



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

October 5, 2019

Buffalo hosts New Jersey in conference matchup

Associated Press

October 5, 2019

New Jersey Devils (0-0-1, fifth in the Metropolitan Division) vs. Buffalo Sabres (1-0-0, third in the Atlantic Division)

Buffalo, New York; Saturday, 7 p.m. EDT

BOTTOM LINE: Buffalo takes on New Jersey in Eastern Conference action.

Buffalo went 19-25-8 in Eastern Conference action and 21-15-5 at home a season ago. The Sabres scored 46 power play goals with a 19.5% success rate on power play opportunities last season.

New Jersey finished 19-28-5 in Eastern Conference play and 11-27-3 on the road in the 2018-19 season. The Devils recorded 355 assists on 219 total goals last season.

The matchup Saturday is the first meeting of the season for the two teams.

Sabres Injuries: None listed.

Devils Injuries: Cory Schneider: day to day (undisclosed).

Sabres preparing to face 'dangerous' New Jersey Devils in home opener

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 4, 2019

The seats inside KeyBank Center were empty when Ralph Krueger arrived in Buffalo for his first official day of work in June. The Sabres' new coach delivered an impassioned speech to team employees and spoke glowingly of the passionate fan base during his introductory news conference with the media.

Krueger expressed excitement for the challenge ahead and the privilege of coaching a franchise that was held in high regard by friends and former colleagues, including Miroslav Satan and Uwe Krupp. Yet, Krueger wasn't interested in focusing on the past, specifically why the Sabres' playoff drought reached a National Hockey League-worst eight seasons.

"Now we need to get the grit and bite into the group on the ice to stoke the fire that's here," Krueger said during the June 5 press conference. "Why not, in the 50th year of the organization, get that going?"

Almost four months later, his vision for the Sabres was finally illustrated to the public during a 3-1 season-opening win over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Thursday night. Naturally, there is palpable excitement and confidence surrounding the Sabres entering their home opener Saturday against the New Jersey Devils.

The Sabres seem to have established an identity in less than one month under Krueger.

"Every practice, everything we've done, is toward that," forward Marcus Johansson said of the win Thursday. "It's only been preseason games, but you're still trying to build towards that first game. I think we got the game to the point we wanted it and kind of looked like we frustrated them a little bit."

The Sabres were back on the ice Friday at noon, less than 15 hours following their brilliant performance against the recent back-to-back Stanley Cup champions. They made the Penguins appear slow and disconnected. Sidney Crosby had only one shot on goal and Pittsburgh managed only seven shots in seven power-play opportunities.

The Penguins couldn't solve the Sabres' new defensive-zone structure. Meanwhile, Buffalo earned a number of odd-man rushes, and outstanding breakout passes led to two breakaways. Conor Sheary scored two goals and Rasmus Dahlin pushed the lead to 3-1 by finishing with what Krueger called "world-class" hands.

All six of Krueger's defensemen played well, including Henri Jokiharju, the 20-year-old acquired from Chicago for Alexander Nylander. Jokiharju's outlet pass sprung Zemgus Girgensons for a breakaway. Casey Mittelstadt had one of his best defensive games as a professional.

"We have some nuances in there that we'll keep secret, but the general concept has to do with pressure and taking away that space and that time they'd like to have," Krueger said of his team's defense at 5 on 5. "How we get there we'll keep to ourselves, but more than anything it's about that. They just couldn't find a way to open our defensive structure, which is the core, really, of our game and our offense grows out of that."

There is little time to savor the win. Krueger planned to meet with his staff following practice Friday to gauge his players' energy levels. They also had the opportunity to watch their next opponent live since the Devils hosted Winnipeg for Jack Hughes' first regular-season game Friday night.

Like the Sabres, New Jersey has undergone significant changes since last season. The Devils drafted Hughes first overall, acquired defenseman P.K. Subban from Nashville, signed veteran power forward Wayne Simmonds and traded for former Vegas winger Nikita Gusev.

"More than anything, you all know it's primarily here about us and what we want to do," Krueger said. "Our game at home should be felt the same way it was felt in Pittsburgh on the road, and we will look for their nuances. We understand the additions of Hughes and Subban and what that does to the mix there with [Travis] Zajac, [Taylor] Hall and so on. I think that they're a very dangerous team and it will be an excellent hockey game for sure here tomorrow night."

