



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 29, 2018

Mittelstadt feels like he belongs as he prepares for his first game as a Sabre

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

March 28, 2018

Two years ago, Casey Nelson finished his season at Minnesota State then signed as a free agent with the Buffalo Sabres. It was three days later when he was making his National Hockey League debut. He remembers it being an afternoon game and grateful for the early start.

"I played an afternoon game which was nice because I didn't have to sit around or try to take a nap," Nelson said. "I wouldn't have been able to nap."

In many ways, Casey Mittelstadt is living the same experience. With his college hockey season at the University at Minnesota complete, the first-round draft pick signed with the Sabres on Monday and will make his NHL debut on Thursday when the Detroit Red Wings visit KeyBank Center.

Only Mittelstadt is pretty sure he won't have any trouble napping, a key part of game-day routine for many hockey players.

"I'll probably be able to take a nap," Mittelstadt said with a smile. "I have no problem doing that. I should be fine. Once the game gets closer, I'm sure I'll get a little nervous, a little antsy to get out there and get going. But I think for the most part I should be fine. I feel good today. I feel like I belong. So I'm not too nervous."

Wednesday was the first practice as a Sabre for Mittelstadt, who centered a line with Sam Reinhart and Evan Rodrigues and he looked very much like a player ready to fit into an NHL team. His teammates certainly worked to make him feel at home. Jack Eichel took him out to lunch on Tuesday while Reinhart took him out to dinner.

That's lots of meals out for the 19-year-old who was the Sabres top draft pick, and eighth overall, in the 2017 draft. But it's more than just about food. It's about making him feel welcome.

"I think it's just making him feel more comfortable, making him feel a part of this team right away," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "We only have six games left, but it's going to be great for him to get used to the players that are surrounding him and getting used to our systems and just getting used to the NHL game. You're playing against bigger and stronger players and just getting up to speed in those areas. Certainly it's great that our guys reached out to him and wanted to make him feel part of this team right away."

Of course they want to make Mittelstadt feel welcome immediately. The players know that he's a key part of the team's future, an important aspect of the turnaround the Sabres hope to make from perennial bottom-feeder to a competitive club with playoff aspirations.

And many of those reaching out to Mittelstadt know what it's like to be a high draft pick thrust into your first NHL experience with some heavy expectations lurking in the shadows.

"Whatever he's done in his career so far, he's been pretty successful so no need for him to come here or change things or change his approach," Eichel said. "Just play your game. Be yourself. Play to your strengths."

"Just relax," Reinhart said. "I think if he plays with the speed he's capable of, the ice is going to open up that much more for him. The quicker you're able to do that, open up a little room for yourself, the confidence will grow. One thing to tell him is just to find that confidence early, whether it's that first shift or if it's one play, build off that."

But there's only so much Mittelstadt can be told. The majority of his learning curve as he jumps into the NHL will have to come through trial and error, through his own lived experience rather than from following a playbook. There is no one prescription for translating his success with USA Hockey and Minnesota into the pro game, although young players seem more prepared for it than ever before.

"With the way things are these days, you're seeing younger kids grow up a lot quicker, I guess you could say, with the resources we have," said the 21-year-old Eichel, now in his third NHL season. "I know I was fortunate growing up, I had a lot

of resources at a young age to help me grow up a little bit. I'm sure the same goes for him. Even when you get here, there's a lot to learn and a lot that you don't really understand or learn until you experience it and you're here every day and you're going through it.

"I mean obviously you can talk to him as much as you want and stuff but he's the guy that's going to go through it," Eichel said. "I just want to be here for him. I was in a similar situation a few years ago, Sam as well, with coming in at a pretty young age. We have a lot in common. It was good (at lunch) where we were able to get to know each other a little better. We're both college guys and are able to talk about things other than hockey and get to know each other. That's important. He's going to be a big part of our future and we want the best for him."

Sabres Notebook: NHL releases draft lottery odds

The Buffalo News

By Amy Moritz

March 28, 2018

The odds of nabbing the overall No. 1 pick in this year's NHL draft went up slightly.

On Wednesday the league released the draft lottery odds for the 15 teams which do not qualify for the playoffs. The team with the worst record in the league has an 18.5 percent chance of winning the lottery for the right to the first pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, scheduled for June 22-23 in American Airlines Center in Dallas.

