



Buffalo Sabres

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Ovechkin scores 2 as Capitals beat Sabres 5-1

Associated Press

Benjamin Standig

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the night Alex Ovechkin reached one milestone, his goal-scoring prowess moved him closer to another.

Ovechkin added to his NHL lead with two goals while tying the Washington record for most games played, and the Capitals beat the Buffalo Sabres 5-1 on Saturday.

“In this day and age, there are not a lot of players with the same team. Those days are probably past a little bit,” Capitals coach Barry Trotz said. “He’s durable. Those two combinations have had a big impact on the franchise for a long time now.”

Evgeny Kuznetsov scored 50 seconds into the game and had two assists. Andre Burakovsky and Lars Eller also had goals for Washington, which leapfrogged Pittsburgh and moved back into first place in the Metropolitan Division. The Capitals had lost two in a row and five of seven.

Ovechkin’s 37th goal came on the power play with 9:47 remaining after Buffalo closed to 2-1 on Sam Reinhart’s goal 14 seconds into the third period. Ovechkin redirected a shot past Sabres goaltender Robin Lehner with 1:24 left for his 38th goal.

The 32-year-old Ovechkin played in his 983rd NHL game, tying Calle Johansson for most in Capitals history.

“I’m getting old, you know?” Ovechkin joked. “Soon it’s going to be 1,000. That’s a pretty big number for games. I’m pretty happy to reach that milestone with one organization. It’s pretty cool.”

Ovechkin holds franchise records for goals (596) and points (1,105). He is four goals from becoming the 20th player in NHL history with 600.

“When you get closer, you want it done earlier,” Ovechkin said. “You’re stuck at 599, you want to pass it. Hoping in a couple of games I will have it done and we move forward.”

The Sabres held out forward Evander Kane. He could be dealt by Monday’s trade deadline.

“Management thought it was the best decision moving forward and the best decision for Evander,” coach Phil Housley said before the game.

Philipp Grubauer made 28 saves for his third win in three starts. Grubauer’s previous victory came against Buffalo, 3-2 on Monday.

Washington held off Buffalo after allowing two third-period goals in Thursday’s 3-2 loss at Florida.

The Sabres struggled defensively against Washington’s speed.

“Focus a little bit more on the defensive end to start the game,” Reinhart said. “I think we gave them too much respect.”

After receiving the puck outside the blue line, Kuznetsov darted to the left of Lehner, cut across the middle and then patiently held the puck until Lehner committed. Kuznetsov knocked the puck into the open net for a 1-0 lead.

Burakovsky’s spectacular goal began with him evading four defenders before nudging a backhand into the left corner.

“We didn’t check well enough to take away their speed,” Housley said. “I just feel there were some guys not ready to play tonight.”

NOTES: Buffalo was 5-0-1 in its previous six road games. ... Washington won the season series 2-1. ... Kane, who can become an unrestricted free agent this summer, ranks second on the Sabres behind injured Jack Eichel with 20 goals. Kane is

third in points (44) behind Eichel and Ryan O'Reilly. ... Brett Connolly, Dmitry Orlov, Matt Niskanen and John Carlson had assists for Washington. ... Buffalo's last win at Washington came on Nov. 22, 2014.

UP NEXT

Panthers: Host the Boston Bruins on Sunday evening.

Capitals: At the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday night.

With trade imminent, Sabres tell Kane to take a seat

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON -- It's clear that Evander Kane has played his last game for the Buffalo Sabres.

Kane was a healthy scratch for Saturday night's 5-1 loss to the Washington Capitals, with a trade almost certainly taking place before Monday's 3 p.m. NHL deadline. It's a virtual certainty he will also sit out Sunday's 5 p.m. game against the Boston Bruins in KeyBank Center.

Provided, of course, he's not already dealt by then.

The Sabres did not have a morning skate Saturday because of a Georgetown-Providence college basketball game in Capital One Arena, so Kane's status was uncertain until coach Phil Housley made the announcement during his routine pregame briefing with reporters about two hours before the opening faceoff. Players learned during their gameday meal at the team hotel.

"Management thought it was the best decision moving forward and the best decision for Evander," Housley said. "... That's the situation for right now."

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The Sabres did not sit out any other potential trade pieces such as winger Benoit Pouliot, defenseman Josh Gorges or either of their goalies. Robin Lehner, a restricted free agent also rumored to be of interest to teams, played goal and took the loss as Buffalo's six-game road point streak ended.

"It's the unfortunate part of this time of the year," Lehner said. "It can happen to anyone. It's a business and they wanted to sit him out. He wanted to be out there. He wanted to play. We'll see what happens. If something happens, I wish him the best."

Kane was seen after the game in a restricted area of the dressing room. Because he did not play in the game, the Sabres did not make him available for comment. He had practiced fully Friday in Arlington, Va., when the Sabres worked out at the Caps' suburban facility.

Housley said he was told to sit Kane Saturday by General Manager Jason Botterill, who is not on the team's road trip and is taking care of trade deadline duties from his office in Buffalo. The team was clearly making sure to not take any chances with an injury that could derail a potential deal.

"I'd be lying to say I was surprised by it," said winger Jason Pominville. "There's been a lot of guys that have been held off the ice and he's definitely a guy that has probably drawn a lot of interest. You don't want him to get hurt. I think overall, it's probably a smart move."

Kane, a pending unrestricted free agent, has 20 goals and 20 assists in 61 games this season, second on the team in goals to the injured Jack Eichel. He has scored at least 20 goals in all three of his seasons with Buffalo after being acquired from Winnipeg in 2015 as the key part to a seven-player trade that also included a first-round draft pick going from Buffalo to the Jets.

"It's always difficult when you come to these situations," Housley said. "You're taking 20 goals out of the lineup but I understand the business part of it."

It's been known for several weeks the Sabres are looking for 3-4 pieces in return for Kane, including a first-round draft pick. In recent days, the first round talk has cooled slightly, with TSN reporting Botterill may be willing to accept a second-rounder if he receives a higher-rated prospect.

Teams with Stanley Cup aspirations like 2017 finalists Pittsburgh and Nashville are known to be among the interested in Kane. Several other Western Conference clubs are reported to be looking at him as well; the Sabres had two scouts in Chicago Friday night for the Hawks' game against the San Jose Sharks, who are believed to be interested.

"I really have no idea," Kane told reporters in Buffalo on Wednesday before the team left on its road trip. "I'm going to find out just like you guys do."

Kane is the latest NHL player to be benched in anticipation of a deadline move. Rick Nash has sat out the last two games for the New York Rangers and Michael Grabner was a healthy scratch for Thursday's game against Montreal before being traded to New Jersey.

The Canadiens benched veteran center Tomas Plekanac for their game Saturday against Tampa Bay while Ottawa sat veteran defenseman Johnny Oduya for its matinee against Philadelphia. Interestingly, however, the Senators did not sit captain Erik Karlsson for that game. Rumors of a mega deal involving the former Norris Trophy winner have mushroomed in the last few days.

"I can't remember this being with so many players but I think it's just the situation that they're in risking injury and moving forward as organizations do," Housley said. "But it is quite interesting that so many players are out."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Evander Kane

Sabres Notebook: Gionta to Bruins?

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON — The Boston Bruins seem to be emerging as the favorite to land former Sabres captain Brian Gionta now that the Rochester native is back from his role as Team USA's captain at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

Gionta, 39, has made it clear he wants to sign with a contender in the Eastern Conference prior to Monday's NHL trade deadline so he will be eligible for the Stanley Cup playoffs. Multiple outlets reported Saturday the Bruins have the lead for his services. His old team, the New Jersey Devils, are believed to be in the mix and another possibility could be the Toronto Maple Leafs because of the ties to current general manager and former New Jersey GM Lou Lamoriello.

Gionta, who played collegiately at Boston College, struggled in the Olympics. He did not have a point and posted a minus-4 rating in the five games. He has played just one professional game this season, a contest with the Rochester Amerks prior to heading to Korea. Gionta worked out with the Amerks much of this season in preparation for his trip overseas.

Speaking to reporters prior to Saturday's game in Toronto, Bruins General Manager Don Sweeney would not directly address talks with Gionta. But he admitted the team had interest in adding free agents who were playing in the Olympics.

"We have had discussions with people prior to [the Games]," Sweeney said. "You know, to see what they may or may not do, based on what our needs are. So we have a couple. ... it is a short window to try to turn this around. We are having those discussions, and I will continue to do so. If there is an area we can continue to supplement our group, we will do that."

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Gionta had 15 goals and 20 assists for the Sabres last season. Oddly enough, Buffalo hosts the Bruins Sunday at 5 in KeyBank Center in the teams' final game prior to Monday's 3 p.m. trade deadline. Gionta has not played in a postseason since 2014 when he was with Montreal.

Saturday was a big anniversary for offense in Sabres history.

* It marked 36 years since Wayne Gretzky broke the NHL's single-season goal record in a memorable Buffalo-Edmonton game in Memorial Auditorium on Feb. 24, 1982. Gretzky scored his 77th goal of the season with 6:36 left and added Nos. 78 and 79 (the latter into an empty net) to complete a hat trick and give the Oilers a 6-3 win. Gretzky's hat trick spoiled one by Buffalo's Gilbert Perreault.

* Twenty-five years ago (Feb. 24, 1993), Alexander Mogilny scored four goals for the second time in six games as the Sabres outgunned the Detroit Red Wings in the Aud, 10-7. It was one of two games that season to feature a combined 17 goals as the Sabres beat the New York Rangers, 11-6, on Dec. 31, 1992. The franchise record is 18, set in a 14-4 win over Toronto in 1981.

Here's one you wouldn't expect: Buffalo and Washington entered Saturday's game with exactly the same record in February at 4-5-2. The Caps were just 2-3-2 in their last seven games and had simply not kept the puck out of their net, allowing 27 goals in those seven games. They were 1-3 in their last four games, with the only win coming Monday in Buffalo.

