



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres fire coach Krueger while in midst of 12-game skid

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Firing Buffalo Sabres coach Ralph Krueger on Wednesday represents just the beginning of what could become Kevyn Adams' major overhaul of an overpriced, underperforming team in the midst of a 12-game skid.

In laying only part of the blame on Krueger, the first-year general manager openly challenged his players' accountability and pride, while suggesting changes to the roster are looming.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said, when asked whether he'd consider moving forward Taylor Hall, who is completing a one-year, \$8 million contract. Adams said he's been in discussions with numerous teams leading up to the NHL's trade deadline on April 12.

"This is my job to make sure not only that I'm proactive but listening, as well doing everything I can to move this thing forward," he said.

The Sabres are starting fresh yet again with Krueger becoming Buffalo's sixth coach fired in just over eight calendar years. Krueger failed to make it through the second season of his three-year contract.

He was fired a day after Buffalo's winless streak grew to 0-10-2 following a 3-2 loss at New Jersey, and against a Devils team that snapped an 11-game home skid. Buffalo has been outscored by a combined 49-19 (not including a goal allowed in a shootout loss) in matching the third-longest winless streak in franchise history.

At 6-18-4, the Sabres have as many wins as times they've been shut out, rank last in the league in victories, points and goals scored, and are in jeopardy of extending their playoff drought to an NHL record-matching 10th season.

"This is about results that haven't been good enough," Adams said. "This is about how do we improve. I believe every crisis is an opportunity for change. And this is a chance for us to move forward and begin to get this thing pointed in the right direction."

Assistant coach Don Granato takes over on an interim basis, with Buffalo opening a two-game home series against Boston on Thursday. Assistant Steve Smith was also fired.

Krueger is the third NHL coach fired this season, after Montreal dismissed Claude Julien and Calgary replaced Geoff Ward with two-time Stanley Cup-winning coach Darryl Sutter.

Adams' decision comes two weeks after announcing he was evaluating the entire operation. After attempting to hold off dismissing the coach until the end of the season, Adams was left with little choice especially following a sloppy 6-0 loss to Washington on Monday.

Adams characterized the team's performance "not good enough," and said he will stress a message of accountability when meeting with his players on Thursday.

"I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of the season having that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable," he said. "There has to be pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres' jersey."

The Sabres have lurched from one crisis to another this season.

Injuries to key players have been a factor. Captain Jack Eichel hasn't been healthy all season and is out indefinitely with an upper body injury. The Sabres also endured a two-week COVID-19-forced pause, leading to the team having to squeeze in its final 46 games over an 83-day stretch, while challenged to compete in a reformatted and ultra-competitive East Division.

Krueger attempted to remain upbeat as the losses mounted.

"All I can say is I continue to enjoy doing this job also in a difficult time," Krueger said, following the loss at New Jersey. "It's easy to stand here when things are going well. It's not that easy to stand here right now in this adversity. But I know we are we are learning and growing as an organization and we will take strength out of this in the future."

Defenseman Brandon Montour acknowledged the team was bracing for changes.

"I think guys expect something just to get out of this in any way possible," Montour said.

Krueger was questioned for constantly fiddling with his lines, and for benching Jeff Skinner for a three-game stretch last month.

Ultimately, the lack of offense and a regular series of defensive breakdowns placed the focus on whether Krueger's philosophy was outdated, too easy to counter, didn't fit the players on the roster or a combination of all three.

The 61-year-old Krueger was praised for having a reputation of being an innovator and motivator despite being out of hockey for five seasons while overseeing Premier League soccer club Southampton.

On the ice, he was a long-time coach of the Swiss national team and served as a consultant for Canada's gold-medal-winning team at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. He took time out from soccer in 2016 to coach Team Europe to a second-place finish at the World Cup of Hockey.

At the NHL level, Krueger spent two seasons as an assistant coach in Edmonton before taking over as the Oilers head coach in 2012-13. He was fired immediately following the lockout-shortened 48-game season.

Krueger now has the distinction of never completing a full 82-game NHL campaign. His first season in Buffalo was cut short by the pandemic. With a 30-31-8 record when the season was paused in mid-March, the Sabres finished a percentage point behind Montreal, which clinched the Eastern Conference's 12th and final playoff berth.

