



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*February 23, 2021*

## **New Jersey faces Buffalo on 3-game home slide**

Associated Press

February 23, 2021

Buffalo Sabres (5-8-2, eighth in the East Division) vs. New Jersey Devils (6-5-2, seventh in the East Division)

Newark, New Jersey; Tuesday, 7 p.m. EST

**BOTTOM LINE:** New Jersey plays Buffalo looking to stop its three-game home slide.

The Devils are 6-5-2 against opponents from the East Division. New Jersey has given up 17 power-play goals, killing 59.5% of opponent chances.

The Sabres are 5-8-2 against the rest of their division. Buffalo averages only 2.4 penalties per game, the fewest in the NHL. Brandon Davidson leads them averaging 0.5.

In their last meeting on Feb. 20, Buffalo won 3-2. Sam Reinhart recorded a team-high 2 points for the Sabres.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Miles Wood leads the Devils with five goals and has 8 points. Pavel Zacha has four goals over the last 10 games for New Jersey.

Victor Olofsson has 13 total points while scoring six goals and totaling seven assists for the Sabres. Reinhart has four goals and four assists over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Devils: 4-5-1, averaging 2.8 goals, 4.9 assists, 3.1 penalties and 6.7 penalty minutes while giving up 2.8 goals per game with a .910 save percentage.

Sabres: 4-5-1, averaging 2.1 goals, four assists, 2.8 penalties and 5.6 penalty minutes while giving up 2.8 goals per game with a .904 save percentage.

**INJURIES:** Devils: Nikita Gusev: out (covid protocol).

Sabres: Rasmus Ristolainen: out (health and safety protocols), Tobias Rieder: day to day (undisclosed).

---

The Associated Press created this story using technology provided by Data Skrive and data from Sportradar.

## **Pageau lifts New York Islanders over Buffalo Sabres 3-2**

By Allan Kreda

Associated Press

February 23, 2021

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (AP) — Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored a tiebreaking power-play goal in the third period and Semyon Varlamov made 34 saves, leading the New York Islanders to a 3-2 win over the last-place Buffalo Sabres on Monday night.

Pageau got his seventh goal at 15:08 when he banged in a rebound on the backhand after Oliver Wahlstrom's initial shot with stopped by Buffalo goaltender Linus Ullmark.

The Islanders beat the Sabres for the third straight time this season after two victories in Buffalo last week. The Islanders also moved to 5-0-1 at Nassau Coliseum.

Matt Martin put New York in front 3:01 into the third, beating Ullmark with a shot from just inside the blueline for his second goal of the season.

But Buffalo's Sam Reinhart tied it at 2 at 5:48, batting the puck out of midair past Varlamov for this sixth goal.

Ullmark played well in the third, denying Brock Nelson and Adam Pelech on consecutive shots in the same sequence and stopping Pageau swooping in with just over nine minutes left.

Sabres forward Curtis Lazar opened the scoring with his fourth goal 17:15 into the first. It was only the fifth time in 15 games that the Sabres scored the first goal. Buffalo outshot New York 12-3 in the opening period.

Anders Lee tied it at 1 with his eighth of the season 3:56 into the second. After Mathew Barzal kept the puck in the Sabres zone, Lee finished a solid passing sequence with Ryan Pullock and Jordan Eberle by backhanding the puck past Ullmark.

The Islanders have won six straight against the Sabres. The Sabres are 2-7-2 in their last 11 games overall against the Islanders.

Monday's game was originally scheduled for Feb. 2, but it was postponed because of COVID-19 issues with the Sabres.

### WORTH NOTING

The Islanders are 7-1-2 this season when they score at least three goals.

### OUT FOR SEASON

The Sabres will be without defenseman Jake McCabe for the rest of the season after he injured his right knee during Saturday's 3-2 victory at New Jersey.

The 27-year-old McCabe was diagnosed Monday with ligament and meniscus damage, and the team said he will need six to eight months to recover. McCabe got hurt trying to hit Devils captain Nico Hischier along the boards in the third period.

### SKINNER SCRATCHED

The Sabres made struggling forward Jeff Skinner a healthy scratch for the first time this season. A 40-goal scorer two seasons ago for the Sabres, Skinner signed an eight-year, \$72 million contract extension in June 2019. He scored only 14 goals in 59 games last season and has just one assist in 14 games this season.

### UP NEXT

Islanders: Hosting Boston Bruins on Thursday.

Sabres: Visiting New Jersey Devils on Tuesday.

## **Sabres D McCabe to miss rest of season with knee injury**

Associated Press

February 22, 2021

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (AP) — Buffalo Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe will miss the rest of the season after he injured his right knee during Saturday's 3-2 victory at New Jersey.

The 27-year-old McCabe was diagnosed Monday with ligament and meniscus damage, and the team said he will need six to eight months to recover. McCabe got hurt trying to hit Devils captain Nico Hischier along the boards in the third period.

McCabe, a second-round pick in the 2012 draft, has one goal and two assists in 13 games this season. He has 18 goals and 59 assists in 353 career games with Buffalo.

He can become an unrestricted free agent after this season.

The last-place Sabres are also without defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who is recovering from a severe bout with COVID-19 and hasn't played since Jan. 31.

Buffalo recalled forward Casey Mittelstadt and defenseman Brandon Davidson from the taxi squad before facing the Islanders on Monday night at Nassau Coliseum.

## **Sabres' forward shuffle produces lots of chances, still not enough goals**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

UNIONDALE – Ralph Krueger can shuffle his forwards any way he wants, but the Buffalo Sabres simply don't score enough.

On the road against a strong opponent, the Sabres put a strong effort on the ice Monday, but it didn't matter. They lost to the New York Islanders 3-2 on Jean-Gabriel Pageau's power-play goal with 4:52 left.

The Sabres dominated the shots on goal count at 36-23 – and the Islanders only had five in the game's first 34 minutes. The shots attempted were 59-48, also in Buffalo's favor. Quite a departure from last week's two losses to the Islanders at home. Same result.

"It's extremely painful. We need 'Ws' right now, so good games don't count," Krueger said. "This is going to be a tough one to swallow. ... It was not enough offense. When you look at that game, even if they score three, we could have had five or more.

"This is probably the most painful loss of the season for the way we were able to actually neutralize them, create opportunities, but we come out on the short end of the stick again and we have to be responsible for that."

The Sabres got lots of offense throughout the lineup in a game most known in the hours leading to faceoff for Krueger's decision to make Jeff Skinner a healthy scratch. Skinner, of course, has no goals this season and none in nearly a year. He has just one point in 14 games.

"We don't measure players only on statistics. It's part of the mix. It just is a bit of a gut feel," Krueger said. "The best lineup for tonight was with Casey Mittelstadt in that spot. It's less against Jeff than it is for what we think this group needs today and what we need in a game for our team today."

Skinner's scratch might have lasted only one game anyway, but that's almost certain to be the case now because left winger Tobias Rieder left for good late in the first period with what looked to be a shoulder injury after a hit from Isles defenseman Ryan Pullock. Skinner could easily slide into that spot Tuesday night in New Jersey.

"There will be underlying messages, of course, anytime somebody doesn't play," Krueger admitted. "But in the end, the decisions are for the team, for the group and for the chances to win. I just think it's good for Jeff to take a look once from the outside. We've got coaches active with him working together to have him come back and be an even stronger player for us."

Here are some other observations on Monday's loss:

1. What's up with the captain? Jack Eichel was officially credited with only one giveaway, but he lost the puck three times in the first period alone and was sloppy for most of the night. He didn't do much offensively and was 4-for-12 on faceoffs.

It was the seventh straight game without a goal for the captain, who is stuck at two on the year. It is believed he suffered a shoulder injury shortly before training camp.

Is Eichel playing hurt?

"No. He's not," Krueger said emphatically. "For me, it's a confidence factor and he needs to stick with it and persevere here. And look at Taylor Hall, too. Six shots on net (with no goals). They need to stick with it, believe and work through this and get our 5-on-5 game going on their backs."

2. Going to the net: The Sabres took the last 10 shots of the first period, holding the Islanders without one for the final 15 1/2 minutes to finish with a 12-3 advantage. They crashed the net all night, right to the final horn, but only scored on a Lazar deflection in the first period and an acrobatic, mid-air rebound by Reinhart in the third.

"Guys competed tonight and I think it showed," Reinhart said. "The difference is they came out on top of it. You're seeing a team that's a little more comfortable in those situations and that's what we need to strive to be. The ice gets a little tough at the end, and that team figures out a way to get one."

3. Casey on the wing: Mittelstadt jumped right into the lineup and assisted on Lazar's goal with good work in the corner. He played 12:38 and was probably worthy of more ice time than that. He had a breakaway in the third period down the left wing off a Noah Dobson turnover, but Semyon Varlamov made the save.

"I think last year I saw how quickly it can be taken away," Mittelstadt said, referring to spending the second half of the season in Rochester. "Maybe I took it for granted a little bit. I think when my chances come, you just have to go play, make sure when the game is over, I know that I left it out there."

4. Special teams battle: The Islanders came into the game as the only NHL team perfect on the penalty kill at home. They survived their first two penalties to get to 9 for 9 before Reinhart's goal snapped the streak. The Sabres missed Rieder on the late PK, however, and Ullmark couldn't corral the rebound on Oliver Wahlstrom's shot that Pageau banged home on the backhand.