That's up from 18.0 percent last year, but down from the 20 percent chance in both 2015 and 2016 with 2015 the infamous year of the tank between Edmonton and Buffalo for the right to draft Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel.

The team with the second-worst record has a 13.5 percent chance of winning the lottery with the third-worst team an 11.5 percent chance.

While not attempting to finish last in the league, the Sabres are on their way. Heading into Wednesday's slate of games, the Sabres were last in the NHL with 60 points (24-40-12) behind Arizona's 63 (26-39-11).

The draft lottery will be held Saturday, April 28, in Toronto, and will have three drawings to determine the teams which will make the first three selections in the NHL Draft.

The 12 clubs not selected in the 2018 NHL Draft Lottery will be assigned 2018 NHL Draft selections 4 through 15, in inverse order of regular-season points.

Wednesday was the first practice for Casey Mittelstadt with the Buffalo Sabres and the 19-year-old had plenty of opportunity during the hour-long session in HarborCenter.

Mittelstadt centered a line with Sam Reinhart and Evan Rodrigues and took a spot on the point on the Sabres second power-play unit.

He will get plenty of ice time Thursday as the Sabres host the Detroit Red Wings at 7 p.m. in KeyBank Center. But head coach Phil Housley would like you to remember something about the 19-year-old.

"Let's remind ourselves that he hasn't played since March 3," Housley said. That was the day Minnesota was eliminated from the Big Ten playoffs by Penn State. "I know he's practiced a lot with his old team, but it never simulates a game. I like that he was getting used to the speed of our practice. Getting comfortable in the situation, just trying to get through the drills, learning our systems. There's a lot thrown at him today but I thought he made really good adjustments today during practice especially on the power play."

Mittelstadt was on a power play unit with Jason Pominville, Rodrigues, Nicholas Baptiste and Marco Scandella. The first unit included Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart, Kyle Okposo, Ryan O'Reilly and Rasmus Ristolainen.

Lines at practice were: Zemgus Girgensons-Eichel-Pominville; Rodrigues-Mittelstadt-Reinhart; Scott Wilson-O'Reilly-Okposo; Jordan Nolan-Johan Larsson-Baptiste.

Defensive pairings were: Brendan Guhle-Ristolainen; Scandella-Casey Nelson; Nathan Beaulieu-Justin Falk. Josh Gorges-Victor Antipin; Benoit Pouliot and Kyle Crisculo were extra forwards.

All three goaltenders were on the ice for practice, including Linus Ullmark who was hurt Monday in the team's morning skate in Toronto.

"Still day to day," Housley said of Ullmark's status. "It's good to see him out there today."

Sabres' Mittelstadt skates in his first practice

Phil Housley liked his new rookie

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

MARCH 28, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Casey Mittelstadt was between Sam Reinhart and Evan Rodrigues for his first NHL practice. Being the new guy, Mittelstadt had to lead the stretch and give a speech when they gathered around him. The 19-year-old said he just thanked them for being so welcoming to him.

There was a lot of chatter and some extra jump to practice. Mittelstadt wasn't at all intimidated by the scene, "It was exciting, I hadn't played a game in a while, so it was nice to get out there and have some pace and have some fun, so it was definitely a good first practice."

On Tuesday, Jack Eichel had lunch with Mittelstadt while Reinhart took him to dinner. Mittelstadt appreciates his new teammates reaching out, "It's probably the biggest part of it, coming to a new team and they've been together all year and you're the new guy so anytime anybody is welcoming you in, it's a good feeling and they've done a great job of that."

Eichel is a guy that wants to be a leader on this team. He feels it's important to make a new guy feel welcome and he said, "He's a good kid, but a normal guy. Hockey guys seems to get along pretty well and he's going to be a big part of our future, so it's important that he feels comfortable in the room and feels comfortable around the guys."

"We have a lot in common and it was good. We were able to get to know each other a little bit and we were able to talk about things other than hockey and just get to know each other and I think that's important."

Eichel and Reinhart know exactly what Mittelstadt is going through. They are all top picks that are getting to the NHL early. Eichel said things are different these days when it comes to young players, "You're seeing younger kids grow up a lot quicker. With all the resources we have, I know I was fortunate to have a lot of resources at a young age to help me grow up a little bit and even when you get here, there's a lot to learn and there's a lot that you don't really understand until you experience it and are here every day."