Saturday's game was the 983rd in the career of Washington star Alexander Ovechkin, tying him with former Buffalo first-round pick and defenseman Calle Johansson for tops on the franchise's all-time list. Ovechkin entered the game six goals away from becoming the 20th player in league history to get to 600. He passed 1,100 points last week, becoming the 60th player to reach that mark, and started the game at 1,103.

Story topics: Boston Bruins/ Brian Gionta/ Buffalo Sabres/ Washington Capitals

The Wraparound: Capitals 5, Sabres 1

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON — With trade rumors creating plenty of loud chatter, the Buffalo Sabres' road point streak quietly went away Saturday night.

The Sabres gave up a goal to Evgeny Kuznetsov after just 50 seconds and never caught up in a 5-1 loss to the Washington Capitals in Capital One Arena. The Sabres played without winger Evander Kane for the first time this season, as the 20-goal scorer was held out as a healthy scratch in anticipation of a trade before Monday's deadline.

Alexander Ovechkin had a pair of third-period goals for Washington to extend his NHL leading total to 38 on the season and his career mark to 596. Kuznetsov finished with a goal and three assists.

The Sabres had been 5-0-1 in their previous six road games and were trying to get a point in seven straight away from home for the first time since 2011. Instead they lost here for the fifth straight time (0-4-1).

Quick start: Kuznetsov burned the Sabres with a fast rush through the neutral zone that saw him bolt past Jason Pominville and curl past the Buffalo winger to the goal. He outwaited Robin Lehner and simply deposited the puck in the open net. Pominville was covering as Nathan Beaulieu was inexplicably caught up ice.

Lehner on the goal: "He came out flying from nowhere. skilled player, not the guy we want to give up an opportunity to in the beginning. ... They play fast and use their speed. It's really noticeable in the neutral zone how much speed they generate. It's kind of overwhelming sometimes. They come three, four at a time and can all make really good plays."

Bucking the trend: The Kuznetsov goal ended the Sabres' streak of scoring first in five straight road games.

Coast to coast: The Capitals took a 2-0 lead at 13:20 of the second period on a highlight reel goal by Andre Burakovsky, who took the puck in his own zone and carried it the length of the ice. Burakovsky split Rasmus Ristolainen and Beaulieu and then beat Lehner with a one-handed backhand that trickled through the Buffalo goalie's legs.

Sabres coach Phil Housley: "We didn't check well enough to take away their speed. There were some guys that weren't ready to play tonight. It was obvious from the drop of the puck. ... Too many guys carrying the puck right up the middle of the ice and creating offense against us where we should be deflecting everything to the outside."

Cutting the gap in half: The Sabres got right back in the game after just 14 seconds of the third period on Sam Reinhart's backhander over the left shoulder of Washington backup goalie Philipp Grubauer that made it 2-1. It was Reinhart's 14th goal of the season.

The Great Eight: Ovechkin's power-play goal with 9:47 left, a wicked wrist shot from the left circle to the top corner, restored the Caps' two-goal lead at 3-1 and he scored again with 1:24 left on a deflection from in front of Lehner. Ovechkin, who had 11 shots on goal in the game, scored in all three meetings against Buffalo this year and has 30 goals and 46 points against the Sabres in 45 career games against them.

Up Next: The Sabres host the Boston Bruins Sunday at 5 in KeyBank Center. The Bruins may be without standout center Patrice Bergeron, who took a puck to the foot Saturday in Toronto and was seen leaving Air Canada Centre with a boot on the foot. Then it will be time to see who remains on the team past the deadline. The first game after the league swap meet is Wednesday night at Tampa Bay.

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ The Wraparound/ Washington Capitals

Inside the Sabres: College free agents could like openings in Buffalo

The Buffalo News

John Vogl

February 24, 2018

Jason Botterill isn't going to fix the Buffalo Sabres by Monday's trade deadline. The general manager is expected to make significant moves, of course, but there will still be holes everywhere in the organization.

That actually could be a good thing as college free agency approaches.

When NHL unrestricted free agents look for contracts, they weigh everything from dollar amounts to weather to schools for the kids. College free agents primarily want to play right away.

The struggling Sabres offer that chance.

"The biggest thing for me was just the opportunity that was here," said Sabres center Evan Rodrigues, who signed with Buffalo after completing his Boston University career in the spring of 2015. "I thought there might be a spot that I could come in and take right away."

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The mindset was the same for defenseman Casey Nelson, who signed in March 2016 after finishing his junior season at Minnesota State. His adviser compiled depth charts of NHL and minor-league rosters, and they examined which teams offered an immediate opportunity.

"It came down to a couple, but there was a perfect fit," said Nelson, who played seven games in Buffalo immediately after signing. "I wouldn't change a thing."

NCAA teams are wrapping up their regular season this weekend. Conference tournaments are the opening week of March. The seniors and underclassmen who are ready for the next step will be hearing from the interested teams that have been watching them all season.

"I had a few teams, and it took me about a week just to talk to people, lay out the pros and cons," Rodrigues said. "Sometimes it comes down to just a gut feeling, and I weighed out pros and cons, and it looked like Buffalo had the most pros.

"Buffalo just seemed like a spot that was right for me."

Rodrigues played two games for Buffalo during his first professional season and upped that to 30 last year. The 24-year-old is a regular now, skating as the second-line center with Jack Eichel injured.

Nelson's advancement has been just as rapid. After his seven-game debut, the defenseman appeared in 11 games for the Sabres last year. He proved himself during the opening half of this season in Rochester, and the 25-year-old is now performing well with Marco Scandella on Buffalo's shutdown pair.

Nelson says once players are in an organization, it doesn't matter if they're a first-round pick, prized free agent or college signee. They'll get ice time if they can play, which is why it's important to pick a club with openings.

"Once you're to this level, you're all on the same playing field," he said.

The college players and their advisers should see plenty of open field in Buffalo. Though Rochester has a winning record, the Amerks are keyed by minor-league veterans. Goaltender Linus Ullmark, defenseman Brendan Guhle and left wing C.J. Smith, who signed as a college free agent from UMass-Lowell last spring, might be the only bona fide prospects who appear ready to advance to Buffalo soon.

Here's a look:

* With the impending departures of Evander Kane and Benoit Pouliot, left wing is barren. A signee would have to compete with only Zemgus Girgensons, Scott Wilson, Smith and Alex Nylander, plus anyone who arrives via trade.

* The battered and bruised defense corps could use help. Nelson, Josh Gorges and Justin Falk will be unrestricted free agents at the end of the season. Guhle could jump up. The other Amerks defensemen under contract for next year are Taylor Fedun and Matt Tennyson, who have proved stopgap measures.

Buffalo's group could make things intriguing for the top college free agent on the market, Daniel Brickley. The Minnesota State defenseman was teammates with Nelson as a freshman, and he's stepped into Nelson's puck-moving role on the right side. Brickley had nine goals and 30 points in the opening 33 games for Minnesota State, which won the Western Collegiate Hockey Association regular-season title.

NHL teams are also meeting with Bemidji State defenseman Zach Whitecloud, who has a solid all-around game.

* The centers in the Sabres' organization are Eichel, Ryan O'Reilly, Rodrigues and Johan Larsson, with Sean Malone and Kyle Criscuolo in Rochester. Casey Mittelstadt and Cliff Pu are coming soon, so Buffalo might not be the ideal landing spot for middlemen.

* Not long ago, the Sabres seemed stacked at right wing. The development of Nick Baptiste, Justin Bailey and Hudson Fasching hasn't gone as planned, however, so there's certainly room.

Princeton right wing Max Veronneau has 12 goals and 41 points in 28 games. Buffalo-born Andy Sturtz leads Penn State with 13 goals and 37 points in 32 games.

Botterill, who spent four years at the University of Michigan, is fond of college players. Looking at Botterill's old team, he has good reason.

Forward Conor Sheary, who signed after leaving UMass-Amherst, is a key member of the Pittsburgh Penguins' run as back-to-back champions. Forward Zachary Aston-Reese, signed from Northeastern, just put up four goals and six points in his first nine NHL games.

The Sabres could use that influx of talent, and college free agents who do their homework will see that.

Story topics: Casey Nelson/ Evan Rodrigues

Inside the NHL: Deadline Day can reap rewards

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 23, 2018

So are rental players really worth it or are they another form of NHL fool's gold? Is thinking you stole something in February more like winning the day on July 1 and then getting buyer's remorse a couple of years later from your free agent folly?

Recent history shows a lot of hit and miss at the trade deadline. Think of how little Kevin Shattenkirk did for the Capitals last year, or how much Martin Hanzal cost the Wild in draft currency to come from Arizona and not help his team get past the first round. On the other hand, think how important Justin Schultz has become on the Pittsburgh blueline after the Penguins got him out of Edmonton at the deadline in 2016.

Maybe Ottawa's Erik Karlsson will someday make this list if the Sens figure out a way to get a megadeal done. Maybe Evander Kane blows up in the postseason as a rental and gives his new club the flashes of 30-goal form he's shown for the Sabres the last three years. Or maybe Rick Nash and Michael Grabner can be those kind of guys.

It's Buyer Beware time. Here's a quick look at some of the best deals in recent years, the kind that all GMs are aspiring to in the next couple of days.

Butch Goring from Los Angeles to the New York Islanders in 1980 -- It was a good hockey trade, as forward Billy Harris and defenseman Dave Lewis were strong Islanders pieces. But Goring went on to become a four-time Cup champion and the 1981 Conn Smythe Trophy winner. Many on the 1980 team say his acquisition pushed the Islanders over the top after several years of playoff frustration.

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Marian Hossa and Pascal Dupuis from Atlanta to Pittsburgh in 2008 -- From bottom-feeder to Stanley Cup final in a couple of months, the two Thrashers had to love their luck. The Penguins sent two players, a prospect and a first-round pick back. The players had key roles in the Winter Classic in Ralph Wilson Stadium a couple months earlier, with Colby Armstrong scoring the game's first goal and Erik Christenson getting stopped on the Pens' first shootout attempt. Hossa had 12 goals for the Penguins that spring while Dupuis won two Cups and became a team and organizational favorite in a career that lasted until 2016.