5. Leading the 'D': With the No. 1 pair of Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen both sidelined, Rasmus Dahlin played a team-high 23:40. Matt Irwin (21:03) and Brandon Montour (20:40) also played heavy minutes. It was a tougher night for Colin Miller, who screened Ullmark on Matt Martin's goal early in the third, and Henri Jokiharju, who returned from a one-game scratch and was on the ice for Anders Lee's goal early in the second.

## **The Wraparound: Sabres sunk by late power-play goal, fall to 0-3 against Isles**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

UNIONDALE – Jean-Gabriel Pageau's power-play goal with 4:52 left snapped a tie and the New York Islanders frustrated the Buffalo Sabres for the third time in a week with a 3-2 win Monday night at Nassau Coliseum.

Pageau banged home his seventh goal of the season on the backhand after goalie Linus Ullmark couldn't control the rebound of Oliver Wahlstrom's slapshot. It was Pageau's third goal of the season against Buffalo, two of which have been game-winners.

The Sabres outshot the Islanders 36-23 in the game and held them to just five shots on goal over the first 34 minutes of play, but Semyon Varlamov made many key saves to keep the Islanders in range.

The Islanders improved to 5-0-1 at home as they opened a stretch of nine games out of 10 in the Coliseum.

Dramatic third period: The teams played to a 1-1 tie through 40 minutes, and the Islanders took a 2-1 lead at 3:01 when Matt Martin whirled and fired a screened shot through Colin Miller and past Ullmark.

The Sabres tied things on the power play at 5:48 as Sam Reinhart picked a rebound of Victor Olofsson's shot out of mid-air with a spectacular curl of his stick.

Breaking on top again: The Sabres were full marks for a strong first period in which they had a 12-3 advantage in shots. They got rewarded with the opening goal for the second straight game when Curtis Lazar tipped home Henri Jokiharju's shot from the right point at 17:15. Casey Mittelstadt worked the puck out of the corner to Jokiharju to earn the secondary assist.

Going Fourth: The goal was Lazar's fourth of the year, an unexpected bonus from the team's fourth-line center – who is now third on the team behind Olofsson (6) and Reinhart (6). And Lazar has more goals than the combined total of three from Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall, Jeff Skinner, Kyle Okposo and Cody Eakin.

Hosts get even: Isles captain Anders Lee, who scored three goals in the two games in Buffalo last week, burned the Sabres again at 3:56 of the second, taking a pass from Jordan Eberle and deking the puck around Ullmark. Lazar was involved in that goal as well, failing to get the puck out of the zone past defenseman Ryan Pulock. Lazar rapped his stick on the boards in frustration.

Injury report: Winger Tobias Rieder left for good late in the first period with an apparent shoulder injury on a hit from Pulock. Defenseman Will Borgen sat out with a sore hand suffered after blocking a shot Saturday in New Jersey.

Coach Ralph Krueger said Borgen had a better day on Monday, experiencing less pain than he did Sunday, and could play Tuesday night in New Jersey.

Next: The Sabres hit the bus back to their Jersey City base for this road trip immediately after the game. They'll wrap up the roadie against the Devils in Tuesday's 7 p.m. faceoff in Prudential Center. The teams meet again Thursday night in KeyBank Center.



## **Sabres go forward vs. Isles with Jeff Skinner as healthy scratch**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

UNIONDALE – The lineup at practice on Sunday mirrored what the Buffalo Sabres used in the game Monday.

That means veteran Jeff Skinner was a healthy scratch for the game against the New York Islanders in Nassau Coliseum. Skinner has no goals and one point in 14 games this season and just 18 goals in his last 98 games dating to February 2019.

It has been a precipitous dropoff for Skinner, a four-time 30-goal scorer who posted a career-high 40 goals for the Sabres in 2018-19. Skinner signed an eight-year, \$72 million contract with Buffalo after that season. He has struggled to deliver since, while not playing on a line with Jack Eichel, as he did most of that season.

Skinner's spot with Riley Sheahan and Curtis Lazar was filled by Casey Mittelstadt on Monday.

"We don't measure players only on statistics. It's part of the mix. It just is a bit of a gut feel," coach Ralph Krueger said before the game. "The best lineup for tonight was with Casey Mittelstadt in that spot. It's less against Jeff than it is for what we think this group needs today and what we need in a game for our team today."

With the Sabres starting a stretch of five games in seven days this week, Krueger did his best to downplay the brewing firestorm of Skinner's scratch. It is possible, in fact, that Skinner could get back in the lineup as soon as Tuesday night's game in New Jersey.

"There will be underlying messages of course anytime somebody doesn't play," Krueger admitted. "But in the end, the decisions are for the team, for the group and for the chances to win. I just think it's good for Jeff to take a look once from the outside. We've got coaches active with him working together to have him come back and be an even stronger player for us."

Aside from the Mittelstadt/Skinner switch, the Sabres' lines remained the same, with Eichel between Victor Olofsson and Sam Reinhart, Eric Staal centering Taylor Hall and Dylan Cozens, and Cody Eakin between Tobias Rieder and Kyle Okposo.

## **Sabres defense stalwart Jake McCabe out for the season with major knee damage**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

NEWARK, N.J. – There was no surprise when the Buffalo Sabres gave the official word on Jake McCabe on Monday.

The veteran defenseman's season is over after he tore the ACL, MCL and meniscus in his right knee. The recovery time for the injury is expected to be six to eight months. McCabe was injured in the third period of Saturday's win at New Jersey and he was helped to the dressing room. An MRI exam Sunday in Buffalo revealed the scope of the damage.

"I had tears two nights ago already," coach Ralph Krueger said in his pregame briefing prior to Monday's game against the New York Islanders. "It was pretty clear on the doctor's first assessment we were dealing with a really serious setback. The confirmation just underlines the pain that we feel for the person first and foremost and then the player that we've lost for the season. It's an amazing setback in addition to what the group has gone through after Covid."

It's a tough break for McCabe on multiple levels. At 27, he was averaging 19 minutes, 11 seconds per game and playing some of the best hockey of his career while serving in a respected role as the team's alternate captain and its representative to the NHL Players Association.

Of bigger importance is the fact this was the final year of McCabe's contract and he is heading into unrestricted free agency this summer. McCabe likely was looking at a decent raise from his current \$2.85 million salary and a good market for his services on a multi-year contract. Given the severity of his injury, McCabe won't be able to cash in this summer.

The loss of McCabe leaves the Sabres without both halves of their top defense pair. McCabe's partner, Rasmus Ristolainen, has been out since Jan. 31 due to a battle with Covid-19. McCabe also landed on the Covid list but said he had mild symptoms and returned to the lineup last week.

McCabe's injury also leaves the Sabres exceedingly thin of left-shot defensemen, with only Rasmus Dahlin remaining from previous seasons. Newcomers Matt Irwin and Brandon Davidson are also lefties and both went into the lineup Monday.

The top pair had Dahlin with Colin Miller. Irwin played with Brandon Montour and Davidson was paired with Henri Jokiharju, who returned to the lineup out of necessity after sitting as a healthy scratch Saturday in New Jersey.

Asked again about Ristolainen's status, Krueger had no new information.

"The way Covid works is there are no timelines," Krueger said. "There's no experience, no history because everybody's journey is different. The symptoms are never the same, the way back is not the same. He is struggling to get his energy to the level where he would be able to play. I think it's still going to take a while."

## **Sabres game day: Offense will try it again against Islanders**

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

Matchup: Buffalo Sabres (5-7-2) vs. New York Islanders (8-6-3)

Where: Nassau Coliseum

When: 7 p.m.

TV: MSG

Radio: WGR 550

UNIONDALE – Maybe Monday night, the Sabres can mix in a goal or two against the New York Islanders.

The Sabres and Isles met twice last week in KeyBank Center and Buffalo scored just once, on a Victor Olofsson power-play goal. That's an easy formula to lose two straight games.

Coach Ralph Krueger is treating each series with the seven East Division opponents as a separate series, so his scorecard shows the Sabres, down, 2-0, heading into tonight.

"We need to get back into that series," Krueger said after practice Sunday in New Jersey. "We're down a couple there. And we need to chip away at that."

Lineup news: The Sabres did not skate Monday and Krueger will not talk to the media until 5:30 p.m. But they line up in games usually how they line up the day before in practice. That means that goalless Jeff Skinner is likely going to be a healthy scratch tonight for the first time and Will Borgen (hand) is probably going to sit this one out. Jake McCabe also will be out with the knee injury he suffered Saturday that the club expects to be long-term.

NASA shares first video and audio, new images from Mars Perseverance rover

Schedule quirks: Monday night's game marks the first of four meetings in Nassau Coliseum over the next two weeks. The Sabres play a three-game series here March 4, 6 and 7.

Buffalo is 0-3-2 in its last five on the road against the Isles, last posting a 4-3 overtime win on April 9, 2016. Brian Gionta scored the winning goal in a game played at Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The Sabres haven't won at the Coliseum since Oct. 15, 2013.

This is the Islanders' final season in their longtime home. They're moving next year to UBS Arena, under construction a few miles away next to famed Belmont Park.

Overall, the Sabres are 0-4-1 in their last five games against the Islanders and 2-8-2 in the last 12.