Housley saw him during Prospects Camp, but this is the first practice he's been on the ice with Mittelstadt. The head coach said, "Let's remind ourselves that he hasn't played since March 3. I know he's practiced a lot with his old team, but it never simulates a game."

"I liked that he was getting used to the speed of our practice, learning our system and there were a lot of things thrown at him today, but I thought he made really good adjustments, especially on the power play."

Mittelstadt was on the second PP unit with Nick Baptiste, Jason Pominville, Evan Rodrigues and Marco Scandella. Brendan Guhle also worked in.

When Housley showed up in Buffalo, he was one year younger than Mittelstadt. Housley was coming right out of high school and he said teammates reached out to him too, "I had some great mentors, Mike Ramsey, Lindy Ruff and Larry Playfair played a lot of tricks on me, but those guys really went out of their way, especially Mike Ramsey and Lindy Ruff who took me in until I got my own place which that really makes you feel part of the team."

Linus Ullmark and Kyle Criscuolo returned to practice on Wednesday.

Wednesday's lines:

Girgensons - Eichel - Pominville

Rodrigues - Mittelstadt - Reinhart

Wilson - O'Reilly - Okposo

Nolan - Larsson - Baptiste

Pouliot - Criscuolo

Guhle - Ristolainen

Scandella - Nelson

Beaulieu - Falk

Gorges – Antipin

Sabres' Okposo is emotional at being nominated for the Masterton Trophy

One year ago, he didn't know what life was going to be like

WGR550

PAUL HAMILTON

MARCH 28, 2018

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Each season, local writers in every NHL city nominate a player for the Bill Masterton Trophy. Buffalo's chapter nominated Kyle Okposo.

You might recall Okposo wound up in neuro ICU at the end of last season after suffering a concussion. He was so bad, there was genuine concern about his wellbeing. Okposo got very emotional when talking about what this nomination means to him. He took a deep breath and said, "It means a lot. Obviously this season hasn't gone the way I wanted it to, but when I take a step back and look where I was year ago, it's pretty cool that I'm playing hockey."

If Okposo wins, he would join Don Luce and Pat LaFontaine as the only Sabres to win the award.

Warm welcome helps Sabres rookie Casey Mittelstadt

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

March 28, 2018

BUFFALO – Right away, center Casey Mittelstadt’s new teammates reached out and welcomed the slick prospect to the Sabres.

So shortly after Mittelstadt signed his entry-level contract Tuesday, center Jack Eichel took him to lunch. Hours later, winger Sam Reinhart had dinner with Mittelstadt, his new linemate.

Mittelstadt, 19, will make his NHL debut tonight against the Detroit Red Wings inside KeyBank Center. In a miserable season widely regarded as the franchise’s worst ever, the youngster’s arrival has generated some much-needed excitement.

The pressure on Mittelstadt to perform is already enormous. While the eighth overall pick in 2017 enjoyed a terrific freshman season at the University of Minnesota, he was playing high school hockey just over a year ago.

Less than 13 months later, Mittelstadt jumped to the world’s best hockey league without the benefit of a training camp or any acclimation period.

His teammates want to help him adjust to NHL life, something he appreciates.

“That’s probably the biggest part of it,” Mittelstadt said of being welcomed. “Obviously, you’re coming to a new team and they’ve been together all year. You’re kind of the new guy. So anytime they just kind of welcome you, it’s definitely a great feeling and they’ve done a great job with it.”

Coach Phil Housley cracked the Sabres just months out of high school in 1982, the beginning of his Hall of Fame career. He understands how important mentors can be.

“I had some great mentors,” Housley said. “Mike Ramsey and Lindy Ruff and Larry Playfair played a lot of tricks on me. Those guys went out their way, especially Mike Ramsey and Lindy Ruff, who took me in until I got my own place.”

With only six games left, Mittelstadt probably won’t be moving in with anyone. Still, the time will be beneficial.

“It’s going to be great for him to get used to the players that are surrounding him, being one of the guys on the team and feeling comfortable in that role and getting used to our systems, just getting used to the NHL game,” Housley said.

Eichel said: “Just try to make him comfortable. Whatever he’s done in his career so far, he’s been pretty successful so no need for him to come here thinking he needs to change things or change his approach. Just play your game, be yourself, play to your strengths.”

The last-place Sabres looked energized by Mittelstadt’s presence during Wednesday’s practice inside HarborCenter, showcasing more energy than they have in weeks.