There will be a significant buzz inside KeyBank Center for the first home game of the Sabres' 50th season. Former captains are returning for the occasion. The team will wear its new alternate jerseys to commemorate the franchise's anniversary.

This is also the first opportunity for Krueger and the new Sabres to witness the home crowd during a regular-season game in Buffalo.

"That's the most fun," Johansson said. "Yeah, preseason game it's always fun to play at home, but home opener, playing a regular season game, it's always different. Gets the crowd into it a little bit more and us too. I'm looking forward to it."

Practice lines

Krueger opted to not make any changes to his forward lines and defense pairings during practice Friday. Forward Evan Rodrigues and defenseman John Gilmour were extras, meaning they will likely be scratched for a second consecutive game.

Additionally, Krueger and his staff had yet to decide which goalie will start against the Devils. Carter Hutton stopped 28 of 29 shots in the win over Pittsburgh and received the start because of his experience, Krueger explained.

"It was a decision out of the coaching room where certainly the experience and the leadership that we felt we needed yesterday was better served with Hutton," Krueger said. "We thought Linus had a great camp. He's shown a lot of good minutes and we feel confident with both."

Morning skates

Don't expect the Sabres to hold many morning skates on game days under Krueger. The Sabres' chaotic schedule -- including 12 games in 23 days this month -- will likely make him more cautious with his player's energy levels between games. Also, Krueger expressed confidence in his players' ability to prepare themselves off the ice. He's not alone in preferring rest prior to a game.

More coaches around the National Hockey League have opted for off-ice workouts over skates in recent years.

"We're outstanding in our activation off-ice," Krueger said. "We loved the way guys have come in strong to every practice since the beginning of training camp, so we activate immediately on the ice. What they're doing off the ice is getting their bodies ready. Our soft-tissue injuries have been extremely low because of the work the guys are able to do and how they understand how to get themselves ready. I don't find that hitting the ice on game days is the norm anymore. For us, it definitely will not be."

Gilbert recalled

Dennis Gilbert, a 22-year-old defenseman who is a Buffalo native and attended St. Joe's, was recalled from Rockford in time to play for the Chicago Blackhawks in their game against the Philadelphia Flyers in Prague, Czech Republic, on Friday.

Gilbert signed a three-year entry-level contract with the Blackhawks last May after completing his junior season at Notre Dame, where he had four goals and 10 points in 39 games for the Fighting Irish, who lost in the NCAA title game. He was a third-round draft pick in 2015 and had five goals among 14 points in 63 games last season for Rockford of the American Hockey League.

Getting better on defense is a must for the new-look Sabres

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

October 4, 2019

At the conclusion of each season, Steve Smith updates a PowerPoint presentation with observations he journaled over the previous calendar year. The 100-slide document contains motivational words, practice plans and systems used by coaches whom Smith has worked with during his 27 years in the National Hockey League.

The 56-year-old even includes what he thought wasn't effective and has delivered his findings at coaching symposiums over the past decade. Many of the positive anecdotes chronicled were spoken or created by Ralph Krueger, Smith's new boss with the Buffalo Sabres.

Smith, who works with the Sabres' defensemen and penalty-killing unit, is the lone holdover from former coach Phil Housley's staff and Krueger's former colleague in Edmonton from 2010-13. The two are aligned in their coaching philosophies, particularly the importance of relationships, and Krueger relies on Smith for "honest feedback."

"He doesn't tell me what I want to hear, he tells me what I need to hear all the time," Krueger said of Smith.

Smith brings a perspective that is not matched by others on the Sabres' coaching staff. His 16-year playing career – including 804 regular-season games and three Stanley Cups with the Oilers – taught him how to help players cope with the mental grind of a pressure-packed position on the blue line, an invaluable asset in his job to get the most out of a talented Sabres defense core that is trying to rebound from a difficult 2018-19 season.

"I look at it from the standpoint of knowing what a player might want to hear," Smith said. "I try to put myself in a position that if I am that player, what would I like to hear today? If he's had a tough day, does that player need me to be hard on him? Or does he already know he's made the mistakes and now we're going to build him back up. ... There are times during the season when as a coach you're angry with someone but you learn as a former player that it's not going to do any good. What does the moment bring and what does that opportunity bring to try and reconfirm how good a player is?"