This story has been corrected to identify fired assistant coach as Steve Smith.

Mike Harrington: Another coach got fired. It's time for Sabres players to show some pride

By Mike Harrington
The Buffalo News
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The question this corner posed to Kevyn Adams was a simple one Wednesday: What's your message to these players going forward about having some shred of accountability for all the coaches that have been fired here in recent years?

You had to love the answer. The Buffalo Coach Killers rang up another one with Ralph Krueger's dismissal and the first-year GM – who didn't remotely have a coaching change on his radar as recently as a month ago – promised there's going to be a pointed, one-way conversation when the team reports to KeyBank Center for pregame work Thursday morning.

Adams laid down the law in slow, measured tones. They should put his words on the wall of the dressing room.

"There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey," Adams said. "There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey League player, of looking around and saying, 'I'm one of the 700, 800, or whatever it is in the league, to get to do this every day.' And that has to be something that just is inside you and drives you to be better every single day, to love to look around the City of Buffalo and see Sabres hats and signs and people wearing jerseys. You know, that matters. And that has to be within the DNA of our team."

Right now, it's not. This is a country club. This is players cashing checks and not producing. This is players who didn't like the hard-charging approach of Dan Bylsma and the behind-the-scenes tweaking of Phil Housley. Let's not forget one coached a Stanley Cup team and the other was in the Hall of Fame. Too difficult for them to handle.

So they got the philosopher, Ralph Krueger. He was positive. He was happy. Jack Eichel loved him, which is apparently all that matters here. Krueger never ranted at practice, never said a cross word about his team to the media. There was no pressure. There was no fear. There weren't any booing fans in the building this year. There were no reporters in the locker room and you just had to survive five minutes on a video call. (Memo to Sam Reinhart: We notice the eye rolls.)

It should not be easy to be an NHL player. It absolutely should not be easy when you're in 31st place like this outfit is. They've got a lot of excuses for this season – and admittedly some have merit – but they're 6-18-4 and haven't beaten anybody since Jan. 26 except poor Lindy Ruff's terrible New Jersey team. Some nights against the Islanders, Capitals and Penguins, the Sabres barely look like they belong in the league.

The season is over. The second half begins Thursday with the first of eight games against Boston and we should never ever ever ever ever see another game from this group like Monday's 6-0 whitewash against Washington. That was one of the lowest moments in the history of the franchise, a mail-order special that brought scorn from across North America.

That was a team that didn't give a damn.

If these players loved Ralph Krueger as much as we heard the last two years, they sure have a funny way of showing it.

"I don't care where we are in the standings right now," Adams said. "If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow, and for the rest of the season, and have that characteristic (of pride) about our team, it's going to be unacceptable. And that is going to be a message and something that I'm going to spend time on. And as we evaluate players, and when we scout players, that needs to be part of it. You have to just show up every day and want to compete and be a Buffalo Sabre."

People work hard in this town. They expect to see it in return. This franchise was born in 1970 and not during the Tank of 2015. People have heroes from days gone by who actually won games: The French Connection, LaFontaine and Mogilny, Gare, Schoenfeld and Korab, Mike Ramsey, the Dominator and Donnie Edwards, Peca,

Drury and Briere. And then there were the players we loved who weren't blessed with talent but had huge hearts and went to battle with their teammates. You think of Ray and May, Barnaby and Boughner and so many more.

Is there one guy on this team that plays anywhere near as hard as those guys did? Do you love any of them that way? That's why people are disgusted.

Rasmus Ristolainen is one current guy who could be on those teams. He's a beast in normal times, even more so this year for the way he's battled through Covid. Maybe Jake McCabe. Anybody else? Still, all they've done here is lose.

What would Chris Drury or Pat LaFontaine say to Eichel about his body language too many nights? What would Briere say to Reinhart about his lack of an all-around game? Or to Jeff Skinner, who stopped scoring for the last 25 games Housley coached and clearly spent the last two years blaming Krueger? You can tell now that Rob Ray wants to jump back down between the benches wanting to shake poor Rasmus Dahlin, whose third year has gone completely off the rails and needs an immediate intervention.

