of injuries and fatigue on its star players with little return benefit to the league for taking a 17-day break, has elected not to play in 2018. According to the International Ice Hockey Federation, only players not under an NHL contract are eligible.

If that applies to Gionta, he would consider the opportunity to play for Team USA. He was a member of the 2006 Olympic team in Torino, Italy and he has also played in three world championships and two junior world championships.

Gionta continues to enjoy many contacts within USA Hockey and coach Tony Granato and top executive Jim Johansson may very well jump at the chance to add a player with an NCAA title, a Stanley Cup, international experience and 588 career NHL points onto what figures to be a roster comprised of college players, minor league pros and Americans playing professionally in Europe.

If Gionta elects to retire as a player, working for the Sabres in coaching, scouting or player development are also possibilities. Continuing to work in hockey is in Gionta's future, Bartlett said.

“Everything’s on his radar to be honest but he’s still skating and still preparing like he’ll play,” Bartlett said. “But yes, all options are on the table.”

## **Sabres' Marco Scandella embracing Buffalo, fresh start**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO – Minutes after his first practice with the Sabres ended, a smiling Marco Scandella entered a media scrum and could hardly contain his excitement.

“Coming to a new team, it feels like my first year again,” the loquacious defenseman said Friday following the first sessions of training camp inside HarborCenter.

The grin never left Scandella’s face during his brief chat, his first here since the Sabres acquired him with winger Jason Pominville from the Minnesota Wild on June 30.

“He’s a great guy,” Pominville said. “What you saw is the way he is pretty much all the time. He’s very outgoing, he shows his emotion.”

Leaving the Wild was a bit emotional for Scandella, who spent his first seven seasons in St. Paul. But Scandella, 27, had a feeling he would be traded.

“You don’t want to think about it too much,” said Scandella, who will earn \$4 million this season. “But at that time, it was wearing on me a little bit.”

The Wild, a team pressed against the salary cap, had a surfeit of puck-moving defensemen. The Sabres needed one badly, so they dished wingers Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno for Scandella and Pominville, the Sabres’ former captain.

The 6-foot-3, 208-pound Scandella, who’s living downtown by the water, has already developed an affinity for Buffalo. He said having Pominville around has helped him.

“A lot of green space, very beautiful place, a lot of good restaurants,” Scandella said of Buffalo. “I’m excited.”

He added: “So far, the weather’s been great. Everyone says it’s going to be terrible weather here. ... It’s a small town (that has) really friendly people.”

Scandella’s friendliness might make him a fan favorite. So could his aggressive style of play.

“He’s a big boy, he’s got a long reach, he can shoot the puck 100 mph, he’s a guy that’s annoying to play against,” Pominville said. “I think the people of Buffalo will definitely enjoy seeing him play.”

Scandella, of course, is the biggest piece of the Sabres’ revamped blue line, which also features newcomers Victor Antipin and Nathan Beaulieu, two other puck-movers.

Even after playing 373 NHL games, the Sabres believe Scandella possesses growth potential. General manager Jason Botterill said in June he envisioned a larger role for Scandella – a spot in the top four and power-play and penalty-kill duty – than the one he had last season, when his ice time dipped to 18 minutes, 20 seconds a game.

Scandella and Sabres coach Phil Housley, however, wouldn’t get into what kind of role they expect.

“I just want to show what I can do on the ice,” Scandella said.

Scandella, who practiced with defenseman Zach Bogosian on Friday, formed a strong offensive duo with Jared Spurgeon before last season, Pominville said.

“Him and Spurgeon were arguably our top two guys to be on the ice with, they would join the rush, they would create offense pretty much on their own, and they’d be really fun to play with,” Pominville said.

Then, Pominville said, Spurgeon mostly played with Ryan Suter in 2016-17.

“So (Scandella) was kind of bouncing around and really wasn’t able to find that stability with a partner, didn’t play the minutes that he maybe should’ve,” he said. “He stuck with it and had a great playoffs for us. Hopefully, here he can take it to that next level.”

Scandella’s performance in the Wild’s opening-round loss to the St. Louis Blues impressed Housley.

“He was probably one of their better D-men, got up in the play well, defended well,” he said. “He’s got a lot of grit to his game.”

Naturally, the idea of playing the fast style Housley plans to showcase excites Scandella.

“He wants some north-south hockey, he definitely wants the D to be involved, so I feel like I have pretty good skating ability, so I think I’m going to mold really well into the system,” Scandella said.

Scandella underwent offseason hip surgery, so he said he just started skating again and getting “into hard battles.”

“Feeling good,” he said.

## **Sabres notes: Ryan O'Reilly not thinking about captaincy**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO – Center Ryan O'Reilly, the Sabres' most versatile presence on the ice and their most accountable voice off it, certainly makes a fine candidate for the Sabres' vacant captaincy.