Marian Gaborik from Columbus to Los Angeles in 2014 -- Gaborik had 14 goals in the playoffs that spring, won a Stanley Cup and even re-signed with the Kings. His career stretched until last week, when he was sent to Ottawa in the Dion Phaneuf trade. The Blue Jackets got Matt Frattin and draft picks. Yeesh.

Filip Forsberg from Washington to Nashville in 2013 -- Are you kidding me? The swap of Forsberg for Martin Erat is one of the most lopsided in NHL history. The Caps mortgaged their future by sending away a No. 1 pick for Erat, a plugger they hoped would help their playoff run. Never happened. Forsberg played in one Cup final last spring and could do it again this year.

Ben Bishop from Ottawa to Tampa Bay in 2013 -- The return was former Sabre and Canisius College star Cory Conacher, who has managed to resurrect his career with the Lightning this season. The Senators had too many goalies, including Robin Lehner, and deemed Bishop expendable. Maybe he was. But what a steal for the Lightning. By 2015, Bishop was a Vezina finalist and was starting in the Stanley Cup final.

Ray Bourque from Boston to Colorado in 2000 -- The Bruins defenseman went West with Dave Andreychuk and didn't get his Stanley Cup that spring. It took until 2001, when Bourque finally lifted the trophy after a 22-year career that culminated in a Game Seven victory over New Jersey. The Bruins got a first-round pick, two prospects and veteran Brian Rolson. Advantage, Avs.

Ron Francis and Ulf Samuelsson from Hartford (remember them?) to Pittsburgh in 1991 -- This was the move that pushed the Penguins over the edge for their first Cup. Francis even stayed through 1998. The return was forwards John Cullen and Jeff

Parker (an ex-Sabre) and defenseman Zarley Zalapski. They were all NHL players at the time but never did much winning in Hartford. The Penguins won it all with their two pickups.

Cuban didn't learn tanking code

Good on the NBA for banging Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban \$600,000 for openly admitting on a podcast with Julius Erving that his 18-40 team planned on tanking the rest of the way. Commissioner Adam Silver nailed Cuban for "public statements detrimental to the NBA."

Cuban made no bones about what his team was doing while talking to Erving.

"I'm probably not supposed to say this, but I just had dinner with a bunch of our guys the other night, and here we are, you know, we weren't competing for the playoffs. I was like, 'Look, losing is our best option,' " Cuban said. "Adam would hate hearing that, but at least I sat down and I explained it to them.

"And I explained what our plans were going to be this summer, that we're not going to tank again. This was, like, a year and a half of tanking, and that was too brutal for me. But being transparent. I think that's the key to being kind of a players' owner and having stability — you've got to communicate."

The Sabres -- as well as teams like Edmonton, Arizona and Toronto -- always took a public stance they were trying to win during the height of the NHL's tank era. Former General Manager Tim Murray was furious when the topic was brought up to him and owner Terry Pegula was adamant the team was simply "rebuilding" when pressed on the philosophy last year following his dismissal of Murray.

It's no secret this corner abhors tanking at all levels, and baseball could be very ugly on this front this season. But at least the NHL teams tried to put on a happy face about what they were doing. You simply can't have owners like Cuban admit they're not trying to win.

Amanda's brother is the No. 2 Kessel for now

Penguins winger Phil Kessel was beaming with pride after practice Thursday talking about his sister, Amanda, who suffered a concussion in Sochi in 2014 and was unable to play for nearly two years before returning to the ice and eventually winning the Olympic women's hockey gold medal Wednesday in South Korea.

"I'm very proud of her," Phil said. "She missed a lot of time with her concussion and stuff. And to be able to win a gold medal, it's a special accomplishment."

Amanda Kessel scored a key goal in the shootout with a wrist shot when the U.S. was in a 2-1 hole against archrival Canada.

"It was great," Phil Kessel said. ""It was a lot of pressure. They're down 2-1 in the shootout and she kind of has to make it there. She made a great shot and I'm proud of her."

Phil Kessel has two Stanley Cup championships with the Penguins but his Olympic success is limited to his 2010 silver medal in Vancouver, when Team USA lost to Canada on Sidney Crosby's golden goal.

Said Amanda Kessel in PyeongChang: "Maybe we're even now."

"It's been a good run," Phil said of the Kessel family. "Hopefully we can keep it going."

More on the Golden Girls

* Panthers defenseman and Canadian Mike Matheson on his girlfriend of five years, Getzville native and fellow Boston College player Emily Pfalzer: "I was definitely rooting for her to win. My experience with Hockey Canada has been unbelievable, they've treated us so well. When I'm playing for Canada, I'm fully in, and I hate U.S. There's definitely that sense and that feeling. Anytime that she's on the ice and playing for her country, I'm fully rooting for her."

* The NHL has announced it's hosting and honoring the entire team during the second intermission of its March 3 Stadium Series game between the Capitals and Maple Leafs at the U.S. Naval Academy's Marine Corps Stadium.

* One thing to be thankful about with the NHL: There is absolutely zero movement among player or management circles to ever include the shootout in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Fans would hate it too. As spine-tingling as the gold medal game was, ending it in a shootout rang hollow no matter which side of the border you were sitting on.

The Olympics have to maintain a schedule and nobody disputes that in pool play and maybe even as medal rounds start. But in the semifinals and medal games, why can't we play it out until there's a winner? Booo.

* The omnipresent Vegas Twitter feed jumped right on board with the victory by the U.S. women with a picture of Hilary Knight accompanied by the words "You can say she's a ... golden Knight" followed by emojis of a gold medal and an American flag.

[View image on Twitter](#)

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Vegas Golden Knights



@GoldenKnights

You can say she's a... golden Knight 🇺🇸

2:45 AM - Feb 22, 2018

20.9K

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* NBC has announced it's using 1998 U.S. Olympian and women's hockey analyst AJ Mieczko as an analyst for its coverage of the Detroit at Boston game March 6 on NBCSN. Mieczko will be alongside Chris Cuthbert with Brian Boucher serving in the Inside the Glass role. Good for the Peacock honchos. Mieczko was excellent during these Games. And from this view, the less of Mike Milbury at the mic, the better.

Around the boards

* The Sabres' first game of the season against the Leafs is March 5 in KeyBank Center. Doesn't figure to include Jack Eichel and it might not include Auston Matthews either. He's going to be "out for a bit" with a shoulder problem, coach Mike Babcock said Friday after his star got sandwiched by two Islanders late in the third period Thursday.

Matthews entered the weekend with 68 goals in his two seasons -- including an NHL-high 58 at even strength. No one else in the league hit Saturday with more than 50 in that span. For comparison sake, Kane led the Sabres with 39 and Eichel had 33.

* Want a harder club to figure? Try the Flyers. They lost 10 in a row at one point in November and December, going 0-5-5, and are 24-8-3 since to pull in the race for the Metropolitan title with Pittsburgh and Washington. They went out and got Petr Mrazek from Detroit at the deadline to play goal with Brian Elliott and Michal Neuvirth injured -- silencing speculation they would go for Lehner or Chad Johnson from the Sabres.

* The Blackhawks are finally admitting they may shut down Corey Crawford for the season due to a concussion. Their ace goaltender skated last week in Arizona but hasn't returned to the ice since and hasn't played in a game since December.

"Going to say right now we'll see on that one," coach Joel Quenneville said when asked if he was going to let Crawford return. "Before we were. Where we're at, his health's going to dictate all that."

* The Rangers' trade of Michael Grabner to New Jersey was their first ever transaction with the Devils, who moved to the swamp from Colorado way back in 1982. The Rangers and Islanders have made just two minor trades, one in 1972 and the other in 2010.

As deadline clock ticks, Sabres' road run shows no signs of ending

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 23, 2018

ARLINGTON, Va. — And as they wait for the phone to ring with the NHL trade deadline approaching, the Buffalo Sabres play on. Away from KeyBank Center, the Sabres' road show continues to be a rousing success.

It continues Saturday night in Capital One Arena against the Washington Capitals, with Buffalo at 5-0-1 in its last six road games following Thursday's 3-2 overtime buzzer-beater in Detroit. For a team that remains dead last in the Eastern Conference, the Sabres are on their best road point streak since going 6-0-1 in 2011, their last playoff season.

"It just seems on the road we get focused," coach Phil Housley said after practice Friday in the Kettler Capitals Iceplex. "There's no distractions, we're on the bus together, we're going to the game together and focused on winning hockey games. At home, it just seems like the mentality right now because of what happened is tough to get out of that rut. We have to simplify our game and not manufacture things that aren't there."

"We've come out and played simple hockey," said goaltender Robin Lehner. "The situation we're in as a team and organization right now is tough. We really want to do well at home and that might be a problem. I feel for the fans. We all want to be better for them so much, we do a little bit too much. The pressure is off on the road."

The Sabres have outscored their opponents, 20-8, in the six games and have spent most of the time playing from in front. They're scored the first goal in their last five road outings; they've opened the scoring only three times in the last 10 in KeyBank Center, where they are on a 2-7-1 slide and an NHL-worst 8-18-4 on the season. The overall road record is 10-14-7.

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"It helps a lot when you get the first goal and you have the lead," said defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who scored to put Buffalo in front in the opening four minutes in Detroit. "We've played pretty well when we've had the lead. Yesterday was strong, almost a full 60 minutes for us."

"At home it gets in your head more when things aren't going the way you want," said winger Jason Pominville. "But your confidence really goes there when they're going well. It gets extreme. You want to make sure you win for the fans and bring that energy. Sometimes it just doesn't happen and it becomes very negative."

"On the road, we're not thinking. We're just going out and playing. It's probably what we should be doing at home and not worry about it. I don't know why it happens that way. It's really weird."

Lehner spent the first half of the season leading the league in goals-against average and save percentage at home but has since found the same kind of trouble the rest of his team has. On the road, suddenly, Lehner has been staunch.

