



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

January 4, 2018

Sabres return to regularly scheduled programming

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

January 3, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- The reality show cameras are gone. So are the gobs of media piling into the locker room for two straight days in New York. There won't be 40,000 people in the stands, fire plumes signaling their entrance to the ice or celebrity musical acts mugging for pictures in the dressing room pregame and playing for the crowd between periods. No more Doc Emrick, Pierre McGuire or NHL Network in the house either.

Welcome to the rest of the Buffalo Sabres' season.

The Winter Classic is history, likely to serve as a major beacon for a 2017-18 campaign that will almost certainly end with Buffalo outside the Stanley Cup playoffs for the seventh straight year. The Sabres got home Monday night after their 3-2 overtime loss to the New York Rangers in Citi Field, spent Tuesday on a day off with their families and flew here Wednesday morning for practice to carry on with their schedule.

The Sabres are 10-20-9 heading into Thursday night's game against the Minnesota Wild in Xcel Energy Center, and they hit the halfway point of the season against surprising Central Division leader Winnipeg on Friday night in Bell MTS Place.

Now that the buildup to New Year's Day is over, will the Eastern Conference's last-place team struggle to keep its focus on the day-to-day tasks at hand?

"Now that it's over, I'm not too worried about that on how I feel mentally and physically," winger Evander Kane said after Wednesday's workout. "Headed into it, the buildup and magnitude of that game is going to be tough to match the rest of the way but you quickly realize you've got to get geared right back up. We're playing some good teams here on the road."

When the Sabres lost the 2008 Winter Classic in a shootout to Pittsburgh at then-Ralph Wilson Stadium, the Jan. 1 game came early in a string of 10 straight losses. From Dec. 26, 2007-Jan. 16, 2008, the Sabres went 0-5-5 as all the extra-time losses were in shootouts. The streak ruined their season as Buffalo finished with 90 points, four out of the playoffs.

Back then, of course, the game was in its first year and didn't have the hype it does now. And that Sabres team, filled with players that were veterans of the Eastern Conference final the previous two seasons, weren't able to come down off the big-game glare.

Coach Phil Housley insists he's not worried about any post-Classic hangover with this group in spite of its lack of experience in the spotlight.

"It's just business as usual," Housley said. "We had a day off yesterday to calm down from the Winter Classic game and I thought we had terrific energy in practice today, really good execution. They understand what they're up against. This is a very good hockey team we'll be playing and we have to be ready from the start."

Housley has been encouraged by the fact his team has points in nine of its last 12 games (going 4-3-5) and liked their response to the 2-0 deficit they fell into over the first nine minutes on Monday.

"We didn't get our feet moving early but once we settled in and played our style, I thought we were very effective out there," Housley said. "We've got to continue to do that. We have to do things quicker in the offensive zone. Anytime we're coming up the ice, our 'D' have got to get up the ice, be in support of the forecheck and make sure we're slamming the wall."

The Sabres had their forecheck going as they got first-minute goals from Sam Reinhart in the second period and Rasmus Ristolainen in the third to forge the 2-2 tie before losing on J.T. Miller's power-play goal in overtime.

"It was a lot of fun," said defenseman Zach Bogosian. "Flying back to Buffalo that night, you get home, sit down and really think about how special a moment that was. Not only for the guys playing in the game but for the families that were there and the fans that came to support us. It was an all-around great weekend."

"The first 10 minutes we were kind of standing around watching. They came out pretty good there. They were flying, getting on pucks. Toward the end of the first, we started playing more of our game. ... We stayed with a dog-on-bone mentality and that's the way we have to play."

This three-game trip, which concludes Sunday afternoon in Philadelphia, will end the Sabres' seven-game run away from Buffalo caused by the World Junior Championship taking over KeyBank Center.

"The overall experience of it was pretty special, pretty cool," Kane said of the afternoon in the home of the New York Mets. "It was kind of like an NFL week. Everybody is getting geared up the whole time for this game. The crowd was sold out. It was pretty fun to be a part of and something I'd love to do again hopefully down the road."

"You definitely learn from certain experiences throughout your hockey career and that will be an experience that I'll remember for the rest of my life," Bogosian said. "Use it as a learning experience and as something to look back on."

Sabres Notebook: Wild are red-hot at home

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

January 3, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- The Buffalo Sabres are in the midst of a rugged stretch of road games and no team they will be facing has been hotter at home lately than the Minnesota Wild.