Coach Phil Housley said Thursday he's in no hurry to name a captain, meaning the Sabres might not have someone wearing the 'C' permanently for a few weeks or even later.

O'Reilly, 26, said he hasn't thought about the captaincy. Still, he said receiving it "would be an honor."

"You look at the guys who have worn it in the past in this organization, it's something very special," O'Reilly said Friday following the first session of training camp inside HarborCenter. "With a letter or not, the stuff that needed to change I think has and that's what we want."

O'Reilly has been an alternate captain since arriving two years ago. The Sabres didn't re-sign veteran winger Brian Gionta, their captain the last three seasons.

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At one point during Friday's second session, Housley stopped line drills to address his players.

"I just thought it was a little sloppy, our execution needed to be better, and I just thought I'd address that because we want to play fast, and if you don't execute, you're not going to be able to play fast," he said. "I thought they did a great job in responding."

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Sam Reinhart, a center before the Sabres switched him to the wing as a rookie two years ago, practiced Friday between Stevie Moses and Benoit Pouliot.

Housley has said he wants to give Reinhart, who has played center occasionally in the NHL, a look pivoting lines.

"I've spent my whole career and back and forth," Reinhart said. "I've been ready for it. I'm going to let my play earn my opportunity just like everyone should coming into this year."

Reinhart, the second overall pick in 2014, scored 17 goals and 47 points in 79 games last season.

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Housley on Russian defenseman Victor Antipin, who spent his entire in Europe before signing with the Sabres in May: "He's a student of the game. ... He really absorbs a lot, likes to watch a lot of video trying to understand our concepts. He's like a sponge."

He added: "He's a terrific skater, he leads well. As his game builds, I think he'll be more aggressive in his reads, especially in the neutral zone. I enjoy him."

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The Sabres' last three preseason games – Sept. 23 at home against the Toronto Maple Leafs, Sept. 27 at the Pittsburgh Penguins and Sept. 29 at home against the New York Islanders – will be broadcast on MSG, the team announced Friday.

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Housley said injured rookie forwards Alexander Nylander (lower body) and Sean Malone (undisclosed) are week-to-week.

Housley said the Sabres are “guarding on the side of caution” with Nylander, who was injured in the first game of the Prospects Challenge rookie tournament last week.

Malone, meanwhile, is close to skating, Housley said.

## **Sabres' Bogosian buying what Housley is selling**

By Matt Bove

WKBW-TV

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Buffalo Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian struggled last year. Quite frankly, that might be putting it lightly.

He doesn't shy away from admitting he had a rough season and has said several times that he needs to be better. Perhaps Phil Housley is just what the doctor ordered.

"He gets the game, he's played for a while and coached for a while and he's been around forever so I think he gets the new style of the game," Bogosian said on Saturday. "Sometimes when you've been around hockey that long I think sometimes some people forget that the game has changed so much he seems to be part of that new group. With the skating, getting up in the play and that offensive side of things, so the guys are looking forward to playing that style."

In only two days of practice, Housley has made it very apparent that he wants to play the style Bogosian referred to. During drills he screamed for his defensemen to jump into the play, pushing the puck up the ice with speed. For Bogosian, it's a style of play that should help him turn into the player he was earlier in his career.

"Yeah, I was frustrated but that's in the rear-view now," Bogosian added. "I had a good summer training, I had a good summer with my family and had a great time in offseason and you know, I was looking forward to come to camp to prove the player that I can be. I'm feeling good right now."

Bogosian spent his summer in Minnesota skating with several of his Sabres teammates in DaBeauty League, a four-on-four summer league featuring NHL and NCAA players. When he wasn't playing for Team Walser, Bogosian was on the ice working with past teammates and friends.

"I skated more this summer than I have in my entire pro career in the offseason," Bogosian said. "I'm looking forward to using the tools that I worked on this summer and hopefully they fall into my game during the regular season."

Bogosian admits personal growth is surely important but team success trumps all.

"I think it's been frustrating the last few years here in Buffalo and we're getting sick of not making the playoffs. There's no way of getting around that, it sucks when you're watching other teams that you know you can probably compete with but you're not playing at that time of year."

## **Eichel headlines charity event**

By Jeff Poth

WKBW-TV

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO, NY (WKBW) - Sabres sharpshooter Jack Eichel is taking part in the hurricane relief effort with a charity autograph signing.

Eichel was at the Dave and Adam's store on Sheridan Drive in Williamsville Saturday afternoon.

Customers who spent at least 60-dollars on any Eichel collection apparel had one of their items signed by Jack for free.

All proceeds from the sales will go to help victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

The autograph signing event helped raised about 75-hundred dollars the Red Cross hurricane relief effort.

## **O'Reilly: "I like our look right now"**

By Nick Filipowski

WIVB-TV

September 16, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Not a lot when right for the Sabres a year ago.

Jack Eichel is on record saying he had two mediocre years and hasn't proven a thing.

Ryan O'Reilly believes he still has to be better.