It’s amazing what beating one of the NHL’s best teams, a day off and adding your top prospect can do.

“You win a game and you get a day off and you come back and you feel a lot better about yourself, and especially the team that you beat, a really good team like Toronto,” Housley said.

Housley put Mittelstadt between Reinhart and Evan Rodrigues, an intriguing scoring line featuring skill and speed. Mittelstadt also manned a point on the No. 2 power play.

“I got to see it firsthand today ... the speed and skill he possesses,” Reinhart said of Mittelstadt.

Housley said he noticed Mittelstadt possessed “a little hop in his step.”

“I really like the way he plays with pace out there,” Housley said. “He looked like he was excited to be out there, being a part of the team.”

Mittelstadt hasn't played a game since March 3. However, he kept practicing with the Golden Gophers before the school was eliminated from the NCAA tournament. He also skated on his own last week.

Perhaps expectations should be tempered a bit. Despite the layoff from game action, Mittelstadt's speed impressed Housley.

"It never simulates a game, but I liked that he was getting used to the speed of the practice, getting comfortable in that situation, just trying to get through the drills, learning the systems, having a lot of things thrown at him today," Housley said. "But I thought he made really good adjustments during practice, especially during the power play."

Mittelstadt said once the game gets closer, he'll likely get a little nervous and antsy for it to start.

"But I think for the most part I should be fine," he said. "I feel good today, I feel like I belong. So I'm not too nervous."

xxx

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark, who missed Monday's 3-2 win in Toronto after suffering an upper-body injury, practiced Wednesday and is day-to-day, Housley said.

Meanwhile, center Kyle Criscuolo, out since suffering an upper-body injury March 5, is back practicing.

xxx

Winger Kyle Okposo has been named the Sabres' nominee for the Masterton Trophy by the Buffalo chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers' Association.

Okposo, 29, returned this season after suffering a concussion forced him to be hospitalized in intensive care last year.

The award honors players who best demonstrate "qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey."

Win, Casey Mittelstadt's arrival puts jump in Sabres' step

Olean Times Herald

Bill Hoppe

March 28, 2018

BUFFALO – It's amazing what beating one of the NHL's best teams, a day off and adding your top prospect can do.

During this morning's practice, the Sabres' first with slick center Casey Mittelstadt, the last-place team showcased more energy than they have in weeks.

"Well, that helps when you win a game and you get a day off and you come back and you feel a lot better about yourself, and especially the team that you beat, a really good team like Toronto," Sabres coach Phil Housley said this afternoon inside KeyBank Center. "The guys are excited to have him as part of our team. A lot of them know him personally or skated with him in the summer and know what he brings to the table."

Housley put Mittelstadt between Evan Rodrigues and Sam Reinhart during today's practice inside HarborCenter, an intriguing scoring line featuring skill and speed. Mittelstadt, 19, also manned a point on the No. 2 power play.

Even among players, excitement is high for Mittelstadt's NHL debut Thursday at home against the Detroit Red Wings.

"I got to see it firsthand today ... the speed and skill he possesses," Reinhart said.

Housley said he noticed Mittelstadt possessed "a little hop in his step today."

"I really like the way he plays with pace out there," Housley said. "He looked like he was excited to be out there, being a part of the team."

Players have welcomed Mittelstadt warmly. Reinhart took him to dinner Tuesday night. Center Jack Eichel took him for lunch earlier in the day.

"That's probably the biggest part of it," Mittelstadt said. "Obviously, you're coming to a new team and they've been together all year. You're kind of the new guy. So anytime they just kind of welcome you, it's definitely a great feeling and they've done a great job with it."

Mittelstadt, the eighth overall pick in 2017, hasn't played a game since March 3. He kept practicing with the University of Minnesota before the school was eliminated from the NCAA tournament. He also skated on his own last week before signing his entry-level contract.

Perhaps expectations should be tempered a bit. Still, despite the layoff from game action, Mittelstadt's speed impressed Housley.

"It never simulates a game, but I liked that he was getting used to the speed of the practice, getting comfortable in that situation, just trying to get through the drills, learning the systems, having a lot of things thrown at him today," Housley said. "But I thought he made really good adjustments during practice, especially during the power play."

Check back later for more on Mittelstadt.

In other news, goalie Linus Ullmark, who missed Monday's 3-2 win in Toronto after suffering an upper-body injury, practiced today and is day-to-day, Housley said.