Home cooking: At 4-0-1, the Islanders join Carolina (6-0-1) as the only teams in the NHL without a regulation loss at home. New York is just 4-6-2 on the road, but two of those wins came last week in Buffalo. The Islanders then went to Pittsburgh and scored only three goals while dropping two straight.

The Islanders are looking to take advantage of a very favorable schedule, as they're opening a stretch of four straight games at home and nine of the next 10.

"The way things are set up this year, the road trips are longer," Islanders captain Anders Lee said today. "It's nice to have a little bit of a stand here and get back at home on our ice."

In the nets: No. 1 goalie Semyon Varlamov (7-4-2, 2.07/.925) tonight. It stands to reason the Sabres would come back with Linus Ullmark (4-3-2, 2.61/.909) after he won Saturday in New Jersey, and then use Carter Hutton on the second half of the back-to-back Tuesday night when the Sabres go back to Jersey to meet the Devils again.

Slumping Sabres: Skinner is far from the only Buffalo forward having trouble putting the puck in the net. While playing all 14 games thus far, Cody Eakin joins Skinner with no goals. Riley Sheahan and Taylor Hall have one apiece and Jack Eichel has just two. Kyle Okposo has no goals while playing nine games after missing the first five with a lower-body injury.

Special teams report: The Sabres have the NHL's best power play on the road at 41.2% (7-17), while the Isles have the best penalty killing at home (7-7, 100%). Buffalo is fourth overall on the power play (32.6%) and has scored at least one PPG in eight of their last nine games, going 12 for 29 (41.1%).

Ten years later: It was Feb. 22, 2011, when new owner Terry Pegula held his memorable introductory press conference upon taking over the Sabres. The numbers are not kind. Since that day, the Sabres have the worst record in the NHL. The ugly rundown of the Pegula era:

## **Travis Yost's Sabre Metrics: Yes, Jeff Skinner is struggling, but he needs better linemates**

By Travis Yost

The Buffalo News

February 22, 2021

What's the end game for the Buffalo Sabres and Jeff Skinner?

Skinner is in Year Two of an eight-year, \$72-million dollar contract. When Skinner signed the mega-extension, he was fresh off a 63-point season (40 goals and 23 assists) with the Sabres, and was surely the team's second-most threatening forward behind Jack Eichel.

Two years later, and Skinner's fate is entirely up in the air. His contract is still as heavy as ever on the salary cap, but the front office that signed him (and spoke so strongly of his play and his future in Buffalo) is no longer. The coaching staff has changed, too – out went Phil Housley, and in came Ralph Krueger.

Fourteen games into the 2020-21 regular season, Skinner is barely an afterthought in the lineup and on the fringe of healthy scratch territory, which could happen as soon as Monday night. With little confidence from the current coaching staff and no apparent push from the front office to reverse course, Skinner has found himself with a rather immaterial role. Skinner is without a goal and has just one assist.

There are always two ways to look at this. The first is that Skinner's demotion was performance related. Skinner didn't score nearly as effectively in 2019-20 as the year prior, and he can't buy a goal right now, either. With Victor Olofsson and Taylor Hall presenting as two quality left wing options in the top six, Skinner becomes a natural casualty.

But it can't be lost on anyone that Skinner's poor offensive production may have a lot to do with who he is playing with, too. Last season there was pretty credible evidence that some of Skinner's scoring reduction year over year was tied to the inability of his teammates to create offense. And a bigger issue: irrespective of whether Skinner is slumping, does the team feel that Curtis Lazar and Riley Sheahan are quality complementary fits?

At his best, Skinner is a finisher, a player who can put pucks in the net from the creativity of his linemates. There's nothing happening – well, nothing good, anyway – this far down the lineup. And asking Skinner to carry a line is to ask something he's never shown himself to do in the first place. Skinner wasn't dropped to the fourth line to add another defensive component to it. He was dropped to the fourth line because he isn't scoring.

Here's a five-year overview of Skinner's usage and production on the attack, per 60 minutes at even strength:

### Skinner usage

An interesting question worth asking (again) is why a player who continues to generate heaps of offense in line with prior years is in such a scoring slump. There is no question that Skinner's been victimized by poor puck luck. He's a career 11% shooter, and even in last year's trying season, he still converted on 8% of his shots. Perhaps he's not generating shots with the same degree of speed or accuracy, but even if that were the case, that number is remarkably low.

It's also indicative of an issue that's plagued linemates of players like Lazar and Sheahan for years. Let's see how their linemates have historically scored over that stretch, in relation to their contributions and the contributions of their teammates:

### Skinner linemates

Not surprisingly, Lazar and Sheahan have been offensive black holes over the last five years. Perhaps there is an argument that Sheahan's larger frame and passing ability create some opportunity for linemates and defensive relief valve options, but even that feels a bit of a stretch. At any rate, both players have consistently been third- or fourth-line offensive options and neither has shown an ability to elevate the play of teammates.

On the other hand, Skinner's offensive production has exceeded league averages. Even with this year's massive scoring slump, Skinner's 1.15 goals per 60 minutes at even strength over this window ranks 13th in the National Hockey League, identical to that of Edmonton's Connor McDavid and Washington's Jakub Vrana. And his

linemates – generally much more capable in their own right, and better linemates than Skinner’s this year – have scored at a considerably productive rate (1.6 goals per 60 minutes).

Finding the right answer for this situation is difficult. Skinner hasn’t played as well in the last couple of seasons, defensive performance matters, and the presence of two capable left wingers was always going to either force players onto their off-wing, or trigger a slide of someone down the lineup.

On the other hand, finding the wrong answer can be quite easy. Investing \$72 million in a top-six scoring winger, only to push him into a hopeless situation on a fourth line by year two seems untenable. If the Sabres think Skinner can contribute, he needs better linemates. If the Sabres are actually considering moving Skinner at some point down the road, he still needs better linemates. If the Sabres just want to win more games this season – again, Skinner needs better linemates.

This is just as much a discussion about optimal lineup deployment as it is asset management. Burying Skinner will do little for the coaching staff, and even less for the front office.

## **OPINION: Sabres waste another good game**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 22, 2021

(WGR 550) - The Buffalo Sabres got a good effort Monday in Long Island, but what does it matter? In the end, they lost 3-2, and are now 0-3-0 against the New York Islanders this season.

Buffalo did just what the team had to in the beginning. They took the play to the Islanders and got the lead before the first period was over.

The problem was their usual problem - They had great chances and only converted one, keeping the opponent in the game.

Ralph Krueger followed through and made Jeff Skinner a healthy scratch, inserting Casey Mittelstadt into the lineup. Mittelstadt took advantage of the opportunity, playing very well with an assist and two shots on goal in 12:38 of ice-time.

On the Curtis Lazar goal in the first period, Mittelstadt's shot was stopped and steered to the corner by Semyon Varlamov. The kid jumped right into the corner, winning the battle for the loose puck. He got it back to the point, and while Henri Jokiharju was winding up to shoot, Lazar went to the net and got the tip.

Don't let the fact that Jokiharju got an assist fool you. The defenseman struggled mightily, once again. Just like Tage Thompson a few years ago, it's so evident that Jokiharju needs to go to Rochester to get his confidence and work on his game, but Krueger said that is not happening.

The Sabres held a 12-3 first period shots advantage, as New York went 15 minutes without a shot, but Varlamov frustrated the Sabres at every turn.

In the second, the Sabres got a quick power play and Jack Eichel beat Varlamov clean with an electric wrister, but he hit the post. A few minutes later, Taylor Hall also hit the post.

Eichel, Hall and Victor Olofsson had 14 shots between them. That should be more than enough for each one to score.

Krueger called this their most painful loss, because he felt they should've had at least five goals.

The Sabres scoring first got the Isles out of that defensive clampdown that they employ. It was mental errors that killed them.

On Anders Lee's goal, Lazar was just about to exit the zone when the speedy Mathew Barzal lifted his stick and kept the puck in and the pressure on. Jokiharju got caught running all over the zone, and was picked by his own man to keep him away from Lee.

Not only did Riley Sheahan take a tripping penalty with the game tied at 2-2 with 6:35 left, he's one of their key penalty killers, and Jean-Gabriel Pageau netted the game-winner with just 4:52 left.

If you would've told me that the Sabres would solve the Islanders defensively and get 36 shots on Varlamov, I would've said Buffalo wins easily. However, I forgot what team I'm talking about.

No matter who has been on this team in the past eight or so years, I have never seen hockey players as fragile as the ones that have played on this team during that time.

In addition to Mittelstadt's strong game, Kyle Okposo played very well, having his second-straight good game. On the pregame show, Okposo talked about doing a deep-dive into his game during the two-week break. He said he even had outside people looking at his games, and he felt he saw many things he could change in his play.

Skinner will likely return to the lineup on Tuesday against the New Jersey Devils, because Tobi Rieder got hurt in the first period and never returned. They showed the trainer working on his left shoulder.

It's also possible that Will Borgen's hand will feel good enough to play on Tuesday in New Jersey.

Faceoff on Tuesday is set for 7 p.m. EST with pregame coverage with Schopp and the Bulldog starting at 6 p.m. EST.



## **OPINION: Jeff Skinner is not underperforming, he's underutilized**

By Joe DiBiase

WGR 550

February 22, 2021

Jeff Skinner is what he is - an offensive finisher, reliant on others to create opportunities for him.

