



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

February 1, 2018

Taylor Hall of Devils fined \$5,000 for boarding incident

Associated Press

February 1, 2018

NEW YORK (AP) — New Jersey Devils forward Taylor Hall has been fined \$5,000 for a boarding penalty against Buffalo Sabres forward Kyle Okposo.

The NHL announced the fine on Wednesday, less than 24 hours after the Devils beat the Sabres 3-1 on Tuesday night.

The incident occurred at 7:40 of the first period. Hall was assessed a minor penalty for boarding.

The fine is the maximum allowable under the current collective bargaining agreement. The money goes to the players' emergency assistance fund.

How to break Kane's slump? Sabres hope it's a return to Eichel's line

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

January 31, 2018

Evander Kane has simply stopped scoring. So the Buffalo Sabres made the most sensible switch in their lines at practice Wednesday: Put him back on Jack Eichel's wing.

Kane will get a chance to resurrect his season – and perhaps bolster his standing among suitors eyeing the trade deadline – while playing with Eichel and Kyle Okposo on a strong top line as the Sabres host the Florida Panthers Thursday in KeyBank Center.

Kane remains second on the Sabres to Eichel in goals (16) and points (36) but much of that damage was done in October and November when he was playing with Eichel. When the calendar hit Dec. 1, Kane had 12 goals and 11 assists. Since then, he has just four goals and nine assists in the last 25 games.

"Hopefully we'll generate some more offense," Kane said. "I haven't created much offensively the last little bit and when I have, they haven't gone in. I've hit some bars. Obviously it's not fun when you're not producing but it's part of a long year."

Kane, who has been playing for several games with Johan Larsson and Jason Pominville, had no shots on goal in Tuesday's 3-1 loss to New Jersey here – the first time that's happened to him at home since he joined the Sabres in 2015.

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Kane had one goal and one assist in 12 January games, with the goal a meaningless last-minute tally in a loss to Minnesota when the score was 6-1. He has no goals in his last 10 games, one goal in his last 15 games and four goals in his last 29.

"They had good chemistry early," coach Phil Housley said of Kane and Eichel. "It was just a change to spark Evander a little bit, reunite those guys. We're going to need 5-on-5 scoring moving ahead here. ... It was just a move to try to mix it up a little bit."

"Confidence obviously helps," Kane said. "When things are going in, you're feeling good. When it's not, you've got to keep your confidence. If that goes, it can really prolong it and other parts of your game can really start to slip. For me, I'm staying confident with what I can do and eventually it will turn."

There is clearly some mental gymnastics going on, with Kane having to strike a balance about his current affairs with the Sabres while simultaneously wondering about his future with the Feb. 26 trade deadline approaching.

"It's two totally different things," he said. "All I can really focus on is each day, each and every game and try to be the best player I can be. It's not something I try to block out. I try to embrace it and realize it's part of my every day right now."

"Anybody in his situation, sometimes it can be difficult," Housley said. "Especially when you're going through a stretch when a lot of things aren't going your way. He's just got to find a way to work through it. He hit a crossbar on the road. Maybe that would have sparked him in Vancouver. He's getting some opportunities. It just hasn't been going in for him."

Housley said he'd like to see Kane start to attack the net more like he did earlier in the season, either by swooping in for rebounds on the power play or using his speed to go wide on defensemen. Certainly, the attention going to the red-hot Eichel could open up more ice for Kane.

"When 'Kaner' is on and playing his game, he can be really dangerous," Eichel said. "He's a pretty unique combination of size, skill, speed. He shoots hard, goes to the net hard. When he's physical and disrupting things, he's a lot to handle and a good guy to play with. When you're going through a tough stretch and not scoring, even the best players in our league go through it. You just try to simplify things and go to the net."

Eichel had a stretch earlier this year of three goals in 18 games and has often said he felt he was playing better than those numbers would indicate.

"Sometimes it feels like everything you touch is going in and you find a way and there's other times where it feels like you can't buy one," Eichel said. "It's a weird game like that. I like to pass the puck so hey, go try to get yourself open and I'll find you. I know how well he shoots it."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Evander Kane/ phil housley

Sabres Notebook: NHL fines Hall, backs Sabres' position on Okposo hit

The Buffalo News

By Mike Harrington

January 31, 2018

The Sabres thought they should have had a five-minute power play in the first period Tuesday night. The NHL apparently agrees with them.