The apologists for these players are everywhere. Too many fans. Too many talk radio hosts. Too many people even inside the club.

Enough already. Ralph Krueger wasn't good enough and needed to go but it can't always be the coach's fault. Don Granato isn't going to suddenly be a reincarnation of Toe Blake with this group.

Since starting last season 8-1-1, Krueger's Sabres went 28-48-11. They were 7-24-4 in the last 35 games. That's pathetic.

These players had far too much rope and they used it. With Krueger gone, Adams is fully in charge. It's long past time for the GM to make guys in the dressing room uncomfortable.

Bills, Sabres co-owner Kim Pegula offers support for Asian American community after Atlanta attack

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A white gunman was charged Wednesday with killing eight people at three Atlanta-area massage parlors. The incident horrified the Asian American community, which saw the shootings as an attack on them, given a recent wave of assaults that coincided with the spread of the coronavirus across the United States.

Over the past year, thousands of incidents of abuse have been reported to an anti-hate group that tracks incidents against Asian Americans, and hate crimes in general are at the highest level in more than a decade.

Robert Aaron Long, 21, told police that Tuesday's attack was not racially motivated and claimed to have a "sex addiction," with authorities saying he apparently lashed out at what he saw as sources of temptation. His parents called police after authorities posted his photo, helping lead to his capture.

Six of the victims were of Asian descent and seven were women.

The shootings have led to shows of solidarity and support for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

Among those with ties to professional sports who have issued statements is Buffalo Bills and Buffalo Sabres co-owner Kim Pegula, who included a link on social media to anti-Asian violence resources.

The shootings appear to be at the "intersection of gender-based violence, misogyny and xenophobia," Georgia State Rep. Bee Nguyen said, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House and a frequent advocate for women and communities of color.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said that regardless of the shooter's motivation, "it is unacceptable, it is hateful and it has to stop."

The GM on the Sabres' new staff: Lots of new roles under Don Granato

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

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Just like you see players do all the time during a game with line changes, General Manager Kevyn Adams pieced together a coaching staff on the fly Wednesday for the Buffalo Sabres.

Adams said his search for a permanent head coach to replace Ralph Krueger starts immediately, but this is the way the staff will look for now, starting with Thursday night's game against Boston in KeyBank Center.

- Assistant Don Granato takes over as interim head coach.
- Fellow assistant Steve Smith, who was running the defense and penalty kill, was fired along with Krueger.
- Director of player development Matt Ellis and development coach Dan Girardi, both former NHL players, will move to the bench as assistant coaches. Girardi will likely have to undergo an intake quarantine before taking the bench, so Adams said Rochester coach Seth Appert may come to Buffalo to assist the Sabres temporarily.

Granato, who came to the Sabres a month after Krueger was hired in 2019, had been an assistant the previous two seasons in Chicago but has lots of experience as a head coach at lower levels, including seven years as St. Louis' AHL head coach in Worcester (2000-2005) and Chicago (2008-2010), and five seasons leading the United States National Team Development Program.

Granato, 53, was AHL coach of the year in 2001 and won the ECHL's Kelly Cup with Peoria in 2000. He was the head man of Green Bay and Wisconsin in the United States Hockey League from 1993-97.

"Don Granato has been a head coach for many years and different levels of professional hockey," Adams said. "Been in the college game, has been in the national program. He has a development background, has a teacher kind of mentality. So he's commanded a room as a head coach before."

Granato comes from a deep hockey family. His sister is Hockey Hall of Famer Cammi Granato, who was captain of the United States' gold medal team at the 1998 Winter Olympics and is considered one of the greatest women's players of all time. She is now a scout for the Seattle Kraken. Her husband is longtime NHL player and TSN analyst Ray Ferraro.

Granato's brother, Tony, is the current coach at the University of Wisconsin and led Team USA in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea. Tony Granato played 774 games in the NHL from 1988-2001 with the New York Rangers, Los Angeles and San Jose. He was a four-time 30-goal scorer and had 37 in 1992-93 for the Wayne Gretzky-led Kings who played in the Stanley Cup Final against Montreal.

