



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

February 1, 2020

Stanley Cup winner Michael Frolik says Sabres need confidence, consistency

By Jason Wolf

The Buffalo News

January 31, 2020

Michael Frolik won the Stanley Cup with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2013, assisting on the Cup-winning goal by Dave Bolland in Game 6 in Boston.

He knows what it takes to win.

He knows what a winning locker room looks like.

And in his month with the Buffalo Sabres, he's seen this isn't it.

"In Chicago we had great, great guys and a great team," Frolik said after practice Friday. "I think it's just a matter of, from what I remember from there, I think the belief. We had a belief in the room that we can win every game. Even if we were down two, three goals, I think you could see in the room the belief that we could turn the game around.

"Also I think the issue here a little bit is just to play a full 60 minutes. We've had a little trouble with the second period. It seems like we always have a pretty good first period and then we kind of take a little bit our foot off the gas, but I think the mindset here needs to be a full 60 minutes and that's the challenge for the next game."

The Sabres host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday afternoon, their third consecutive home game in a stretch of nine of 10 at KeyBank Center since returning from the All-Star break. To this point, they're 0-2, with demoralizing losses to the struggling Ottawa Senators and Montreal Canadiens.

Buffalo (22-22-7) has lost three consecutive games to drop to sixth in the Atlantic Division, and on Friday afternoon sat 10 points out of a playoff spot with 31 games remaining in the regular season.

Players admittedly lost confidence after allowing two goals in just over two minutes in the second period of their Thursday night loss to Montreal, but coach Ralph Krueger said the group remains committed to one another and the system.

"We feel a continued, complete buy-in by the players of what we're working on," Krueger said Friday. "And are the results the way we want them? No. And do fans deserve to boo us after games like Ottawa and Montreal? Yes. Do we need to take that? Yes. And it should fuel us to continue to work in the right direction so that's how I'm feeling right now and that's how the group is feeling. And we're going to continue to work hard here."

Jack Eichel, who's enjoying a career year statistically with 30 goals and 34 assists, capped Thursday's frustrating performance by smashing his stick.

"It wears on everyone," Eichel said Friday, addressing the team's struggles, "but that's my job as a hockey player, as a leader, as a person, to be able to find a way to regroup every day and come to work, get better and prepare for the next game and I think that's what I try to do every day."

The captain hasn't received much help.

The Sabres have been plagued by a lack of secondary scoring, inconsistent play and an inability to sustain pressure in the offensive zone.

Frolik, who turns 32 on Feb. 17, has just an empty-net goal and one assist in eight games since being traded from Calgary to Buffalo for a fourth-round draft pick on Jan. 2. The forward had five goals and five assists in 38 games with Calgary this season.

But his experience and work ethic count, too.

"He's just a real solid character player who understands the game away from the puck and also understands what his team needs from him," Krueger said. "I think that he has courage and his [addition] to our penalty kill has been good. Other than the game against Ottawa, we really, really have had a good run of PK here since he's been in our group."

"He's a good guy in the room. He's a mentor kind of player, works hard off the ice, another good example for our young guys to see why he's been in the National Hockey League for this long."

Frolik's ice time declined in each of the last three seasons in Calgary, down to an average of 11:56 this season, before being traded. He's playing nearly 14 1/2 minutes per game with the Sabres, the most he's received since the 2017-18 season, when he had 10 goals and 15 assists in 70 games.

Frolik has played for five NHL franchises since being selected with the 10th overall pick by Florida in 2006 draft.

He waived his no-trade clause to come to Buffalo, and said he's happy with his role.

"Yeah, definitely. Obviously, my ice time has been higher and my role has been pretty good here coming from Calgary. I'm happy with that, for sure," Frolik said. "I'm happy for that opportunity. Hopefully, like I said, I want to play the right way and don't think too much about the scoring. But it's a little bit in your head, too. You want to help the team, help the guys and get some experience. I know we got a young team here and strive to be an example for them on the ice and in the practices and stuff."

But with the trade deadline approaching, he didn't rule out waiving his no-trade clause again, should the Sabres wish to deal him elsewhere.

"Obviously, the opportunity's getting bigger, so that's why I kind of came here," Frolik said. "So far, I'm happy here. I just want to help the guys, help the team. You never know, but I like the guys, I like the group here, I don't want to be changing too much. You never know, but like I said, I'm happy here and I'm happy to be a Buffalo Sabre."

Happy enough to consider re-signing with the Sabres this offseason, when he's slated to become a free agent?

"I don't want to go too much ahead, but I think if some offer happens, I definitely want to stay in the league," Frolik said. "I think still I can play in this league. But you never know what will happen in the summer. I've been through that free agency. So I know it's tricky and you kind of never know. But yeah, if any offer happens here I'd definitely consider it and take it."

For now, Frolik said he's focused on helping the Sabres improve their consistency and work ethic, and trying to help the team push for an unlikely playoff berth.

"We have to realize this is the time for us," Frolik said. "Every game for us should be like a kind of playoff game. And it's between us here. We need to do the work. We need to put the work in and I think we were, it's just we took a couple of minutes off and they make us pay. In this league, you need to be consistent the whole game and every single game and that's what we're looking for the next few games."

Okposo, Bogosian likely out

Kyle Okposo will not play in Saturday's matinee against Columbus after being injured early in the first period of Thursday's loss to Montreal. Krueger made sure to clarify that the veteran did not suffer another concussion, but simply had an upper-body injury "below the neck."

Zach Bogosian did not practice Friday because he's sick and is expected to miss the game.

"Zach is extremely ill, so expecting that's going to take a couple of days," Krueger said.

Brandon Montour also didn't skate. He was given a maintenance day.

Dea recalled from Rochester

The Sabres recalled forward Jean-Sebastien Dea from Rochester.

Dea has 13 goals and 17 assists in 41 games for the Amerks. He leads the team with 30 points and he is tied with Andrew Oglevie for the team lead in goals. It's the second recall of the season for Dea, who made his Sabres debut Nov. 27 against Calgary.

"I'm just going to stay myself, try to bring as much positive as I can," Dea said. "If I can help the team win, that's obviously my main goal."

As another season slips away, Sabres fans unleash their anger

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 31, 2020

*Hey Jason Botterill, do you like it in this city?
I've been watching all these games, and well
This team's not looking pretty from my view
The spotlight's shining bright on you
To make a move
– Melody Martin to the tune of "Hey There, Delilah"*

There have been other dark moments in the Buffalo Sabres' history. It's easy for people to forget, for instance, how empty KeyBank Center was during the end of the Rigas bankruptcy era before Tom Golisano bought the team in 2003. The franchise's very viability was in question.