New Jersey forward Taylor Hall has been fined \$5,000, the maximum allowed under the CBA, for his boarding penalty against Sabres winger Kyle Okposo during the Devils' 3-1 win in KeyBank Center.

Hall was only given a minor penalty on the play, perhaps in part because Okposo immediately hopped to his feet and was uninjured.

"I wasn't expecting it at all. I absolutely thought it deserved to be a major," Okposo said after practice Wednesday. "I was in a vulnerable position and didn't know a hit was coming. You're 5 feet from the boards and that is a hit that is five (minutes) every time."

Hall told NHL.com after Tuesday's game he felt that Okposo turned at the last second prior to the hit.

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"I just kind of went in and thought it'd be shoulder-on-shoulder but I hit him in the back," Hall said. "Def a 2-min minor, would've been iffy if they called it five. It's a quick game."

Sabres coach Phil Housley disagreed with that view, saying the fact Hall came directly from behind should have made the hit a major penalty and a game misconduct.

"The thing that was concerning to me is the distance that it come from and that he's looking at the player's numbers when he's going for the puck," Housley said. "Kyle, who is a very strong player, got up right away and that was part of the ruling of the referee. But it's good to see the NHL came forward and recognized it and fined Taylor Hall. I know that's not part of his game but it's still a hit that should have been a five-minute major."

* * *

There were about 3,000 children on hand for practice Wednesday as part of the NHLPA's Future Goals program that uses hockey to relate to school subjects like math and science.

At one point early in practice, Housley stopped the workout and sternly addressed his team for a few seconds about its execution.

"I would have liked to have seen a better start," Housley said. "I think with all the kids there it was hard for them to hear me but that's one of the reasons why I had to stop practice because I was looking for some more speed. I think from that point it got a lot better, our execution got better. I really liked our battle drills at the end there. We need more of that moving forward. I shouldn't have to address our team today and give them that reaction. We should have been better ready to play."

* * *

Wednesday was Bell Let's Talk day in Canada, with the Canadian telecommunications giant donating five cents for every social media interaction, including the Twitter hashtag #BellLetsTalk, to mental health programs in Canada.

Wednesday morning before practice, Sabres center Jack Eichel tweeted out a simple message of "Speak up and reach out" with a four-leaf clover and the hashtag.

"Knowing people that have went through [mental illness] and we've lost a lot of players from our league. It's a serious disease, a serious problem," Eichel said. "Obviously, whenever you're able to spread awareness and do something for a good cause, it's nice.

"If you're having problems, if you're down on yourself or down about something, it's important to reach out to somebody and just talk. You never know what it can do for somebody. You never know what somebody is really going through until you talk to them."

Jack Eichel

✓

@Jackeichel15

Speak up and reach out. 🍄 #BellLetsTalk

9:45 AM - Jan 31, 2018

13 13 Replies 4,123 4,123 Retweets 3,258 3,258 likes

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* * *

Former Sabres defenseman Mike Weber was hired as an assistant coach Wednesday by the Windsor Spitfires, his former Ontario Hockey League junior team. Weber, 30, finished his career this year playing in Sweden when knee injuries prevented him from playing. He is likely headed for knee replacement surgery.

Weber, the Sabres' second-round pick in 2006, played four seasons for Windsor from 2003-2007. He played 341 games for Buffalo until being traded to Washington at the deadline in 2016. He finished his NHL career with 10 games for the Caps that season and two more in the playoffs.

Weber spent last year as the captain of the American Hockey League's Iowa Wild in the Minnesota chain before playing 10 games this year for Frolunda in the Swedish League.

Mike Weber

✓

@Mike6Weber

Couldn't be more excited to start my next chapter with @SpitsHockey. Grateful for the opportunity and eager to get going! #gospitsgo <https://twitter.com/spitshockey/status/958678755500634112> ...

7:46 AM - Jan 31, 2018

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* * *

Housley was surprised when reporters passed on the news to him that former Nashville Predators captain Mike Fisher, who retired after last season, announced Wednesday he's re-signing with the team for the rest of the season. Housley was an assistant with the Preds last season, when Fisher helped the team to the Stanley Cup final.

"That's pretty surprising. It's going to be tough. He's been out of the game for a long time but good for him," Housley said. "Maybe he's still got the fire in him."