Though forwards also were responsible, the Sabres' defensemen were scrutinized by fans when the team allowed an NHL-worst 125 goals from Jan. 29 through April 7 last season. For context, the St. Louis Blues had 53 fewer goals against during that span. Additionally, Buffalo allowed the fourth-most shots on goal in its final 34 games.

Defensemen struggled to break the puck out of the Sabres' end, leading to turnovers and dangerous scoring chances against. They struggled to move opponents from in front of their own net and often were caught out of position after chasing the puck into the corner.

General Manager Jason Botterill addressed some of those issues by acquiring three talented puck-moving defensemen over the past eight months: Brandon Montour, Colin Miller and Henri Jokiharju. Krueger has implemented a different defensive-zone structure than the man-to-man system used by former coach Phil Housley, opting for more zone principles with an emphasis on applying pressure.

The Sabres' defensemen have spoken glowingly about the latter changes, noting how they aren't thinking as much around their own net. However, they said the transition would not have been as seamless without Smith.

"He's a guy who played a lot of years in this league," Marco Scandella said of Smith. "He's got a lot of good knowledge about the game and he's composed about how he says it. He's done it, so you have to respect a guy who has done it and won. I admire the way he comes to the rink every day, always smiling. He has a lot to teach, but he's also a really good person in the room."

"I'm not saying this because he's my coach right now, but he's been far and away the best D coach I've had in my career dating back to college and here," Jake McCabe added. "He's a guy who played the game for a long time, had success when he played, obviously. ... He's one of those guys when he's talking, you're going to listen to him because he's been there and done that. He's someone that can relate to us on the back end and knows

what makes each guy tick. He can get through to players easily and when you can do that, you're a step ahead of the game."

When Tom Renney was assembling a coaching staff in 2010, he surveyed several people within the Oilers' organization, including Kevin Lowe, Smith's teammate in Edmonton from 1984-91. Smith had never coached in the NHL and spent the previous two seasons as a scout with the Chicago Blackhawks.

Yet, Lowe thought Smith's philosophies, particularly the importance of interpersonal relationships on a team, aligned with the vision Renney had for the Oilers. In addition to Smith, Renney hired Krueger, the former coach of Switzerland's national team. Smith was immediately captivated by the way Krueger "processed relationships with people and relationships with players." When Krueger was elevated to head coach prior to the 2012-13 season, he retained Smith to continue to coach Edmonton's defensemen and penalty kill.

Though the NHL lockout prevented Krueger from holding a traditional training camp, the Oilers' young roster was in position to reach the Stanley Cup playoffs until they lost seven of their final 10 games. While Krueger got more production out of forwards such as Taylor Hall, Edmonton's penalty kill finished ninth under Smith's guidance and its defenseman showed significant progress from the previous season.

"He's got a real feel there," Renney, now the CEO of Hockey Canada, said of Smith's ability to work with players during a recent phone interview. "That's not necessarily something that you learn. Certainly his experience lends itself to what players need. He's got a real good sense of timing. He's a very calm guy, knows how to deliver the message. ... Most NHL coaches will tell you that's extremely valuable on their staff, to have someone like that. Certainly at the defense position, especially young defensemen, there are more decisions made there than anyone on the ice. Certainly decisions of magnitude. If something goes wrong back there, it can be pretty fatal."

Rasmus Dahlin now admits he was nervous in the early days of his rookie season with the Sabres. Every mistake and every loss – including those in the preseason – seemed significant. Dahlin, then 18 years old, was dealing with the expectations attached to being drafted first overall and wanted to make an immediate impact in the NHL. That desire caused Dahlin to put undue pressure on himself, resulting in errors with and without the puck.

Smith routinely would pull him aside prior to practice to try to calm the rookie's nerves and encouraged Dahlin amid difficult games. That guidance helped Dahlin produce a historic season. His 44 points were the second-most by a defenseman ahead of their 19th birthday, trailing only Housley (1982-93), and ranked first among all rookie defensemen in 2018-19. Dahlin was the Sabres' first Calder Trophy finalist since Tyler Myers in 2009-10.

"So helpful," Dahlin said of Smith. "A coach like that, he talks to you every day. He teaches you every day. He was a mentor for me. Coming to the ice every day, he's always so calm. He makes you feel relaxed. I was very nervous at the beginning of last season. He would always tell me to have fun, go out there and do my thing. That helped me so much."

