



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sam Reinhart moves back to wing as Sabres shuffle lines

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

October 11, 2017

The lines will not remain the same.

Not when the Buffalo Sabres are still looking for their first win of the season, still looking for offense, still looking for a way to keep the puck from ending up in the back of their own net.

So Phil Housley shuffled the lines Wednesday morning as the team had an hour-long practice in HarborCenter before catching a flight to San Jose to begin their four-game West Coast road trip.

"I think you change the lines to try and get other guys going or maybe there's some chemistry that you're looking for. And that's why we made that change today," Housley said. "They could change tomorrow, but we'll try these combinations moving forward."

These combinations include having Jack Eichel center Zemgus Girgensons and Jason Pominville. Evander Kane moves to a line with Ryan O'Reilly and Kyle Okposo. Johann Larsson moves back to center with Sam Reinhart moving to wing along with Benoit Pouliot on the third line. The fourth line featured Seth Griffith, Jacob Josefson, and Jordan Nolan.

Moving Larsson back to center and Reinhart to wing could be a function of Housley looking for more speed up the middle. But then again, the first-year Sabres coach is looking for speed from every corner of the ice.

"I thought we did an excellent job of that in practice," Housley said of generating speed up the ice. "We've got to continue to work on that element in our game. Again, we just took Sam out of the middle to give him a different look, give our team a different look and the lines a different look."

Reinhart is used to shifting between wing and center. He did that throughout his first two pro seasons. Wing. Center. It's pretty much all the same to the 21-year-old.

"I mean, like I said, wherever I am, I'm going to try and do my best," Reinhart said after Wednesday's practice.

Reinhart hasn't had much to show for his first three games this season. No points. One shot. A minus-6. It wouldn't be so pronounced if every one else on the roster, with the exception of Evander Kane, was struggling as well. Reinhart believes his way out of the funk is to find a way to relax.

"Just relax, have fun. There's so many things going on," Reinhart said. "I know I'm not the only one when I say I'm fighting the puck a little bit. Just got to relax down low and find my game. ... I think I've got to make my mind up quicker. Once I'm on the puck I've got to move my feet a little quicker and open up the ice a little bit."

While new lines may help spark some offensive chemistry, Housley seems most concerned with the team defense, especially in the premium odd-man rushes the team keeps allowing.

"I think right now we're going to focus on keeping the puck out of our net," Housley said. "So we're really going to focus on defending well, taking care of our own zone, and then get five guys up the ice. You know the old saying -- five guys in D-zone, five guys through the neutral zone, and then five guys in the offensive zone. We focused a lot today on defending and breaking out."

Speaking of defense, Josh Gorges is likely to make his season debut on the trip. Gorges, who had been a healthy scratch for the first three games, was paired with Jake McCabe in Wednesday's practice.

Zach Bogosian, who has been out with a lower-body injury, will likely not make the trip.

"We're trying to be really careful with it," Housley said of Bogosian's injury. "He's moving in a good direction but again we've got to be cautious with it. Just make sure we take the right amount of time for Zach. It's a day-to-day situation still."

The Sabres had another brief injury scare in practice when Robin Lehner was hit in the face with a puck during a drill. Lehner went to the bench briefly, returned to practice, then left the ice early.

Phil Housley said Lehner was fine and left to receive some stitches.

"It was unfortunate but just glad that the worst of it is that it's some stitches," Housley said. "We let him go a little early so he could get on the plane."

Sabres Notebook: San Jose first stop on West Coast trip

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

October 11, 2017

When the Buffalo Sabres open their four-game West Coast road trip against San Jose on Thursday (10:30 p.m., MSG), they'll be meeting a team that's also looking to quickly right the ship.

The Sharks aren't off to a great start, either. They're 0-2 and have been outscored 9-4 in those games.

"Right now, if you look at San Jose, they're sort of in the same predicament that we are," Sabres coach Phil Housley said after his team practiced in HarborCenter Wednesday morning. "It's going to be a tough game. I'm sure they're not happy with their game, just like we're not happy with ours. ... It's good that guys can get out on the road, hopefully bond together, but we've got to start winning."