Skinner has always been that player, and will always be that player.

In 59 games last season, plus 14 games this season, Skinner has just 14 goals. That comes after a 40-goal season that earned him an eight-year contract worth \$9 million annually.

It is too simplistic and shortsighted to just look at the goal totals and declare that Skinner is not performing. I would argue that Skinner is overachieving, given the impossible situation Ralph Krueger has put him in.

In the 2019-20 season, Skinner's most common linemates were not an impressive group of offensive creators:

- 1.) Marcus Johansson (336:03)
- 2.) Conor Sheary (211:46)
- 3.) Evan Rodrigues (166:16)
- 4.) Vladimir Sobotka (160:54)

Despite playing almost entirely with a group of players that averages 36 points per-82 games combined in their careers, Skinner somehow managed to lead the Buffalo Sabres in goals per-60 minutes of ice-time at 5-on-5.

Yes, you read that right.

In the 2019-20 season at 5-on-5, Skinner had the most goals on the Sabres per-60 minutes of ice-time. More than Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart, and Victor Olofsson.

Skinner produced with subpar help, but didn't get the proper amount of ice-time.

Fast forward to the 2020-21 season, and Krueger, once again, has put Skinner in an impossible position. From the start of the season, Skinner has skated with Curtis Lazar and Riley Sheahan, arguably, two of the worst offensive players on the team.

The difference this season is Skinner has not scored at all.

However, now is not the time to panic.

Skinner is not experiencing the career decline that Kyle Okposo has gone through, for example.

In fact, Skinner's rate of high-danger scoring chances per-60 minutes this season is actually higher than each of his first two years with the Sabres. This includes his 40-goal season back in the 2018-19 campaign.

Okposo, for comparison, is averaging a career-low 2.01 high-danger scoring chances per-60 minutes. It's a sign that goals are not going to come.

Simply put, Skinner is unlucky.

If Krueger was trying to be predictive instead of reactionary, he would be playing Skinner big minutes at the top of the lineup and not sticking him in the press box.

Let's also end this narrative that Skinner doesn't help the Sabres if he's not scoring.

Skinner ranks first on the Sabres per-60 minutes in penalties drawn, takeaways, rebounds created, and he has the third-most blocked shots among forwards.

The shot block total is definitely a fluke, if looking at the rest of Skinner's career, but the other categories are consistent in his game.

Getting the most out of Skinner is critical for whoever the Sabres head coach is in the future. He is under contract through 2027 at \$9 million per-year. Like it or not, Skinner is here and isn't going anywhere.

It is vital for the head coach to find a way to make it work. Krueger should be doing everything in his power to get Skinner scoring.

So far, Krueger's way of getting the most out of Skinner is to keep him far away from the Sabres' other top offensive players, and then punish him when he doesn't score with a guy who was signed to a professional tryout at the start of training camp.

The solution is sitting there right in front of Krueger. It's the only thing he hasn't tried with Skinner since he walked through the door as the head coach in Buffalo - Giving Skinner extended playing time with, at least, one of the top forwards at driving offensive play. That's Eichel, Reinhart and/or Taylor Hall.

## **OPINION: Three observations: Sabres strike first, but can't hold on**

By TJ Luckman

WGR 550

February 22, 2021

For the second game in a row, the Buffalo Sabres were on the board first. Unfortunately, the New York Islanders battled back, eventually taking the lead early in the third period.

Buffalo managed to pull even in the middle of the period, but Jean-Gabriel Pageau found a way for the Islanders to take, yet, another two points from the Sabres with a late power play goal.

Let's take a look at three observations from Monday night's game:

### 1.) First goal an important boost for the Sabres

The Sabres struggled to figure out the Islanders at even strength in their previous two matchups at KeyBank Center. Buffalo fixed that narrative late in the first period on Monday with a goal from forward Curtis Lazar.

Lazar was able to get his stick on a shot from the point by defenseman Henri Jokiharju. Forward Casey Mittelstadt had tracked the puck behind the net to the corner before finding Jokiharju at the point to rip a shot.

### 2.) Reinhart is on fire

Sabres forward Sam Reinhart is having a nice season for Buffalo, and now he's celebrating a nice string of games, scoring three goals in his last two games and four points in his last three.

Reinhart scored a ridiculous goal in the third period, contributing on the power play for the second game in a row.

Defenseman Rasmus Dahlin found forward Victor Olofsson in his usual spot at the right circle. His shot on Islanders goaltender Semyon Varlamov popped straight up in to the air, and nobody was able to find the puck, except for Reinhart. He waited for the puck to drop just below the crossbar before taking a whack at it out of the air and connecting.

### 3.) Sabres lose their fire in the third period

Buffalo came out and had a strong opening period, outshooting the Islanders 12-3. After the first period, the Sabres couldn't generate the same amount of pressure they did to open the game.

They allowed New York back into the game with a goal from Islanders captain Anders Lee. Lee was, somehow, alone in front with no less than three Sabres watching him deke past Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark. Curtis Lazar and Brandon Davidson were gliding close to the play.

The Sabres allowed the Islanders to get ahead in the third period, with Matt Martin throwing, what looked like, a Hail Mary shot at the net that found its way past Ullmark.

Buffalo was able to battle back on the power play later in the period, but New York answered right back with 4:52 to go in the third period. Islanders winger Oliver Wahlstrom took a one-timed shot from Nick Leddy that got through to the net. The ensuing rebound ended up on the stick of Pageau, who one-timed a backhand past Ullmark for the winning goal.

-----

While the effort against the Islanders on Monday night was better than the couple of performances from last week, it still wasn't enough. Now, the Sabres must travel back to New Jersey to play the Devils at the Prudential Center on Tuesday.

Puck drop in Newark will take place at 7 p.m. EST with Schopp and the Bulldog bringing you the Paul William Beltz Pregame show starting at 6 p.m. EST. on WGR Sports Radio 550.

## Islanders use special teams to defeat Sabres

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 22, 2021

A late power play goal from Jean-Gabriel Pageau in the third period was the difference on Monday night in the New York Islanders' 3-2 win over the Buffalo Sabres at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

The Sabres had their first chance on the power play a little more than halfway through the opening period when Scott Mayfield was penalized for hooking. However, Buffalo failed to convert on the man advantage opportunity despite two shots on goal.

Curtis Lazar put the Sabres on the scoreboard first with a goal late in the first period. The veteran forward re-directed a shot by Henri Jokiharju for his fourth goal of the season. Jokiharju and Casey Mittelstadt received the assists on the score that made it 1-0 Buffalo over the Islanders.

Buffalo finished the opening period with a 12-3 shots on goal advantage, while not allowing the Islanders a power play opportunity in the first.

Mathew Barzal was penalized for tripping less than a minute into the middle frame after taking Jack Eichel to the ice. However, Buffalo failed to score on their early power play chance.

Anders Lee tied the score at 1-1 with his eighth goal of the season. Jordan Eberle and Ryan Pullock were credited with the assists on the game-tying goal that came less than four minutes into the period. The Islanders captain has now scored four goals against Buffalo this season.

The Islanders recorded eight shots on goal in the second period, but failed to register a shot during their power play chance in the second. Buffalo was credited with seven shots in the middle stanza for a total of 19 through 40 minutes.

New York wasted little time in the third period to get a go-ahead goal and take a 2-1 lead over the Sabres. Matt Martin scored his second goal of the season, three minutes into the period with a shot through a screen of Sabres players in front of goalie Linus Ullmark. Andy Greene and Casey Cizikas assisted on the goal.

Sam Reinhart converted on the Sabres' third power play chance of the night to even the score at 2-2 part way through the third period. The forward's goal came late in the man advantage while Lee was in the penalty box for interference.

Victor Olofsson and Rasmus Dahlin received the assists on Reinhart's sixth goal of the season.

However, the Islanders would convert on a power play chance later in the third. Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored to give New York a 3-2 lead with less than five minutes remaining in regulation.

-----

### GAME SUMMARY

#### Scoring Summary:

##### First Period:

BUF: 17:15 - Curtis Lazar (4) (Henri Jokiharju, Casey Mittelstadt)

NYI: NONE

##### Second Period:

BUF: NONE

NYI: 3:56 - Anders Lee (8) (Jordan Eberle, Ryan Pullock)

Third Period:

BUF: 5:48 - Sam Reinhart (6) PPG (Victor Olofsson, Rasmus Dahlin)

NYI: 3:01 - Matt Martin (2) (Andy Greene, Casey Cizikas); 15:08 - Jean-Gabriel Pageau (7) PPG (Oliver Wahlstrom, Nick Leddy)

-----

Penalty Summary:

First Period:

BUF: NONE

NYI: 10:48 - Scott Mayfield (Hooking - 2 min.)

Second Period:

BUF: 4:59 - Sam Reinhart (Hooking - 2 min.)

NYI: 0:52 - Mathew Barzal (Tripping - 2 min.)

Third Period:

BUF: 13:25 - Riley Sheanan (Tripping - 2 min.)

NYI: 4:17 - Anders Lee (Interference - 2 min.)

-----

STATS OF THE GAME:

-----

Losi and Gangi Three Stars of the Game:

1.) Jean-Gabriel Pageau - NYI

2.) Matt Martin - NYI

3.) Nick Leddy - NYI

-----

What's Next:

There is no rest for the blue and gold, as they are right back on the ice Tuesday night for their third game in four days. Buffalo and the New Jersey Devils will meet at the Prudential Center after their matchup this past Saturday.