The Wild are 10-1-1 in their last 12 games at Xcel Energy Center, where they host the Sabres Thursday night. They're coming off a 5-1 bludgeoning of the Florida Panthers on Tuesday, a game that saw them outshoot Florida, 19-2, in the second period and 41-26 overall.

On the season, the Wild are 13-4-2 at home and that's third in the Western Conference in points percentage entering Wednesday. Only Vegas (17-2-1) and Winnipeg (14-3-1) are ahead of them, and the Sabres head to Manitoba to meet the Jets Friday.

The Wild, however, are just 8-12-1 on the road and that has them fifth in the Central Division and a point behind Anaheim in the wild-card race.

Minnesota's 12-game run of dominance at home began with a 3-0 win over Philadelphia on Nov. 14, the last of a streak of three straight shutouts by the Wild. The only regulation loss in that stretch was a 3-2 defeat to Edmonton on Dec. 16, the lone loss in overtime was a 4-3 decision Nov. 20 against New Jersey. The Wild won five straight here after that game and are 8-1 in the last nine at home.

"Minnesota is going to be tough to play against," Sabres coach Phil Housley said after practice here Wednesday. "Reading a lot of things their players said and the coaches from Florida said about how they forecheck, hang on to pucks down low and force other teams to defend, we're going to have to have a game plan to avoid that and spend less time in our zone."

The Wild have outscored opponents at home this year, 54-39, and have killed off 91.9 percent of the penalties against them. Opponents have just five power-play goals in Xcel Energy Center, the fewest allowed by a home team in the NHL this season.

While the Wild have thrived of late in their building, the Sabres have a very unusual history against Minnesota since it re-entered the NHL as an expansion team in 2000. Buffalo is 7-3 against the Wild here in that span but just 2-9 in KeyBank Center, including a 5-4 loss on Nov. 22.

The Wild returned from Christmas with a stretch that will see 15 of 22 games at home through mid-February. That includes seven of their 11 January games, giving them a big chance to make up ground in the tight Central Division.

Especially since they're getting healthier. Zach Parise -- who averaged 25 goals and 50 points the last five years for Minnesota -- made his season debut Tuesday after back surgery and winger Nino Niederreiter will return Thursday after missing five games with a lower-body injury. Assuming Niederreiter plays, the Wild will have a full lineup for the first time this season.

"If it works I'll be real excited," coach Bruce Boudreau said after practice Wednesday. "We'll see how we play. That's what gets me excited when we're playing well. I thought the second period was our best period of the year last night. That stuff gets me excited."

Thursday's game will be the first here for Buffalo defenseman Marco Scandella and winger Jason Pominville since the July trade between the Wild and Sabres. Scandella, the Wild's second-round pick in 2008, played 373 games for them from 2010-17. Pominville played 327 games for Minnesota from the time he was acquired from the Sabres in 2013 through the end of last season.

On the other side of that trade, former Sabres Tyler Ennis has six goals and six assists in 39 games for the Wild while Marcus Foligno has three goals and seven assists in 37 games.

All hands were on deck for the Sabres at practice Wednesday except defenseman Victor Antipin. Housley said Sunday in New York that Antipin is being dogged by the flu and there was no update on his status Wednesday.

It was an unusually busy day for an NHL arena here Wednesday with three teams practicing. Florida opted to stay in Minnesota and work out here before trying to make their flight to Boston, which is expected to be crushed with snow on Thursday. The Panthers are supposed to play there Thursday night and then move on to Detroit for a game Friday.

The Wild followed Florida to the ice and the Sabres then got their chance at 2 p.m. local time after taking a delayed morning flight from Buffalo. The Sabres were off on Tuesday in the aftermath of Monday's overtime loss to the Rangers at the Winter Classic in New York.

Sabres lose much of local audience from 2008 Winter Classic

The Buffalo News

By Alan Pergament

January 3, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres' 3-2 overtime loss to the New York Rangers in the 10th anniversary game of the NHL's Winter Classic lost about two-thirds of the local TV audience from the 2008 game played in what was then named Ralph Wilson Stadium in Orchard Park.

Monday's game from Citi Field in the borough of Queens in New York City had a preliminary 12.4 rating on WGRZ-TV (Channel 2), the local NBC affiliate, during game action. The rating peaked during the overtime at 14.4.