That's not the case now. Still, this is a troubled time.

It looks like the Sabres aren't going to the playoffs for the ninth straight season. The franchise is just 24th in the NHL in percentage of tickets sold (with many disguised as empty seats). And fan unrest with this club seems to be at a breaking point, certainly the worst since Terry Pegula became owner in 2011.

The booing in the arena during this week's dreary losses to Ottawa and Montreal was richly deserved and might only get worse with seven more home games in the next 17 days, starting with Saturday's matinee against Columbus.

Turbulence is everywhere. There's a growing call for a protest rally next week on the arena's Alumni Plaza. A fan rant on WGR Radio sparked the social media hashtag #WeAreAllDuane in honor of the caller. There's even a parody song on YouTube imploring General Manager Jason Botterill to make a trade in the best spirit of #DoSomethingDarcy that dogged former GM Darcy Regier.

"This team has just sucked the life out of me," said Melody Martin, 25, the Williamsville woman who has done Sabres song parodies for the last two seasons. "I just don't even care about these games anymore. If people want to protest, they can go ahead but I just feel like I've completely lost every ounce of love I have for the Sabres.

"I just don't even care and that feels so much worse. I'd much rather be angry."

Canisius College physical education major Peter Tripi feels that anger. He's organizing a "Pack the Plaza" event outside the arena at 11 a.m. Feb. 8 to show Sabres management their dismay over nearly a decade of failure under Pegula ownership. He says he wants the gathering to be peaceful, respectful, passionate and in support of the players.

"I still have Briere and Drury stuff all over my house. That was my first real memory," said Tripi, a sophomore who graduated from Williamsville North. "When they left [in 2007], there was confusion and doubts and everything. It's crazy how bad that was and how big a mistake that was. But seeing how bad we've been in the last 9 years, we're worse and I never thought I'd see something worse.

"We're desensitized to losing when it comes to the Sabres. The Pegulas need to worry the day people stop caring. That's when they should worry.

*Hey Jason Botterill, I'm sure things are not that easy
But your answer to our scoring woes
Was Johansson and Vesey
Well it's true
Without Jack Eichel we'd be screwed
What would we do?*

Martin said she wrote her Botterill parody more than a month ago but shelved it when the Sabres traded Marco Scandella to Montreal about an hour before she was going to post it. She had jotted down several verses in the middle of the night.

"It didn't make any sense to have all these defensemen," she said. "How has he not made a trade right now? Then he did and I thought it became irrelevant. Now almost a month later, I felt the same so I said, 'Why not?' and I posted it."

The song has quickly spread on social media and was prominently featured across Canada on BarDown, TSN's sports culture blog.

"That was great. I don't do a lot on Twitter but I saw a lot of notifications on my phone and I'm thinking that's different," Martin said. "I guess I have some new followers now from Canada."

Martin is a teacher's aide at Dodge Elementary School in Williamsville and a youth sports coach at KidsPlay. She and her mother shoot the videos and she does the editing. She said music is just a "fun hobby."

The Sabres were her big hobby for many years. Not anymore.

"I don't even want to pay \$5 StubHub prices anymore," she said. "I went to the Bruins game (a 3-0 loss on Dec. 27) and it was the first time in my life I left the game early. If they were losing, it would be one thing if the games were entertaining and there was a bit of passion and excitement. Like 5-4 and it's a good game, whatever. I'm sick of 18 shots on goal, no legitimate scoring chances. It's boring. Be better."

"I was a fan my whole life. In 2006, you could not find me away from the TV when the games were on. That was the moment I knew I loved this with all my heart. They got eliminated in June and I started playing hockey in September (for the Buffalo Regals). I loved hockey that much because of them."

*Hey Jason Botterill, that O'Reilly trade was rough.
How could you think that Patrik Berglund and Sobotka were enough?
It sounds insane. But I hear O'Reilly is doing great.
So they say.
Hey Jason Botterill I just hope you have the answers
'Cause our rink's starting to look and feel just like the Florida Panthers'
And it's tough
It's a situation where this sucks
Enough's enough*

Most fans in Buffalo have similar views of Terry and Kim Pegula that this corner has expressed over the years. They are the most important figures in downtown development in the 21st century, with LECOM Harborcenter being a potential game changer for decades.

The Pegulas saved the Bills, when it seemed like a purchase and move out of town was likely. The team has gone to the playoffs twice in three years and a fully renovated stadium or a new one seem imminent. The Sabres? No playoffs for nine years, a shabby arena falling far behind the rest of the NHL and a 50th anniversary celebration that has fallen flat for fans with snafus including alumni jerseys with misspelled names and knockoffs handed out to '80s and '90s alumni.

"It's just the way they're treating fans now," Tripi said. "Treating the alumni, the arena itself and the franchise with all the losing for nine years. It's inconceivable. It's not like this anywhere else in the entire United States and Canada."

"I cannot remember someone coming out and saying it's going to get better. We have two first overall picks (Jack Eichel and Rasmus Dahlin) and we're just wasting their time here. It's sickening really."

"I love the Pegulas, love what they did for our community but the fact of the matter is Buffalo is a blue-collar town. We're a hockey town. We don't deserve a billionaire owner refusing to listen to us, refusing to show up in

public and acknowledge he's sorry or apologize in any way about how the Sabres are being portrayed by their fans or around the league. They're a laughingstock."

Eichel is one of the top 10 players in the league this season and what has the 2015 tank that allowed the team to get him resulted in? No playoffs and the sight of their captain baseball bat-smashing his stick into the goalpost after Montreal's empty-net goal Thursday night.

Firing coaches and general managers hasn't worked. The discord between ownership and team legend/short-term president Pat LaFontaine was a disastrous chapter that remains embarrassing.

Fans are pretty vocal in the arena, but at least that means they're still there. What happens when they start expressing themselves with their feet and their wallets?

"I would tell the Pegulas how much I appreciate them," Martin said. "I just wish they would put a little more attention to the Sabres. I have a couple more song ideas but I don't want to come off as negative or mean. But right now, that's what seems to be resonating."

*Hey Jason Botterill, I don't have much left to say
Because like Risto and Ryan [O'Reilly] I've lost my love of this game
And it's a shame
At least we have the Bills to play postseason games
Oh, you gotta do something
Oh, you gotta do something
Oh, you gotta do something
Oh, you gotta do something
Gotta do someth-iiiiing.*

Amerks Hall of Famer Domenic Pittis recalls time he played Sabres-Amerks doubleheader

By Bill Hoppe
The Buffalo News
January 31, 2020

Domenic Pittis, who will be inducted into the Rochester Americans Hall of Fame prior to Friday's game against the Syracuse Crunch, sounded nostalgic recalling perhaps the wildest day of his 19-year career.