Dahlin's progress is pivotal to the long-term success of the Sabres, yet he is only one cog in a defense core that could be one of the team's strengths this season. There is a blend of gifted offensive talents such as Dahlin and Rasmus Ristolainen, as well as the rugged Jake McCabe. Though Buffalo has skill up front, led by Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner and Sam Reinhart, it struggled at 5-on-5 play last season when defensemen could not connect with forwards on breakout passes.

"We're really deep. I feel like we're deep up and down the lineup," Scandella said. "Now it's time to put it together. It's been too long that we haven't been in the playoffs. We talk about one day at a time, but we have the group on paper. It's time to execute."

That execution was shoddy at times in the preseason. However, the Sabres showed tangible signs of progress, particularly in the defensive zone. They're breaking up backdoor passes, clearing traffic from in front of the net, forcing turnovers near the blue line and preventing opponents from taking shots from the slot.

During their six preseason games, the Sabres showed signs of how Krueger wants them to play in the offensive, defensive and neutral zones. Many of the principles Krueger has installed are included on Smith's PowerPoint presentation, including on defense. The two believe in the importance of pressuring the puck and designing a system that doesn't make players feel robotic on the ice.

There also have been a number of mistakes, some of which resulting in goals. Yet, Smith is there to offer constructive criticism or to build up a player's confidence with a positive remark. As the Sabres' navigate a chaotic schedule, including 12 games in 23 days during October, Smith will continue to jot down notes that will someday end up in that PowerPoint. He hopes his latest project can be another positive anecdote to add to the list.

"To go through it every day, there's an awful lot of 'aha' moments," Smith said of teaching a new system. "All of a sudden you see a guy go, 'Aha, it worked.' That is the joy you get as a coach, to see that happen."

Sabres' Sheary looks like a different player

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 4, 2019

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) - Conor Sheary spoke in the off-season about how he needed to improve his game from his first year with the Sabres.

In Game 1 he did that along with scoring two goals. Sheary was engaged in the battles and spent time in front of the net. Last season he spent a lot of time on the perimeter and that's why he only had 14 goals in 78 games. In the game in Pittsburgh, I saw a different Conor Sheary, "I'm just going to take it game-by-game, I think it was a good start for myself and the team and just the way we play as a team helps bring out the best in my game. We're always on our toes and always moving our feet. I just want to be more consistent."

Because of penalties, Casey Mittelstadt got in less than 10 minutes of work, but he played very well in those 10 minutes. Sheary is on his line along with Jimmy Vesey. Sheary said he noticed the improvement in Mittelstadt's game, "I think he was playing with a lot more confidence than he has been, I think coming back in your second year, you feel that. I've spent a lot of time on his wing so I think we've developed chemistry."

As a coach, Krueger knows there are going to be times when players get left on the bench because of what's going on in the game. Krueger said, "If you end up with stretches where your ice is shorter, or we tighten up for the ending of a game, players accepting those roles is part of a good team. You can see the acceptance on the bench and Casey understands that he's in a position of growth, learning and depth for us and he's doing a good job there."

Buffalo pretty much had control of the opener for most of the game. Sheary said it started in the room before the game started, "I keep saying it, but we had a lot of excitement in that room and we feel like we have a lot to prove."

The lines and defense did not change in Friday's practice so Evan Rodrigues and John Gilmour will likely be scratched for the home opener on Saturday. Krueger would not reveal if he was coming back with Carter Hutton in goal.

Many former captains will be in attendance for the game including Gerry Meehan, Gil Perreault, Danny Gare, Stu Barnes, Brian Gionta, Michael Peca, Mike Foligno, Floyd Smith and Craig Rivet.

Join us for the pregame to the home opener Saturday at 6:00 when Brian Koziol will be joined by Ralph Krueger, Connor Sheary and Casey Mittelstadt.

Sabres' plan for goalies Carter Hutton, Linus Ullmark still unclear

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 4, 2019

BUFFALO – After outplaying Carter Hutton last month, Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark took a backseat Thursday, watching his partner's splendid 28-save performance from the bench.

Coach Ralph Krueger said everything would be up for competition during training camp, and based on their preseason numbers, Ullmark deserved to start the Sabres' 50th anniversary season opener.

But the decision, of course, wasn't quite that simple.