That's a strong rating for a regular season hockey game.

However, the Sabres' shootout loss to Pittsburgh in the 2008 game had a 38.2 rating on Channel 2.

There likely were multiple reasons for the decline, including the hangover from the Buffalo Bills breaking their 17 season playoff drought Sunday, the Sabres' poor start to the season and the fact outdoor games no longer seem as novel.

By comparison, the Bills win over Miami Sunday had a 43.1 rating.

Notre Dame's 21-17 college football victory over LSU in the Citrus Bowl, which played opposite the hockey game, had a 5.5 local rating on WKBW-TV (Channel 7), the local ABC affiliate.

And Georgia's 54-48 double overtime victory over Oklahoma in a college football playoff semifinal game had an 11.1 preliminary local rating on ESPN. The local rating peaked at 16.8 at 9 p.m.

The Sabres are coming back to earth

The team isn't worried about a Winter Classic hangover

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

JANUARY 03, 2018

St. Paul, MN (WGR 550) - After the thrill and lead up to the NHL Winter Classic, it's back down to earth for the Buffalo Sabres as they prepare for road games in Minnesota, Winnipeg and Philadelphia.

The players really seemed to enjoy the whole process of playing in that game so I've been wondering if there'll be a Winter Classic hangover. Everybody seemed to be focused after practice in Minnesota. Head coach Phil Housley isn't worried, "I don't think so, I think we've been playing some very good hockey as of late and we understand how we have to play."

The team had Tuesday off and skated about 40 minutes on Wednesday. Housley said, "It's business as usual. We had a day off to be able to calm down from the Winter Classic and I thought we had terrific energy in practice today and really good execution."

There was a lot of hype as the whole hockey world was focused on the Buffalo Sabres for the first time in years. Housley feels playing in a situation like that can make his players want to do more of that, "Definitely, nobody would've forecasted where we are at this point, but we're dealing with it really well right now. We'll use that Winter Classic experience moving forward.

"It was a big stage that we handled pretty well. We didn't get our feet moving early, but once we settled in and played our brand of style, I thought we were very effective out there and we've just got to continue to do that."

Zach Bogosian has never played a playoff game in Buffalo, Winnipeg or Atlanta. He said the Winter Classic makes him want to get on that playoff stage even more, "It's always great when you know that everybody is watching a spectacle like that, it was cool to be a part of it. There was a lot going on there with practice outdoors with it leading up to the game, you just try to soak everything up.

"It was a cool, new experience for most of the guys in this room other than Benoit who has played in five of them, but you learn from certain experiences throughout your career and that will be an experience that I'll remember for the rest of my life."

Playing in a game like that makes you do a lot of thinking. It didn't hit Bogosian until he got home, "It was a lot of fun. Flying back to Buffalo that night, you get home, sit down and really think about how special a moment it was, not only for the guys playing in the game, but for the families there and the fans that came to support, so it was an all-around great weekend."

We talked to Housley about the Winter Classic hangover and Bogosian isn't buying it either, "No I don't think so. If anything it'll just feel more natural being back playing indoors and getting adjusted back to what you're used to."

Evander Kane is the type of player that loves the hype and loves the big stage. The team started slow, but Kane said he was very pumped up for the opening faceoff, "I can't really speak for other guys in terms of the atmosphere and how they felt, but for me, it just really got me going. I was hitting everything that moved for a few shifts and it was probably as close to a playoff game that you can get and I was trying to use it to my advantage and it's something that I'd love to do again."

Kane knows there was a lot of hype for about three weeks before with cameras in the locker-room and everything that came with it. Kane said, "After this game it's kind of like, the buildup and the magnitude of that game, it's going to be tough to match the rest of the way, but you quickly realize you've got to get back up because we're playing some good teams here on the road."

It's probably good that Chad Johnson didn't have to go in for Robin Lehner during the Winter Classic. Johnson said he was not sitting on the heated bench and was very cold as he sat and watched.

No word on if Johnson will play on this trip, but if Housley stays consistent, Robin Lehner will play in Minnesota and Philadelphia while Johnson would play in Winnipeg.

Victor Antipin is still sick and is not on the trip to start. Justin Falk moved in next to Nate Beaulieu on defense with Josh Gorges and Scott Wilson practicing as the extras.