The rhetoric coming out of the San Jose dressing room sounds familiar to what's being said in Buffalo.

"I think we understand mentally where we're at. It's not where we need to be," Sharks captain Joe Pavelski told the media after a 4-1 loss to the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday. "The hockey we're playing right now, I respect that everybody's coming to the rink ready to play, but we're missing something. Just mentally, I think, we know we've got a whole other level. We're just going to have to go back to the start, reset a few things."

The Sharks may be without defenseman Paul Martin, who is still recovering from offseason ankle surgery. He had fewer than 11 minutes of time in San Jose's 4-1 loss to the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday.

At Wednesday's practice, the Sabres didn't just shuffle their lines, but reworked their power play units.

On the first unit, Jason Pominville and Evander Kane joined Ryan O'Reilly and Jack Eichel with Rasmus Ristolainen at the point. The second unit had Kyle Okposo, Seth Griffith and Benoit Pouliot along with defensemen Nathan Beaulieu and Matt Tennyson.

The Sabres have two goals in 13 power plays through the first three games. More concerning that the goals for have been the goals against when the Sabres have the man advantage. Buffalo has given up four shorthanded goals in three games, matching the total they allowed all of last season.

It's the second road trip of the season and it's a doozy at that. After playing in San Jose on Thursday, the Sabres play in Los Angeles on Saturday, Anaheim on Sunday, then Las Vegas on Tuesday.

The team does not return home until Oct. 20 when they host Vancouver at 7 p.m. in KeyBank Center.

The Sabres will get their first look at the NHL's newest team when they close out their road trip Oct. 17 in Las Vegas. The Golden Knights are already making history, becoming the first club in the 100-years of the league to begin its inaugural season with three straight wins.

James Neal scored two goals on Tuesday as the Golden Knights defeated Arizona, 5-2, in their first game at T-Mobile Arena. Neal has scored the game-winning goal in the first three wins for Vegas. According to Elias Sports Bureau, Neal is the second player from any NHL team in the expansion era (since 1967) to register the game-winning goal in each of his team's first three games. The other was Brian Propp with Philadelphia to start the 1982-83 season.

Biron set to return to Sabres' broadcasts on Saturday

The Buffalo News

By Alan Pergament

October 11, 2017

After all the publicity that Martin Biron received when he replaced Brad May on the Buffalo Sabres pregame, intermission and post-game segments, some readers wondered where he's been the last two games of the National Hockey League team's young season.

The Sabres say Biron requested the time off early in the season for a planned family event.

The former goaltender could have been valuable offering his insights on the play of Robin Lehner and Chad Johnson during the Sabres' two recent lopsided losses in which the goalies were left defenseless in dealing with multiple 2-on-1 rushes by opponents.

Biron will return on the pregame, intermission and postgame show for Saturday's road game against the Los Angeles Kings, working with Brian Duff from the Sabres studio at New Era Field.

Housley: We need to be a smarter hockey team

WGR550

OCTOBER 11, 2017

The Buffalo Sabres are winless through three games in the 2017-18 season. There was a lot of talk during the offseason about the improvements on defense, and so far that has not shown up. The Sabres are tied for last in the NHL in goals given up with 15. Head coach Phil Housley joined Howard & Jeremy on Wednesday morning to discuss the early season struggles. Here are some of his best quotes:

On being a smarter hockey team:

"We've got to keep our game simple. We're trying to make plays that are not high percentage plays. We've got to protect the puck a little bit better. We're using our energy in the wrong area. We want to continue to hammer our message about being a smarter hockey team."

What has led to the past two losses:

"When teams are pushing and we're under siege, we have to create our own push back. Right now, we're accepting too much of the push. We have to face the fact that every team is a hard working team, you know they're trying to win a hockey game as well."

On trusting the players:

"Have to put the puck decisions in the players hands. That's part of every guy's offensive game, creativity. Also, there's a responsibility that comes with that. It's not putting your teammates in a position where you have to go back and defend."

What has to be cleaned up:

"We're giving up too many odd man rushes and second chance opportunities in front of the net. We have to clean that area up first before we can start worrying about the offensive end. The more we defend, the more offensive chances we're going to get."