Hutton, 33, played a career-high 50 games and started regularly for the first time last season. He owns terrific career numbers against the Penguins. The Sabres have also historically struggled in Pittsburgh.

Hutton rewarded Krueger's faith by looking in sharp all night.

"It was a decision out of the coaching room where certainly the experience and the leadership that we felt we needed (Thursday) was better served with Hutton," Krueger said Friday inside KeyBank Center. "We thought Linus had a great camp. He's shown a lot of good minutes and we feel confident with both."

So which netminder will Krueger start in Saturday's home opener against the New Jersey Devils? He said following Friday's practice that hadn't been decided yet.

Whatever happens, Ullmark, 26, will almost certainly play soon. The Sabres have three games next week and a condensed schedule because of their trip to Sweden.

Not surprisingly Krueger, who hired Mike Bales as the new assistant/goalie coach, hasn't said much about his plan. Ullmark said the Sabres have one, although he wouldn't elaborate.

Clearly, both goalies must perform consistently this season.

Following hot starts in 2018-19 – they ranked among the NHL's top duos for three months – Hutton and Ullmark struggled in the second half as the Sabres imploded.

The Sabres have other goalies they could turn to. Injured prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (hip) might start playing games with the Rochester Americans next month. The Sabres also have NHL veteran Andrew Hammond in the AHL.

Ullmark, who started last year 9-1-3, will be an unrestricted free agent following the season.

Hutton roared out of the gate last season, his first with the Sabres after signing a three-year contract. When the Sabres won their 10th straight game Nov. 27, he improved to 12-6-1 with a 2.50 goals-against average and a .920 save percentage.

The UMass Lowell product finished with below-average numbers – 18-25-5, 3.00 and .908 – and lost a little playing time to Ullmark.

As the Sabres' struggles mounted, Hutton, who posted a league-best .931 save percentage with the St. Louis Blues' in 2017-18, responded by trying to steal every game.

By March, Hutton started adapting to the porous defense in front of him.

"I just tried to keep chipping away," said Hutton, who faced 31 shots a game. "I think at one point, you're just trying to do too much. We were giving up so much. Just get back playing the way you can."

"But honestly, I think sometimes you're just a product of your team. Even when we were winning, we were playing with fire the whole time."

Hutton said he didn't tinker with anything in his game during the offseason.

"I didn't think I needed to," he said. "I'm two years removed from leading the league with a good save percentage. ..."

"At the end of the day, there's a reason why I'm here, there's a reason why I've had success over the years, so you just keep pounding away at it."

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Krueger all but said the Sabres would be foregoing morning skates this season.

Some teams often skip them all together (the Columbus Blue Jackets), while others make them optional.

"Don't expect us to pregame skate, put it that way," Krueger said. "We're outstanding in our activation off-ice. We loved the way guys have come in strong to every practice since the beginning of training camp, so we activate immediately on the ice. What they're doing off the ice is getting their bodies ready."

"Our soft-tissue injuries have been extremely low because of the work the guys are able to do and how they understand how to get themselves ready. I don't find that hitting the ice on game days is the norm anymore. For us, it definitely will not be."

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The Sabres will be sporting their special gold and white 50th anniversary jerseys Saturday. Players have been breaking in white gloves this week.

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No. 1 overall pick Jack Hughes should make his first appearance in Buffalo on Saturday.

Game-worn Sabres jerseys to go up for auction

By Evan Anstey

WIVB

October 4, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) — A Buffalo Sabres game-worn jersey auction is starting Friday at 5 p.m.

The auction, which takes place at this web address, will last until October 13 at 9 p.m.

The jerseys that will be up for auction include set three of the game-worn home jerseys from this past season. Each comes with a certificate of authenticity.

Proceeds from the auction will help the Buffalo Sabres Foundation, which supports local organizations.

Former Sabres honored by Sabres in Golden Season

By Stu Boyar

WGRZ

October 4, 2019

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Saturday night will be special for the Buffalo Sabres and their fans. The Sabres play the New Jersey Devils in their home opener. The Sabres are coming off a dominant performance in a 3-1 win over the Penguins in Pittsburgh Thursday night. The Devils played Friday night, blowing a 4-nothing lead against Winnipeg. The Jets roared back to beat the Devils 5-4 in a shootout.

Jack Hughes, the first overall pick in this summer's NHL entry draft made his regular season debut for the Devils Friday night. He did not register a point in the first game of his career that actually matters.