Preview: Wild vs. Buffalo

FoxSports

Jan 4, 2018

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Due to the World Junior Hockey Championship being played in their arena, the Buffalo Sabres have not had a true home game since Dec. 22 and won't again play in front of their home fans until Tuesday. But Sabres coach Phil Housley will at least get a taste of home on Thursday when his team visits Minnesota to face the Wild.

Housley's family still lives in the Twin Cities suburbs, where his wife Karin is a Republican state senator and has recently announced her candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

As for the campaign that Phil Housley is running in Buffalo, the team is still solidly in last place in the Eastern Conference, but the first-year Sabres coach is seeing some signs of hope.

After their overtime loss to the New York Rangers in the Winter Classic on New Year's Day, the Sabres have collected at least a point in four of their last five games.

"A lot easier, believe me. Early on in the season there were a lot of struggles and a lot of games we were in were one-goal games or we were even. We were just cracking at the wrong time, making a critical mistake at the wrong time, and they were tough," Housley said.

"It was tough on our hockey club and our coaches because we kept trying to grind it out and trying to find different areas where we could improve. We're playing a better brand of hockey now. You can see the confidence growing in our guys. ... There are times when we bend but we don't break, which is a credit to our team."

Buffalo's players have noticed a new, better feeling, both on the ice and in the locker room.

"We're definitely making strides and playing more consistently the way we want to play, which is usually a good sign," said forward Jason Pominville, who will be returning to Minnesota after the Wild traded him to Buffalo over the summer.

The Wild opened 2018 with a decisive 5-1 win over the Florida Panthers on Tuesday, getting two goals each from Matt Cullen and Eric Staal. They were boosted by the return of Zach Parise to their lineup after the star left winger had missed the first half of the season due to back surgery.

"I felt really good from the start," said Parise, who had three shots and skated more than 13 minutes versus the Panthers. "Kind of re-learning different spots on the ice where you get pressured. But that'll come. Conditioning-wise, everything else actually felt really good."

Wild coach Bruce Boudreau sounded confident after the Florida game that they may inch closer to full health soon with the return of forward Nino Niederreiter, who has missed five games with a lower-body injury.

Niederreiter was a full participant in the Wild's practice on Wednesday and Boudreau expects him in the lineup versus Buffalo.

Following high of Winter Classic, Sabres get back to business in St. Paul

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 3rd, 2018

SAINT PAUL, Minn. - For a couple of days, all eyes in the hockey world were on the Buffalo Sabres. Evander Kane described the buildup to the 2018 Bridgestone Winter Classic as being almost NFL-like, between the media attention and the anticipation toward playing on a national stage.

With that game now behind them, though, it was back to their usual daily routine for practice at Xcel Energy Center on Wednesday.

"I think it's just business as usual," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We had a day off yesterday to calm down from the Winter Classic game, and I thought we had terrific energy at practice today, really good execution."

Housley rejected the notion of being worried about any sort of "Winter Classic hangover," and his players agreed. Kane said it may have been a thought going into the event, but one that dissipated following the day off on Tuesday and then the return to practice indoors.

"I think kind of now that it's over, I'm not too worried about that [based] on how I feel mentally and physically," Kane said. "But I think maybe heading into it you think, jeeze, after this game, the buildup and the magnitude of that game, it's going to be tough to match the rest of the way.

"But you quickly realize you've got to get geared right back up."

The Sabres have been generally pleased with their play as of late; they took all three of their games since the holiday break into overtime and have earned points in nine of 12 games dating back to Dec. 5, a stretch in which they're 4-3-5.

Part of what's helping them stay on course, Housley said, is the knowledge of what kinds of tests await them. The Sabres are four games into a stretch of seven consecutive contests away from KeyBank Center, tied for the longest such stretch in franchise history. They'll play three games in the next four days, beginning in Minnesota on Thursday.

After playing the Wild, they'll head to Winnipeg to play on Friday followed by a game in Philadelphia on Sunday afternoon.

"They understand what they're up against," Housley said. "This is a very good hockey team that we're going to be playing tomorrow night and we have to be ready from the start. I think it showed in practice today that guys have a little bit of confidence just from the recent games, but we have to understand that we have to be ready at the start of the game."

Zach Bogosian suggested that, as opposed to any sort of "hangover" from the Winter Classic, the game in Minnesota will represent a return to normalcy.

"If anything, it will just feel more natural to be back playing indoors and getting adjusted back to what you're used to," he said. "I don't think there will be any type of hangover that way. We have three teams on this road trip that we're looking to get points from and get the wins every game. It starts tomorrow night."