In his last seven games at home, Lehner is just 1-5-1 with a 3.80 goals-against average. His last four on the road? The numbers are 3-0-1, 1.22 and .963.

Lehner made a pair of key saves on odd-man rushes in the wild, whistle-less overtime session Thursday in Little Caesars Arena.

"It's more open ice at 3-on-3 so you can't be deep in your net on a shooter," Lehner said. "A guy has time to pick a corner. Then you have to be aggressive on him but he gets the puck over and you've got to throw yourself over. We made much smarter decisions in overtime than we have in the past. We held on to the puck more. Smarter decisions give you a better chance."

The Sabres are 0-3-1 in their last four visits here and the Capitals are in desperation mode as they try to cling to the lead in the Metropolitan Division over hard-charging Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Washington is just 4-5-2 in February while the Penguins are 8-1-1 in their last 10 entering Friday and acquired Ottawa center Derek Brassard to bolster their third line. The Flyers are 8-0-2 in their last 10 and have added Detroit goaltender Petr Mrazek.

Things remained status quo for the Sabres at practice Friday, which potential trade subjects Evander Kane and Benoit Pouliot taking regular shifts on their lines while goaltenders Chad Johnson and Lehner put in their normal day. It remains to be seen if any players will be held out of Saturday's game or Sunday visit by Boston, the final game before the deadline.

Lehner said he's just focusing on playing for whatever team wants him, be it the Sabres or someone else. But he wishes things were different for the club in Buffalo.

"There's that hesitation at home. It's cumulative and builds up," Lehner said. "It's a different feeling. The positive is we really want to do it but it feels like every home game now is a must-win game. Hopefully it can turn around. Our fans back home deserve to see some of this winning hockey."

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Jason Pominville/ Robin Lehner

Sabres Notebook: Goalie interference cuts both ways

The Buffalo News

Mike Harrington

February 23, 2018

ARLINGTON, Va. - Naturally, the Buffalo Sabres liked one of the signature officiating decisions from Thursday's 3-2 overtime win in Detroit. Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill was less than pleased.

Blashill went off to Detroit reporters following the game due to the lack of a goaltender interference call against Jason Pominville on Evander Kane's wraparound goal that gave the Sabres a 2-1 lead in the second period.

Pominville skated directly into the crease and appeared to slightly impede the stick and movement of goalie Jimmy Howard moving to his left as Kane beat the goalie to the post and stuffed the puck home for his 20th goal of the season. The play was challenged and reviewed, but the goal was allowed to stand.

"I think Hockey Ops had done an unreal job for the first part of the year of making a grey rule as black and white as they could," Blashill said. "Basically, if you went in the blue on your own and you made contact with the goaltender and kept him from being able to play his position, it was going to be called back. I could go to my guys and say exactly what it was."

The league's ruling in conjunction with the on-ice officials was that "the position of Buffalo's Pominville did not by itself impact Howard's ability to play his position in the crease and therefore no goaltender interference infractions occurred."

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During the MSG broadcast, analyst Martin Biron blamed Howard for the goal and not interference.

"If Howard wants to make the save on Kane's goal all he needs to do is go butterfly slide on the wraparound," tweeted Biron, the longtime Sabres and NHL netminder. "Pominville had no impact on the goal being scored. Howard played it wrong, simple call. Good goal."

Sabres goalie Robin Lehner agreed with that assessment.

"We've seen harsh interferences where they actually interfere and it's a goal," Lehner said after practice Friday in Kettler Capitals Iceplex. "They hang on goalies, push on goalies, lay on goalies and it's been a goal. That one yesterday, he never touched him. If we cross a line where you can't touch with the tip of your stick a goalie's stick, then we might as well put a rule in that the players can't be in the blue paint at all. If that's the standard, that would be ridiculous."

"Pommer didn't hinder him from going post-to-post whatsoever. If the coach thinks he hindered his stick, a goalie doesn't go with his stick to the post. No goalie in the league goes post to post and leads with this stick. The stick has nothing to do it."

Pominville said Friday he had no idea which way the call would go.

"I honestly had no idea. I kicked the puck to Kaner and drove the net thinking he might come back to me with it," Pominville said. "When I saw the replay, I wondered if my stick was there but I saw another angle and the stick didn't prevent him from sliding across. I can't say I wasn't in the crease. I'm standing right there but I don't think I prevented him from going across which was why they allowed it."

Blashill went on to say that this goal was an outgrowth of small-group meetings at the All-Star Game and Commissioner Gary Bettman's news conference that said goals should be wiped out only for obvious violations, and that referees needed to stop searching for reasons to disallow them.

"There was a feeling that too many goals were getting called back so they want to go back to this term 'egregious,'" Blashill said "Well, what's egregious mean? So now we're back to ultra-grey. All I know is Pominville had no reason to go into the crease, zero. He stood literally in front, right on the goalie. So I don't know what goalie interference is now. I don't know what egregious means. I know for sure that the player went in on his own, didn't allow our guy to play his position, kept our guy from making the save. I'm not sure what goalie interference is if that's not goalie interference."

Marco Scandella's overtime winner in Detroit came with 0.2 seconds left on the clock and was the second this season in the NHL to come at 4:59 of overtime. Los Angeles' Tyler Toffoli also pulled the trick Oct. 28 against Boston, a play that came off a faceoff with 0.9 seconds left and ended with the puck in the net at 0.4. The Sabres' last won in the final second of OT in 2016 against Carolina, when Jack Eichel scored on a breakaway to beat Carolina.

Center Johan Larsson had his first two-point game since October, with one of his two assists being a back pass to Scandella. Larsson said Friday he had no idea how much time was left on the clock.

"I knew we were inside a minute when I got on the ice," Larsson said. "I had no idea when I got the puck. I saw he was behind me and thought he might have a better view.

Larsson has just three goals -- two into empty nets -- in 59 games this season. He had six goals in 36 games last year before being lost to a serious elbow injury and 10 two years ago. He's also been plagued by penalties in recent games with seven minors, a major, a match and two-game suspension dotting his last nine games. His tripping penalty with 2:56 left Thursday allowed the Red Wings to tie the game on a power play via a Justin Abdelkader goal with 1:25 to go.

"Obviously, it's getting a little ridiculous right now," Larsson said. "You feel like they're calling everything I do and that makes it hard. I don't want to take those. Yesterday was unfortunate getting a stick between his legs and he fell down but it's something I just have to clean up.

"It's a fine line because when he plays with emotion, he's really good, he's aggressive and he attacks the game," Housley said. "The penalties we can do without for sure and it's an area we continue to talk to him about. It's all stick position. He rides a guy out and just needs to get his stick back on the puck."

Based on Friday's practice, Nicolas Baptiste and Justin Falk will be the healthy scratches Saturday in Washington. Neither was involved in line rushes.

The Sabres are not expected to hold a pregame skate Saturday. Georgetown and Providence have a Big East basketball game slated for a noon tipoff in Capital One Arena, forcing the Sabres to again trudge to Virginia if they want to skate in the morning before shuffling all their equipment back downtown for the game in the arena.

Story topics: Buffalo Sabres/ Detroit Red Wings/ Jason Pominville/ Robin Lehner

Capitals late surge secures 5-1 win over the Sabres

WGR550

February 24, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres made their only trip of the season to our nations capital. No Evander Kane in the lineup for Buffalo, with the trade deadline under 48 hours away. Kane has likely played his last game as a Buffalo Sabre.

Final score 5-1 in favor of the Capitals. The game was close until late, when two Ovechkin goals, and an empty netter ran up the score.

Here's how the game played out.

First Period:

19:10 - CAPITALS GOAL. Evgeny Kuznetsov wastes no time for the Capitals. He gets them out to an early 1-0 lead. Hard to imagine a worse start for the Sabres, putting themselves behind the 8-ball against a good team.

9:04 - The Sabres have had some good chances. Sam Reinhart had a quasi-breakaway, but was stopped. Evan Rodrigues drew a penalty and set up a nice chance by Kyle Okposo. Still trailing by 1 though.

0:00 - Not a bad period for the Sabres. They didn't have many grade A chances in the second half of the period, but neither did Washington. Marco Scandella has been covering Ovechkin a lot, and has done a very good job.

Goal Summary:

BUF: NONE

WAS: 0:50 - Evgeny Kuznetsov (17)(Connolly, Orlov)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: NONE

WAS: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 9 ; WAS - 8

Second Period:

15:50 - The Caps have been all over the Sabres. Andre Burakovsky had a wide open one timer in the slot that Lehner was forced to save. Shots are already 6-2 in the period in favor of Washington.

12:00 - Both teams are playing good defensively. Casey Nelson continues to make great breakout passes out of his own end.

6:40 - CAPITALS GOAL. Andre Burakovsky scores a highlight reel goal. He makes both Jason Pominville, Scott Wilson, and Rasmus Ristolainen look silly before roofing it over Lehner's shoulder. If Ristolainen is going to be this teams' 1st pair defenseman for years to come, he can't let things like that happen.

1:28 - The Sabres have had a nice push back after giving up the 2nd goal of the game. Both Kyle Okposo and Ryan O'Reilly have done a good job creating chances, but Philip Grubauer is standing tall.

Goal Summary:

BUF: NONE

WAS: 13:20 - Andre Burakovsky (8)(Kuznetsov, Niskanen)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: NONE

WAS: NONE

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 9 (18); WAS - 12 (20)

Third Period:

19:46 - SABRES GOAL. Sam Reinhart does it all himself. Reinhart carried the puck into the zone, chipped it by the defender, and roofed a backhand top shelf to make it a 1-goal game.

12:26 - Ristolainen got deked out for the second time tonight. Kuznetsov put a toe drag on Risto, and cut the net, nearly scoring a goal.

9:47- CAPITALS GOAL. Alex Ovechkin on the powerplay from his office on the left side. It's his 37th of the season, which leads the league.

1:12 - CAPITALS GOAL. Ovechkin again. This time a deflection in front. The guy just can't not score goals.