With a new coach, a new focus and new energy – the centerman is ready to lead the Blue and Gold.

"At the end of the day it comes down to how we do as a team. I don't think anyone here can say we had success," O'Reilly said on Friday. "(Eichel) is a phenomenal player, he's had good numbers but if we can do something together that's what people will remember. Winning games, winning together with a group of guys you like and want to see succeed, that's what it's all about."

Since his arrival in May, General Manager Jason Botterill has given the Sabres roster a bit of a facelift.

14 days after being hired he signed Russian defenseman Victor Antipin in a move to help bolster the blueline.

Nearly a month later he sent Marcus Foligno and Tyler Ennis to Minnesota in exchange for defenseman Marco Scandella and a veteran presence in Jason Pominville.

He also added left winger Benoit Pouliot and inked Chad Johnson as the backup goaltender.

"It's always tough to see players go, but getting new guys from a different organization that gives us a fresh look," O'Reilly added. "For myself, for other guys there's a lot we have to change ourselves. We can't expect someone to come in and make all the difference. For myself I have to be better at this year and I think I will."

"I like our look right now. We have a lot of good new things, good new pieces. It's a great feel. There's a lot of excitement with us right now and that's what we want."

## **5 Observations: Day 2 – Sabres training camp**

By Matt Bove

WKBW-TV

September 15, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Friday was a day of firsts for the Buffalo Sabres. It was the first time Phil Housley ran a practice as the team's newest head coach. The first time we got to see some of the new players acquired in the offseason. And quite simply, it was the first practice of training camp, a sure reminder that the regular season is right around the corner.

*5 Observations from Friday's day of firsts:*

### **Playing with pace**

It was only one practice, but my goodness, it was obvious that Housley wants to see his defensemen involved in all aspects of the game. Just minutes into his first practice he lined his defenders up and told them that they need to focus on timing when they jump into the offensive zone. As the next drill followed Housley yelled "Go, go, go" as the defensemen followed the rush.

In the second session, Housley continued to send his message and stopped play in the middle of a drill to tell players they need to break out of their own end with more speed.

"We want to play fast," Housley said after practice. "If you don't execute you won't be able to play fast. I thought they did a great job and responded. Both groups worked really well and hard today because on-ice testing, you guys know, it's tough on the legs but they mentally fought through it and did a great job."

### **No Nylander**

According to Housley, 2016 first round pick Alex Nylander, who many believed would fight for a roster spot this year, is dealing with a lower-body injury and is considered week-to-week.

"It's unfortunate that in the first game of the Prospects he had a lower-body injury, so he'll be assessed," Housley said. "[We're] guarding on the side of caution because it's so early in the season for him and we'll reevaluate that on a day to day basis as well."

Sean Malone is also dealing with a week-to-week injury

### **Reinhart testing the waters at center**

You've probably heard this before, but yet again Sam Reinhart is getting a look down the middle. Will it stick? Who knows, but he wants his play to do the talking.

"I think you guys know more than anybody that I've spent my whole career going back and forth," Reinhart told reporters. "I'm excited to get started here, get my legs under me, get skating, feel the puck a little more and whatever happens happens."

Reinhart was asked if he was happier at center and he said happy wasn't the right way to explain it, he says it's just different.

"I have no idea [if it will happen]," Reinhart added. "You know as much as I do but like I've said in the past I'm ready for every challenge thrown at me and I'm going to work with it the best way I can."

### **Plenty of new faces**

Oh hey, Marco Scandella, Nathan Beaulieu, Victor Antipin, Jason Pominville, Benoit Pouliot, Chad Johnson and Jacob Josefson.

Chances are, I left somebody off that list but on Friday we got our first look at several of the Sabres' big-name offseason additions.

Take this with a grain of salt because it's the first practice of camp but I thought Scandella really was impressive. The 27-year-old defenseman moves well for someone his size and isn't afraid to throw his body around, even in practice. He's got a cannon of a shot and will likely be featured a lot once the regular season begins.

As for the other guys, Beaulieu and Antipin both move well and have a quick first pass out of the zone. Admittedly, I didn't keep a close eye on the forwards, but nobody stood out for the wrong reasons. Remember, it was just one day.

### **Line-shuffling galore**

We saw some very interesting line combinations during the first two sessions of training camp. That said, some of the combinations have a lot to do with how the players are split into two different groups.

For example, Reinhart took reps down the middle with Benoit Pouliot and Stevie Moses. I'd bet all the money in my wallet that line doesn't stick together into the regular season.

Housley said on Friday he would like to start building some chemistry with certain combinations but I'm sure we'll see plenty of weird groups as camp and the preseason shuffle along.

## **Sabres' Reinhart, Eichel ride tandem bike to KeyBank Center**

By News 4 Staff

WIVB-TV

September 15, 2017

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB)** — Remember when Rob and Rex Ryan went viral for riding a tandem bike together?