In a news conference Wednesday, Fisher confirmed the return is for this season only to take one more crack at the Stanley Cup. The 37-year-old, who is married to music star Carrie Underwood, has played 1,088 NHL games with Ottawa and Nashville. He lost in the Cup final with the Senators in 2007 to Anaheim and with the Predators last year to Pittsburgh.

Carrie Underwood

✓

@carrieunderwood

This is happening! Fish is back! So proud of you, baby! We want the cup!!! <https://twitter.com/predsnhl/status/958748453554794497> ...

1:03 PM - Jan 31, 2018

350 350 Replies 2,498 2,498 Retweets 21,351 21,351 likes

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Housley said Fisher, along with former defenseman Shea Weber, were the most respected leaders for the Predators in the four seasons he was an assistant to Peter Laviolette.

"He represented the Nashville Predators in a classy way and his compete level, not only in practice and in games, he was one of the fiercest competitors I've seen in the battle," Housley said. "I know other teams respected that."

* * *

The Sabres have announced a February partnership with the Bald for Bucks initiative and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to raise funds to support research and patient-care programs.

As part of the effort, the Sabres and Bald for Bucks will be releasing limited-edition T-shirts. Donors who contribute \$50 or more will receive the T-shirt and have the chance to win autographed merchandise, tickets to future Sabres games and meet-and-greet opportunities.

Donations can be made online at Sabres.com/BaldForBucks or at KeyBank Center during Thursday's game against Florida as well as home games on Feb. 8 (New York Islanders), 17 (Los Angeles) and 25 (Boston). All money raised will stay in Western New York for research projects and cancer patient support.

Story topics: [Buffalo Sabres](#)/ [Jack Eichel](#)/ [Kyle Okposo](#)/ [Mike Weber](#)/ [Nashville Predators](#)/ [phil housley](#)

Kane trying to figure out his slump

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

January 31, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Evander Kane had a great offensive start to the season. He scored 12 goals in his first 21 games, but only has four in his last 29 games. Kane does not have a goal in 10 games and has just one in 14. Kane said, "I haven't created much offensively in the last little bit. Obviously it's not fun when you're not producing, but it's part of a long year and we have a substantial amount of games left and we can turn it around."

Scoring goals can get into your head. I think it can happen when the puck is going in and also when it's not. Kane said, "Confidence obviously helps, especially when things are going in, you're feeling good about things and when it's not, you've just got to keep your confidence because if that goes, it can really prolong things and other parts of your game can suffer too, so for me, I'm staying confident in what I can do."

Kane knows he will likely be traded before the Feb. 26 trade deadline. One wonders if that has an effect on his game. Kane said, "It's not something I try to block out, I think I just try to embrace it and realize it's part of my every day now."

Phil Housley said there are a few things he'd like to see Kane get back to. Housley moved Kane to the left wing with Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo for Wednesday's practice. The head coach said, "He hasn't gotten the puck a lot in the middle because they know he's got a quick release, but even shots from the point, I think he can sink down there and maybe try to get a rebound and get in there a little bit more into the paint area."

"I think a lot of times he can use his speed a little bit better, attacking with wide speed and try to get some shots off, but I've never had a problem with his shot mentality."

As far as putting Kane back with Eichel, Housley said, "I think they had good chemistry early and it was a change to maybe spark Evander. We're going to need 5-on-5 scoring moving ahead here, especially playing some good checking teams, so it's a move to try to mix it up a little bit."

Wednesday was kid's day at practice with around 3,000 kids in attendance. They didn't see a very good start to practice and Housley put an end to it quickly, "It was tough because you're coming off a game where you got a little bit outcompeted in the battle level, we addressed that."

"I would've like to have seen a better start, but I think with all the kids there, it was hard for them to hear me, so that's one of the reasons I had to stop practice because I was looking for some more speed and I think from that point, it got a lot better."

"I shouldn't have to address our team today and give them the reaction where we should've been better and ready to play."

The lines changed up for practice.

Kane - Eichel - Okposo

Wilson - O'Reilly - Reinhart

Girgensons (Pouliot) - Larsson - Pominville

Nolan - Josefson (Rodrigues) - Baptiste

Scandella - Ristolainen

McCabe - Antipin

Gorges - Nelson

Beauleau - Falk

Okposo not happy with the Hall hit from behind

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

January 31, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - The NHL Department of Player Safety has fined Taylor Hall \$5,000 for his hit from behind on Kyle Okposo. If the league wants to eliminate that hit, it needs to be a major penalty each and every time.