Goal Summary:

BUF: 0:14 - Sam Reinhart (14)(Nelson)

WAS: 10:13 - Alex Ovechkin (37)(Kuznetsov, Carlson)

Penalty Summary:

BUF: Kyle Okposo (2 min., goaltender interference)

WAS: Andre Burakovsky (2 min., delay of game)

Shots on Goal:

BUF - 11(29); WAS - 17(37)

What's Next:

The Sabres have a quick turnaround. They host the Bruins tomorrow evening at 5pm. We'll have pregame starting at 4pm on WGR!

The Sabres begin life without Evander Kane

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

February 24, 2018

Washington, DC (WGR 550) - The Sabres have started their time without Evander Kane. Kane was pulled out of Saturday's lineup in Washington and will likely be traded before 3 p.m. on Monday.

Kane will finish up with 196 games in Buffalo scoring 68 goals and 50 assists for 118 points. That's an average of 28 goals every 82 games.

Kane was acquired in February of 2015 along with Zach Bogosian and Jason Kasdorf for Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford, Joel Armia, Brendan Lemieux and a number one pick which turned out to be Jack Roslovic. That pick was 25th overall.

Things did not always go smoothly for Kane in Buffalo, but for this season, he seems to have grown a lot.

Benoit Pouliot replaced Kane on the line with Ryan O'Reilly and Sam Reinhart.

In the first period O'Reilly really stepped up. On his first two shifts, he forced Dmitry Orlov into two bad passes. One led to a 3-on-2 and the other forced Philipp Grubauer into a huge save on a Reinhart tip.

Later in the period O'Reilly sent Reinhart in and it was a big save by Grubauer.

Zemgus Girgensons was also strong along the wall. He forced one turnover and walked in on Grubauer through the right faceoff circle and then out battled John Carlson and set up Evan Rodrigues in the high slot.

In the first period the Sabres really missed Kane's speed. Just 50 seconds in, Evgeny Kuznetsov took off with the puck in his own zone. He beat Jason Pominville right away to the neutral zone and then beat him again in the offensive zone. Nate Beaulieu for some reason had stepped up to take a player at the red line before Kuznetsov even got rolling and wasn't in any position at all to help Pominville.

Alex Ovechkin had a couple of real good opportunities that came from raw speed.

The second period was a carbon copy of the first. Washington scored on some superior speed and Buffalo had Grade-A chances coming from winning battles.

On the second Capitals goal, Andre Burokovsky took off near his own goaltender and once again outraced Pominville. This time, he turned Rasmus Ristolainen totally around and went in alone on Lehner.

O'Reilly continued to drive Orlov out of his mind. He beat the defenseman to the net and accepted a pass feathered to him by Pouliot. Grubauer made a great save.

Later, Reinhart won a battle and found a wide open Pouliot down the slot.

Grubauer was called on for another wide open save when Kyle Okposo came through the crease area on the backhand.

The O'Reilly line finally got rewarded just 14 seconds into the third when Reinhart made a nifty move to get to the net and beat Grubauer far side.

Buffalo kept pressing, but Ovechkin ended any hopes of a rally scoring from where he always does on the power play, the left circle.

The Sabres let it get away in the final five minutes. Phil Housley wasn't happy with some of his players saying they weren't ready to play.

I had a chance to ask Lehner, Reinhart and Pominville after the game if they were at all surprised by what happened to Kane and none of them were. They just felt it is part of the business.

From the Locker Room: Sabres-Capitals

WGR550

February 24, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres matched up with the Washington Capitals for the second time this week, and for the second time this week the Sabres were on the wrong side of the final score. After defeating Buffalo 3-2 on Monday, Washington was at it again, this time besting the blue and gold by a final of 5-1.

Alex Ovechkin netted two goals for the Caps, while Sam Reinhart scored the only Sabre goal 14 seconds into the third period.

Philip Grubauer, the Capitals backup goaltender, bested Buffalo for the second time in six days.

Go inside the locker room to hear from Sam Reinhart, Robin Lehner, Jason Pominville and Phil Housley following the loss.

Sam Reinhart:

Early battles: "When you close the gap quicker it limits their time on the puck and limits their creativity. They have a lot of that. To start the game we gave them too much room, and they've got guys that are going to make plays."

Tonight's struggles attest to?: "Tonight's not a matter of work ethic, I don't think so. We're all battling out there. Mentally, we could've been a bit sharper. Could've closed some space better early too."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-24-sam-reinhart-post-game>

Robin Lehner:

Early goal: "[Kuznetsov] came out flying from nowhere. He's a skilled player. Not the guy you want to have that early opportunity. That first period was weird. They came out with a lot of speed and I think we were a little bit behind. We managed to come out of it only down 1-0, though."

On Kane: "That's the unfortunate part of this time of year. It can happen to anyone. It's a business. They wanted to sit him out, but he wanted to be out there. "

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-24-robin-lehner-post-game>

Jason Pominville:

Kuznetsov beat me clean: "First one I should've just not tried to get the puck there. I got a couple swings at it, missed, and he was able to get inside position. I probably should've just skated with him."

Thoughts on Evander: "I'd be lying to say I was surprised by it. You look around, there's been a lot of guys that have been held off the ice. He's definitely a guy drawing a lot of interest. You don't want him to get hurt. Overall I think it was a smart move."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-24-jason-pominville-post-game>

Phil Housley:

Lack of physicality: "I thought we didn't check well enough to take away their speed. There were also some guys [on our side] that weren't ready to play tonight. It was obvious right from the drop of the puck. Loss of coverage on a set forecheck."

Too light: "We weren't heavy enough in the battle and compete area in our own end. They were able to move around at will. That's because we didn't get to our checks and stay tight to them."

AUDIO: <http://www.wgr550.com/media/audio-channel/2-24-phil-housley-post-game>

Sabres' Ristolainen thinks his game can be even better.

WGR550

Paul Hamilton

February 23, 2018

Arlington, VA (WGR 550) - For the most part, Rasmus Ristolainen has been much better since the flameout game he had on Feb. 11 against Colorado.

Yes, there was the very casual drop pass giveaway that led to Washington's game winning goal, but he was very good in Detroit on Thursday.

Ristolainen had a goal and an assist and played 28 minutes against the Red Wings. He had three shots, three hits and four blocked shots. Ristolainen liked his performance at both ends of the ice, "Yes, it was the right game and right now what matters are the wins and it was a good battle."

Ristolainen had a lot of disgust in his voice when he thought back to how he played against the Avalanche. Ristolainen said, "In that game I didn't do anything well, so in every way it's been better, but I still have another level and I'll try to reach it before the season is over."

I thought that was an interesting comment. My first thought was what would that extra level look like? Ristolainen explained, "It means I take charge, everything works, I'm breaking out the puck well, making plays in the O-zone, just doing whatever it takes to win the game."

Phil Housley benched Ristolainen for part of the Colorado game. The head coach likes the response he's gotten, "He has really responded well. I think his game has gotten back to where it should be, not because he's getting production, I think his confidence and compete and his battle.

"He leans on guys, he's physical, he just has more urgency in his game and because of that, I think he's getting rewarded in the production area."

In their last six road games, the Sabres are 5-0-1. Their overall record away from the arena is 10-14-8 which is a point percentage of .438. Ristolainen said, "I don't know, but I think the last few years we've been better on the road. The record has been better, I don't know what's the reason, but somehow we've got to keep going with what we do on the road and then play better at home."

When the Capitals were in town on Feb, 19, I stood next to Alex Ovechkin. I never realized how thick this guy is. Ristolainen will be on the ice against him a lot. He loves games like that, "I enjoy a heavy game, a physical game and tomorrow it's going to be one, so I'm excited, I'm ready and that's my style, you've got to be physical, get hits and that's when I'm at my best."

The Sabres practiced for almost 45 minutes on Friday Housley made only one line change,

Kane - O'Reilly - Reinhart

Girgensons - Rodrigues - Okposo

Wilson - Larsson - Pominville

Pouliot - Josefson - Nolan

Nick Baptiste practiced on defense with Justin Falk. I totally understand that it's easier to practice with four pairs of defensemen, but Baptiste is still a young forward trying to find his way in the NHL. Having him practice on defense is a total waste of his time.

Anything could be on table for Sabres at trade deadline

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

February 25, 2018

BUFFALO – Jason Botterill has never experienced a trade deadline like this one. Prior to joining the Sabres, the rookie general manager spent 10 seasons in the Pittsburgh Penguins' front office, winning three Stanley Cups.

The Penguins contended for the Cup every season of Botterill's tenure, meaning they loaded up for a long playoff run, dealing prospects and draft picks for talent that could help them immediately.

After winning two straight championships, they're at it again this year. On Friday, Pittsburgh GM Jim Rutherford made a complicated three-team deal with the Ottawa Senators and Vegas Golden Knights. Most notably, the Penguins acquired center Derick Brassard and dished their 2018 first-round pick and defenseman Ian Cole.

Botterill, meanwhile, is trying to rebuild the failed rebuild he inherited. The last-place Sabres, of course, are sellers this deadline.

But beyond 20-goal winger Evander Kane and starting goalie Robin Lehner, do they have any assets teams really want? The Sabres aren't exactly bursting with first-rate talent opponents covet.

Botterill might be able to trade, say, Jacob Josefson and Benoit Pouliot, two veteran forwards on expiring contracts, for low picks. Still, while any return is good for players who likely won't be back, fifth-round choices aren't going to revitalize the Sabres.

They need players who can help them immediately. So does Botterill have something up his sleeve this deadline? Since he's a first-year GM, we don't know how he operates at this time of year.

Given Botterill has no attachment to many of the Sabres, anyone short of perhaps center Jack Eichel and defenseman Brendan Guhle and goalie Linus Ullmark, two AHL prospects, could be in play. The Sabres still have 17 players left from the previous regime.

So perhaps Botterill tries to swing something big, or at least notable, before Monday's 3 pm deadline. Maybe he packages up some high picks for an established youngster who can pay immediate dividends.

Or maybe he simply stays quiet, makes the expected deals – Kane, a veteran a team wants for depth – and focuses on reshaping the Sabres in the offseason.