On the afternoon of March 28, 1999, Pittis, then 24, made his fourth NHL appearance, skating 12 minutes, 36 seconds in the Sabres' 4-3 win over the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Following the game, Sabres GM Darcy Regier approached Pittis, a free agent he had signed the previous summer.

"He's like, 'Hey, do you want to play in the second one? You don't have to play a lot,' " Pittis recalled.

The second game was at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester. So Pittis drove 75 miles and said he played a whopping 24 minutes in the Amerks' 3-2 loss to the Cincinnati Mighty Ducks, registering two assists.

"It was exciting, I guess, right?" Pittis said of his doubleheader. "Part of me was like, 'What are we doing playing two games?' But part of me was like, 'I got to get myself ready to play another game.' You're like, 'Oh, I'm going to be tired, emotionally drained.' "

When the game started, Pittis forgot he had played earlier in the day.

"You're just like, 'Oh, now I'm in it, now I want to play as much as I normally do,' " he said. "You don't think much more about it. It's amazing what you can do when you don't even think about it. I remember being pretty hungry afterwards."

The center's effort paid off. He would end up winning the American Hockey League scoring title with 104 points, two more than the Providence Bruins' Randy Robitaille.

Pittis spent three seasons in Rochester over two stints, scoring 75 goals and 246 points. He's the last Amerk to crack 100 points in a season.

Pittis only played 14 games with the Sabres, but he parlayed his dynamic play during his first stint – Rochester reached the Calder Cup final both seasons – into a one-way contract with the Edmonton Oilers. He spent the next two years with the Oilers.

"I owe all that to the Sabres and Roch, really, to be honest with you," said Pittis, now an assistant with the Stockton Heat, the Calgary Flames' AHL affiliate. "The opportunity I was given, someone saw that I was worth the chance."

Sabres prospect Mattias Samuelsson shows maturity, strength as pro decision awaits

By Bill Hoppe
The Buffalo News
January 31, 2020

At 6-foot-4 and 221 pounds, Buffalo Sabres prospect Mattias Samuelsson has the size to play pro hockey.

Samuelsson has played big minutes throughout his career at Western Michigan, earning perhaps more ice time than any freshman in the country last season.

The former second-round pick just captained Team USA's entry at the World Junior Championship, his second consecutive appearance in the tournament.

When his college season ends, Samuelsson, 19, could be ready to sign his entry-level contract with the Sabres. He was selected 32nd overall, the first pick in the second round, in the 2018 draft.

"It's something you always have in the back of your mind, it's something you're constantly working toward," Samuelsson said of turning pro. "But at the end of the day, I'm a Bronco right now and you just want to focus on this season."

Following a slow start this season caused partly by a spate of injuries, Western Michigan has won four games in a row.

"We've got the people back that we expected to play together," coach Andy Murray said.

Samuelsson said he suffered a high ankle sprain doing off-ice training before the season – "Rolled it the wrong way," he said – and he missed four games to start the season.

"It was hard, I never had anything like that," he said. "I tried coming back maybe a couple weeks earlier. The pain was a little too bad ... So I took some time off at the beginning of the year. Once I came back on the ice, it felt fine."

Samuelsson's growth this season, according to Murray, can be traced to a less taxing summer. Fewer commitments allowed him to train regularly and improve his conditioning.

"He's stronger than he was last year," Murray said.

Samuelsson said he been showcasing a more physical style and has become tougher to play against in the corners and in front of the net.

"That's something I pride myself on is being a pain to play against for the opponent," said Samuelsson, who has compiled one goal and seven points in 18 games this season. "I feel like playing against older, bigger guys every day is helping me."

Samuelsson only faced teenagers during Team USA's short run as captain at the World Junior Championship.

"He's very mature," Murray said. "I think right away, they had a feeling he would be a leader, they had a young team, they needed somebody with his kind of stable attitude."

While the Americans lost in the quarterfinal, Samuelsson's play during the five games impressed Sabres assistant general manager Randy Sexton.

"I saw a guy who handled the captaincy extremely well," Sexton said. "I saw a guy who, I think, to a large degree played to his identity. He was big, strong, he moved pucks intelligently, defended with vigor, anchored the PK, blocked shots – did all the small things that it takes to win at any level."

Samuelsson said captaining his country "was pretty surreal."

"You dream about playing in the World Juniors, let alone being the captain for Team USA," he said. "So it was ... super humbling. I mean, really an honor."

Bryson responds to scratch

After rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson played the first 40 games this season, he was scratched for the Amerks' 3-2 overtime win Jan. 22 against the Cleveland Monsters.

"I just made a decision that I felt it's best for him as a young player he needed a night off," coach Chris Taylor said.

Taylor said the Bryson, 22, responded with "one of his best games he had all year" in the Amerks' 4-1 victory versus the Laval Rocket on Jan. 24.

The diminutive Bryson, a Providence product, tried to use sitting out as a learning experience.

"I hadn't done that all year," he said. "I played 40 straight there. It's different from going from college, where you play 40 games, and then playing 40 games and you still have 36 left. It's a long season, and just to watch it up top was kind of good. Confidence-wise, I knew I could come back and play well."

Bryson has already played 42 games, as many as he played last season in the NCAA. That includes the Frozen Four in Buffalo.

Oglevie tallies

After scoring seven goals in a six-game stretch in November, Amerks forward Andrew Oglevie battled a long slump and a lower-body injury, scoring just once over his next 14 outings.

When Oglevie scored an early power-play goal against the Rocket, he celebrated emphatically.

"I was fired up to score that one," he said.

Oglevie added an empty-net goal later in the game and scored the next night in the Amerks' 3-2 win in Syracuse.

Taylor hinted Oglevie isn't 100% yet.

"He's playing through some stuff right now," he said.

Malone gets bounce

Amerks forward Sean Malone's eight-game drought ended Jan. 24 when Rocket goalie Keith Kinkaid played the puck off his own defenseman into the net.

"I was about to (change)," Malone said. "I turned to our bench, I had no idea it went in. Guys came over to celebrate with me. It was a funny moment and something I'll remember."

After playing the Crunch, the Amerks face the Binghamton Devils on the road Saturday.

With Kyle Okposo down, Sabres call up Jean-Sebastien Dea

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

January 31, 2020

Buffalo Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said he didn't expect Kyle Okposo to be available for Saturday's matinee against Columbus and the confirmation for that apparently came Friday morning when the team recalled forward Jean-Sebastien Dea from Rochester.