Coverage in Minnesota on Thursday begins at 7:30 p.m. with GMC Gamenight on MSG-B, or you can listen live on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 8 p.m.

Looking back at the Classic

While the team was off on Tuesday, several of the Sabres players took to social media to share their gratitude for the experience of playing in the Winter Classic. Bogosian - who had yet to play in an outdoor game during his 10-year career - was one such player.

"Flying back to Buffalo that night, you get home and think about how special of a moment it was," he said. "Not only for the guys who were playing in the game, but for the families that were there and obviously the fans that came to support. It was an all-around great weekend."

Kane, who like Bogosian came to Buffalo via Atlanta and Winnipeg and had yet to play in an outdoor game, echoed his teammate's sentiment.

[View image on Twitter](#)

[View image on Twitter](#)

Evander Kane



@evanderkane_9

The #winterclassic wasn't the result we wanted but I must say it was a truly great experience. I had so much fun playing in front of the 40,000 plus fans. #EK9

5:30 PM - Jan 2, 2018

33 33 Replies 64 64 Retweets 1,100 1,100 likes

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

"It really got me going. I was kind of hitting everything that moved those first few shifts," Kane said. "It was as close to a playoff game that you can get. I was trying to use it to my advantage. It was something that I'd love to do again, I'd love to do every night."

Housley's back home

Housley said during the weekend that, growing up in South St. Paul, he would make an effort to wake up early on weekends and be the first kid out on the pond so that he could have the ice to himself. Perhaps it's no coincidence that he was first on the ice for practice on Wednesday, his first in his hometown as an NHL head coach.

Asked if he might have nerves being behind the bench on Thursday night, Housley was forthcoming.

"I'm a nervous guy," he said. "I'm anxious, I'm intense, and I'm sure I'll be nervous once I get behind the bench early. But coming from the Winter Classic, that was extraordinary and very nerve-racking, just so everything worked out smoothly and we wanted our guys to play well, which they did. Now we've just got to carry that forward. But it's always a good time coming back to Minnesota."

Wednesday's practice

Victor Antipin, who is ill, remained absent for a third straight practice. The rest of the lineup remained the same as it had been in Monday's game, with the exception of Justin Falk replacing Josh Gorges on a defensive pair with Nathan Beaulieu:

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 15 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
67 Benoit Pouliot - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 29 Jason Pominville
22 Johan Larsson - 10 Jacob Josefson - 17 Jordan Nolan
20 Scott Wilson

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
19 Jake McCabe - 47 Zach Bogosian
82 Nathan Beaulieu - 41 Justin Falk
4 Josh Gorges

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson

Budik, Nylander, Davidsson, Mittelstadt advance to semifinals

World Junior Championship action resumes Thursday

by Kris Baker

SabresProspects.com

January 3rd, 2018

Defenseman Vojtech Budik (2016, fifth round) and the Czech Republic are heading to the semifinal round of the 2018 IIHF World Junior Championship following Tuesday's 4-3 shootout victory over Finland.

Budik, who captured one assist in the win for his fourth point of the tournament, did a nice job throughout the contest using his size and long reach to break up plays and chip pucks off the boards.

He was quite steady defensively for the Czechs, only expanding his offensive game when the Czech Republic was pressing late in the third period in search of the game-tying goal, which they eventually scored to force overtime.

Budik's helper came in the game's 35th minute when he used the boards to clear the zone with a backhand that led to a Kristian Reichel goal on the ensuing transition.

The Finns brought the heat on the forecheck in the early stages, but Budik's overall workload was relatively light in the opening period with not much in terms of sustained pressure or traffic in front of the net to attend to.

It was a different story in the second and third periods, though, as Budik saw his poise and awareness put to the test as the Finns started coming in waves to pile up a total of 54 shots.

Still, Budik proved to be a calming influence in his 26:09 of action to help the Czechs reach the semifinals for the first time since 2005.

The Czechs will face Canada, who advanced with an 8-2 triumph over Switzerland, at 8 p.m. at KeyBank Center.

Finland goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (2017, second round) stopped 26 of 29 shots through regulation and overtime, but allowed two goals in the shootout to take the loss and head home without a medal.