Okposo was in some pain, but popped up because he doesn't believe in laying on the ice. In my mind, that shouldn't matter. We hate when players embellish, but the league encourages that with plays like these. Okposo said. "I don't like that, since you were a kid you get taught don't stay on the ice, it's not my style, I've never been one to stay down, but if you stay down and get the five minute, maybe that game's different. It shouldn't matter if the player's hurt or not."

"If I stay down, then the ref says it's a five, but why should that matter? It's the same play in my opinion.

"I got up because I was mad and I was looking around for who did it and it didn't register, I was looking for somebody else, but I know he's not that kind of a player, but still, it was a bad hit. I didn't turn or anything, I was just going to get the puck and he just buried me five feet from the boards, so I didn't like that play at all."

If the league thought it was a bad enough hit for a fine, then it was a bad enough hit to receive a five minute major penalty..

Sabres' Evander Kane slumping as trade deadline approaches

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 1, 2018

BUFFALO – In what are likely his final days with the Sabres, winger Evander Kane said he's trying to embrace his uncertain future.

Whether it goes down today, next week or hours before the Feb. 26 trade deadline, the last-place team will almost certainly deal Kane, an established scorer set to cash in as an unrestricted free agent this summer.

"It's not something I really try to block out," Kane, who was reunited with top center Jack Eichel on Wednesday, said of his future.

Perhaps blocking it out would help Kane's production. Once one of the NHL's hottest scorers, Kane, 26, has been mired in a scoring slump for more than two months.

"I'm staying confident in what I can do," Kane said. "Eventually it will turn."

While Kane speaks positively, the difficult situation is clearly wearing on the nine-year veteran.

Kane has produced just four goals in the last 28 games. He has compiled zero goals and one assist in the last nine contests entering tonight's tilt against the Florida Panthers at KeyBank Center.

Remember, the speedy Kane got off to a torrid start, scoring 12 goals in the first 21 games.

"I haven't created much offensively the last little bit, and when I have they haven't gone in or I hit some bars," he said. "Obviously, it's not fun when you're not producing, but it's part of the long year."

So what has happened to the Sabres' early-season MVP? Sure, it was unlikely he would keep scoring at a 46-goal pace. But 30 goals seemed likely for Kane, who scored 28 times in his final 58 outings last season.

Kane possesses a strong shooting mentality. For example, he pumped 26 shots on goal in the first three games this season, including a whopping 11 opening night. But he hasn't been putting pucks on net.

He registered zero in Tuesday's 3-1 loss to New Jersey, just the second time this season an opponent blanked him. He has a meager four shots in the last four games.

"Anybody in his situation, sometimes it can be difficult, especially going through a stretch where a lot of things aren't going your way," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He's just got to find a way to work through it. You go back, he hit a crossbar on the road, maybe that would've sparked him in Vancouver (last week).

"He's getting some opportunities. It just hasn't been going in."

Housley added: "A lot of times he can use his speed a little bit better attacking with wide speed and trying to get some shots off. I've never had a problem with his shot mentality. He tries to get as many pucks to the net as possible."

Kane hasn't been getting his 6-foot-2, 212-pound frame to the net much, either.

"He hasn't had opportunities to," Housley said. "He's playing on the power play. He hasn't gotten the puck a lot in the middle there because he's coming, they know he's got a quick release."

Housley recently moved Kane to the third line with Johan Larsson, the center he quietly produced much of his offense beside last season. On Wednesday, Housley put Kane back with Eichel, his regular pivot most of the season, and Kyle Okposo.

"They had good chemistry early," Housley said of Kane and Eichel. "It was just a change to maybe spark Evander a little bit."

Okposo understands what Kane might be experiencing. Two seasons ago, Okposo played out his contract with the New York Islanders.

While Okposo was told he wouldn't be traded, he still heard whispers – “Definitely tough to hear,” he said – he could be dished.

“You got to really just keep it between your ears and really just focus on the task at hand and playing, because once you start thinking at that, that's when it gets really tough,” Okposo said. “I know (Kane) hasn't been scoring as much as of late. You just have to try to focus on your game. ... It's a really tough situation.”.