Don Granato has been in charge of the Buffalo power play all season and it was flying atop the NHL charts for the first 17 games. But it has nosedived without the injured Jack Eichel and is 0 for 18 over the last 11 days. Overall, the Sabres entered Wednesday ninth at 26%.

Granato returned to the Sabres' bench last week after being sent to the press box in the wake of the team's Covid-19 outbreak. Adams was concerned about Granato's exposure level after Granato missed the start of last season and spent nearly two months hospitalized here with pneumonia complications that included a life-threatening blood infection.

Ellis played 296 games for the Sabres from 2008-14 and spent parts of four years in Rochester, including time as the team captain. Adams brought him on in September as director of player development after Ellis had worked as director of the Academy of Hockey in LECOM Harborcenter.

"Matt has been with the team all season in his development role. He'll continue in the development but he's going to step into this as well," Adams said. "So the players have been seeing him every day, he's been on the ice every day, so I don't see any sort of kind of burn-in time for him in terms of relationships."

The hope is that Girardi can have instant impact on the defense, given the regression of Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju this season. Girardi is one of the top undrafted players in NHL history, playing 927 games with the New York Rangers and Tampa Bay in a career that stretched to 2019.

Girardi missed just five games for New York from 2007-2015 and was a key member on defense for the team that lost to Los Angeles in the 2014 Stanley Cup Final. He is second in career blocked shots among NHL defenseman with 1,954.

"High character, high compete, thought the game very well as a defenseman, which I thought would be very helpful in a short time to bring some fresh perspective," Adams said. "I've been extremely impressed with Dan in his role as a development coach on our staff for the past few months, the attention to detail he showed, the discipline the amount of work he's done with our prospects.

Smith, a three-time Stanley Cup champion as a player with Edmonton in the 1980s and '90s, came on to the staff in 2018 under Phil Housley. He worked with Krueger as an assistant in Edmonton and then under him in the 2013 lockout season, Krueger's previous season as an NHL head coach.

What's next for Sabres GM Kevyn Adams? Hire a coach, forge a team identity.

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

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Kevyn Adams was torn.

Even amid a Buffalo Sabres winless streak that reached 12 games Tuesday night, the first-year general manager received glowing reviews from players about coach Ralph Krueger. Those comments confirmed what Adams observed for weeks: Krueger's coaching staff remained engaged and the weight of sitting last in the NHL did not create a "toxic" culture in the dressing room.

Yet, as Adams watched games from above, he kept seeing the same mistakes result in losses. The Sabres, now 6-18-4 and on track to match the NHL record with a 10th consecutive season outside the playoffs, were again shut out in consecutive games Saturday and Monday.

Adams traveled to Florida to inform owners Terry and Kim Pegula that it was time to fire Krueger after less than two seasons. Krueger, an ultra-positive, staunch defender of a system he refers to as his "principles," was unwavering in his belief that he was the coach to restore the Sabres to greatness, even while receiving the news of his firing Wednesday morning.

Don Granato, amid his second season as an assistant on Krueger's staff, was elevated to interim head coach and Adams began the search for a permanent replacement. Assistant coach Steve Smith, who has run the defense and penalty kill since 2018-19 under Phil Housley, was also fired as former first overall pick Rasmus Dahlin is last in the NHL with a minus-27 rating.

"Ultimately, wins and losses are what you're judged on and what happens in the standings, but it's deeper than that," noted Adams. "So, for me, certainly part of this was understanding our players' mindset and the players really, really love Ralph Krueger. ... Ultimately, the results speak for themselves. The standings speak for themselves. We're not where we need to be, and I felt it was the right time to make the change."

Since arriving in Buffalo, Granato, 53, has worked exclusively with the forwards and the NHL's ninth-best power play. He has nine-plus seasons of experience as a professional head coach, including seven in the American Hockey League.

Adams would not outline specific characteristics he's seeking in his first permanent head coaching hire, though he mentioned the importance of building relationships and holding players accountable. Bruce Boudreau, Gerard Gallant and Claude Julien are among the experienced coaches currently out of work that will be sought after by teams this summer, including the expansion Seattle Kraken.