The team later confirmed that Okposo will undergo further evaluation and will not play Saturday.

Dea has 13 goals and 17 assists in 41 games for the Amerks, leading the team with 30 points and sitting in a tie with Andrew Oglevie for the team lead in goals. It's the second recall of the season for Dea, who made his Sabres debut Nov. 27 against Calgary.

Okposo was injured early in the first period of Thursday's 3-1 loss to Montreal. Krueger made sure to clarify that the veteran did not suffer yet another concussion, but simply had an upper-body injury "below the neck"

Defenseman Zach Bogosian will not practice Friday with an illness and Brandon Montour is being given a maintenance day.

Sabres trying to get their confidence back for Columbus on Saturday

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 31, 2020

The past two games for the Buffalo Sabres have been a couple of the more disappointing efforts from the team this season.

On Tuesday, coming off their 10-day break for the bye week and the NHL All-Star break, Buffalo took two periods to really get their feet going, but still ended up falling 3-2 to the Ottawa Senators.

Thursday saw the Sabres have a better start against the Montreal Canadiens, but the final two periods of play saw Buffalo getting outshot 22-10 in a 3-1 loss at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres currently sit with a 22-22-7 record and 51 points in the standings, and have lost the opening two games of their current five-game homestand. While Buffalo remains 10 points out of the playoff picture in both the Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference Wild Card race, other teams are now starting to build up games in hand on the Sabres.

If the Sabres want to remain in contention, the team cannot afford any more slip ups in winnable games this season.

The constant message from Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger and company is to keep the picture small and take every game a day at a time. And while maintaining a grasp at the standings and what's going around the league may be enticing, the focus has to be improving as a group every single day.

"For us to move beyond the small picture at this time of year is a waste of energy," Krueger said on Friday following practice. "It's not that we're sticking our hands in the sand. Whatever noise that's out there is out there, but I really don't let it into my head or my space because I need to work with this group on a daily basis as constructively as possible. To grow them, to educate them, and to build a foundation that becomes a habit. We've spoken about it since Sep. 12, and we will not lose that course. The noise out there is deserved, if you're telling me it's out there, but it's not getting inside our room because we are very confident in the principles that we're bringing into play here, we're confident in the processes that we're laying out here. We feel a continued, complete buy-in by the players of what we're working on. Are the results the way we want them? No. Do fans deserve to boo us after games like Ottawa and Montreal? Yes. Do we need to take that? Yes, and it should fuel us to continue to work in the right direction."

Following Thursday's loss to the Canadiens, the one constant word that was brought up was "confidence" and the lack of confidence, especially in the second and third period. Buffalo played a very solid period to kick off the contest, outshooting the Canadiens 11-8, but then the team appeared to go into a shell and could not find a way to break out of that shell.

While the team struggles to find their game again coming out of the break and it continues to lose ground in the playoff race, Krueger is not feeling any desperation with the group.

"For me, it's what are the issues, what can we do about the issues, how do we work on these issues, and drive forward again and not get stuck on those," Krueger said. "I'm not frustrated because this group is trying, and they are attentive and they're involved in the process. We are not alone as coaches in this. We are doing this together, and that gives me optimism even after a painful night like yesterday. To spend a few hours with these guys is the best therapy, because they are working together with us on these solutions. We will do our best to give a reaction to the fans. We're expecting a full house here against Columbus, who's one of the hottest teams in the league right now. And coming off their break, they're going to be fresh and it'll be a big physical test for us. We're getting ready for that."

The Columbus Blue Jackets come to Buffalo for an afternoon matchup on Saturday at KeyBank Center as one of the hottest teams in the National Hockey League. Columbus had won six straight games heading into the All-Star break, and are 8-2-0 over the course of their last 10 games. The Blue Jackets currently sit as the top Wild Card team in the Eastern Conference with 62 points, and that comes after losing a number of their top players to free

agency last year like forwards Artemi Panarin, Matt Duchene and Ryan Dzingel, as well as goalie Sergei Bobrovsky.

Krueger knows that if his group is to beat a red-hot team like the Blue Jackets, as well as to get back on track towards the playoffs moving forward, the team will have to become more of a consistent group and string together some wins.

"All [the inconsistencies] show that we have work to do. All that shows is that we have to continue to find our moments of teaching, whether it's in the short practice times we have, the video sessions we do, the 1-on-1 meetings or the board talks. Wherever and whatever, we need to continue to cement what are simple fundamentals that are still not habits. They're just not habits, and they don't grow overnight," Krueger said. "We've said that many times before, and sometimes it take pain like we're feeling right now to become normal for us, and they aren't yet. That's why we've been inconsistent. Are we striving towards those principles and those values in a focused way? Yes. Are they there 100% of the time? No. They will never be that, but we need to have a higher percentage than now. If we continue to work the way we are, we're going to improve, and I believe in that."

Forward Michael Frolik has been in Buffalo for nearly a full month after the Jan. 2 trade that saw him going from the Calgary Flames to the Sabres. In his eight games with the Sabres, Frolik has a goal and an assist while mainly skating on a line with Marcus Johansson.

The 31-year-old has been through some highs and some lows in his 12-year career in the NHL, including a Stanley Cup win in 2013 while with the Chicago Blackhawks. While his time has been brief with the Sabres, Frolik knows that any change that comes with the team has to come from within.

"I think it's just a matter of the belief," Frolik said. "We had a belief in the [Chicago] room that we can win every game, even if we're down 2-3 goals, I think you could see in the room that we could turn the game around. Obviously I think the issue here a little bit is to play a full 60 minutes. I think we've had a little trouble with the second periods. Seems like we have a pretty good first period, and then we kind of take our foot off the gas, but I think the mindset here needs to play a full 60 minutes. That's the challenge for the next game.

"We need to realize in this room that this is the time for us. Every game should be for us. We need to put the work in, and I think we were. It's just we took a couple minutes off and they make us pay. In this game, you have to be consistent the whole game and every single game. I think that's what we're looking for the next few games."

As for improving the team's confidence going forward, it may be as simple as just getting some more pucks to find the back of the net from top-to-bottom of the lineup.

"What helps is that you have to score some goals. It goes with confidence," Frolik said. "When you feel you score a few or when you get on the board, the confidence goes higher, and everyone around you feels better. If you want to be successful in this league, you need that kind of secondary scoring, and I think we've been missing that in the last few games. That's me included. If you're on the second line, you need to try and help the team. You need everybody to chip in, and not just from our first line with Eichs [Jack Eichel]. He's a high scoring guy, but we need to follow him. Hopefully when you score a few goals, the confidence goes higher, and hopefully we do that soon."