The puck drops in Neward at 7 p.m. EST on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sports Radio 550. The Paul William Beltz Pregame Show gets underway with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog at 6 p.m. EST.

## **Jake McCabe out six-to-eight months with ACL, MCL, and meniscus injuries**

By Joe DiBiase

WGR 550

February 22, 2021

Devastating news came for Buffalo Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe on Monday afternoon as the team announced the veteran will be out six-to-eight months with injuries to his ACL, MCL and meniscus in his right knee. Given the announced timeline for recovery, McCabe's 2020-21 season is over.

McCabe's injury looked bad from the moment his knee twisted after colliding with New Jersey Devils captain Nico Hischier on Saturday.

Not only will McCabe not play for the Sabres again this season, there's a chance that he's played his final game with the team. The 27-year-old is set to become an unrestricted free agent this upcoming offseason.

McCabe has spent his entire career with the Sabres after being a former second round pick (44th overall) in the 2012 NHL Draft. In 353 career games with the Sabres, McCabe has scored 18 goals and registered 59 assists for 77 points.

The Sabres are set to take on the New York Islanders on Monday night on Long Island. Faceoff is set for 7 p.m. EST with the Paul William Beltz Pregame Show starting at 6 p.m. EST with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog.

## **Jeff Skinner scratched: What does it mean for him, Ralph Krueger and the Sabres?**

By John Vogl

The Athletic

February 22, 2021

Ralph Krueger knew that scratching Jeff Skinner would put him in the crosshairs. The Sabres coach did it anyway.

Now what?

For starters, Krueger is indeed in the crosshairs.

"I have a lot of respect for the noise certain decisions will make," the Buffalo coach said. "My role is not to be popular here but to be respected at the end of the day whenever reckoning is on the table."

The day of reckoning came for Skinner, who watched in street clothes Monday as the Sabres lost 3-2 to the Islanders.

At its simplest, Krueger's decision is easily defensible. Skinner has no goals and one point in 14 games. Slumping players take a seat all the time.

But nothing is simple in this situation:

- Nearly every offensive player is struggling, casting doubt on Krueger's style of play and coaching.
- Skinner is fifth on the Sabres in shots, so he has been getting chances. He has hit the post twice.
- He's fourth among forwards in even-strength goal differential at minus-1, meaning he hasn't been a defensive liability compared with others on the team. Skinner also is second in takeaways.
- According to The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn, the Sabres have a 58 percent expected goal rate with Skinner on the ice and 43 percent actual goals, which supports the notion that he has been unlucky.
- The left winger leads Buffalo with 1.9 penalties drawn per 60 minutes, a significant stat for a team living and dying with its power play.
- Though Skinner's slump includes two starts next to Jack Eichel, Krueger primarily uses the left winger in the bottom six. Skinner is 16th on the Sabres in ice time at 13:36 per game.

The coach's usage of Skinner has been in question since Krueger stepped behind the bench last season. After Skinner scored 40 goals alongside Eichel and Sam Reinhart under coach Phil Housley, his primary linemates have been Marcus Johansson, Conor Sheary, Curtis Lazar, Evan Rodrigues and Vladimir Sobotka.

- And, of course, Skinner is in the second season of an eight-year contract that pays him \$9 million per year.

"There will be underlying messages, of course, anytime somebody doesn't play," Krueger said from Nassau Coliseum. "But in the end, the decisions are for the team and for the group and for the chance to win. I just think it's good for Jeff to take a look once from the outside. We've got coaches active with him, working together to have him come back an even stronger player for us."

Sabres left winger Jeff Skinner, left, has struggled this season. (Timothy T. Ludwig / USA Today)  
Casey Mittelstadt, who has spent most of the season on the taxi squad, replaced Skinner alongside Lazar and Riley Sheahan.

"We don't measure players only on statistics. It's part of the mix," Krueger said. "It is just a bit of a gut feel that the best lineup for tonight was with Casey Mittelstadt in that spot. It's less against Jeff than it is for what we think this group needs."

What the group needs is for Krueger and Skinner to find common ground to optimize the winger's skills.

From 2010-19, Skinner had 244 goals in 661 games, the 13th-highest total in the NHL. Skinner has 14 goals in 73 games during the past two seasons, which ranks 205th.

"I've played for a lot of coaches. I don't know if it's that simple," Skinner said. "Obviously, I'm going through a little bit of a slump and it's not something I'm used to, especially sort of five-on-five. I think since I've come into the league I've shown to have some pretty good success five-on-five.

"It's just something that's not working or not going well right now, and I've just got to work my way out of it."

He should get an immediate chance. It would be a monumental shock if Skinner isn't in the lineup Tuesday in New Jersey, especially after left winger Tobias Rieder left the loss to the Islanders with an injury.

"Getting players to their potential, in the end, is my job, is our (coaching staff's) job and we do strive for that," Krueger said. "Hopefully, it pushes the right buttons in the individuals to have them fulfill the roles that we expect. We have expectations on each and every player."

A healthy scratch for a young player is a necessary tool for growth. He gets to watch from up top and learn that the game isn't as quick as it seems on the ice.

A healthy scratch for an experienced player, especially one making \$9 million, is punishment.

"I don't think I've ever really felt like I need a day off to relook at things," Skinner said Sunday after practicing on the fifth line. "I've seen a lot in this league, run through adversity before my career. You just work, keep working and put your head down, and that's what I'll do."

The Sabres obviously hope the benching works wonders. But what happens if nothing changes?

There are no easy solutions.

A buyout is out of the question. The cost isn't prohibitive — owner Terry Pegula would pay Skinner \$29.7 million this summer, a \$7.5 million signing bonus in 2022 and shave \$14.8 million off the full deal — but Skinner would be on the cap for \$2.47 million until 2033. That's an onerous 12-year expense.

The Sabres could try to trade Skinner, but he has a full no-movement clause. He might be willing to waive it given the situation, but this a money-in, money-out era. Teams can't just absorb \$9 million a season for six years without creating space.

Here are players signed for \$7 million or more through at least 2025. Even ignoring the litany of no-trade clauses, captaincies and untouchables, it shows how limited the marketplace would be for Skinner's contract.

Another option would be to fire Krueger, which would come at a considerable financial cost. He's signed through next season at almost \$4 million per year, according to The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun.

There's more to it than money. It would also be a psychological blow to Pegula and the organization. Since becoming owner a decade ago, Pegula has employed six coaches and four general managers. Another change would add to Buffalo's reputation as a place where careers go to die.

That's not to say a coaching change wouldn't be warranted. Despite a much better roster than his recent predecessors, Krueger has not distinguished himself.

There has been minimal improvement in the NHL rank for goals for and against.

Again, there are no easy answers to this complicated mess. But something has to change.

"You think about ways you can do things differently, how you can support your teammates, be a good guy when you come to the rink," Skinner said. "If it gets more challenging, you meet the challenge. If it starts to turn for a more positive spin, you try and build on that. I don't really know what the future is going to hold, but I'm just going to take it one day at a time."



Skinner watched the Sabres lose for the fifth time in six games and drop to 5-8-2 overall. Here's the report card, based on Game Score by Luszczyszyn.

Good

Henri Jokiharju: The defenseman returned from a one-game benching with an assist and two blocked shots in 15:17.

Casey Mittelstadt: Skinner's replacement had an assist and two shots, including a breakaway, in 12:38. He says he has learned from last season's demotion to Rochester.

"I kind of saw how quickly it could be taken away," Mittelstadt said. "I kind of took it for granted a little bit. When my chances come, just go play and play as hard as I can."

Fine

Victor Olofsson: The winger had five shots in 22:50, the fifth most ice time in his career.

Tobias Rieder: He left with an apparent arm or shoulder injury in the first period and didn't return.

Sam Reinhart: He tied Olofsson for the team lead with his sixth goal, and it was a beauty.

Matt Irwin: The defenseman skated 21:03, which could become a regular occurrence. As expected, the Sabres announced Jake McCabe is done for the season with damage to his ACL, MCL and meniscus. Recovery time is six to eight months for the pending unrestricted free agent.

Poor

Taylor Hall and Jack Eichel: Despite a game-high six shots, Hall was kept off the scoresheet again. He has one assist in his past six games and no goals in the past 14. Eichel had no points, three shots and lost 12 of his 16 faceoffs in 23:01.

Eichel simply doesn't look like the player who finished eighth in Hart Trophy voting last season. Is he hurt?

"No. No, he's not," Krueger said. "For me, it's a confidence factor. He needs to stick with it and persevere. If you look at Taylor Hall today also, six shots on net, posts again. They need to stick with it and they need to believe and work through this and then get our five-on-five game going on their backs. But other than Toby Rieder, everybody was healthy in this game."

Skinner was healthy, too, but he watched.

"Obviously, we see I'm not happy with how things have gone so far (on the ice)," Skinner said. "It's fun to play hockey. Obviously, there's going to be times when it's more fun and there's going to be times when it's challenging."

## **Sabres generate more offense, still fall to Islanders for third time in week**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 22, 2021

Against a tight New York Islanders team knowing for neutralizing the opposition, the Buffalo Sabres finally broke through Monday, pumping 36 shots on goalie Semyon Varlamov.