Much as he has throughout the tournament, the composed Luukkonen came out to the edge of the paint to challenge shooters and looked comfortable exiting the net to handle the puck. His athleticism and demeanor serves as a solid foundation for Luukkonen as he continues to address some of the areas in his game that were exposed in his five World Junior starts.

With his team killing a penalty, Luukkonen allowed the first of three regulation goals at 6:20 of the first period.

The Czechs moved the puck around, and as Luukkonen rotated to his right to face the shooter, he left an opening over his right shoulder that allowed Filip Zadina to blow a shot past him on the short side.

With 5:43 left in the second period, Reichel broke in on the breakaway and got Luukkonen to drop with a forehand-to-backhand move before lifting the puck to tie the game 2-2. Luukkonen fell forward to make a play on the puck, but Reichel's quick hands won the battle to even the score prior to the second intermission.

A minute and half later, Luukkonen made an important save as Radovan Pavlik got inside position on Juuso Valimaki (CGY) and tried to squeeze a puck through his legs on a breakaway. Luukkonen was calm and stayed with Pavlik the entire way to shut the opportunity down.

Late in the third period with the Finns clinging to a one-goal lead, a shot from the point was tipped downward in the slot by Zadina through Luukkonen's legs to force extra time.

Luukkonen's shootout results:

Reichel came in with speed, got Luukkonen to drop, and waited him out while drifting wide before scoring with a forehand. Luukkonen stopped the second attempt as Zadina came down the left side tried to beat him with a short-side shot.

Martin Necas went third for the Czechs, beating Luukkonen with a quick shot right at his feet.

Martin Kaut comes down the middle and fakes a slap shot, but Luukkonen stays with him and closes his legs to stuff the forehand deke.

Marek Zachar cuts left to right and sees his five-hole backhand attempt stopped by Luukkonen. The 18-year-old Luukkonen ends the tournament with a 2-3 record, 3.13 goals-against average, and a .879 save percentage. The only goalie to play every minute of his team's games, Luukkonen will likely get another crack at leading Finland back to medal contention when the 2019 tournament takes place in Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia.

In the third quarterfinal of the day, Alexander Nylander (2016, first round) and Marcus Davidsson (2017, second round) were each held without a point as Sweden ended Slovakia's tournament hopes with a 3-2 win.

Nylander recorded one shot on goal in the victory, at times showing off his speed and skill while earning an even 17:00 of work. One instance saw Nylander blaze through the neutral zone with speed and dance to the middle with a nice one-on-one move that saw him crossover and cut while maintaining control of the puck.

Sweden's coaching staff certainly appreciates the individual flashes of brilliance, but they are likely hoping that Nylander can elevate his even-strength intensity over the next two contests as they pursue their first medal since 2014. It will also be key for the talented forward to hit the net with more shots as several of his attempts have missed high or wide as he looks to pick corners.

Davidsson, meanwhile, extended his run of consistent play with another strong effort that saw him collect two shots on goal as the team's checking line pivot. Davidsson was tabbed for 22 shifts, compared to Nylander's 19, but his total workload was considerably less with 11:57 logged.

Bring speed and detail down the middle, Davidsson's best scoring chance came early in the game when he cut to the net to get a clean look while on the penalty kill.

The role Davidsson is playing for Sweden in this tournament is exactly the role he'll be expected to play when he arrives in North America. He's committed to the work in front of him on every shift, and in that regard he has proven himself quite well leading up to the semifinal round.

In the day's final game, Casey Mittelstadt (2017, first round) recorded one assist as the United States punched their ticket to the medal round by defeating Russia 4-2.

Mittelstadt, who began the game lined up at center between Joey Anderson (NJD) and 2018 NHL Draft prospect Brady Tkachuk, was an all-situations player en route to earning 21:19 of ice time. His effort has not waned all tournament, with Mittelstadt playing with a two-way sense of urgency and being a key creator for the American attack.

On the second American goal, Mittelstadt chipped the puck away from the lunging goaltender to Kailer Yamamoto, who was stopped on his first shot but stuck with it to put his team up a goal 2-1. The helper was Mittelstadt's tournament-leading 10th point. He was unable to get a goal of his own with any of his four shots on goal.

The U.S. will take on Sweden at 4 p.m. at KeyBank Center on Thursday in the first of two semifinal matchups.

For tournament updates, follow Kris Baker on Twitter (@SabresProspects) and check out his website SabresProspects.com for news on Sabres players in the pipeline throughout the week.