Sabres notes: Kyle Okposo unhappy with Taylor Hall's hit

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 1, 2018

BUFFALO – At the 5:31 mark of the third period in Tuesday's 3-1 loss to the New Jersey Devils, Taylor Hall knocked Sabres winger Kyle Okposo into the boards from behind.

While Okposo bounced right back up, the hit, which only earned Hall a two-minute boarding minor, was scary.

"That's the play you're trying to eliminate, right?" Okposo said Wednesday after the NHL fined Hall \$5,000, the maximum allowable under the collective bargaining agreement. "There's no place for that."

Okposo said he had no idea Hall, one of the NHL's highest-scoring wingers, was coming from a notable distance away.

"I was not ready for contact at all," he said. "If I stayed down, then the ref says it's a five(-minute penalty). But why should that matter? It's a same play, in my opinion. I got up because I was mad. I was looking around for who did it, and I saw him, and it didn't register. Like, I was looking for somebody else.

"Obviously, I know him a little bit. I know he's not that kind of player. But still, that was a bad hit. I didn't turn or anything. I was going to get the puck, he buried me behind into the boards."

Perhaps if Okposo milked it and stayed down, then the referee would've given Hall a major penalty.

"It's not my style," said Okposo, who said he was taught to get up.

Sabres coach Phil Housley said the distance skated to hit a vulnerable Okposo – Hall wasn't close to the boards – should've made the hit a major and a game misconduct.

The Sabres host the Florida Panthers tonight.

xxx

Fresh off a game in which the Devils outcompeted them, the Sabres looked sluggish early in Wednesday's practice before a few thousand school children inside KeyBank Center.

At one point, Housley stopped practice and spoke to his team. After that, the tempo picked up.

"I shouldn't have to address our team today and give them the reaction," Housley said. "We should've been better and ready to play."

xxx

Sabres defenseman Nathan Beaulieu (upper body) and center Jacob Josefson practiced as regulars Wednesday, meaning they could return against the Panthers.

Josefson has recovered from a lower-body injury and waiting his turn to play.

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Former Sabres defenseman Mike Weber, who recently retired, has been named an assistant coach for the Ontario Hockey League's Windsor Spitfires, his former junior team.

Practice notes -- Eichel & Kane reunited

WKBW

Matt Bove

January 31, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Evander Kane has gone ten games without a goal and has only one-point during that same span. Hardly impressive, especially when you consider that Kane led the Sabres in scoring for much of the first half of season.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Evander Kane has one goal since Dec. 22nd. After practice he was asked how he's dealing with the slump and if he has thought about the Feb. 26th trade deadline #Sabres @WKBW

1:13 PM - Jan 31, 2018

3 3 Replies 3 3 Retweets 13 13 likes

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"Confidence obviously helps, especially when things are going in, you're feeling good about things, when it's not, you've got to keep your confidence because when that goes it can really prolong and other parts can really start to slip," Kane said on Wednesday. "So, for me, I'm staying confident. I know what I can do and eventually it will turn."

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Kane-Eichel-Okposo

Wilson-O'Reilly-Reinhart

Pouliot/Larsson/Girgensons/Pominville (rotating)

Nolan/Rodrigues/Josefson/Baptiste (rotating)

Ristolainen- Scandella

Antipin-McCabe

Beaulieu - Falk

Gorges- Nelson

11:57 AM - Jan 31, 2018 · Buffalo, NY

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In an effort to give his game a spark, Kane was returned to the 'first line' alongside Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo, who have been two of the Sabres most productive forwards during Kane's slump.

ADVERTISING

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Jack Eichel has a voice & is someone plenty of people look up to. I asked him today about mental health awareness & how he can use his platform to spread the message #BellLetsTalk #Sabres @WKBW

1:00 PM - Jan 31, 2018

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Okposo on Hall's dangerous hit from behind: 'There's no place for that'

Sportsnet

January 31, 2018

New Jersey Devils
NEW JERSEY
DEVILS
6TH EASTERN CONF
3RD METROPOLITAN DIV
58 POINTS

RECORD

25-16-8

6TH

GPG

2.94

14TH

PP%

20%

14TH

LAST 5

1-4-0

GAA

2.92

19TH

PK%

83.4%

4TH

VISIT TEAM PAGE

forward Taylor Hall delivered a dangerous and blatant hit from behind on Buffalo's Kyle Okposo Tuesday night. Hall only received a two-minute minor for the hit, possibly because Okposo was able to get to his feet and continue in the game.