Check out the new duo in Buffalo trending on two wheels.

Sabres player Sam Reinhart posted a video on his Instagram page of him and teammate Jack Eichel making their way to practice at the KeyBank Center yesterday.

Reinhart wrote a brief caption under the video, saying “Kids got some new wheels over the summer [#lets gobuffalo](#)“

## Sabres announce broadcast schedule for preseason games

By Evan Anstey

WIVB-TV

September 15, 2017

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB)** — The Buffalo Sabres announced their 2017 preseason broadcast schedule on Friday.

Here it is:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>TV</u>	<u>Radio</u>
Sept. 18	7 p.m.	Carolina		WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)
Sept. 19	7 p.m.	Pittsburgh*		WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)
Sept. 22	7:30 p.m.	at Toronto**		WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)
Sept. 23	7 p.m.	Toronto	MSG	WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)
Sept. 27	7 p.m.	at Pittsburgh	MSG	WGR 550 (Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray)
Sept. 29	7 p.m.	NY Islanders	MSG	WGR 550 (Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray)

## **Buffalo Sabres believe time is now to follow Toronto Maple Leafs in making playoff return**

By Michael Traikos

National Post

September 15, 2017

BUFFALO — Only 40 kilometres separated the Buffalo Sabres from the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday, as the Leafs officially began their training camp in Niagara Falls. But when it comes to each team's respective rebuild, a gap is definitely widening.

While the Sabres missed the playoffs for the sixth straight year, the Leafs went from finishing last overall in 2015-16 to qualifying for the second wild card spot. Heading into this season, the teams have similar but different goals.

Toronto, which picked up Patrick Marleau and Ron Hainsey in free agency, now wants to take that next big step and go deeper into the playoffs and potentially contend for a championship. Buffalo, meanwhile, is still working on taking that first step forward — a year after taking another step backwards.

"It's obviously not the results we wanted the last couple of years," said Jack Eichel, the Sabres' top scorer last year and No. 2 overall pick in 2015. "A bit of an underachievement, but it's a fresh start and a new opportunity to be good again. We're looking forward to the chance to prove to everyone that we're a competitive team. I think we're all excited for it."

It might rub a bit of salt in the wound of Sabres fans to see how quickly the Leafs were able to reverse their fortunes shortly after bottoming out and drafting Auston Matthews with the No. 1 overall pick in 2016. After all, Buffalo was supposed to be a year ahead of Toronto in the rebuild, having finished with the worst overall record in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Then again, it did take missing the playoffs in 10 of 11 years before the Leafs finally righted the ship and made the playoffs. Not that the Sabres want to wait that long.

"I think that definitely motivates you," Eichel said of watching the Leafs in the playoffs last season. "Obviously, being a competitor and wanting your team to do well, I think more than anything the playoffs are just so exciting. You want to be part of it. It looks like so much fun playing at that time of year."

"That's why I want to do it. This team, this city, this organization deserves an opportunity to see some playoff hockey. I think this group of guys should be able to do it. We just need to give it to them."

Eichel, who is on the final year of his entry-level contract, is not the only one who is getting impatient.

The Sabres fired their general manager and head coach after finishing with the second-worst record in the Eastern Conference last season. In addition to hiring head coach Phil Housley, who is introducing an up-tempo, attacking style reminiscent of what he helped coach as an assistant with the Nashville Predators last season, the team also brought back fan favourite Jason Pominville and added defencemen Marco Scandella and Nathan Beaulieu.

The biggest change, however, is in the team's attitude. There was a woe-is-me feeling after the Sabres managed just 21 wins last year and scored only 157 goals — 39 less than the next-worst team. For a young team, the constant losing had a snowball effect on the players' psyche.

"Just coming to the rink everyday, that's something that's being harped on, to have a fresh mentality, a fresh mood every day no matter what happens before," said Sam Reinhart, the second-overall pick in 2014. "And another thing we've been talking about is letting our play do the talking. We know we have a lot to prove and you could stand here and say, 'I had the best summer of my life and I'm ready.' But we're all going to let our play do the talking this year."

No question, it will be difficult for the Sabres to make the playoffs. They know it. But they also know that it's not too much to ask for them to be a lot more competitive than they were a year ago. Eichel, who had 24 goals and 57 points in 61 games, was ranked 14th in points per game last season. Had he not missed the first two months — and had Ryan O'Reilly, Evander

Kane and Kyle Okposo not missed significant time with injuries — the Sabres might have picked up another five, 10 or even more wins.

Add in a new coach, a deeper defence and some luck, and the Sabres just might surprise a few teams.

“To me, if we just remain healthy and we get everybody believing in each other, I think this group can do something special,” said Housley. “I feel the vibe of the team right now, just being on the ice with them one day. They’re excited.”

Said Pominville: “I think it’s time for this team to make a step. Obviously, this city deserves a little more than what they’ve got lately and hopefully, we can do that starting this year.”