Here are some players who could be moved before Monday afternoon.

Kane

Kane, 26, was held out of Saturday's road tilt against the Washington Capitals, a sure sign he will be traded. The nine-year veteran will command a huge contract as an unrestricted free agent the Sabres can't afford.

While he has mostly struggled for more than two months, he got off to a torrid start and finished strongly in 2016-17.

In fact, Kane was one of the NHL's best goal scorers for nearly a calendar year. From Dec. 3, 2016, the date he scored his first goal last season, until Nov. 20, 2017, he ranked fifth in goals, compiling 39 in 78 games.

Only Nikita Kucherov, Auston Matthews, Anders Lee and Brad Marchand scored more goals in that stretch. That's elite company.

Kane scored 12 goals in the first 21 contests this season before going into a rut he has recently emerged from a bit. He has scored four times in the last seven games, including one goal in each of the last two contests.

It's unclear how much value Kane possesses. He almost certainly lost some over the past few months. Naturally, Botterill is aiming high. He reportedly wants four assets in return. That might be a bit much, though.

Still, could Kane bring back a high pick – remember, teams rarely part with first-rounders – a notable prospect and another asset? In a seller's market, he might.

Botterill might be waiting for the New York Rangers to trade Rick Nash to establish the market for a high-scoring winger.

Lehner

It's hard to imagine a scenario in which Lehner, 26, is back next season. Even if the Sabres keep him past the deadline, they could deal his rights in the spring.

Lehner, a restricted free agent following the season, is playing on a one-year, \$4 million contract. He likely wants a long-term deal the Sabres don't want to give him.

With Ullmark, 24, ready for NHL duty, the two Swedes likely won't be sharing the net next season.

While Lehner, an acquisition by former GM Tim Murray in 2015, has tended some terrific goal, he hasn't established himself as an elite No. 1 goalie.

Perhaps a team like the New York Islanders, whose suspect goaltending could cost them a playoff spot, would dish a pick or a strong prospect for Lehner.

Sam Reinhart

Following an awful start, Reinhart, 22, has caught fire, scoring eight goals and 20 points in a 23-game stretch entering Saturday. The winger averaged 20 goals and 45 points in his first two seasons.

Reinhart likely won't be traded. The Sabres desperately need scoring, and the former second overall pick has been providing plenty.

But if Botterill receives an offer – for example, another young forward with similar scoring abilities but different talents the GM puts a greater value on – would he say no? What if someone dangles a puck-moving defenseman the Sabres sorely need?

Reinhart will probably stay put. Never say never, though.

5 observations: Capitals stomp Sabres 5-1

WKBW

Matt Bove

February 24, 2018

Washington, D.C. (WKBW) - For the second time this week the Buffalo Sabres lost to the Washington Capitals, this time falling 5-1 in their final meeting of the season.

Five observations from Saturday's loss:

1.) Waiting game

Evander Kane stole the spotlight on Saturday and he didn't even play. With Kane sitting out against the Capitals, there are almost no doubts that he'll be moved before Monday's deadline. What has been inevitable since the start of the season is now all but a certainty.

The question now becomes where he'll be dealt and for what in return? Maybe we'll find out Sunday, perhaps Monday morning or right at 3 o'clock as the deadline hits. Buckle up, this might be the most enjoyable part of the season based off how things have gone so far.

2.) Last game for?

I'd be floored if Kane plays tomorrow night against the Bruins -- why would he? But with Robin Lehner getting the nod against the Capitals on Saturday there is a chance he has played his last game with the Sabres. Lehner won't be as hot of a commodity as Kane and the chances he gets dealt are much slimmer, but you never know? The same can be said for players like Josh Gorges, Benoit Pouliot, Zemgus Girgensons, the list goes on and on.

3.) Still no offense

With Eichel sidelined and Kane out of the lineup the Sabres were without arguably their two most prolific goal scorers. Despite their absence the Sabres generated a few chances, but clearly not enough. In the Sabres last five games they have only ten goals. That's almost never going to get the job done.

4.) Better team won

Let's not sugarcoat this -- there is a reason the Capitals are where they are in the standings and a reason why the Sabres have sat in the basement of the Eastern Conference all year. On Saturday it was evident that the team with Alex Ovechkin, Nick Backstrom, TJ Oshie, John Carlson and Evgeny Kuznetsov had more talent on the ice. Their first goal of the evening came because the Caps were ready to play right from the start. Their second goal was a result of pure speed. Two areas where the Sabres have struggled....and the Capitals took advantage.

And how does Alex Ovechkin always get so open? Along with his absolute cannon of a shot and tenacity, this is one of the biggest reasons he's flirting with 600 career goals.

5.) Population falling

After a scorching hot start to the season Jason Pominville has seen a massive drop-off in production. On Saturday against the Capitals he struggled, as did many of his teammates, but it makes you wonder what the Sabres are going to do with Pominville moving forward? He has only three goals in his last 49 games and only one goal since December 10th.

Pominville is under contract for one more season and will make \$5M (\$5.6M cap hit). He's an outstanding veteran leader and is usually pretty responsible in his own end but this is just looking like another bad contract the Sabres will deal with moving forward.

Former Sabres captain Brian Gionta expected to make return to NHL

WKBW

Matt Bove

February 24, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Brian Gionta is making his return to the NHL. According to Brian Bartlett of Sports Consulting Group, the agency that represents Gionta, the 39-year-old Rochester native is expected to sign with an NHL team in the near future.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Can confirm that Brian Gionta is expected to sign an NHL contract in the near future with a playoff contender, as first reported by Kevin Oklobzija @WKBW

11:13 AM - Feb 24, 2018 · North Tonawanda, NY

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Bartlett added that Gionta would be signing with a team that will be a serious playoff contender but could not specify which team because the deal has not been signed.

Gionta, the former captain of the Buffalo Sabres and Montreal Canadiens, has played in 1,006 NHL games, scoring 289 goals and tallying 588 points. More recently, Gionta captained Team USA at the 2018 PyeongChang Games.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Tomorrow on @WKBW we catch up with Brian Gionta to discuss the Olympics, his time in Rochester and of course, what may happen next! #Sabres

Hey @TobyMotyka, our two camera interview looks great! @TobyMotyka

1:41 PM - Feb 7, 2018

8

See Matthew Bové's other Tweets

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In an interview with WKBW before the Olympics, Gionta said he would keep his options open and would like to keep playing if possible. In the months leading up to the games, Gionta practiced with the Rochester Americans of the AHL and appeared in one-game.

Evander Kane to sit out Vs. Caps

WIVB

Nick Filipowski

February 24, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y (WIVB) – With the trade deadline two days away, Jason Botterill has made his first move — almost.

Evander Kane will not play Saturday in Washington, the team announced.

“Management thought it was the best decision moving forward and the best decision for Evander,” head coach Phil Housley said when he met with the media.

Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

Coach Housley says Evander Kane will not play tonight. “Management thought it was the best decision moving forward and the best decision for Evander.”

4:58 PM - Feb 24, 2018

858

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Kane, who had a red-hot first half of the season with 16 goals, has only scored four times since January 1. Although he never played in a game after being traded to Buffalo during the 2014-2015 season due to a shoulder injury, the star winger has scored 20 or more goals in each of his three seasons with the club.

After taking part in practice on Wednesday, when asked about trade rumors, Kane joked with the media that he continually refreshes social media to see if he’s been traded.

“Every five seconds refreshing, refreshing, refreshing and refreshing,” Kane joked Wednesday. “I love the hockey critics especially the guys with the fake profiles – what are they called? Bots now? I love it. It’s just great. Just criticizing my play what I’m doing. It’s awesome. I refresh. I try to stay up to date.”

Nick Filipowski

@NEWS4_NICK

Evander Kane had some fun after practice with social media and how much he pays attention to the rumors that are out there
[@news4buffalo](#) [#Sabres](#) [#NHLTradeDeadline](#) [#TradeDeadline](#)

2:18 PM - Feb 21, 2018

35

See Nick Filipowski's other Tweets

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Robin Lehner, who has also been rumored to potentially be on the move on or before the deadline, will be the starter when puck drops at 7 p.m. inside the Verizon Center.

Ovechkin scores 38th in Capitals win against Sabres

NHL.com

Brian McNally

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON -- Alex Ovechkin scored his NHL-leading 37th and 38th goals for the Washington Capitals in a 5-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Capital One Arena on Saturday.

Evgeny Kuznetsov, Andre Burakovsky and Lars Eller scored for Washington (35-20-7), which ended a two-game losing streak and regained first place in the Metropolitan Division, one point ahead of the Pittsburgh Penguins and Philadelphia Flyers.

Sam Reinhart scored 14 seconds into the third period for the Sabres (18-33-11), who are last in the Atlantic Division.

[WATCH: All Sabres vs. Capitals highlights]

Ovechkin, who tied Calle Johansson's record for most games played for the Capitals (983), has 596 NHL goals and would become the 20th player to score 600 in the NHL.

"When you get closer, you want it done earlier," Ovechkin said. "You're stuck at 599, you want to pass it. Hoping in a couple of games I will have it done and we move forward."

Kuznetsov gave the Capitals a 1-0 lead 50 seconds into the first period when he skated around forward Jason Pominville.

Kuznetsov's impressive goal
00:32 • February 24th, 2018

Burakovsky scored at 13:20 of the second period on a solo rush up ice that ended with a backhand between Robin Lehner's pads for a 2-0 lead. He took a pass from Kuznetsov in the left face-off circle in the defensive zone and skated past five Sabres.

"I'm playing with some confidence right now and I'm feeling good with the puck," Burakovsky said. "I had a lot of other opportunities tonight. It's just kind of crazy that a goal like that goes in because I think I could have some other shots that could be goals, but not that one. I'll take it."