Frolik skated on a line with Johansson and Jeff Skinner once again at Friday's practice.

Sabres forward Kyle Okposo left the first period of Thursday's game with an upper-body injury and did not return. Following the game, Krueger said that Okposo did not have a concussion, but that he would go under more evaluation on Friday. The team announced on Friday that Okposo would not practice on Friday, nor would he play on Saturday afternoon against the Blue Jackets.

That prompted the call up of 25-year-old J.S. Dea from the Rochester Americans.

Dea was called up once earlier this season, but only got into one game before Thanksgiving and played in just 5:53 of ice time.

"In the game I played, I thought I played pretty good," Dea said. "Obviously there were a lot of bodies at that time, so hopefully I get another chance. But I think I've kept working down there, playing my game, and I'm glad to be back.

"I was only here for only a week, but I got to see a few games. I think the big part is that I usually have a lot more time that you think. Watching from up [in the press box], you can take that extra second to make that play. So I think that's going to help me over the next couple of games. If I can bring my A-game and bring some snarl to the room, that's all I can do."

The Buffalo forward has led the Amerks in scoring this season, netting 13 goals and picking up 17 assists for 30 points in 41 games played. With the lack of depth scoring that has tended to plague the Sabres as of late, Dea is hoping to bring some of his scoring ways to Buffalo while he is in the NHL.

"I'm just going to stay myself and try to bring as much positivity as I can," Dea said. "Obviously if I can help the team win, that's my main goal, but I'm just going to take things one day at a time and go from there."

At practice on Friday, the Sabres were missing a pair of defenseman as Brandon Montour was given a maintenance day and Zach Bogosian was out with an illness. Krueger said that it was "definitely a maintenance day" for Montour, which is likely a sign that he will be ready to play on Saturday. As for Bogosian, Krueger said that he was very ill and could be out of commission for a couple of days.

Here is how the lines looked at Harborcenter on Friday:

Forwards:

Vesey - Eichel - Reinhart
Skinner - Johansson - Frolik
Girgensons - Larsson - Sheary
Rodrigues - Lazar - Dea

Defense:

Pilut - Ristolainen
Dahlin - Jokiharju
McCabe - Miller

PP1:

Ristolainen
Eichel - Reinhart - Johansson
Dahlin

PP2:

Skinner
Sheary - Vesey - Rodrigues
Miller

Be sure to tune in to the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show on Saturday starting at noon with Brian Koziol, where you will hear from Frolik, Dea and Krueger. In addition, you will hear from Lethbridge Hurricanes general manager Peter Anholt at some point in the broadcast, who joined Howard Simon and Sal Capaccio on Friday to talk about Sabres prospect Dylan Cozens

Sabres call up Dea from Rochester

By Brayton Wilson

WGR 550

January 31, 2020

After an injury to Kyle Okposo in Thursday night's loss to the Montreal Canadiens, the Buffalo Sabres have called up forward J.S. Dea from the Rochester Americans.

This is Dea's second call up to Buffalo this season. He appeared in in one game with the Sabres on Nov. 27 against the Calgary Flames, where he was held pointless in 5:53 of ice time.

In 30 career games in the National Hockey League, Dea has scored five goals and picked up two assists while with the Sabres, New Jersey Devils and the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Dea leads the Amerks this season in scoring with 13 goals and 17 assists for 30 points in 41 games played. The 25-year-old has played in 349 career AHL games and has scored 96 goals and registered 119 assists for 215 points.

Okposo was injured during the first period of Thursday night's action with an upper-body injury and did not return. Head coach Ralph Krueger after the game that Okposo's injury was not a concussion, but that he would be further evaluated on Friday.

The team has since announced that Okposo would not take part in Friday's practice, and that he will not play on Saturday against the Columbus Blue Jackets at KeyBank Center.

Michael Frolik comfortable with Sabres, grateful for opportunity

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
January 31, 2020

BUFFALO – Before winger Michael Frolik waived his no-trade clause to leave the Calgary Flames, he coveted the kind of opportunity the Sabres awarded him upon his arrival last month.

Frolik, 31, will be a free agent following the season. The Czech is playing for his future in the NHL. He needs ice time to showcase his talents.

Earlier this season in Calgary, he regularly skated fewer than 10 minutes a night and sat out four games as a healthy scratch.

"When you play eight minutes, it's not much you can show off," Frolik said Friday inside KeyBank Center. "I just want to kind of have a new opportunity for a start. That's kind of why I came here. Obviously, the opportunity's getting bigger."

In his first eight outings with the Sabres, Frolik has enjoyed a notable role, mostly skating on the second line and killing penalties, an area he has helped improve. The veteran has played at least 12 minutes, 57 seconds in every game entering Saturday afternoon's home game

"I'm happy with that, for sure," Frolik said of his role.

By now, having played for five teams over his 12-year career, Frolik knows what to expect when he switches uniforms.

"I know everybody, know all the faces, the names and everything," said Frolik, who was acquired for a fourth-round pick Jan. 2. "Now it's just a matter of time to perform on the ice. It was a quick transaction. I think I feel more comfortable, for sure. Now it's just focus on hockey."

Frolik, of course, believes he can contribute more. So far, he has scored just once, an empty-net-goal, and added an assist.

The Sabres' reliance on captain Jack Eichel's line and their lack of secondary scoring has become a huge problem.

"I want to play the right way and don't think too much about the scoring," he said. "But it's a little bit in your head, too. You want to help the team, help the guys and get some experience.

"I know we got a young team here and strive to be an example for them on the ice and in the practices and stuff."

Frolik understands he has a chance to prove his worth and extend his career.

During the Sabres' bye and the NHL All-Star break almost two weeks ago, he brought his gear to his Florida home and found some ice at an old rink in Boca Raton.

"I didn't want to be six, seven days off the ice," he said.

The Sabres want Frolik's habits to wear off on his new teammates. Having won the Stanley Cups with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2013, he's one of the few players in the dressing room who has experienced any winning.

"He's just a real solid character player who understands the game away from the puck and also understands what his team needs from him," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "I think that he has courage and ... he's a mentor kind of player."

Frolik said the Blackhawks possessed "belief in the room we could win every game."

Right now, the Sabres can't string together a complete game. In Thursday's 3-1 loss, the Sabres pounced on the Montreal Canadiens early before mustering little offense over the final 50 minutes.

"The issue here is just play a full 60 minutes," Frolik said. "We've had a little trouble with the second period. It seems like we have always a pretty good first period, and then we kind of take our foot off the gas a little bit."

Frolik said the Sabres, who are 10 points out of a playoff spot, need more urgency.