## Sabres' Alexander Nylander week-to-week with lower-body injury

By Mike Johnston

Sportsnet

September 15, 2017

The [Buffalo Sabres](#) began training camp without one of the franchise's prospects.

[Alexander Nylander](#) is dealing with what the team describes as a lower-body injury and the eighth-overall pick from the 2016 NHL Draft is considered week-to-week, Sabres head coach Phil Housley told reporters in Buffalo Friday.

The 19-year-old winger was held out of the Prospects Challenge for precautionary reasons a week ago but Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said at the time he was hopeful the talented Swede would be ready for the start of camp.

"It's unfortunate," [Housley said via John Vogl of Buffalo News](#). "He'll be assessed. Guarding on the side of caution because it's so early in the season."

Nylander spent 65 games with the Rochester Americans in the AHL, registering 10 goals, 18 assists and six penalty minutes. He made his NHL debut in April, suiting up for the Sabres' final four games of 2016-17. He tallied his first career point with an assist in the season finale.

Housley added that centre Sean Malone is also week-to-week, which is why he was absent from camp Friday.

## **Antipin proving to be an avid learner at Sabres camp**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 17, 2017

When the Buffalo Sabres signed Victor Antipin out of the KHL in the offseason, what we knew about the defenseman was mostly restricted to on-ice habits. We knew he was a fast, puck-moving defenseman, an ideal fit for a Phil Housley system.

Then, on Friday, Housley clued us into another intangible that Antipin has shown during his brief time in Buffalo.

"He's a student of the game," Housley said. "He really absorbs a lot, likes to watch a lot of video trying to understand our concepts. He's like a sponge."

Prior to camp, Antipin spent time with assistant coach Chris Hajt learning the subtleties of Housley's system and the North American game in general. Hajt said the sessions were arranged to prevent information overload once on-ice activity began.

"We identified it as something important for him, coming from Russia and making sure he understands what's going on so he can just concentrate on playing," Hajt said. "We didn't want him to see it for the first time on the first day of camp. It'd be very overwhelming. So we kind of got ahead of it and made sure to explain to him how we're going to play and his role within that system."

Antipin has seven KHL seasons under his belt, so of course there were some concepts he understood right away. Others required Hajt to break out the white board or pull up video, and in those instances he found he was dealing with an avid learner.

Hajt recalls trying to cut one session short after coaches felt they had given Antipin enough information for a day. The defenseman wouldn't have it.

"He was like 'no, no, no, more,'" Hajt said. "He's very keen. He cares a lot about the game and wants to put his best foot forward."

It's in that same vein that Antipin has taken on his assimilation into North American culture. Having been born in Kazakhstan and having spent his entire career in Russia, Antipin is brand new to the English language, yet he's insisted on working through interviews without the help of a translator.

He's found a teammate to lean on in Vasily Glotov, who moved from Russia himself to play in the QMJHL prior to last season. Glotov had more experience with English than Antipin - he'd played in North American tournaments and taken classes in Russia - but even now, he's still adjusting.

"I was the same way. I was like, 'I do hockey' and stuff," Glotov said. "Now I watch TV shows no problem. But I'm still learning."

Glotov, 20, has served as a tutor of sorts for Antipin. He uses methods that helped him learn English, like writing down words and phrases to create visual memory.

"Let's say I say a Russian word, you're not going to remember it in two weeks," Glotov said. "But if you write it by yourself or if you see it on a screen a couple times, you'll remember it. Same for him."

Antipin has taken well to Buffalo, and said he's happy with how the opening of camp has gone. Hajt said he's improved each day at practice, and he's shown the speed and ability to move the puck that made him a star in the KHL.

"He's a real good kid," Hajt said. "He's very keen and very coachable. Going through video and talking with him, he wants to know everything that's going on and he wants to do things the right way. He's definitely has enthusiasm about the game where you can tell he loves the game and he loves playing it."

Scandella absent from practice

Marco Scandella took a maintenance day and did not practice Sunday. The defenseman underwent arthroscopic surgery on his left hip at the end of last season.

"He really went after it yesterday," Housley said. "Just testing it out he was a little sore, so no sense in rushing him back into play. He looked really good, I'm really happy with his effort. Just a maintenance day, we'll see after today what happens."