Watch: Mittelstadt skates with Sabres for the first time

WKBW

Matt Bove

March 28, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - It's been a whirlwind few days for the newest member of the Buffalo Sabres, Casey Mittelstadt. The 19-year-old arrived in Buffalo after signing his entry-level deal on Monday evening, while his new team was on the road in Toronto.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

In a year full of disappointment, #Sabres fans are hoping Casey Mittelstadt can help turn things around @WKBW

11:37 AM - Mar 28, 2018

160

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On Tuesday Mittelstadt met with reporters and discussed his choice to turn pro. A day later, he was on the ice practicing for the first time as an NHL player.

During the skate, Mittelstadt worked on a line with Sam Reinhart and Evan Rodrigues. He also practiced with the second power-play unit, alongside Rodrigues, Nick Baptiste, Jason Pominville and Marco Scandella/Brendan Guhle.

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

Eichel said it's very important to make Mittelstadt comfortable and feel like he belongs #Sabres @WKBW

1:01 PM - Mar 28, 2018

255

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After practice, Mittelstadt's new teammates gave him a hard time as he once again got ready to chat with reporters. To hear the entire interview with the newest member of the Sabres, head to the top of the page!

Matthew Bové

✓

@Matt_Bove

In his two days here Mittelstadt has already went to lunch with Jack Eichel and dinner with his new teammates. He says it's nice to see his new pals make an effort to welcome him into the locker room @WKBW #Sabres

Mittelstadt practices, prepares for debut Thursday Vs. Red Wings

WKBW

By Nick Filipowski

March 28, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Casey Mittelstadt was thrown right into the mix his first day on the job, leading the stretches at the beginning and end of practice with the Sabres on Wednesday.

“I just said thanks for the warm welcome and it was a good first practice,” Mittelstadt said of his chat with teammates at center ice as practice ended.

[View image on Twitter](#)[View image on Twitter](#)

Nick Filipowski

@NEWS4_NICK

Mittelstadt begins and ends practice leading stretches #Sabres @news4buffalo

11:58 AM - Mar 28, 2018

20

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Nick Filipowski

@NEWS4_NICK

Young fans here to watch the youth movement of the #Sabres

Mittelstadt mania has arrived @news4buffalo

11:17 AM - Mar 28, 2018

4

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The rookie slotted right into the second line, centering Evan Rodruiges and Sam Reinhart, with a chance to get his legs under him before making his debut Thursday night.

“It was fun,” the rookie said. “They’re new guys for me and I’m new for them. Being linemates it kind of gives you a gateway to know each other. I’ll see if we can develop some chemistry and make some plays.”

“He looked excited to be out there and being a part of the team,” Head Coach Phil Housley said with a grin after practice.

“He had a little hop to his step today. I thought he got through practice pretty well.”

Nick Filipowski

@NEWS4_NICK

Mittelstadt is flying @news4buffalo #Sabres

11:21 AM - Mar 28, 2018

145

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<https://platform.twitter.com/widgets.js>

Mittelstadt also saw action on the second power play unit, but as for his own expectations, he says he's not really placing any on himself.

"I haven't played a game in a while so I'm going to try to go out and try to get settled in the pro game here and be able to make some plays," he said. "Just try to play and see how it goes."

"Once the game gets closer I'll get a little nervous, a little antsy to get out there and get it going. For the most part, I felt good today, I feel like I belong. I'm not too nervous."

"If he plays with the speed he's capable of I think that'll open up that much more for him," linemate Sam Reinhart added. "The quicker you're able to do that, open it up for yourself the confidence starts to grow."

"The simplicity with the game, just keeping things simple," Housley said of what he expects when Mittelstadt makes his NHL debut Thursday. "His instincts will take over. You can see he has a really good hockey sense out there and is comfortable out there right now."

Sabres provide warm welcome for Mittelstadt at first practice

by Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 28th, 2018

As his first NHL practice came to a close at HarborCenter on Wednesday morning, Casey Mittelstadt was summoned to center ice to lead the team stretch. That means he was also tasked with saying a few words to his teammates before breaking the huddle.

Given that it was his first day on the job, Mittelstadt kept it simple.

"I just said thanks for the warm welcome, good first practice and that's pretty much it," he said.