The game will be the home debut for new head coach Ralph Krueger.

While the game is certainly the main reason for the excitement the Sabres having 14 former team Captains take part in the pregame festivities.

The captains and Sabres alumni will walk the blue and gold carpet beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Alumni Plaza.

This is a list of the captains scheduled to attend:

Floyd Smith (Captain: 1970-71)
Gerry Meehan (Captain: 1971-72 - Oct. 1974)
Don Luce (Captain: Jan. 1976)
Danny Gare (Captain: 1977-78 - 1980-81)
Gilbert Perreault (Captain: 1981-82 - Nov. 1986)
Mike Foligno (Captain: Feb. 1989 - Dec. 1990)
Michael Peca (Captain: 1997-98 - 1999-2000)
Donald Audette (Captain: April 1998)
Stu Barnes (Captain: 2001-02 - March 2003)
Jochen Hecht (Captain: Oct. 2007, Feb. 2008)
Toni Lydman (Captain: Nov. 2007)
Brian Campbell (Captain: Dec. 2007)
Craig Rivet (Captain: 2008-09 - 2010-11)
Brian Gionta (Captain: 2014-15 - 2016-17)
The Sabres will not be holding morning skates on game day this season.

'It's a complete honor': Eichel looks ahead to Captains Night

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

October 4, 2019

Fans who walk into KeyBank Center on Saturday night will be greeted by a series of banners hung throughout the atrium, each depicting a moment from the Sabres' 50-year history.

There are images of Dominik Hasek, Pat LaFontaine, Danny Gare, and Daniel Briere. Fans will see Gilbert Perreault being carried on the shoulders of his teammates after scoring his 500th NHL goal and Ryan Miller and company at the inaugural Winter Classic in Orchard Park.

Among those banners is an image of Jack Eichel celebrating his second NHL goal. Eichel will again find himself among Sabres greats prior to Saturday's home opener against New Jersey, when the team welcomes 15 former captains to the ice as part of a pregame ceremony.

Eichel had just passed beneath those atrium banners as he considered what the moment will mean.

"It's a really, really special moment just to put that into perspective and think about the franchise and obviously what an honor it is to be the captain of this franchise," he said.

"To think about the history and all the past captains, what it was like for them to wear the 'C,' and for me to carry on the tradition - it's a complete honor. It's really cool that the Sabres are doing this tomorrow and I'm really looking forward to it."

READ: What to expect at the home opener

Eichel's time with the Sabres has given him the chance to pick the brains of some of the organization's regularly returning alumni, a group that includes Gare and Rene Robert. He's spoken with Chris Drury, a fellow Boston University alum, about what it was like in Buffalo during his three seasons as captain.

He had plenty of time to hear stories from former captain Jason Pominville, his teammate the past two seasons. Pominville's tales of the mid-2000s, combined with videos and Rick Jeanneret's famous calls from the era, fuel a hunger to return the organization to springtime hockey.

"It's just something that we want to recreate so badly," Eichel said. "Obviously, it's been a tough go here for a little bit but we're so desperate to get back to playing meaningful games and bring that atmosphere around this arena."

Eichel stressed that it was only one game, but Thursday's season-opening victory in Pittsburgh was a good start. The Sabres stuck to the aggressive approach they worked on throughout the preseason and kept their foot on the pedal even after going up by two goals in the second period.

"I think a lot of the guys in the room were pretty excited about it after the game," Eichel said. "I thought the way we played, it was the new brand of Sabres hockey."

As the golden celebration begins tomorrow, the Sabres will look to introduce that new brand to their home crowd. That includes the returning alumni.

"It's always great to have them around," Eichel said. "Obviously, they represented the organization so well and you want to make them proud."

Friday's practice

The Sabres stuck with the same lines that led them to the win in Pittsburgh:

68 Victor Olofsson - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
53 Jeff Skinner - 90 Marcus Johansson - 17 Vladimir Sobotka
13 Jimmy Vesey - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 43 Conor Sheary

28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 21 Kyle Okposo / 71 Evan Rodrigues

19 Jake McCabe - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

26 Rasmus Dahlin - 33 Colin Miller

6 Marco Scandella - 10 Henri Jokiharju

58 John Gilmour

40 Carter Hutton

35 Linus Ullmark