Lines at Sunday's practice

#### **Group A**

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo

67 Benoit Pouliot - 23 Sam Reinhart - 52 Stevie Moses

49 C.J. Smith - 51 Kyle Criscuolo - 95 Justin Bailey

25 Seth Griffith - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 59 Cliff Pu

64 Vaclav Karabacek

45 Brendan Guhle - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

19 Jake McCabe - 27 Taylor Fedun

8 Casey Nelson - 38 Cody Goloubef

58 Austin Osmanski - 53 Devante Stephens

40 Robin Lehner

35 Linus Ullmark

34 Jonas Johansson

#### **Group B**

9 Evander Kane - 15 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville

26 Matt Moulson - 22 Johan Larsson - 24 Hudson Fasching

83 Vasily Glotov - 10 Jacob Josefson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste

44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 12 Kevin Porter - 46 Eric Cornel

62 Brendan Hagel

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 47 Zach Bogosian

41 Justin Falk - 93 Victor Antipin

4 Josh Gorges - 5 Matt Tennyson

79 Vojtech Budik - 54 Brycen Martin

31 Chad Johnson

32 Adam Wilcox

33 Jason Kasdorf

## **Pouliot sees comparisons between Sabres, Oilers**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 16, 2017

It's a 370-mile drive from Buffalo to Benoit Pouliot's hometown of Alfred, Ont., which seems like a lot until you compare it to the 3,500-plus miles that separated him from home during his past three seasons in Edmonton.

The opportunity to be closer to home was one of the reasons Pouliot signed a one-year deal with the Sabres this past summer. Another is the strong endorsements the city received from those Pouliot spoke with, including former Sabres defenseman and current Oiler Andrej Sekera.

The other major reason, Pouliot said Saturday, was how closely the situation in Buffalo seemed to compare to when he first arrived in Edmonton.

"The past few years haven't been very good here," he said. "It's the same situation as it was in Edmonton when I first signed there, and things got better and better every year that I was there. It's just fun to see the turn around."

Pouliot's first season in Edmonton was 2014-15, when the Oilers finished with 62 points and fired coach Dallas Eakins midseason. They drafted Connor McDavid the following that offseason and improved under new coach Todd McLellan in 2015-16, and then made the jump to a 103-point campaign last season.

"I think the situation here is the same," he said. "You've got a great player in [Jack] Eichel who's going to come up just like Connor did in Edmonton. Things can turn around quickly, especially when you get new management, new coaches and everything. It's a fresh, new start for everyone and I think it's good."

Pouliot has spent the beginning of camp skating alongside another one of Buffalo's young stars in Sam Reinhart, a situation he compared to playing with Ryan Nugent-Hopkins or Jordan Eberle in Edmonton. It was Pouliot's job to retrieve pucks on the forecheck and get the puck to one of his young, playmaking centers.

"They're the guys who are going to make the plays," he said. "But you need that guy who's going to go get it and create some havoc down low and then we'll figure it out from there."

"Ben's got terrific speed. He can be first on the forecheck for sure," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He's trying to understand the way we're trying to play in the offensive zone and off the rush. That's going to take a little time, but definitely he has the speed to do that."

Pouliot will be looking to rebound from a season he described as the most difficult of his career. His average ice time was cut to 14:03, down two minutes from the previous season, and he scored just 14 points after scoring 30-plus for three straight seasons.

Two practices into camp, he seemed happy with the choice he made in coming to Buffalo.

"It's a good mix of young and old," he said. "The guys have been having fun ever since I got here. It's been real easy for me to fit in and talk to the guys. They made me feel comfortable and I think it just makes it easy for everyone."

Now, onto some more notes from Saturday's practice.

**Guhle, Risto skate together**

Brendan Guhle skated on a pair with Rasmus Ristolainen for the second straight practice on Saturday, providing a look at what could one day be a dynamic offensive pairing for the Sabres. Both are gifted offensively, but Housley said it will take chemistry for the duo to be successful.

"They just have to read off each other," Housley said. "There's going to be a time where one guy's going to be digging a puck out of the corner and the other guy will be free and he'll be able to join the rush. Certainly we don't want them to both join the rush, but that's great. I like their offensive instincts, I liked the way they passed the puck today so that's something to look at as we move forward."

It's early in camp, and Guhle will have to impress to make the Sabres roster, let alone the top pair alongside Ristolainen. The fact that the Sabres are getting a look at him in that spot likely reinforces what we already know, which is that they have high expectations for his future.

#### Saturday's practice

Housley said he liked the pace and execution at practice. The players, it seems, are already showing enthusiasm about their new system.

"It's what we asked of them as an expectation heading into camp, and I think they're having fun out there," Housley said. "It's a new style of game that I think they're going to enjoy ... Today a big step for both groups today. I really liked the speed that they brought."

Cliff Pu joined Alexander Nylander and Sean Malone as absentees from practice, although Housley said it was for personal reasons and that he'll be back on the ice tomorrow. In Pu's absence, Vasily Glotov switched practice groups and skated on a line with Kyle Criscuolo and Eric Cornel.