Sabres bringing new lines out west

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

OCTOBER 11, 2017

San Jose, CA (WGR 550) - After a mandatory day off, Phil Housley changed his lines and defensive pairs. One of the biggest changes was Sam Reinhart moved to right wing and Johan Larsson went to center. Benoit Pouliot was the left winger on that line.

I believe Housley made the move to get more speed down the middle. He said, "I'm looking for speed in every situation up ice. I thought we did a good job of that today in practice and we've got to continue to work on that element of our game, but we just took Sam out of the middle to give him a different look and to give our team a different look."

"You change the lines to try to get other guys going or maybe there's some chemistry that you're looking for."

Reinhart was pretty good against Montreal, but was awful against the Islanders and Devils. Overall he has no points and is minus six in three games. I asked Reinhart if he had trouble getting used to Housley's system while playing center. He said, "No, I felt coming back into our own zone, picking up speed, I was feeling a lot more comfortable as I was going."

For the Sabres to be a good team, they must get production out of Reinhart. He believes, "I'm just going to try to relax. I find there's so many things going on and I'm fighting the puck a little bit, so I've just got to relax down low and find my game."

"I wouldn't say I'm squeezing my stick too hard, but I think I've got to make my mind up quicker and move my feet a little quicker and open up the ice a little bit."

For Larsson, I think he plays much better up the middle. He said, "I'm happy, but I think I work well on the wing too, but it's time for the middle and I'll play where he wants me to."

When Housley got here he talked about a fast game up ice with the defensemen joining, but he stressed that they couldn't sacrifice the defense. That didn't happen so practice on Wednesday had a different focus, "Right now, we're going to focus on keeping the puck out of our net, so we're going to focus on defending well, taking care of our own zone."

Larsson said as bad as this team has played, it's not just one thing, "We've got to work on a lot of things to get better. We have to start battling, we have to start to compete out there."

Robin Lehner took a shot in the mask from Zemgus Girgensons. He got patched up and went back in net, but he had to come off again to get stitches.

Zach Bogosian did not make the trip, which will give him another week to get better. The same goes for Justin Falk and Evan Rodrigues.

Wednesday's lines:

Forwards:

Kane - O'Reilly - Okposo

Girgensons - Eichel - Pominville

Pouliot - Larsson - Reinhart

Nolan - Josefson - Griffith (Moulson)

Defense:

Scandella - Ristolainen

Beaulieu - Tennyson

Gorges - McCabe (Antipin)

PP1: Kane - O'Reilly - Pominville - Eichel - Ristolainen

PP2: Pouliot - Okposo - Griffith - Beaulieu – Tennyson

Sabres move struggling Sam Reinhart

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

October 12, 2017

BUFFALO – Sam Reinhart’s run at center lasted three games.

Following two wretched losses in which opponents outscored the Sabres 12-5, coach Phil Housley, as expected, mixed up his lines and defense pairs Wednesday, making changes to every combination.

Most notably, Reinhart, who moved to his natural position in training camp, skated at right wing again, his spot most of the last two years. Housley also yanked from Reinhart off the power play. Reinhart has played on the No. 1 unit most of his career.

Reinhart has looked awful this season, compiling zero points and a minus-6 rating.

“I’m not the only who will say I’m fighting the puck a bit,” Reinhart said Wednesday inside KeyBank Center.

Housley added: “Give him a different look, give our team a different look.”

Right now, most players are struggling.

“You change the lines to try to get the other guys going or maybe there’s some chemistry you’re looking for,” Housley said. “That’s why I made that change today. They could change tomorrow.”

The 0-2-1 Sabres face the San Jose Sharks tonight, the start of a four-game western road trip. The Sabres have historically done well in San Jose, although they often struggle on California trips. They also face the Los Angeles Kings, Anaheim Ducks and the 3-0 Vegas Golden Knights, the NHL’s newest team.

While it’s early, a disastrous trip could bury the Sabres.