The Sabres have certainly made an honest effort at welcoming their newest teammate, particularly some of the team's younger players. Jack Eichel took Mittelstadt to lunch on Tuesday afternoon, while Sam Reinhart said he went out to dinner with him at night.

Sabres Now (3/28/18)
01:55 • March 28th, 2018

Like Mittelstadt, Eichel and Reinhart were both teenagers when they began their NHL careers. That, combined with their high draft status and the expectations that come with it, puts them in position to empathize with the 19-year-old forward.

"I just want to be here for him," Eichel said. "I was in a similar situation a few years ago, Sam as well, with coming in at a pretty young age. But we have a lot in common. It was good. We were able to get to know each other a little bit yesterday. ... I think that that's important."

Reinhart practiced on a line with Mittelstadt at center and Evan Rodrigues on the opposite wing. He said he watched Mittelstadt play on television during the World Junior Championship and took notice of the way he created space with his speed and demanded the puck. He saw those qualities in person on Wednesday.

"I'm excited for the opportunity," Reinhart said. "I know what he's going through. It's an exciting time for him and for me to be a part of it. Hopefully we can go out tomorrow, have some fun and make some plays because I got to see it firsthand today and see the speed and skill he possesses."

Phil Housley, too, began his playing career with the Sabres at 18, and like Mittelstadt he cut his teeth playing high school hockey in Minnesota. Housley credited veterans on the team such as Mike Ramsey and Lindy Ruff with making him feel at home, particularly during training camp.

"That's the nerves, coming into a new team, just feeling comfortable and just trying to find your way through," Housley said. "After the exhibition games, the guys made me feel more and more comfortable and part of the team."

"That's going to be big for Casey, that our guys still reach out, especially our leadership group, and make him feel comfortable."

Housley said he was impressed with the pace that Mittelstadt brought to practice on Wednesday. The coach placed him on the team's second power-play unit along with Rodrigues, Jason Pominville, Nicholas Baptiste and Marco Scandella, with Brendan Guhle rotating in as well.

Still, Housley tried to temper expectations, cautioning that Mittelstadt hasn't played in an actual game since the University of Minnesota's season ended on March 3.

"He was practicing a lot with his old team," Housley said. "It never simulates a game, but I liked that he was getting used to the speed of the practice, getting comfortable in that situation, just trying to get through the drills, learning the systems, having a lot of things thrown at him today."

Phil Housley After Practice

04:09 • March 28th, 2018

Reinhart's advice to Mittelstadt for his debut on Thursday is to relax and find his confidence early. From the standpoint of fitting in, it seems he's confident already.

"Once the game gets closer, I'm sure I'll get a little nervous, a little antsy to get out there and get it going," he said. "But I think for the most part I should be fine. I feel good today, I feel like I belong. So I'm not too nervous."

Medical report

Kyle Criscuolo practiced with the team for the first time since sustaining an upper-body injury during a collision with Toronto Maple Leafs forward Matt Martin on March 5. Criscuolo had been recalled from Rochester one day prior, where he ranks sixth on the Amerks with 34 points (15+19) in 50 games.

Linus Ullmark was also on the ice for practice after being a late scratch for the Sabres' game in Toronto on Monday. Housley said that Ullmark remains day-to-day.

Lines at practice

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 15 Jack Eichel - 29 Jason Pominville
71 Evan Rodrigues - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 23 Sam Reinhart
20 Scott Wilson - 90 Ryan O'Reilly - 21 Kyle Okposo
17 Jordan Nolan - 22 Johan Larsson - 13 Nicholas Baptiste
67 Benoit Pouliot - 51 Kyle Criscuolo

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

40 Robin Lehner
31 Chad Johnson
35 Linus Ullmark

Sharpen Up: March 28, 2018

by Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 28th, 2018

The Buffalo Sabres and Casey Mittelstadt made it official yesterday afternoon: He's under contract. The eighth overall pick in this past summer's draft is set to take the ice with the team for the first time today for practice at HarborCenter. We'll have full coverage for you here.

The Sabres host Detroit tomorrow night in what is expected to be Mittelstadt's NHL debut. Tickets are on sale now.

Here's what you need to know.

Mittelstadt arrives in Buffalo

Mittelstadt met with the Buffalo media yesterday. Here's what he had to say:

Casey Mittelstadt (3/27/18)

10:32 • March 27th, 2018

"I've definitely lived a pretty perfect life to this point," Mittelstadt said. "I'm pretty lucky. My parents were really good growing up, they supported me through everything, gave me a lot of opportunities I couldn't imagine.