Here are Saturday's lines in full:

#### **Group A**

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo

26 Matt Moulson - 22 Johan Larsson - 24 Hudson Fasching

64 Vaclav Karabacek - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 49 C.J. Smith

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44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 12 Kevin Porter - 95 Justin Bailey

25 Seth Griffith - 10 Jacob Josefson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste

62 Brandon Hagel

Defensemen: 6 Marco Scandella, 47 Zach Bogosian, 41 Justin Falk, 4 Josh Gorges, 93 Victor Antipin, 82 Nathan Beaulieu, 5 Matt Tennyson, 79 Vojtech Budik, 54 Brycen Martin

31 Chad Johnson

32 Adam Wilcox

33 Jason Kasdorf

## **Pominville, Scandella expect to be big contributors for Sabres**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 15, 2017

If Marco Scandella is a man who wears his emotions on his sleeves, as Jason Pominville said on Friday, it was clear how he felt about being in Buffalo for his first practice as a Sabre. Scandella smiled throughout his post-practice comments, and after a summer of rehabbing from arthroscopic surgery on his left hip, he just seemed happy to be on the ice.

"It's extremely exciting," Scandella said. "Coming to a new team, a lot of talent up front, a new coach. How could you not be excited right now?"

Scandella and Pominville, acquired together in a trade that sent Marcus Foligno and Tyler Ennis to Minnesota on June 30, were part of the same practice session as the on-ice portion of training camp opened at HarborCenter on Friday.

For Scandella, it was the first practice he'd been a part of for any organization other than Minnesota. For Pominville, it was a return to the franchise he began his career with more than a decade ago.

For both players, it signaled a new beginning as they look to be driving forces in what's hoped to be a turnaround season for the Sabres.

A greater role

When the Sabres traded for Scandella, Jason Botterill said he expected the defenseman to take on a larger role for Buffalo than the one he had in Minnesota a season ago. Scandella only averaged 18:20 of ice time after averaging 20-plus minutes for two seasons prior.

According to Pominville, the drop in ice time stemmed from Scandella's removal from a change in his defensive partner under first-year Wild coach Bruce Boudreau. Prior to last season, Scandella had spent the majority of his ice time playing alongside Jared Spurgeon.

"I think it was disappointing for him, to be honest with you," Pominville said. "I think when you wanted to create offense, him and Spurgeon were arguably our top two guys to be on the ice with. They would join the rush, they would create offense pretty much on their own and they'd be really fun to play with.

"Last year, D pairings kind of changed. He ended up bouncing around. Spurgeon ended up with [Ryan] Suter most of the time, so Scanny was kind of bouncing around. He wasn't able to find that stability with a partner and didn't play the minutes that he maybe should've."

Scandella rebounded and averaged 22:55 of ice time in the Wild's playoff series against St. Louis, standing out as one of the best defensemen in the series. The Sabres clearly took notice; in an offseason focused on bolstering defensive depth, he was their primary acquisition.

So, what kind of player did they get?

"He's a big boy," Pominville said of the 6-foot-3-inch, 208-pound defenseman. "He's got a long reach. He can shoot the puck 100 miles an hour. He's a guy who's annoying to play against and I think the people of Buffalo will definitely enjoy seeing this guy play."

Scandella practiced alongside Zach Bogosian on Friday, although it won't be a surprise if we see him on the top pair with Rasmus Ristolainen once the Sabres merge into one practice group (Ristolainen was in the opposite session on Friday and was paired with rookie Brendan Guhle).

Scandella was optimistic about the prospect of taking on a larger role, although he didn't want to define what that role may be. Echoing the comments some of his teammates made on Friday, Scandella said he'd rather let his play do the talking and earn whatever role he ends up with.

His coach, however, was a bit less reluctant to talk about Scandella's importance.

"I think he's going to be a big part of our team, that's going to be his role," Phil Housley said. "You see the way he played against St. Louis in the playoffs, he was probably one of their better D men. He got up in the play well, defended well. He's got a lot of grit to his game so he's going to fit nicely back there in our D core."

Scandella was willing to talk about his expectations for the team, and he did so optimistically.

"This team has a lot of talent," he said. "Definitely, we have the talent in here. [It's a] really tight group so it's us to build this in training camp. New coach, new system, so it's up to us to make that happen."

"A guy to look up to"

When Scandella was a young defenseman still looking to establish himself as a full-time NHLer, Pominville was one of the players he looked up to most.

"He's just a great person, but what a great pro," Scandella said. "Always stretching, always taking care of his body, so he's just a great role model for all the young guys. When I first got to Minnesota I looked up to him a lot."

It hasn't taken the former Sabre captain long to impart that leadership on his new teammates, who seem to already respect his place in the organization. In a session that included some of the team's young stars in Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart, Pominville led the stretch to open practice on Friday.

"First off, the respect he has from the whole locker room, right when he walks in," Reinhart said when asked what's stood about Pominville.. "He's been in this locker room a lot, so guys look to follow him and guys look to follow his work ethic, his approach to the game on a daily basis. He's another guy for me and all the young guys to look up to and follow after."

Pominville is the only player left from Buffalo's last postseason team. He also made the playoffs in each of his five seasons with the Wild, an experience he said helped him grow as a professional. He and his teammates in Minnesota pushed each other to improve constantly, an element he hopes to impart on a young Sabres dressing room.