The NHL Department of Player Safety reviewed the hit and decided to fine Hall \$5,000.

Okposo did not agree with the reasoning that Hall would have received a heavier in-game punishment had Okposo gotten hurt on the play.

"I was not ready for contact at all," he told Bill Hoppe. "If I stayed down then the ref says it's a five(-minute penalty). But why should that matter? It's a same play, in my opinion. I got up because I was mad. I was looking around for who did it, and I saw him, and it didn't register. Like, was looking for somebody else.

"Obviously, I know him a little bit. I know he's not that kind of player. But still, that was a bad hit. I didn't turn or anything. I was going to get the puck, he buried me behind into the boards."

NHL Player Safety



@NHLPlayerSafety

New Jersey's Taylor Hall fined \$5,000, the maximum allowable under the CBA, for boarding Buffalo's Kyle Okposo.

12:13 PM - Jan 31, 2018

35 35 Replies 113 113 Retweets 331 331 likes

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There is, rightly, a lot of focus on head injuries and penalizing head shots in all pro sports and the NHL has taken an extra focus on those when it comes to supplementary discipline. There does not, however, appear to be the same fervour to send a message about hits from behind, which are dangerous and come with the possibility of devastating effects.

"That's the play you're trying to eliminate, right?" Okposo added. "There's no place for that."

At no point did Okposo have his shoulder or front turned in Hall's direction. The Devils forward follows Okposo in, seeing the name on his back the whole way, and doesn't let up before the hit. This one could have been especially bad, as Okposo was still a few feet away from the boards, not right up against them. It's the most dangerous position to be in on the ice.

"I wasn't expecting it at all. I absolutely thought it deserved to be a major," Okposo told the Buffalo News. "I was in a vulnerable position and didn't know a hit was coming. You're five feet from the boards and that is a hit that is five (minutes) every time."

Hall explained he thought the hit would be a shoulder-on-shoulder check and that the two-minute minor was the right call. "Would've been iffy if they called it five," he said.

Hall scored what stood up as the game-winner in New Jersey's 3-1 victory.

Kane switches lines as Sabres seek to ignite offense

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

Jan. 31, 2018

Coming off a disappointing end to their three-game winning streak, the Buffalo Sabres took the ice for practice on Wednesday with some tweaks to their lineup. Namely, Evander Kane was moved to the top line alongside Jack Eichel and Kyle Okposo.

Kane got off to a scorching start to his season with 12 goals in his first 21 games, but he's scored just four goals in 29 games since. He spent last week's Western Canada road trip playing on a line with Johan Larsson and Jason Pominville, where he remained for Tuesday's 3-1 loss to New Jersey.

He'll have a chance to reignite his offense alongside Eichel, with whom he's had success in the past.

"I think they had good chemistry early," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It was just a change to maybe spark Evander a little bit, reunite those guys. I think we're going to need 5-on-5 scoring moving ahead here, especially playing some tight teams, some good checking teams."

Phil Housley (1/31/18)

04:59 • January 31st, 2018

Kane admitted to being frustrated with his production of late, but remained confident that he'll rediscover his scoring touch. When he has had chances, they simply haven't found the back of the net. Housley pointed to a shot off the crossbar in Vancouver last Thursday as one that might have sparked Kane had it gone in.

"I haven't created much offensively the last little bit, and when I have they haven't gone in or I hit some bars," Kane said. "Obviously, it's not fun when you're not producing, but it's part of the long year."

Kane insisted that his contract status has not been a factor in his production. He's set to become an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season, and his name has been mentioned in trade rumors as February's deadline approaches.

"Two totally different things," he said. "I think all I can focus on is each day and each and every game and trying to be the best player I can be."

The area Kane can improve, according to Housley, can be said for his teammates as well.

"One area we can all get better at when things aren't going well is just going to the net," Housley said. "Maybe you get a tip, maybe you get something off your shin pad that's going to create and turn directions in the right way."

New Jersey's Hall fined for hit on Okposo

Devils forward Taylor Hall was fined \$5,000, the maximum allowed under the collective bargaining agreement, for his hit from behind on Kyle Okposo on Tuesday. Hall was assessed a two-minute boarding minor at the time of the hit, but Housley thought it was deserving of more.

"The thing that was concerning to me was the distance that it came from and [Okposo's] numbers [showing] when he's looking at the player going for the puck in a vulnerable position," Housley said. "That's why I thought it should have been five and a game."