The Sabres struggled offensively in two home losses to the Islanders last week, scoring just one goal. But Monday inside Nassau Coliseum, they consistently cracked the Islanders' rigid structure, generating a slew of chances.

Still, the Sabres couldn't finish their opportunities, and Jean-Gabriel Pageau's goal 15:08 into the third period broke a late tie in a 3-2 loss.

The Sabres have lost four of their five games since their COVID-19 pause ended Feb. 15.

"This is probably the most painful loss of the season for the way we were able to neutralize them, create opportunity but come out on the short end of the stick again," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said on a Zoom call. "We have to be responsible for that."

Despite the loss, the Sabres have started showing signs more of progress following their 15-day break between games. Fresh off Saturday afternoon's 3-2 win over the New Jersey Devils 3-2, they looked engaged early against the Islanders.

"As a whole, we understand what we have to do each and every night, and I think you're starting to see that we're rolling lines over, we know where the puck's going, which is allowing us to make the next play," said Sabres center Curtis Lazar, who opened the scoring 17:15 into the game.

Lazar added: "They're so structured, they make you work for every opportunity. But I thought we played nice and north. We kept things simple."

After Anders Lee tied it and Matt Martin put the Islanders up early in the third period, Sabres winger Sam Reinhart's power-play goal, his third score in two games, tied it at 5:48.

But the Sabres couldn't failed to crack the three-goal mark four the fourth time in five games.

"It was not enough offense," Krueger said. "I think when you look at that game and even if they score three, we could have had five or more. It's gonna be a painful trip back over to New Jersey here tonight and the best thing about the situation right now is we go right back at it tomorrow."

He added: "I've liked the foundation that we have here now. The defensive structure in the group is strong. It's solid and it doesn't give up a lot of opportunity. We just broke down in critical moments again today."

The Sabres close their four-game road trip tonight in New Jersey.

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark made 20 saves. Winger Tobias Rieder did not play in the third period. Krueger did not give an update on him.

Pageau has scored one goal in each of the Islanders' three meetings against Buffalo this season, including two game-winning scores.

## **Sabres' Jeff Skinner to be healthy scratch versus Islanders**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
February 23, 2021

Buffalo Sabres winger Jeff Skinner will be a healthy scratch for the first time in his 11-year NHL career tonight against the New York Islanders, coach Ralph Krueger said.

Krueger said Casey Mittelstadt will replace the struggling Skinner, who has scored zero goals in 14 games this season.

"We don't measure players only on statistics," Krueger said on a Zoom call late this afternoon inside Nassau Coliseum. "It's part of the mix. Really, it's a bit of a gut feel, the best lineup tonight was with Casey Mittelstadt in that spot. It's less against Jeff than it is for what we think this group needs today and what we need for a game from our team today.

"I did mention to everybody that there would be players sitting out with the pace of games coming up. We got five games in the next six and a half days. There will be underlying messages, of course, anytime somebody doesn't play. But in the end, the decisions are for the team and for the group and for the chance to win."

Krueger said it will be "good for Jeff to take a look once from the outside," meaning his benching could last just one game. The Sabres play a road game Tuesday against the New Jersey Devils.

"We got coaches active with him working together to have him come back and even strong player for us," Krueger said.

Skinner is in the second season of an eight-year, \$72 million contract.

In other lineup news, Krueger said defenseman Will Borgen, who hurt his hand blocking a shot in Saturday afternoon's 3-2 win in New Jersey, will miss tonight's game. Krueger said Borgen could play Tuesday.

With Borgen and defenseman Jake McCabe out, Brandon Davidson and Henri Jokiharju are expected to play tonight.

McCabe suffered a season-ending knee injury Saturday.

The Sabres recalled Mittelstadt and Davidson from the taxi squad late this afternoon.

## **Sabres' Jake McCabe out for season**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 22, 2021

Buffalo Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe's season is over.

McCabe, 27, suffered ACL, MCL and meniscus injuries in his right knee Saturday afternoon and will need six to eight months to recover, the team announced this afternoon.

The American left the Sabres' 3-2 road win against the New Jersey Devils with 11:03 remaining after his right leg buckled when he tried to hit Nico Hischier in the corner. He clutched his knee before being helped off the ice.

Sabres coach Ralph Krueger had hinted for two days McCabe's injury would likely be season-ending.

"I had tears two nights ago already," Krueger said on a Zoom call late this afternoon from Nassau Coliseum. "It was pretty clear on the doctor's first assessment we were dealing with a really serious setback. The confirmation just underlines the pain that we feel for the person, first and foremost, and then the player that we lost for the season.

"It's an amazing setback, in addition to what the group's gone through after COVID."

McCabe returned to the lineup last week after testing positive for COVID-19 earlier this month.

"Is this connected to COVID or not connect?" Krueger said of the knee injury and COVID. "We'll never know. We can philosophically look at this forever, but it's just another shot. But we have a group of character, and everybody just needs to step."

McCabe's absence leaves a huge hole on the blue line. The gritty alternate captain has morphed into one of the Sabres' most respected leaders and most reliable defensemen.

In 13 games this season, McCabe compiled one goal and three points while averaging 19 minutes, 11 seconds of ice time.

He will be an unrestricted free agent following the season.

The Sabres play a road game tonight against the New York Islanders.

## **Three Observations: Sabres fall short 3-2 to Islanders**

By Adam Unger

WKBW

February 22, 2021

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (WKBW) — After dominating the possession game in the first period, and coming out of that frame with a lead, the Sabres wound up dropping the fourth out of their last five games. The Islanders came back to beat Buffalo 3-2 Monday night. The Sabres are back in action Tuesday against the New Jersey Devils.

### Limited scoring threats

Curtis Lazar is in sole possession of third place on the Sabres in goals this season. THIRD. He has more goals than Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall, and Jeff Skinner combined. That doesn't tell the whole story; Eichel and Hall are still generating chances and racking up assists. But the scorers on this team are Sam Reinhart, Victor Olofsson, and then everyone else.

Both Reinhart has shown more capability of scoring at even strength than Olofsson, but the production is incredibly unbalanced from there and the drop-off is jaw dropping. If nothing else, the two wingers are proving their worth after being RFAs this past fall.

### Ullmark on his head

Even when the Sabres have been able to find the net, and even when they've won the possession battle and the shots on goal battle, Linus Ullmark still has to stand on his head far too often. The quality of the Islanders' chances, as opposed to the quantity, still forced him to do so tonight.

We've seen Ullmark in this type of zone before. It comes and goes, but every time he's in a zone like this, it's a shame that the Sabres can't score enough to capitalize on it. He bailed the blue and gold out of several odd-man rush opportunities tonight, and it still wasn't enough.

### Rotating door this week

The next six days will be the toughest stretch in terms of workload for the Sabres all year. Tonight's tilt against the Islanders was the first of five in seven days for Buffalo. There's not going to be a stretch that condensed the rest of the way (at least as it stands right now), but legs are going to have to stay fresh.

That's likely a part of the rotating door along the bottom six and bottom pairing. Jeff Skinner and Will Borgen will probably be back on the ice by the end of the week. Different players may wind up missing a game or two to foster "internal competition." There's an expanded taxi squad for 2021. Buffalo might as well use it during this stretch.

## **10 years later: state of the Buffalo Sabres**

By Matt Bove

WKBW

February 22, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. [WKBW] — "Starting today, the Buffalo Sabres reason for existence will be to win a Stanley Cup."

That's what Terry Pegula said 10 years ago today as he was formally introduced as the fourth owner in Buffalo Sabres franchise history.

Since taking over in 2011, the Sabres have had some of their worst seasons in franchise history and have fewer wins than any other team [excluding the Vegas Golden Knights, who joined the league in 2017-2018.]

During that span, the Sabres have a 281-354-94 record and own the longest playoff drought in the NHL. The team has had six head coaches since 2011 and four general managers. After hiring the current GM, Kevyn Adams, both Terry and Kim Pegula were confident in the direction of the organization.

"You know on the Bills side, it took us several times there, we feel like we've got the right people," Kim Pegula said in June of 2020. "We're going to keep trying, we feel like Kevyn is the right person."

"We believe in acting and not reacting to certain situations," Terry Pegula also said in June. "We as owners had a vision to where we need to go during these uncertain times."

So while things certainly looked promising 10 years ago, the wait continues and the question remains; when and how will the Pegula's live up to their Stanley Cup promise?

## **Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe to miss 6 to 8 months due to knee injury**

By Anthony Reyes

WKBW

February 24, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — The Buffalo Sabres announced Monday defenseman Jake McCabe will miss six to eight months due to a knee injury.

McCabe left Saturday's game against the New Jersey Devils after injuring his knee and never returned.

The Sabres say McCabe injured his ACL, MCL and meniscus in his right knee.

## **Sabres lose to Islanders 3-2**

By Josh Reed

WIVB

February 23, 2021

(WIVB) — The Sabres looked much better in their 3rd meeting with the Islanders but the result was the same.

"It's going to be a painful trip back over to New Jersey tonight," Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger said after the loss. "The best thing about the situation right now is that we go right back it tomorrow but I have to tell you this is probably the most painful loss of the season."