"It's just you need to realize in the room this is the time for us, every game for us should be like kind of a playoff game," Frolik said.

The chances of Frolik playing in the postseason this year are slim. He could waive his no-trade clause again. That, however, seems unlikely.

"I don't want to be changing too much," he said. "You never know, but I'm here and I'm happy to be a Buffalo Sabre."

Frolik doesn't want to get too far ahead of himself, but if an offer materializes from the Sabres, he said he would "definitely consider it."

"I definitely want to stay in the league," he said. "I still think I can play in this league. But you never know what will happen in the summer. I've been through that free agency. So I know it's tricky and you kind of never know."

Sabres' Kyle Okposo, Zach Bogosian out against Blue Jackets

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 31, 2020

BUFFALO – With winger Kyle Okposo out for Saturday afternoon's home game against the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Sabres recalled forward Jean-Sebastien Dea from the Rochester Americans on Friday.

Dea, 25, has compiled 13 goals and 30 points, both team highs, in 41 AHL games this season.

Okposo left Thursday's 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens early with an upper-body injury.

Coach Ralph Krueger said Okposo was being evaluated Friday and the Sabres wouldn't give more information "until we have 100 percent certainty."

Dea played one game during a recall earlier this season. He has compiled five goals and seven points in 30 career NHL games.

After bouncing around three organizations last season, Dea said the stability he has enjoyed this season has helped "big time."

"You feel a lot more comfortable, I feel more energized and stuff, so every time I jump in a game I'm more excited," he said.

In other news, Krueger said defensemen Zach Bogosian "is extremely ill" and missed Friday's practice inside LECOM Harborcenter.

"(We're) expecting that's going to take a couple days," he said inside KeyBank Center.

Meanwhile, defenseman Brandon Montour had a maintenance day Friday.

With Kyle Okposo injured, Sabres recall Jean-Sebastien Dea from Amerks

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

January 31, 2020

BUFFALO – The Sabres recalled forward Jean-Sebastien Dea, the Rochester Americans' leading scorer, this morning.

Dea, 25, has compiled 13 goals and 30 points in 41 AHL games this season.

The Sabres summoned Dea because winger Kyle Okposo left Thursday's 3-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens early with an upper-body injury. Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said Okposo will likely miss Saturday afternoon's game against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Dea played one game during a recall earlier this season. He has compiled five goals and seven points in 30 career NHL games.

Update: The Sabres have announced Okposo is out Saturday.

In addition, defensemen Zach Bogosian (illness) and Brandon Montour (maintenance) will miss today's practice.

Sabres sticking together as season slips away

By Stu Boyar

WGRZ

January 31, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. — After two dismal performances at home, losses to Ottawa and Montreal, the Sabres are looking ahead to Saturday afternoon's game against the red hot Columbus Blue Jackets. The Sabres lost Tuesday to Ottawa 5-2 and to Montreal 3-1 Thursday night. Coming out of the All Star break the Sabres had nine of their next ten games at home, but they've let the first two games slip away without earning a point.

The Sabres were listless against Ottawa a team that had lost ten of its last 11 coming into Buffalo. They weren't much better against Montreal although they did get the first nine shots on goal in the game and played for the most part a good first period. Montreal got two quick goals early in the second period and defenseman Jake McCabe said the team lost its confidence after giving up those two goals.

After practice Friday morning head coach Ralph Krueger said "you need to be smart with the passion and I like to see that word (desperation) turned into passion. You want to show our fans tomorrow a complete game that we care and our giving our best.

"I've always said that the Buffalo fans base will accept losses when we do that and that's been the disappointing thing about the last two games, we've slipped out of the hard work we need to do as a group for a few moments here and there and been punished for it and that's our goal for tomorrow to give a full 60 of hard work and passion. You can call it desperation for me its just a really hard work ethic that comes across as not leaving anything on the table."

After Montreal scored an empty netter to ice the game Thursday night captain Jack Eichel smashed his stick over the net in an act of sheer frustration.

This morning Eichel said, "Everyone cares. We got a lot of passionate guys in the locker room. Obviously my frustration boiled over there and whatever. I ran into the net and broke my stick."

Eichel scored the Sabres only goal against Montreal. It was his 30th goal of the season the first time in his career he has reached that mark but despite his success the Sabres continue to struggle. As captain, and team leader he's always looking to bring more to the team.

"You always think you can do more when the team's not winning. I think everyone in the locker room would agree that everyone needs to kind of look in the mirror and expect more out of themselves going forward and that includes me."

Columbus has won six straight coming into Saturday's matinee against the Sabres. Jeff Skinner returned to the lineup after the All Star break. He hasn't scored in his first two games back and after scoring 40 goals last season he only has 11 goals in 41 games this season.

"I think in order to turn the tide when things aren't going well you got to try and find a spark and whatever word you use for it, desperation, urgency, you have to find a way to get out of it. For us that's the point we're at. We're going to work to find that spark."

Sabres fan planning protest against team

By Chris Horvatits

WIVB

January 31, 2020

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – Frustration is boiling over for some Sabres fans, with the team 10 points out of a postseason spot and on its way to a ninth straight year without a playoff birth.

The Sabres lost their third straight game Thursday, dropping a 3-1 decision to the Montreal Canadiens. Hours before the game, Peter Tripi, who runs the Twitter account @PavingTheStreet, posted a poll.

“Would you attend a peaceful protest of the Buffalo Sabres Management in response to the way they have treated the Franchise, the Fans, and the Alumni over the last 9 years?” Tripi asked.

As of 6 p.m. Friday, the nearly 3,000 people had voted in the poll. About 78 percent said ‘yes’.

“If the Pegulas, or anybody is upset at how upset we are, I think the biggest thing to thing about is it’s the day that Sabres fans stop being upset at the state of the organization that they should be worried about,” Tripi told News 4. “Because that’s going to be a really dark day in Buffalo.”

Tripi says he is planning to hold the protest on February 8th at 11 a.m. in Alumni Plaza.

Buffalo Sabres fans are ready to snap – and you can't blame them

By Rory Boylen

Sportsnet

January 31, 2020

I wasn't sure if the headline for this piece would be accurate enough. Sabres fans are ready to snap, or have snapped? If their first loss this week — 5-2 at home to the dreadful Ottawa Senators — wasn't the breaking point this season, Thursday's 3-1 home loss to Montreal, in which Buffalo managed just 10 shots over the last two periods, surely was.