He might just be an X factor for the Sabres on the ice as well. Pominville found himself on arguably Buffalo's most dynamic offensive line on Friday, skating alongside Eichel and Evander Kane.

"We've got to set the bar higher for ourselves and keep pushing each other every day," he said. "I think it's time for this team to make a step. Obviously this city deserves a little more than what they've got lately and hopefully we can do that starting this year."

## Camp Notebook: Reinhart practices at center on Day 1

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

September 15, 2017

Sam Reinhart doesn't plan on spending too much time making promises or talking about the work he's put in during the offseason. He made that clear following his first practice of the season at HarborCenter on Friday.

"We've been talking about letting our play do the talking," Reinhart said. "We know we have a lot to prove. You can stand here and say, 'I had the best summer of my life, I'm ready,' but we're all going to let our play do the talking this year."

If day one is any indication, he might be letting his play do the talking from the center position. Phil Housley said Thursday that he intends to try Reinhart at his natural position in the preseason, and Reinhart spent his first practice centering a line with Benoit Pouliot and Stevie Moses.

Reinhart has spent the majority of his first two seasons on the right wing, playing alongside either Jack Eichel or Ryan O'Reilly. He got his biggest dose of center in the first half of last season, with Eichel and O'Reilly both dealing with injuries. By mid-January, Reinhart had matched his rookie assist total.

It's a stretch to read too much into lines on the first day of camp, but Housley did say he'll look to create some stability throughout the preseason.

"We're trying to get our guys used to some sort of lines, but I'm sure there's going to be changes," Housley said. "Coming in to the games, hopefully we can find a combination or two that works and gives them the best opportunity to succeed."

Jason Pominville was a part of Reinhart's practice group on Friday, and he spoke highly of the depth that Reinhart could provide the Sabres down the middle.

"To be honest with you, I didn't know Sam played center as well," Pominville said. You add Sam to our centers, you have a top three centers that can probably matchup against any centers in the league, which gives us that much more depth. Who knows where he's going to play, but having him there is nice."

Reinhart has said in the past that he feels he plays faster at center, but has always maintained that he's willing to play either position. He held that stance on Friday.

"It's just a new look," he said. "There's a long way to go before the season starts so I'm going to let my play do the talking for me and try to earn every opportunity that I get."

Here are some more notes from Friday's second practice session.

Housley liked the pace of practice

The players were understandably fatigued going straight from skate testing into practices, and it showed at the beginning of the second session. Housley stopped to address that fact to his players, and said he liked the pace from thereon out.

"I just thought it was a little sloppy," he said. "Our execution needed to be better. I just thought I'd address that, because we want to play fast and if we don't execute we're not going to be able to play fast. I thought they did a great job of responding. Both groups worked really well and hard today."

Group B lines

9 Evander Kane - 15 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville  
67 Benoit Pouliot - 23 Sam Reinhart - 52 Stevie Moses  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers - 12 Kevin Porter - 95 Justin Bailey  
25 Seth Griffith - 10 Jacob Josefson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste  
62 Brandon Hagel - 38 Vasily Glotov

6 Marco Scandella - 47 Zach Bogosian

41 Justin Falk - 93 Victor Antipin

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 5 Matt Tennyson

79 Vojtech Budik - 54 Brycen Martin

31 Chad Johnson

32 Adam Wilcox

33 Jason Kasdorf

You can find the lines from the early practice session, along with Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen's thoughts on Housley's system, **in our notebook from this morning.**

## **Sabres announce 2017 preseason broadcast schedule**

By Sabres PR

Sabres.com

September 15, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres today announced the broadcast schedule for the team's 2017 preseason games. All six preseason games will be broadcast live on WGR 550 and the Sept. 27 and 29 games will be broadcast live on television with Rick Jeanneret providing play-by-play on MSG.

In addition, the Sept. 23 game against the Toronto Maple Leafs will be shown on MSG using a simulcast of the Sportsnet feed.

A full broadcast schedule for the team's preseason can be found below:

**Sept. 18** - 7 p.m. vs. Carolina - Radio: WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray) // [Tickets On Sale Now](#)

**Sept. 19** - 7 p.m. vs. Pittsburgh\* - Radio: WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)

**Sept. 22** - 7:30 p.m. at Toronto\*\* - Radio: WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray)

**Sept. 23** - 7 p.m. vs. Toronto - TV: MSG (Sportsnet feed) / Radio: WGR 550 (Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray) // [Tickets On Sale Now](#)

**Sept. 27** - 7 p.m. at Pittsburgh - TV: MSG / WGR 550 (Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray)

**Sept. 29** - 7 p.m. vs. NY Islanders - TV: MSG / WGR 550 (Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray) // [Tickets On Sale Now](#)

\* Game at Pegula Ice Arena, State College, Pennsylvania

\*\* Game at Ricoh Coliseum, Toronto, Ontario