Curtis Lazar provided a 1st period goal to give the Sabres an early 1-0 lead over the Islanders but New York responded with a tally in the 2nd period. Anders Lee's 8th goal of the season tied the game at 1-1.

The Isles took the lead in the 3rd period on a goal by Matt Martin. The Sabres continued to battle and evened the score with a Sam Reinhart power play goal.

New York answered with a power play goal of their own. Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored the game-winner for the Islanders.

Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark had 20 saves in the loss.

Next game: Tuesday at New Jersey Devils.



## **Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe suffers season-ending knee injury**

By Heather Prusak

WIVB

February 22, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – You could tell when Jake McCabe needed help getting off the ice in Saturday's game against the Devils, it was a bad injury and the Sabres confirmed that on Monday.

McCabe's season is over after he tore his ACL, MCL and meniscus in his right knee during the third period against New Jersey on Saturday. The expected recovery time is six to eight months.

"I had tears two nights ago already so it was pretty clear on the doctors' first assessment that we were dealing with a really serious setback. The confirmation just underlines the pain that we feel for the person first and foremost and then the player that we've lost for the season. It's an amazing setback in addition to what the group's gone through after Covid and he was part of the Covid package," Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger said on Monday.

"It's another shot but we have a group of character and everybody needs to step up and help to fill the big hole that McCabe leaves with his injury."

This comes just less than a week after McCabe returned to the lineup after spending time on the NHL's COVID-19 list when he tested positive for coronavirus. When talking to reporters, McCabe said he only had mild symptoms.

This is a big blow to the Sabres' blue line as now both of their top two defensemen are out as Rasmus Ristolainen still hasn't returned since battling COVID-19 even though he is off the NHL's protocol list. Ristolainen has been out since January 31st and was one of the first Buffalo players to land on the Covid list when their outbreak started.

## **Sabres' Jake McCabe out for the season**

By Ashley Holder

WGRZ

February 22, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres announced Monday that defenseman Jake McCabe will be out for six to eight months due to a recent injury.

McCabe suffered injuries in his right knee to his ACL, MCL and meniscus in the Sabres win over New Jersey on Saturday.

McCabe is expected to land on injured reserve in the coming days. This will free up his \$2.85 million salary towards the team's salary cap.

## **McCabe out remainder of season for Sabres with knee injuries**

NHL.com

February 22, 2021

Jake McCabe will be out the remainder of the season for the Buffalo Sabres after the defenseman sustained injuries in his right knee to the ACL, MCL and meniscus.

The expected recovery time is 6-8 months.

McCabe had an MRI on Sunday after he was injured in a 3-2 win at the New Jersey Devils on Saturday. He was favoring his right leg when he left the game at 8:57 of the third period after attempting to check Devils center Nico Hischier .

"I had tears two nights ago already," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said before a game at the New York Islanders on Monday. "It was pretty clear on the doctor's first assessment we were dealing with a really serious setback. The confirmation just underlines the pain that we feel for the person, first and foremost, and then the player that we've lost for the season. It's an amazing setback in addition to what the group's gone through after COVID. He was part of the COVID package. Is this connected to COVID or not connected? We'll never know. We could philosophically look at this forever. It's just another shot, but we have a group of character and everybody needs to step up and help to fill the big hole that 'Caber' leaves with his injury."

The 27-year-old, who is an alternate captain, scored three points (one goal, two assists) and averaged 19:10 in ice time in 13 games this season. The game Saturday was his third since being removed from the NHL COVID-19 protocol list.

McCabe can become an unrestricted free agent after the season.

"Jake's a guy that, he's taken a lot of strides in the last couple of years as a leader," Sabres forward Kyle Okposo said Sunday. "He's somebody that I have a ton of respect for and all the guys have a lot of respect for in that room. I don't know what the final prognosis is yet, but he's going to be a guy that's dearly missed on and off the ice."

The Sabres also are without defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who was removed from the COVID-19 protocol list Feb. 17 and is working his way back into shape after testing positive for the virus Feb. 2. He hasn't played since Jan. 31.

"Yeah, with McCabe, it's so unlucky," Buffalo defenseman Rasmus Dahlin said. "He's one of our main guys in the locker room and main guy on the ice. It's going to be huge loss. With 'Risto' gone, too, we just have to make the best of it and try to compete. It's another game and we can't really do anything about it right now. It's not fun, for sure, when those types of things happen."

## **What does future hold for Jack Eichel, Sabres?**

By Adam Gretz

NBC Sports

February 22, 2021

It is now year six of the Jack Eichel era for the Buffalo Sabres and in some ways the playoffs seem as far away today as they did when he arrived in the NHL.

That should not be acceptable to anybody.

Not to the Sabres. Not to the fans. Certainly not to Eichel.

Even after a busy offseason that saw them land Taylor Hall and Eric Staal to bolster their roster around Eichel, the Sabres find themselves in last place of the East Division and inching their way closer to what could be a 10th consecutive non-playoff season. When former general manager Tim Murray was tearing the organization to the ground as part of a scorched earth rebuild that was centered around the 2015 NHL Draft (the hope was obviously landing Connor McDavid, but a 30th place finish guaranteed them either McDavid or Eichel) that could help jumpstart the organization.

That draft coincided with the acquisition of veterans like Ryan O'Reilly, Evander Kane, and Robin Lehner, as well as a Stanley Cup winning coach (Dan Bylsma) to bring a new level of excitement to the team and some hope for real change in the future.

None of it worked out.

Today, O'Reilly, Kane, and Lehner are gone for pennies on the dollar, the Sabres are on their third head coach in six years, their third general manager, and the roster remains full of short-term and long-term holes.

Goaltending is a major weakness and neither Carter Hutton or Linus Ullmark is signed beyond this season. The defense is not great either. Jeff Skinner's contract looks worse by the day, while Hall and Staal are only one-year contracts. It also seems unlikely that either would want to re-sign given the way the season is going. They also have to deal with Sam Reinhart and Rasmus Dahlin as a restricted free agents this offseason.

In short: The team is a mess.

That all brings us back to Eichel, the franchise cornerstone, who still has five years and \$50M remaining on his contract after this season.

Given where the Sabres are this very well might be a team in need of a rebuild to correct the mistakes of its previous rebuild.

With the number of holes throughout the roster there does not seem to be a quick fix here to dramatically get things turned around in short order. They are clearly behind the pack of playoff contenders in the East Division this season, and they return to the Atlantic Division next season they will be clearly behind the likes of Tampa, Boston, Toronto, and now Florida. That does not even take into account an improved Montreal team. They have not finished with a points percentage above .500 in seven years, and if it does not happen this season (not a guarantee that it won't, but they are not off to a good start) after the additions of Hall and Staal, what reason is there to believe it can happen next season without them?

It is fair to wonder if Eichel, who has already seen some of the best hockey of his career get wasted on an afterthought of a team, might eventually want out. While there is nothing concrete to say that he does, there is talk of him being restless and fed up with losing. There was also word during the offseason that teams were placing calls (even though the Sabres had no intention at the time of making a trade).

If we are being realistic here there are only two reasons that a team would ever trade a player like Eichel. An elite forward still in their prime years and still under contract long-term. You do not get players like that very often, and when you do you want to build around them as much as possible. But if you do trade them it is either because the player demands a trade and refuses to play for you (which does not seem to have happened here — yet), or because you as an organization are completely giving up and ready to start over.

Eichel's contract does not contain any trade protection until 2022-23 when a no-movement clause kicks in. It would seem logical to think that if the Sabres were going to consider it, the next year-and-a-half would be the time when they could freely negotiate with the other 30 teams (31 when Seattle enters) across the league without having to worry about a deal being blocked.

It is just such a unique situation because the Sabres ended up getting the most important piece of any successful rebuild — a true cornerstone player that is among the league's best players. They have just so badly bungled the rebuild around him that it has rendered his value almost entirely useless. Since Sabres have not found an even an ounce of success in Eichel's career to this point asking him to give up a few more seasons while the team retools around him (again) seems like it is asking a lot. At some point he is going to be even more desperate to join a winner.

Whether he asks out or the Sabres make the decision to preemptively part ways before that happens the odds him playing out his contract on a team other than Buffalo seem to be getting higher and higher.

How that situation gets managed will be the ultimate test of new GM Kevyn Adams' tenure. The previous administration botched its big ticket trade (O'Reilly) and it set the franchise back several years.

You absolutely can not repeat that mistake here.

## Sabres 2 - Islanders 3 | 5 takeaways from Monday's game

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 22, 2021

Jean-Gabriel Pageau swatted a puck out of midair to break a tie with 4:52 remaining and what had begun as a promising night for the Buffalo Sabres ended as another disappointing loss to the New York Islanders, this time by a score of 3-2 at Nassau Coliseum on Monday.

The Sabres fell behind early in each of their two losses at home to the Islanders last week, which came on the heels of a 15-day hiatus. This time, coming off a win in New Jersey on Saturday, they struck first on a goal from Curtis Lazar. They later erased a 2-1 deficit on a power-play goal from Sam Reinhart in the third.

The goal from Pageau - who also scored in both prior meetings between the two teams - came with 18 seconds remaining on an Islanders power play after Riley Sheahan was called for tripping.

"This is probably the most painful loss of the season for the way we were able to neutralize them, create opportunity but come out on the short end of the stick again," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said. "We have to be responsible for that."

Here are five takeaways from the game.