I don't live in the city of Buffalo, but I live close enough in Toronto that the Sabres are in the backyard. The columns are (fairly) getting more heated and the fans, well, an epic rant from someone named Duane on WGR 550's Schopp and the Bulldog encapsulates what's going on there:

This is a cautionary tale of what can happen when you gleefully dive head first into a rebuild you assume will turn out rosy after making a few high draft picks.

When Terry Pegula first bought the team in 2011 the message was about his dedication to winning the Stanley Cup.

"If I want to make some money, I'll go drill a gas well," he declared at the time. Pegula said all the right things to invigorate a fan base that day. "Starting today, there will be no financial mandates on the Buffalo Sabres' hockey department... I'm going to make decisions based on winning the Stanley Cup and what is right for the fan base and the team."

Of course, that didn't go as planned. And it wasn't long until the message was flipped to the opposite.

In 2015, after back-to-back last place finishes in their division, Buffalo had picked second overall twice in a row. At that point everyone, including the majority of the fan base, was OK with starting from scratch and building it back up again. Pegula said that stretch represented "two of the most successful seasons we've ever had" because it brought the Sabres Sam Reinhart and Jack Eichel high in the draft.

Five years later and the Sabres are still well out of the playoffs. Unless they finish with the league's best record the rest of the way, they're not making it there in 2020. Edmonton has been razed many times in the past decade for their futility, but Buffalo has the longest active playoff drought that's about to extend to nine years. If they miss again next year — and, really, who's betting against that now — they'll equal the Oilers for longest playoff drought in league history.

The frustrating thing is the Sabres have the pieces that are hardest to acquire. In Eichel they have the stud young star centre, and he's having an MVP-type of season that'll get swept under the rug after the playoff whiff becomes official. In Rasmus Dahlin, picked first overall after another disastrous season in 2017-18, they have a superstar defenceman in the making. Both of them are performing at a level you'd expect for their ages and experience levels.

But it's not mattering. At all. Nothing else has come together.

Ralph Krueger was a bold and strong coach hire last summer and the start he and the Sabres had teased an emergence from the depths of the league standings. In their first 13 games, Buffalo had just two regulation losses and were tied with Boston atop the Atlantic when October closed.

Since Nov. 1, the Sabres are 13-20-5, with a better points percentage than only Anaheim and Detroit. That hot start lacks any meaning now, the same way last season's 10-game November winning streak was just a mirage.

There have been a few questionable roster decisions by the GM Jason Botterill, not least of which was the re-signing of Jeff Skinner. Had Botterill not signed him ahead of free agency last summer the GM would have received a lot of flak, but signing Skinner long-term to a \$9 million cap hit with a no-move clause was not the better call.

Skinner was rewarded for a 14.9 shooting percentage season — well above his career average — and this year he's on pace for about half as many goals with a defensive game as problematic as ever. A deadline trade was the better way out.

The Ryan O'Reilly trade was also a disaster.

And on that note, more than one player has voiced a preference to not be a part of this organization. O'Reilly famously said he had lost his love for the game of hockey with the Sabres. After Tyler Ennis and Marcus Foligno were traded to Minnesota in 2017, they both alluded to a negative culture. "It's definitely nice to be here, where losing is not an option," Ennis, now ironically, said of Minnesota.

This year two players, Zach Bogosian and Evan Rodrigues, have reportedly asked to be traded out.

As we've watched the epic Battle of Alberta unfold this season, it's hard not to think about a revived Battle of the QEW. When Toronto was picking Auston Matthews first overall in 2016, the Leafs and Sabres were on a similar track. But while Toronto successfully got out of its rebuild, Buffalo is still grinding away with no obvious solution. That can't be an easy pill to swallow either.

Today the message in Buffalo isn't even pretending to be about Cups on the horizon. It hasn't been that way in more than six years.

"We're looking long term here," Botterill said the day he introduced Krueger as his head coach. "We can understand a fan's perspective, but it can't impact our decisions, our vision of how our team needs to eventually look."

There are two ways to look at that statement.

The pessimists angle would frown on the fact this team is still rebuilding nearly a decade after first starting out down this road. The optimists view would be that this is a team with a number of expiring contracts and a whole whack of summer cap space to work with and that, by playing the long game, they won't feel obliged to make the worst mistake and throw around money in free agency in a bid to rush their way back to relevance.

We're betting a healthy amount of Sabres fans are registered pessimists about their team right now, as they watch Eichel's prime years wasted and Dahlin develop inside of a losing, frustrating atmosphere. Just look over some of the conversations being had on the #Sabres hashtag on Twitter.

And we can't blame them.

Blue Jackets at Sabres preview

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

January 31, 2020

BLUE JACKETS (27--16--8) at SABRES (22-22--7)

1 p.m. ET; SN, MSG-B, FS-O, NHL.TV

The Game

The Columbus Blue Jackets will try to extend their season-long winning streak to seven games when they play the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

The Blue Jackets, who are playing their first game following their League-mandated break, have outscored opponents 20-6 and recorded three shutouts during the streak. They are 16-2-4 in their past 22 games

The Sabres have lost three straight after winning three in a row. They are 5-8-0 in their past 13 games.

Players to watch

Blue Jackets forward Oliver Bjorkstrand has scored two goals in each of his past three games and has nine goals in his past six games.

Sabres center Jack Eichel has 12 points (five goals, seven assists) in his past 11 games.

They said it

"Now is the time where you see teams take a step up [in the standings] and take a step down, and you want to be that team that steps up. We were playing really well before the break, but now is the most important part of the season." -- Blue Jackets forward Pierre-Luc Dubois

"We've been through these times where we take a couple of hits at this time of the year, when it seems like it's critical games, we take a couple of hits and then all of a sudden the wheels fall off. That's not happening here. I think that's probably the biggest message that has been sent to the locker room. You're going to take punches, it's a tough league. Every team's competitive every night. You've just got to start finding ways to win hockey games. That's honestly what it all comes down to." -- Sabres captain Jack Eichel

Blue Jackets projected lineup

Nick Foligno -- Pierre-Luc Dubois -- Oliver Bjorkstrand
Gustav Nyquist -- Alexander Wennberg -- Cam Atkinson
Nathan Gerbe -- Boone Jenner -- Emil Bemstrom
Jakob Lilja -- Riley Nash -- Eric Robinson

Zach Werenski -- Seth Jones
Vladislav Gavrikov -- David Savard
Scott Harrington -- Markus Nutivaara

Elvis Merzlikins
Matiss Kivlenieks

Scratched: Sonny Milano

Injured: Brandon Dubinsky (wrist), Josh Anderson (shoulder), Ryan Murray (lower body), Joonas Korpihalo (knee), Alexandre Texier (back), Dean Kukan (knee)

Sabres projected lineup

Jimmy Vesey -- Jack Eichel -- Sam Reinhart
Jeff Skinner -- Marcus Johansson -- Michael Frolik
Zemgus Girgensons -- Johan Larsson -- Conor Sheary
Evan Rodrigues -- Curtis Lazar

Lawrence Pilut -- Rasmus Ristolainen
Rasmus Dahlin -- Brandon Montour
Jake McCabe -- Henri Jokiharju
Colin Miller

Carter Hutton
Jonas Johansson

Scratched: Jean-Sebastien Dea

Injured: Kyle Okposo (upper body), Zach Bogosian (illness), Linus Ullmark (lower body), Victor Olofsson (lower body), Tage Thompson (upper body), Vladimir Sobotka (lower body)

Status report

Okposo was being evaluated Friday and will not play against Columbus. ... Montour is expected to play after missing practice Friday due to a maintenance day. ... Forward Josh Anderson practiced with the Blue Jackets on Friday but is not expected to face the Sabres.