"... It's an exciting time for me and my family. We're definitely looking forward to it."

Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

As a freshman, 30 points in 34 games

2nd in scoring for @GopherHockey@B1GHockey All-Freshman honors

Let's roll the @CMittelstadt highlights. 📺

4:43 PM - Mar 27, 2018

226

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Twitter Ads info and privacy

Mittelstadt's career at the University of Minnesota ended abruptly earlier this month when a combination of six different outcomes kept the Gophers out of the NCAA Tournament. Having dreamt of wearing the Gophers' signature 'M' all his life, he needed to take time before deciding his future.

He took a few days to say goodbye to the seniors on the team and be with his teammates. Eventually, conversations with the Sabres began.

"We wanted it to be more of a partnership rather than us two kind of clashing, going at it," he said. "We wanted to figure out what was best for me. We kind of went through it and agreed on pretty much everything there. So, it went pretty quick, pretty smoothly and obviously I'm definitely excited to be a Buffalo Sabre."

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Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

Wearing number 37 for the Buffalo Sabres: Casey Mittelstadt.

1:33 PM - Mar 27, 2018

2,411

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We have a lot more here.

In other Sabres news, the team assigned Justin Bailey to Rochester. The Amerks clinched a playoff spot last weekend and will take on Utica tonight at Blue Cross Arena. You can watch that game locally on MSG starting at 7 p.m.

Kyle Okposo is Sabres' Masterton Trophy nominee

BUFFALO, NY - MARCH 7: Kyle Okposo #21 of the Buffalo Sabres greets fans before an NHL game against the Calgary Flames on March 7, 2018 at KeyBank Center in Buffalo, New York. (Photo by Bill Wippert/NHLI via Getty Images)

BUFFALO, NY - MARCH 7: Kyle Okposo #21 of the Buffalo Sabres greets fans before an NHL game against the Calgary Flames on March 7, 2018 at KeyBank Center in Buffalo, New York. (Photo by Bill Wippert/NHLI via Getty Images) Bill Wippert/Getty Images

From the announcement in The Buffalo News...

Okposo, who landed in the neuro ICU unit of Buffalo General Medical Center last year after a serious reaction to concussion medication, is a nominee for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy. Okposo was selected in a vote of the Buffalo chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers Association. The award honors the player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey. The winner from the league's 31 chapters will be announced in June as part of the NHL Awards Show.

Okposo's ninth full NHL season included a trip to the 2017 All-Star Game in Los Angeles but ended prematurely and things then became very ominous in his world. With his career in doubt, support came in from around the NHL and buoyed Okposo in his recovery and his eventual return to the game. That started during summer pro league play in July in his native Minnesota, the first sign that he was going to be able to return to the NHL.

"There were a lot of guys there and that was great," Okposo said. "Everywhere I went this summer, seeing guys in Minnesota and other guys. you would hear from them, 'I'm happy that you're back playing, I'm happy you're OK. Just take it slow.' Just happy I was healthy. The hockey community really is a small tight-knit community and the support I got from everybody was really cool."

Alumni Wine Festival is tonight

Last call for tickets! The event begins at 6 p.m. tonight.

Attendees will have a chance to sample some of the finest wines and food that Western New York and Southern Ontario have to offer while socializing with Sabres legends and their wives. The festival will include music, auctions and raffles with unique items from the Buffalo Sabres and Sabres Alumni.

Ladies, don't miss the last Sabres Style event of the season tomorrow

[View image on Twitter](#)

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Buffalo Sabres



@BuffaloSabres

Don't miss #SabresStyle this Thursday. 🍷 🍷

2 tickets to the game, a VIP pregame party with alumni, food & drink & the Gold Carpet Experience. Sign up ►
<http://bufsabres.co/style18>

1:16 PM - Mar 26, 2018

16

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Get ready for Fan Appreciation Night on April 4

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Are you the #Sabres #1 fan?

Enter for your chance to win the title Fan of the Year: <http://bufsabres.co/x7hGL8>

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FIRST LOOK: The Dominik Hasek Bobbleheads are in!

Every fan attending our Fan Appreciation Night on April 4th will receive one. Be there: <http://bufsabres.co/9X1A9Y>

3:31 PM - Mar 26, 2018

995

281 people are talking about this

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Full details can be found here.