Reinhart made it 2-1 with his goal. Washington blew a 2-1 lead to the Florida Panthers on Thursday in the final 3:42 and lost 3-2. The Capitals blew a two-goal lead Feb. 13 against the Winnipeg Jets in the third period and lost 4-3 in overtime, and Washington defeated Buffalo 3-2 on Feb. 19 being outshot 17-6 in the third period.

Reinhart's top-shelf backhand
00:48 • February 24th, 2018

Capitals goalie Philipp Grubauer made 28 saves, including a pad stop on Kyle Okposo alone in front at 14:01 of the second period. Grubauer has won three consecutive starts, including two in a row against Buffalo.

"How the last couple of games went, it's always huge to get the next one," Grubauer said. "It was important for us to get the win. It was a little unfortunate there in Florida with a couple seconds left. Overall, we played 60 minutes and we've got to keep doing that."

Ovechkin scored on the power play at 10:13 of the third period to make it 3-1 and at even strength at 18:36 to make it 5-1. Eller scored an empty-net goal at 17:48 for a 4-1 lead.

Ovechkin tips home second goal
00:51 • February 24th, 2018

The Sabres have lost three of four. Lehner made 31 saves.

"There were some guys that weren't ready to play tonight," Buffalo coach Phil Housley said. "It was obvious right off the drop of the puck."

Buffalo scratched forward Evander Kane to prevent injury with the NHL Trade Deadline approaching at 3 p.m. on Monday.

Goal of the game
Ovechkin's goal at 10:13 of the third period.

Ovechkin roofs power-play snipe
00:58 • February 24th, 2018

Save of the game
Grubauer's save on Okposo at 14:01 of the second period.

Grubauer's pad stop on Okposo
00:10 • February 24th, 2018

Highlight of the game
Burakovsky's goal at 13:20 of the second period.

Burakovsky's spectacular goal
00:55 • February 24th, 2018

They said it
"It was different not having [Kane] there. It's something there's been a lot of rumors about. It just kind of happened." -- Sabres forward Ryan O'Reilly

"In this day and age obviously, there's not a lot of players that are with their same team. Those days are past a little bit. I think [milestones are] important for a franchise when you're the face of a franchise." -- Capitals coach Barry Trotz on Alex Ovechkin

Need to know
Ovechkin leads Evgeni Malkin of the Penguins by two goals. ... Burakovsky has four goals in the eight games since he was a healthy scratch against the Vegas Golden Knights on Feb. 9. ... Kuznetsov had his fourth three-assist game of the season. ... Johannsson played for the Capitals from 1988-89 to 2002-03.

What's next
Sabres: Host the Boston Bruins on Sunday (5 p.m. ET; SN360, MSG-B, NESN, NHL.TV)

Capitals: At the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday (7:30 p.m. ET; SN, FS-O, NBCSWA, NHL.TV)

Ovechkin goal stifles comeback effort in Washington

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON - In the District of Columbia, two offices reign supreme. One is located on Pennsylvania Avenue, occupied by the president of the United States. The other, in and around the left faceoff circle at Capital One Arena, belongs to Alex Ovechkin.

With the Buffalo Sabres in town and pushing for a third-period comeback on Saturday night, Ovechkin went to his office as he often does, with the Washington Capitals on the power play. He reached back and rifled a one-time shot across the body of Robin Lehner, the difference maker in a 5-1 Sabres loss.

Prior to Ovechkin's goal, the Sabres trailed 2-1 and had generated potential game-tying looks. After it, Lars Eller scored into an empty net with 2:12 remaining and Ovechkin later added a second goal to transform a close game into a lopsided loss for the Sabres.

"If we get through that power play," Lehner said, "it could have been different."

Sabres lose to Capitals, 5-1

03:39 • February 24th, 2018

The power play was Washington's first of the game, the result of a goalie interference call against Kyle Okposo with 11:17 remaining. Okposo appeared to be pushed into Philipp Grubauer by linemate Zemgus Girgensons, who was pushed from behind by Washington forward Tom Wilson.

"I totally disagree with the call," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "He's trying to go hard to the net, which we want our guys to do, and he gets pushed into the goalie. [The official] said that he made no move to get out of the crease, but when you've got two guys pushing on him, it's hard to get out of there."

The Sabres came into the contest having earned at least a point in each of their last six road games, with a 5-0-1 record in that span. They had scored the first goal in five of those games, which Housley stressed as a crucial aspect to their success.

It was the Capitals who struck first on Saturday, and it took them less than a minute to do so. Evgeny Kuznetsov carried the puck into the neutral zone, got by Jason Pominville as he cut across the net and scored just 50 seconds into the game.

"I've got to have the first one," Pominville said. "That's on me. I think I've just got to skate with him and not try to get the puck. I think I tried at least two times to get the puck and he kept getting my stick."

The Sabres did eventually respond and generate some offense, but Housley felt it took too long. The Capitals' speed burned them again in the second period, this time when Andre Burakovsky went end-to-end and through four defenders before beating Lehner with a backhand shot.

"There were some guys who weren't ready to play tonight," Housley said. "It was obvious right from the drop of the puck."

Sam Reinhart scored to cut the deficit in half just 14 seconds into the third period, battling to drive to the net and burying a shot off his backhand. The goal was Reinhart's 14th of the season and his 19th point in 18 games.

Reinhart's top-shelf backhand

00:48 • February 24th, 2018

"Sam went hard to the net," Housley said. "It's good to see him going to those areas. I think a lot of our guys can do a better job of that, trying to get in front of the goaltender and get a greasy goal."

The Sabres were otherwise shutdown by Grubauer, who made 28 saves. Their comeback was stifled when Okposo went to the box and Ovechkin went to his office, made possible when Ryan O'Reilly tripped along the boards on the opposite side of the ice.

"It's unfortunate because I was forcing the puck in the corner and I fall down," he said. "It gives them the easy quick up and across. Usually I'm there, I can recover, and [forward Benoit Pouliot] doesn't have to come across and we can take that away. It's just an unfortunate bounce.

"He's one of the elite scorers in the game. Leave him open, he's going to make you pay."

Kane scratched as deadline approaches

Evander Kane was held out of the lineup as a precautionary measure to avoid risk of injury in advance of Monday's trade deadline. Kane is an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season.

While they missed his skillset on the ice, his teammates said they understood the decision by management.

"I think I'd be lying to say I was surprised by it," Pominville said. "You look around, there's been a lot of guys who have been held off the ice and he's probably been a guy who's drawn a lot of interest"

Up next

The Sabres return home on Sunday for a 5 p.m. matchup with the Boston Bruins. Family Packs - which include four 300-level tickets, four hot dogs, four drinks and four popcorns - are available and can be found [here](#).

Can't make it downtown? Coverage on MSG-B begins at 4:30 with the GMC Game Night Pregame Show, or you can listen live on WGR 550.

With deadline approaching, Sabres scratch Kane in Washington

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

February 24, 2018

WASHINGTON - With just two games remaining ahead of Monday's trade deadline, Evander Kane will be held out of the Buffalo Sabres lineup when the team concludes its road trip against the Washington Capitals on Saturday.

Kane is due to become an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season. Other teams have sat potential trade assets in recent days to avoid the risk of injury, beginning when the New York Rangers scratched Rick Nash and Michael Grabner on Thursday (Grabner was later traded to New Jersey).

Sabres coach Phil Housley said that Kane will still attend the game on Saturday.

"Management thought it was the best decision moving forward and the best decision for Evander," Housley said. '

Phil Housley Pregame (2/24/18)

03:21 • February 24th, 2018

Benoit Pouliot will take Kane's place on the top line alongside Ryan O'Reilly and Sam Reinhart. Nicholas Baptiste, who skated as an extra forward in practice on Friday, will remain in the lineup while Jordan Nolan will be back in after sitting the last two games as a healthy scratch.

Robin Lehner, 3-0-1 in his last four road games, will start in net.

The Sabres have split their season series with the Capitals thus far, having won the first game in Buffalo 3-1 prior to losing their most recent matchup, at home last Monday, 3-2. The Sabres last won a game in Washington on Nov. 22, 2014, a 2-1 victory that required 43 saves from Jhonas Enroth.

On the other hand, the Sabres are 5-0-1 in their last six road games and can use their early-season victory over the Capitals as a template for success.

"I think the first game we played Washington was [an example of] really good checking," Housley said. "You have to check well against this team and then you're going to have to score in some opportunistic manners. Power play and special teams will play an important role tonight."

The Capitals have lost two-straight games and fallen a point behind Pittsburgh atop the Metropolitan Division standings. They have acquired a pair of defensemen, Michal Kempny from Chicago and Jakub Jerabek from Montreal, since they visited Buffalo less than a week ago. Of the two, only Kempny will play on Saturday.

Coverage on MSG-B begins at 6:30 p.m. with the GMC Game Night Pregame Show, or you can listen live on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 7.

Sharpen Up: February 24, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

February 24, 2018

Coming off a thrilling overtime in Thursday in Detroit, the Sabres are back in action tonight against the Washington Capitals. We'll hear from Phil Housley later today for any lineup news and notes.

Be sure to check out the GMC Game Night pregame show starting at 6:30 p.m. on MSG. Then RJ and Rayzor will have the call of the action from Capital One Arena just after 7 on MSG and WGR 550.

A new episode of Beyond Blue and Gold will also debut today. "Fully Equipped" focuses on the experience of Sabres equipment managers Rip Simonick, Dave Williams and George Babcock during the 2018 NHL Winter Classic.

Here's what you need to know.

Friday's practice

Sabres Now (2/23/18)

02:37 • February 23rd, 2018

Here's how the team lined up at the Capitals practice facility in Virginia:

9 Evander Kane - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 23 Sam Reinhart
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 71 Evan Rodrigues - 21 Kyle Okposo
20 Scott Wilson - 22 Johan Larsson - 29 Jason Pominville
67 Benoit Pouliot - 10 Jacob Josefson - 17 Jordan Nolan (13 Nicholas Baptiste)

82 Nathan Beaulieu - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Marco Scandella - 8 Casey Nelson
4 Josh Gorges - 93 Victor Antipin
41 Justin Falk

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson

Phil Housley (2/23/18)

03:10 • February 23rd, 2018

Since an admittedly dreadful game against Colorado, Rasmus Ristolainen has stepped up over the last four games, and posted a pair of points on Thursday.