Here are Wednesday’s forward lines and defense pairs from left to right:

- Evander Kane, Ryan O’Reilly and Kyle Okposo
- Zemgus Girgensons, Jack Eichel and Jason Pominville
- Benoit Pouliot, Johan Larsson and Reinhart
- Jordan Nolan, Jacob Josefson and Seth Griffith
- Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen
- Nathan Beaulieu and Matt Tennyson
- Josh Gorges and Jake McCabe

Nolan replaced Matt Moulson. Larsson had been playing the wing. Gorges, a healthy scratch the first three games, moved in for rookie Victor Antipin.

Housley put Eichel, Ristolainen, Pominville, O’Reilly and Kane on the first power play, promoting Pominville and Kane. The second unit consisted of Beaulieu, Tennyson Griffith, Okposo and Pouliot.

In other news, defenseman Zach Bogosian, out since suffering a lower-body injury in the preseason finale, will likely miss more time.

“We’re trying to be really careful with it,” Housley said. “He was moving in a good direction. We got to be cautious about putting him into a practice and take the right amount of time for Zach.”

Despite getting hurt 13 days ago, Housley said Bogosian is still day-to-day.

Meanwhile, goalie Robin Lehner left Wednesday's practice early after taking a puck in the face. Lehner initially stayed on the HarborCenter ice. He departed early so he could get stitches and make the team's flight, Housley said.

Sabres veteran Josh Gorges adjusting to new role, expectations

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

October 12, 2017

BUFFALO – The skill set that has buoyed Josh Gorges' unlikely 13-year NHL career is pretty straightforward. The Sabres defenseman showcases grit and tenacity.

Gorges, 33, is a stay-at-home, defensive defenseman. He plays full throttle, rarely letting up.

His talents, of course, would be welcomed by any team. But the NHL has evolved in recent seasons, transforming into a speedy league.

These days, most defenders must also slickly move the puck and drive possession. That isn't Gorges forte.

The Sabres revamped their defense corps during the offseason, adding speed for new coach Phil Housley, who wants to utilize an aggressive five-man attack.

So Housley sat Gorges for the opening three games, the first healthy scratches of his four-year Buffalo career. But the 0-2-1 Sabres, who begin a four-game road trip tonight, need a spark, so Gorges will likely play against the San Jose Sharks.

"We need to make some changes," Housley said Wednesday inside KeyBank Center. "We had to make changes because we haven't won ... so we're just giving our defense a little different look."

Gorges practiced beside Jake McCabe on Wednesday at HarborCenter before the Sabres flew to California, making rookie Victor Antipin the odd man out.

So how does Gorges fit in on this new blue line?

"Still trying to find that way right now," he told the Times Herald.

While Gorges acknowledged he must change to meet the new demands, he also said he must "be who I am, how I play, do what I do."

"But at the same time, there's a philosophy and a system and an idea of how a team wants to play that you have to be a part of," he said. "So if that means that you got to do extra to get yourself involved in the play and carry the puck and jump down and be involved, you got to be willing to make those adjustments and work ... so that you're fitting into what the team wants. Because if you're not fitting into the team structure, you're never going to do it."

Gorges, a favorite of former Sabres coach Dan Bylsma, is a proud veteran. He often speaks passionately about his team, so he wasn't about to pout over sitting out.

"He's been really good, really good teammate, approaching the game the right way," Housley said. "I know it's not easy, being a veteran guy. He should be ready for his opportunity right now. It's good of him that he's had a great attitude."

Naturally, getting scratched was difficult for Gorges, who has played 749 NHL games after going undrafted.

"You want to be helping your team and be in the battle, in the game," he said. "But at the same time, it's a difficult situation, because you don't want to be the guy that's in the room and feeling sorry for himself and be a distraction. Guys got a job to do. ..."

"You do the best you can to come to the rink with a positive attitude, do what you can, do what you do and let the chips fall where they may after that."

Housley's message to the team's oldest defenseman him has been simple.

“Keep working,” said Gorges, an alternate captain for three years before losing his letter this season. “That’s kind of the gist of things. Don’t know when you’re going to get in, but keep being prepared, keep showing us that you’re hungry. When the time comes, then you can be ready.”

To some observers, it was surprising Housley didn’t start the season dressing Gorges out of respect. Defensemen are always at a premium and the Sabres are a young team, so it seemed like Gorges wouldn’t sit too long.

Still, Gorges never assumed he would play.