Stat pack

Atkinson is two goals from 200 in the NHL. ... Wennberg is one point away from 200. ... Reinhart has 12 points (six goals, six assists) in his past 12 games.

Okposo to miss Saturday's game with upper-body injury

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

January 31, 2020

Kyle Okposo will miss Saturday's home game against the Columbus Blue Jackets with an upper-body injury, Buffalo Sabres coach Ralph Krueger announced Friday.

Okposo sustained the injury during the first period of Buffalo's loss to Montreal on Thursday. Krueger said the ailment is not head related.

"He's being evaluated today and we're withholding the final decisions or the final information until we have 100 percent certainty," Krueger said. "But at the moment it's just the game tomorrow and we'll confirm that probably tomorrow."

The Sabres recalled Jean-Sebastien Dea prior to practice on Friday to round out their group of 12 forwards. Dea previously appeared in one game for the Buffalo, skating 5:53 against Calgary on Nov. 27. He leads Rochester with 30 points in 41 games.

Buffalo also practiced without defensemen Zach Bogosian (illness) and Brandon Montour (maintenance day). Montour will be available to play Saturday, while Bogosian's recovery is expected to take "a couple of days," according to Krueger.

Here's how the Sabres lined up Friday:

Forwards:

13 Jimmy Vesey - 9 Jack Eichel - 23 Sam Reinhart
53 Jeff Skinner - 90 Marcus Johansson - 67 Michael Frolik
28 Zemgus Girgensons - 22 Johan Larsson - 43 Conor Sheary
71 Evan Rodrigues - 27 Curtis Lazar - 15 Jean-Sebastien Dea

Defensemen: 10 Henri Jokiharju, 19 Jake McCabe, 24 Lawrence Pilut, 26 Rasmus Dahlin, 33 Colin Miller, 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

Goalies:

40 Carter Hutton
34 Jonas Johansson

Now, more notes from Friday's practice.

Moving forward

Jake McCabe and Curtis Lazar acknowledged the need for urgency following the loss to Montreal, the team's second in a row since returning from the bye week. The Sabres sit 10 points removed from a playoff spot and are in the midst of a vital stretch with seven of their next eight games at home.

Krueger, who has promoted a day-to-day focus since the start of training camp, spoke about balancing that urgency and the justified concerns of the fanbase with the "small picture" he sees as vital to the team's success.

"I mean, for us to move beyond the small picture at this time of year is just a waste of energy, I have to say," he said. "It's not that we're sticking our heads in the sand and whatever noise is out there is out there but I really don't let it into my head or my space because I need to work with this group on a daily basis as constructively as possible to grow them, to educate them, and to build a foundation that becomes a habit. We've spoken about it since September 12th and we will not lose that course."

"So, the noise out there is deserved if you're telling me it is out there but it's not getting inside our room because we are very confident in the principles that we're bringing into play here, we're confident in the processes that we're laying out here, we feel a continued complete buy-in by the players of what we're working on."

"Are the results the way we want them? No. And do fans deserve to boo us after games like Ottawa and Montreal? Yes. Do we need to take that? Yes, and it should fuel us to continue to work in the right direction. That's how I'm feeling right now and that's how the group is feeling and we're going to continue to work hard."

You can watch Krueger's full session with the media below:

Frolik happy with new role

Michael Frolik came to Buffalo looking for a better opportunity, and he's gotten it through eight games. The winger remained on a line with Marcus Johansson and Jeff Skinner Friday, where he's played since returning from the bye. He's averaging 14:25 of ice time, up more than two full minutes from his time in Calgary.

Though Krueger has said that Frolik was placed on his line because of his defensive responsibility, which should free Johansson and Skinner offensively, Frolik admitted he's hungry to contribute his own offense, as well. He's produced at least two scoring chances in four of his past five contests, according to NaturalStatTrick.com, but only has one goal since joining the Sabres.

"Obviously, my ice time has been higher, and my role has been pretty good here coming from Calgary," he said. "I'm happy with that, for sure. ... Hopefully, like I said, I want to play the right way and don't think too much about the scoring. But it's a little bit in your head, too. You want to help the team, help the guys and get some experience. I know we got a young team here and strive to be an example for them on the ice and in the practices and stuff."

Up next

The Sabres will look to right the ship when they host the Columbus Blue Jackets - current owners of the first wild card in the Eastern Conference - on Saturday afternoon. It will be a Kids Day at KeyBank Center.

Coverage on MSG begins at 12:30 p.m., or you can listen to the game on WGR 550. Puck drop is scheduled for 1.

Sabres recall Dea from Amerks

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 31, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres announced today that the team has recalled forward Jean-Sebastien Dea from the Rochester Americans (AHL).

Dea is currently the leading scorer in Rochester with 30 points (13+17) through 41 games. He is tied for the team lead in goals and is second in assists.

This is his second recall of the season. He dressed for Buffalo on Nov. 27 against Calgary and skated 5:53. Dea, 25, appeared in a career-high 23 NHL contests for New Jersey and Pittsburgh last season, tallying six points (4+2).

Kyle Okposo left last night's game with an upper-body injury and did not return. After the game, coach Ralph Krueger said Okposo would be further evaluated, but that it was unlikely that the forward would be able to play in Saturday's home game against Columbus.

Stay tuned to Sabres.com for updates from today's practice. Faceoff on Saturday is scheduled for 1 p.m. with pregame coverage on MSG starting at 12:30.

Rochester, meanwhile, will host Syracuse tonight and the team will induct Domenic Pittis into the Amerks Hall of Fame in a pregame ceremony. You can catch the action on MSG starting at 7 p.m. Read more in this week's Amerks Update.