We took a closer look in the Ice Level Practice Report. Here's a sampling (you can read the full story here):

Rasmus Ristolainen was blunt when asked whether his game has picked up since a loss to Colorado on Feb. 11, a game in which he was directly involved in three goals against and at one point saw his ice time limited exclusively to special teams.

"It can't be worse than that," the defenseman said, "so obviously it's been a little better."

The points are nice, but Phil Housley said they're more indicative of improvements in other areas on the ice.

Ristolainen's wrist finds twine

00:51 • February 22nd, 2018

"He has really responded well," Housley said. "I think his game has gotten to be back where it should be. Not because he's getting production. I think just his compete and his battle, he leans on guys, he's physical, just has more urgency in his game. Because of that I think he's getting rewarded in the production area."

In the game immediately following the Colorado loss, Ristolainen led a defensive effort that held Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos scoreless with just one shot on goal. He was matched up with another superstar in Alex Ovechkin on Monday - who he'll meet again when the Sabres visit the Washington Capitals on Saturday - and matched his physicality from beginning to end.

That may be true, but it also doesn't do justice to the fact that Ristolainen has gotten back to his usual high level of play in the five games since that loss to the Avalanche. He's scored four points in that stretch, including a goal and an assist against Detroit on Thursday.

It's an improvement from where he was at shortly after the All-Star break, but Ristolainen said there is still another level he can reach. What might that look like?

"I take charge," he said. "Everything works. Breaking out the puck well, making plays in our own zone. Just doing whatever it takes to win the game."

"It's a great attitude to have," Housley added. "I really like the way he's getting up in the play, in the rushes, joining the rush. I think he can do more of that. I think that's maybe what he's talking about. But he certainly has a good way of finding lanes, like the goal last night."

Tonight's matchup

From the Game Notes...

This is the third and final meeting between the Sabres and Capitals this season.

Last meeting: Washington defeated Buffalo 3-2 in Buffalo on Feb. 19

The Sabres are 2-6-2 in their last 10 games vs. the Capitals; 3-6-1 on the road.

The Sabres are looking for their first win in Washington since Nov. 22, 2014.

Kyle Okposo has seven points (4+3) in his last seven games against the Capitals.

Jason Pominville has seven points (3+4) in his last eight games against Washington.

Benoit Pouliot has five points (4+1) in his last six games against the Capitals.

Evander Kane has six career two-point games against Washington and three goals in two matchups this season.

Buffalo enters tonight's game with points in six straight road games (5-0-1) in the same season for the first time since the team went 6-0-1 in a seven-game span on the road from Feb. 8 to March 6, 2011.

Rasmus Ristolainen has recorded 12 points (4+8) in his last 11 road games.

Sam Reinhart has totaled eight points (2+6) in his last seven road games.

Kyle Okposo has recorded six points (2+4) in his last seven road games.

Scott Wilson enters tonight's game with six points (3+3) in his last six road games.

Johan Larsson has four points (1+3) in his last four road games.

Beyond Blue and Gold airs tonight

We'll have it up on the web and on social media later this morning and it'll air on the broadcast tonight. For now, here are two bonus scenes from the episode:

Improved all-around play has led to increased production for Ristolainen

Sabres.com

Jourdon LaBarber

February 23, 2018

ARLINGTON, Va. - Rasmus Ristolainen was blunt when asked whether his game has picked up since a loss to Colorado on Feb. 11, a game in which he was directly involved in three goals against and at one point saw his ice time limited exclusively to special teams.

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Ristolainen's wrist finds twine

00:51 • February 22nd, 2018

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Phil Housley (2/23/18)

03:10 • February 23rd, 2018

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"It's a great attitude to have," Housley added. "I really like the way he's getting up in the play, in the rushes, joining the rush. I think he can do more of that. I think that's maybe what he's talking about. But he certainly has a good way of finding lanes, like the goal last night."

Against Detroit, Ristolainen recorded three hits and four blocked shots in addition to his two points. He broke up a potential goal for Henrik Zetterberg that would have tied the game late in the second period and came up with a key block of an Anthony Mantha shot from point-blank range in the third.

Of course, when asked about the game, he brought up none of that, choosing instead to focus on the result: a 3-2 win in overtime.

"Right now, what matters are the wins," he said. "It was a good battle."

Ristolainen's tap-in goal

00:54 • February 17th, 2018

Road warriors

Sabres Now (2/23/18)
02:37 • February 23rd, 2018

With the win in Detroit, the Sabres are 5-0-1 in their last six road games. Housley said it's no coincidence that they've scored the first goal in all but one of those contests, which is a testament to their mentality to begin games away from home.

"It just seems that on the road, we just can focus," Housley said. "There's no distractions. We're on the bus together, we're going to the game together and we're focused on winning hockey games. At home, it just seems like the mentality right now, because of what's happened, it's tough to get out of that rut."

Some players have suggested as of late that, because of the team's struggles at home, they try to do too much in front of the home crowd. Their wins on the road have come by virtue of simplicity, getting pucks deep in the offensive zone and limiting turnovers that feed transition.

"We've got to get back to simplifying our game and keeping it simple out there, not manufacturing things that aren't there," Housley said.

The fine line for Larry

Johan Larsson made up for it with an assist at the buzzer in overtime, but it was his minor penalty for tripping that gave the Red Wings the power play on which they tied the game late in the third period on Thursday.

Larsson has now taken a minor penalty in six of eight games since he was suspended for a cross-check at home against Anaheim on Feb. 6. The trick for the Sabres, Housley said, is getting him to reel back the penalties while keeping an aggressive mentality.

"It's a fine line because when he plays with emotion he's really, really good," Housley said. "You can see it. He's aggressive, he attacks the game. The penalties we can do without, for sure, and that's one area we continue to talk with him [about]."

"I look at that play, it's just all stick position. He rides a guy out and he just needs to get a stick back on the puck like we talked about. It's unfortunate it got caught up in his skates. We're going to continue to work on that with him."

Lines at practice

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31 Chad Johnson

Sharpen Up: February 23, 2018

Sabres.com

Chris Ryndak

February 23, 2018

That was exciting. Marco Scandella put home the winner in overtime last night just before the final horn sounded. It was the third overtime goal of his career.

Buffalo is in Washington D.C. now as they get ready for a 7 p.m. game against the Capitals tomorrow night.

Here's what you need to know.

Let's look at that OT winner again

Scandella's OT buzzer beater

01:05 • February 22nd, 2018

Here's Scandella (who is celebrating a birthday today) with Dan after the game:

Scandella with Dan (2/22/18)

02:02 • February 22nd, 2018

From the Lexus Postgame Report, live from Little Caesars Arena...

Recap: BUF 3, DET 2 - F/OT

04:27 • February 22nd, 2018

Johan Larsson summed it up best, standing in the visiting dressing room at Little Caesars Arena: "It's a fine line," he said, "between winning and losing." Exactly how fine that line was against the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday night, he wasn't sure.

Phil Housley Postgame (2/22/18)

02:24 • February 23rd, 2018

Larsson began his drive as the final seconds dwindled off the clock in overtime, drew two defenders as he approached the net and made a quick pass back to Marco Scandella, who rifled a shot past Jimmy Howard with 0.2 seconds remaining to clinch a 3-2 win for the Buffalo Sabres.

Surely it took an acute sense of timing on Larsson's behalf to pull off the buzzer beater. Right?

"No," he said, smiling. "No idea. I heard it was pretty close."

Johan Larsson Postgame (2/22/18)

02:01 • February 23rd, 2018

In any event, the victory was a show of resiliency for the Sabres, who gave up the game-tying goal to Detroit's Justin Abdelkader with 1:25 remaining in regulation. The goal came with the Red Wings on a 6-on-4 advantage, with Howard pulled and Larsson serving a minor penalty for tripping.

Evander Kane Postgame (2/22/18)

03:10 • February 23rd, 2018

It was fitting, then, that it was Larsson who came through with the late-game heroics.

"We didn't throw in the towel," Scandella said. "We didn't give up. It just showed the kind of game we played tonight. We played 60 minutes. We played a simple game, but a hard game and everyone pulled on the rope."

Robin Lehner Postgame (2/22/18)
01:35 • February 23rd, 2018

According to Elias Sports Bureau, Scandella joined Los Angeles' Tyler Toffoli as the only players to score at the 4:59 mark in overtime this season. You might remember the last time a Sabre accomplished the feat:

Eichel pots game-winner in OT
01:44 • March 12th, 2016

New Beyond Blue and Gold coming Saturday

The newest episode of the Emmy-winning behind-the-scenes video series focuses on the work of our equipment managers during the NHL Winter Classic.

We have two bonus scenes for you here:

BBG Bonus: Bills Jacket
00:55 • February 22nd, 2018

BBG Bonus: The Kids
01:10 • February 22nd, 2018

RJ Bobbleheads raise \$74,000

Big news here and thanks to everyone who purchased a Rick Jeanneret Bobblehead to help support the Buffalo Sabres Foundation and Kevin Guest House.

The special edition talking bobblehead presented by John W. Danforth raised \$74,000 that will be split in half and donated to Kevin Guest House and the Buffalo Sabres Foundation.

A check for \$37,000 will be presented to representatives from Kevin Guest House on Sunday, Feb. 25, when the Sabres host the Boston Bruins.

"We would like to thank the fans and John W. Danforth for making this possible," said Rich Jureller, President of the Buffalo Sabres Foundation. "With all the support, we are going to be able to use these funds to continue to make a difference in the Buffalo community and help a great organization in Kevin Guest House."

After overwhelming demand from Sabres fans, all 1,900 talking bobbleheads sold out in a day and a half.

"The response from the community took me completely by surprise," Jeanneret said. "I was flattered to see how many people wanted this bobblehead and stepped up to help support our community, proving once again that Buffalo has the best fans in the league."