“You don’t really know,” Gorges said of playing. “You hope each day you come you’re back in. But that’s for higher powers than me to decide. To sit and say, ‘I think I’m going to be in this one and then you’re not,’ it’s tough. You don’t want to ride that roller coaster of emotions. You just come each day.

“When your name gets called, be ready and do what you have to do on those off days to make sure when you do get a chance that you’re ready to go.”

Housley mixes up lines to find scoring solution

WIVB

By Nick Filipowski

October 11, 2017

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Three games in and with an offense struggling to produce, Sabres Head Coach Phil Housley began mixing up line combinations in the hopes of finding a solution to the scoring problems.

Sam Reinhart (0 points) was bumped from center to wing and will skate on the right side of Johan Larsson, who will be anchored by Beniot Pouliot on the left.

With four goals to his name, Evander Kane (6 points) was moved to left wing on the Sabres' second line with Ryan O'Reilly (1 point) and Kyle Okposo, while Zemgus Girgensons moved to the top line alongside Jack Eichel (3 points) and Jason Pominville (2 points) during Wednesday's morning skate.

"You change lines to try to get other guys going. Maybe there is some chemistry you're looking for," Housley said prior to leaving for San Jose. "They could change (Thursday). We thought we'd try these combinations moving forward."

Still winless on the season, Buffalo is looking to avoid a repeat of their last two games, where they surrendered 12 goals along with three shorthanded goals.

The Sharks are 0-2 on the season with losses at home to Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

"They're in the same predicament we are. It's going to be a tough game. I'm sure they're not happy with their game, just like we're not happy with ours," Housley said. "Going on the road, hopefully we have a good solid game. We have to narrow our focus just winning the first period. It's good that guys can get on the road and bond, but we have to start winning here."

Sabres' Zach Bogosian: Out at least another week

CBSSports.com

October 11, 2017

Bogosian (lower body) will miss one more week of action at minimum, effectively ruling him out for the Sabres' next four contests, Paul Hamilton of WGR Sports Radio 550 reports.

Buffalo has allowed 4.67 goals per game in its opening three outings and was probably hoping to get Bogosian back sooner rather than later. The oft-injured defenseman has yet to suit up in a regular-season matchup after getting hurt in the final preseason game Sept. 30. Thus far, Victor Antipin has filled in on the blue line; however, coach Phil Housley could also turn to Josh Gorges while the Sabres await Bogosian's return.

Housley shuffles lineup as Sabres prepare for western road trip

Sabres.com

by Jourdon LaBarber

October 11th, 2017

Change is inevitable when a team is winless through three games, and there was plenty to be found when the Buffalo Sabres returned to practice at HarborCenter on Wednesday morning. From the lines and defensive pairs to personnel on the power play, the team had a whole new look.

Here's what the new lineup looked like:

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 15 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville
9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
67 Benoit Pouliot - 22 Johan Larsson - 23 Sam Reinhart
25 Seth Griffith - 10 Jacob Josefson - 17 Jordan Nolan

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 5 Matt Tennyson
4 Josh Gorges - 19 Jake McCabe
93 Victor Antipin - 26 Matt Moulson

"You change the lines to try to get other guys going or maybe there's some chemistry that you're looking for," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "That's why we made that change today. They could change tomorrow, but we thought we would try these combinations moving forward."

Phil Housley (10/11/17)

03:52 • October 11th, 2017

One notable change at forward was the swapping of Kane for Girgensons on the left wing alongside Eichel. Kane has been the team's most productive scorer thus far with four goals in three games, and his speed could inject some life on a line alongside O'Reilly and Okposo, both of whom have been kept off the scoresheet so far this season.

The other most notable change is the move for Reinhart from center to the wing. Reinhart has moved back-and-forth between the two positions throughout his young NHL career, but had played exclusively at center since the start of training camp.

Reinhart admitted he's been fighting the puck this season, and said his focus is on making quicker decisions and moving his feet faster on the puck.

"I'm just going to try to relax and have fun," Reinhart said. "There's so many things going on. I know I'm not the only one when I'm saying I'm fighting the puck a little bit. I've just got to relax down low, find my game and that's what I'm going to look to do."