Okposo, who missed the end of last season with a concussion, said Wednesday that he was upset with the hit. Both he and Housley felt that the fact that Okposo was able to get back on his feet immediately after the hit was a determining factor in Hall only being assessed a minor penalty.

"I had no idea he was coming," Okposo said. "Like, I was not ready for contact at all. If I stayed down then the ref says it's a five. But why should that matter? It's the same play, in my opinion. I got up because I was mad. I was looking around for who did it, and I saw him, and it didn't register. Like, I was looking for somebody else."

"Obviously, I know him a little bit," he continued. "I know he's not that kind of player. But still, that was a bad hit. I didn't turn or anything. I was going to get the puck, he buried me behind into the boards."

Future goals

The Sabres were joined for practice by more than 3,000 area students as part of the NHL's Future Goals program, which aims to teach critical STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills through the game of hockey.

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Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

Practice underway with more than 3,000 students in attendance as part of the @FutureGoalsSTEM program! ☐ #Sabres

11:41 AM - Jan 31, 2018

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More information on the program can be found [here](#).

Wednesday's practice

Nathan Beaulieu (upper body) and Jacob Josefson (lower body) continued to practice with the team, and Housley did not rule either player out for Thursday's home game against the Florida Panthers. Here's how they factored into the lineup:

9 Evander Kane - 15 Jack Eichel - 21 Kyle Okposo

20 Scott Wilson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 23 Sam Reinhart

28 Zemgus Girgensons / 67 Benoit Pouliot - 22 Johan Larsson - 29 Jason Pominville

17 Jordan Nolan - 10 Jacob Josefson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste

71 Evan Rodrigues

6 Marco Scandella - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

19 Jake McCabe - 93 Victor Antipin

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 41 Justin Falk

4 Josh Gorges - 8 Casey Nelson

40 Robin Lehner

31 Chad Johnson

Sharpen Up: January 31, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

January 31, 2018

Coming off three straight wins in Western Canada, the Sabres were hoping to extend that streak on home ice. However, they were unable to do so, losing to the New Jersey Devils 3-1 last night at KeyBank Center.

Here's what you need to know.

About last night

Sabres fall to Devils, 3-1
03:43 • January 30th, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report...

Jake McCabe scored late to put them within earshot, but the Buffalo Sabres ultimately fell short of a comeback in a 3-1 loss to the New Jersey Devils at KeyBank Center on Tuesday night. The loss snapped a three-game win streak for the Sabres, who had swept their road trip in Western Canada last week.

Phil Housley Postgame (01/30/18)
03:07 • January 30th, 2018

The Sabres had managed to hold all three of their opponents without an even-strength goal on that road trip, which they hoped would translate as they began a five-game homestand. But instead of being on their toes, Phil Housley said, they got caught on their heels too often against a Devils team fighting for their playoff lives.

Jake McCabe Postgame (01/30/18)
01:44 • January 30th, 2018

"Our five-on-five game wasn't where it needed to be," Housley said. "We talked this morning about where they are as a desperate team. They just played with more urgency. I didn't think we respected the position they were in. Coming off a road trip, you would've thought we would have gained confidence and been sharp."

Jack Eichel Postgame (01/30/18)
04:56 • January 30th, 2018

What seemed most disappointing for the Sabres was the fact that they squandered an opportunity to carry momentum onto their home ice. Nine of Buffalo's 14 games in February will be played at KeyBank Center, a building where they've only managed six wins this season.

Ryan O'Reilly Postgame (01/30/18)
01:58 • January 30th, 2018

Why that is, they still have no answer. But McCabe said to expect an inspired performance when they return on Thursday.

"It's tough," he said. "We want to bring that hockey that we showed we can play out west to this arena and for our fans. You guys saw that we can play that way and we all see it too, so we need to play that way for our fans and for this city. Tonight's unacceptable but we get another shot at it on Thursday."

We have lots more here.

And stick with us for coverage of today's practice from KeyBank Center.

Shutout streak starts anew

New Jersey's first goal brought Robin Lehner's shutout streak to an end at a career-best 145:15. His previous best streak was 126:59 (Feb. 16 to 21, 2016).

The goal also stopped the team's shutout streak at 199:19. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the streak was Buffalo's longest since the team's franchise-record streak of 226:24 set from Jan. 16 to 25, 2003.