### 1. Krueger: "It was not enough offense"

The Sabres coach felt his team had enough chances to string together a high-scoring game against the defensively stingy Islanders. They finished the night with a 36-23 edge in shots on goal.

Taylor Hall was held without a goal despite tallying six shots, not including one that deflected wide off the post. Jack Eichel hit a post during a power play in the second period.

"It was not enough offense," Krueger said. "I think when you look at that game, even if they score three, we could have had five or more."

### 2. A sense of urgency

Having a schedule entirely comprised of intra-division games offers a chance to make up ground with a hot stretch, but players recognize the need to begin stringing together wins soon.

The Sabres fell to 0-3-0 on the season against the Islanders, who now sit nine points ahead of them as the East Division's third-place team. Fourth-place Philadelphia is seven points ahead of Buffalo.

"There's no excuses here," Lazar said. "We understand the importance of this stretch to get back in this race. Every game's against your division. There's ground to be made up and there's ground to be lost. We decide what we do with it."

### 3. Filling in on defense

The Sabres played the game without two of their top defensemen in Rasmus Ristolainen, whose return is indefinite following a severe bout with COVID-19, and Jake McCabe, who is out for the season after sustaining multiple injuries to his right knee on Saturday. William Borgen also missed the game to nurse an upper-body injury.

Rasmus Dahlin led the team in ice time at 23:40. Brandon Davidson and Henri Jokiharju re-entered the lineup and each eclipsed 14 minutes, including healthy doses of Islanders leading scorer Mathew Barzal.

"This is going to be a tough one to swallow because of the way we were able to fill the holes of the injured players," Krueger said. "I thought everybody coming in here played well."

### 4. Mittelstadt tallies assist in return

Casey Mittelstadt drew back into the lineup at forward in place of Jeff Skinner, who was a healthy scratch. He tallied his second assist in three games this season on Lazar's goal, chasing a loose puck into the corner and quickly feeding a pass to Jokiharju at the point.

Mittelstadt finished the game with two shots in 12:38, including a breakaway during the third period that began with a takeaway at the Buffalo blue line.

"Last year, I kind of saw how quickly it can be taken away," said Mittelstadt, who spent the latter part of 2019-20 in Rochester after beginning his career in Buffalo.

"I kind of took it for granted a little bit. I think when my chances come, just go play and play as hard as I can and make sure that when the game's over, I know I left it out there."

#### 5. Rieder exits early

Tobias Rieder did not return after finishing his sixth shift of the game at the 15:38 mark of the first period. The shift ended with the winger attempting to split the Islanders defense as he carried the puck into the offensive zone before being met by a hip check from defenseman Ryan Pullock.

Rieder has three goals in 14 games this season and has been a consistent presence on the Buffalo penalty kill, averaging 1:31 in shorthanded ice time per game.

## **At The Final Horn: Sabres 2 - Islanders 3**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 22, 2021

A late power play proved to be the difference Monday night between the Buffalo Sabres and the New York Islanders.

The Sabres had battled back to tie the game, but the Islanders put themselves ahead with a goal from Jean-Gabriel Pageau with 4:52 left in regulation to win 3-2 at Nassau Coliseum.

Curtis Lazar scored his fourth goal of the season for Buffalo and Sam Reinhart potted his third goal in three games. Linus Ullmark made 20 saves in net.

Pageau, Anders Lee and Matt Martin all scored for New York. Lee and Pageau have scored in all three games played between these two clubs so far this year. Semyon Varlamov stopped 34 Sabres shot.

Buffalo's power play went 1-for-3 in the game while the penalty kill was 1-for-2.

### What happened

The Sabres opened the scoring with 2:45 remaining in the first period when Lazar deflected in a point shot from Henri Jokiharju that had already gone off the stick of an Islanders player.

Lee made it a 1-1 game when he put the moves on Ullmark in tight 3:56 into the second period.

New York took the lead 3:01 into the third period when Martin tallied. The Islanders were able to keep the puck in the zone after stopping a Buffalo clearing attempt and then Martin picked up a loose puck and fired it in through traffic.

Fifty-three seconds later, Taylor Hall cut in and put a shot on for a chance to tie the game, but he hit the far post.

The Sabres were able to make it 2-2 when Reinhart batted the puck in just under the crossbar with the flat part of his blade while on the power play up at the 5:48 mark of the third. Reinhart has six goals on the season, which is tied with Victor Olofsson for the team lead. Olofsson's assist on the goal put him in a tie with captain Jack Eichel for the team lead in points with 13.

With Riley Sheahan in the box for tripping, Pageau scored on the power play with 4:52 remaining in regulation to put the Islanders back in the lead for good.

### Roll the highlight film

Reinhart's goal is one of the prettiest we've seen in a while:

### Worth mentioning

The Sabres received unfortunate news when it came to their defense before the game. The team announced alternate captain Jake McCabe would need the next six-to-eight months to recover from injuries in his right knee to his ACL, MCL and meniscus. He sustained the injury during Saturday's game.

Buffalo was also without defensemen William Borgen, who is day-to-day with an upper-body injury, and Rasmus Ristolainen, who is recovering from COVID-related symptoms. There is no timetable for Ristolainen's return.

With only five healthy defensemen on the active roster, Brandon Davidson was called up from the taxi squad before the game. Davidson recorded three shots in 14:25.

Casey Mittelstadt was also recalled from the taxi squad and skated in his third game of the season. He picked up an assist on Lazar's goal. Mittelstadt took the place of Jeff Skinner in the lineup.

During the game, Tobias Rieder played his last shift with 4:22 remaining in the first period before leaving with an apparent injury. Stay tuned to Sabres.com's postgame coverage for a possible update on Rieder's status.



Coming up

Buffalo's four-game road trip concludes Tuesday night when the Sabres take on the New Jersey Devils. Faceoff from Prudential Center is set for

## **Skinner, Borgen to sit out game vs. Islanders**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

February 22, 2021

Buffalo Sabres forward Jeff Skinner and defenseman William Borgen will not be in the lineup for the team's game against the New York Islanders on Monday, coach Ralph Krueger announced.

Borgen is day-to-day with an upper-body injury and has not been ruled out for the Sabres' game in New Jersey on Tuesday. Skinner will be a healthy scratch with Casey Mittelstadt taking his place at forward.

"In the end, decisions are for the team and for the group and for the chance to win," Krueger said. "I just think it's good for Jeff to take a look once from the outside and we've got coaches active with him, working together to have him come back an even stronger player for us."

Mittelstadt has appeared in two games this season, tallying one assist.

Borgen's absence comes in addition to that of fellow defenseman Jake McCabe, who will miss six to eight months with injuries in his right knee to his ACL, MCL and meniscus that occurred during the team's win over New Jersey on Sunday.

Brandon Davidson was recalled from the taxi squad to step in on the back end.

"It was pretty clear on the doctor's first assessment that we were dealing with a really serious setback," Krueger said of McCabe. "The confirmation just underlines the pain that we feel for the person, first and foremost, and then the player that we've lost for the season."

"It's an amazing setback in addition to what the group's gone through during COVID and he was part of the COVID package. ... It's just another shot, but we have a group of character and everybody needs to step up and help to fill the big hole that Caber leaves with his injury."

### Scouting the Islanders

New York ranks fourth in the NHL with an average of 2.35 allowed per game, the product of a defensive commitment that showed during two games in Buffalo last week.

The Sabres scored one goal in those two losses to the Islanders after falling behind early in both games.

"We need to get back in this series against the Islanders," Krueger said. "When you look at those two games, even (strength) scoring chances doesn't get you any points. So, we certainly matched them but they outscored us, they got all four points. Unacceptable."

"The key notes here today, it's looking for areas of opportunity offensively, ways that we can create more net pressure and just match the amazing patience they have and the way they play their game."

Semyon Varlamov will start in net for the Islanders. Forward Michael Dal Colle will miss his third straight game with a lower-body injury.

### Tune in

Coverage on MSG begins at 6:30 p.m. or you can listen to the game on WGR 550. The puck drops at 7.

## **Mittelstadt, Davidson up from Sabres taxi squad**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 22, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres have recalled forward Casey Mittelstadt and defenseman Brandon Davidson from the team's taxi squad in anticipation of tonight's game against the New York Islanders.

In his pregame press conference, head coach Ralph Krueger announced that forward Jeff Skinner and defenseman William Borgen would not play against the Islanders.

Borgen is day-to-day with an upper-body injury. Defenseman Jake McCabe is out for the season after sustaining a knee injury on Saturday, and the club is also without Rasmus Ristolainen as he recovers from COVID-related symptoms. Skinner will be a healthy scratch.

Stay tuned for more on Sabres.com soon.

Pregame coverage begins at 6:30 on MSG.

## **McCabe out 6-8 months with knee injury**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 22, 2021

Buffalo Sabres defenseman Jake McCabe was diagnosed today with injuries in his right knee to his ACL, MCL and meniscus as the result of a play during the team's game on February 20 in New Jersey, the team announced Monday.

The expected recovery time for his injuries is approximately six to eight months.

McCabe recorded three points (1+2) in 13 games while averaging 19:09 of ice time in the 12 games prior to the injury.

Buffalo will play the New York Islanders tonight at 7 p.m. at NYCB Live on MSG and WGR 550. Pregame coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on MSG.