Defensively, the pairing of Antipin with Moulson as a fourth unit suggested they could be scratched for Buffalo's game in San Jose on Thursday. That would open the door for Gorges, a healthy scratch in all three games thus far, to make his debut.

"He's been really good, a really good teammate," Housley said. "I know it's not easy, being a veteran guy, but he should be ready for his opportunity right now and it's good of him that he's had a good attitude."

Both power-play units underwent dramatic makeovers after allowing four shorthanded goals in three games. That meant breaking up the top unit that was a major catalyst for Buffalo's success with the extra man last season, when the Sabres finished with the top-ranked power play in the NHL.

On one unit, Pominville and Kane joined Eichel and O'Reilly with Ristolainen at the point. The second unit featured Okposo, Griffith and Pouliot along with two defensemen in Beaulieu and Tennyson.

The overall focus of practice was on speed and execution coming out of the defensive zone, an area the Sabres have struggled with in their past two losses to the New York Islanders and New Jersey Devils.

"I think coming back, finding the easy option, communicating on the way back and getting out of the zone as quick as possible," Reinhart said. "That's been our toughest part and that's what we worked on today."

While they work out the kinks, the Sabres will have to balance the reality of their struggles with the fact that the season is still young. They can rebound with a strong showing on a perennially-tough California road trip against the Sharks, Kings and Ducks, which now also includes a meeting with the undefeated Vegas Golden Knights at the tail end.

"Every game is important," Ristolainen said. "Yeah, I know it's only three games, but it's six points. At the end of the year the schedule might be tough and you need every point so right now the good thing is, it's only three games so we can regroup and be strong on this tough road trip against really, really good teams."

Lehner leaves practice

Lehner left practice early on Wednesday after taking a shot off his mask, leaving him with a cut on his face. Although he initially continued to practice after he was tended to by trainers, he left for good midway through the session to receive stitches.

Housley said the goaltender was OK after practice.

"Robin's doing great," Housley said. "It did require some stitches so he had to get off a little bit early."

Bogosian unlikely to travel

Zach Bogosian is still working his way back from a lower-body injury, and Housley said he expects the defenseman to remain in Buffalo when the team travels to begin a four-game road trip in San Jose on Thursday.

"I would anticipate that," Housley said. "We're trying to be really careful with it, he was moving in a good direction, but again we've got to be cautious about putting him into a practice and just make sure we take the right amount of time."

Sharpen Up: October 11, 2017
Sabres.com
by Chris Ryndak
October 11th, 2017

The Sabres return to practice today as they prepare to set out for a four-game road trip to the Pacific Time Zone.

They'll take on the San Jose Sharks tomorrow night at SAP Center at 10:30 p.m. ET. Check in with the GMC Game Night pregame show starting at 10 on MSG. We'll have full coverage throughout the day on Sabres.com.

Here's what you need to know.

The Sabres had a scheduled off day yesterday after a 6-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils on home ice Monday afternoon.

Phil Housley Postgame (10/9/17)

05:48 • October 9th, 2017

"I think the work part of it is competing and coming to play and playing for 60 minutes," coach Phil Housley said after the game. "We'll have spurts in our game where we look really, really good and then there's other areas where we're not getting back or a breakout, we're not giving our defensemen an out in the neutral zone or were not winning a race to the loose pucks and that's work and effort.

"But I think we've got to figure out those parts of our game as a group moving forward here, and hopefully the sooner the better."

Housley has stressed the importance of developing good habits in practice, so we'll see what drills the team goes through today and if any lineup changes are in store.

Stay tuned for full practice coverage here.

Next home game

The Sabres are back at it on home ice next Friday when the Vancouver Canucks come to town. Vancouver will be in the middle of a five-game road trip and coming off a game the night before in Boston.

Great seats are still available, and you can also check out different ticket packages like Mini-Packs and Family Packs.

Amerks Update

The Amerks are off to a great start after they won their first two games of the season last weekend. C.J. Smith and Justin Bailey have led the way on the stat sheet.

We have the full report for you here and be sure to check out Amerks.com throughout the week for all the latest news from our AHL affiliate.

Rochester hosts Utica on Friday.