The Sabres also could hire someone from the college ranks, most notably Providence College's Nate Leaman or Minnesota-Duluth's Scott Sandelin. There is risk in waiting to make the hire, but Adams prefers to not rush the decision given it's difficult to hold in-person interviews amid the Covid-19 pandemic. He also may want to first hire an assistant general manager, a process that is also underway following Krueger's departure.

"I'm not going to timeline it at all," added Adams. "For me, it's about getting it right. If we felt it was absolutely the right person and it happens quicker, then OK. If it needs to take a longer time because we haven't found the right person or this isn't that easy of a time to have conversations and meet people face-to-face either, (we will). I don't want to rush into anything."

Granato and the coaching staff, supplemented now by director of player development Matt Ellis and development coach Dan Girardi, will have to fix the Sabres' porous defensive-zone coverage and inability to create offense at 5-on-5. The power play is also amid a 0-for-18 slump over the past 11 games, the latter five without captain Jack Eichel, who has been sidelined with an upper-body injury since March 7.

Granato was not available to speak to the media Wednesday and players were off. It's unclear how or if he plans to change the system, lineup or player usage.

A roster that includes Eichel, Jeff Skinner, Taylor Hall, Sam Reinhart and Eric Staal has scored only 36 goals at 5-on-5 in 28 games. Skinner, Hall, Staal and Kyle Okposo have combined for seven goals while accounting for \$26.35 million of salary-cap space. Eichel, a 24-year-old who scored a career-high 36 goals in Krueger's first season, had two goals in 21 games, a performance at least partially impacted by injuries.

The roster has also been hit hard by injuries to Eichel, Dylan Cozens, Jake McCabe, Will Borgen, Zemgus Girgensons and Linus Ullmark. The Sabres' goaltenders have combined for a .902 save percentage at 5-on-5, the third-worst mark in the NHL. In 18 games since returning from the Covid-19 pause Feb. 15, Buffalo ranks last in the league in 5-on-5 goals allowed (47) and suppressing shot quality, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

"We need to be better in the harder areas of the game," said Adams. "We need to defend better and quicker and more tenaciously. We need to do a better job in the offensive zone of getting to the inside and the harder areas. We need to manage the game better. ... Let's not overcomplicate this. We want to be better, we have to be better and we will be better."

Twenty-eight games remain in this shortened regular season that ends May 8 and the schedule was further truncated after a two-week pause in which nine Sabres were placed on the Covid-19 protocol list.

Granato will only have a morning skate to prepare for the Sabres' game Thursday night against the Boston Bruins in KeyBank Center. There won't be many practice days to make sweeping changes at 5-on-5 or special teams. He's also likely going to face significant personnel turnover in the coming weeks, as other teams continue to inquire about Adams' pending unrestricted free agents ahead of the April 12 trade deadline.

Hall, Staal, Brandon Montour, Tobias Rieder and Riley Sheahan are among the Sabres who could be traded.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said.

Any roster movement will be difficult until the Rochester Americans are cleared to resume practicing after three of their players tested positive for Covid-19. Sabres players under contract beyond this season likely aren't untouchable, as Adams evaluates who fits into his long-term plan for the franchise.

The Sabres are in line to own a top 10 draft choice for a ninth consecutive year, and CapFriendly.com projects Buffalo will have \$35.839 million in salary-cap space this offseason. The plan must start, though, with finally creating an identity for the Sabres after a tumultuous decade in which ownership has hired and fired five head coaches and two general managers.

"I talk about this team and this town, we need to have an identity moving forward and build this team where players love playing, they compete hard, the fans love watching it and it's all connected," said Adams, a 46-year-old Clarence native. "I know, I've seen it in this town before. I know what that does for our fan base, and I understand that and we're not there. And that's when I go back to earlier, I said every part of our organization has to be better, and it starts with me."

Sources: Ex-Penguins, Hurricanes exec Jason Karmanos on Sabres' radar for assistant GM

By Lance Lysowski
The Buffalo News
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Terry and Kim Pegula's plan for the Buffalo Sabres' hockey operations department went out the window with the decision to fire Ralph Krueger only 28 games into his second season as coach.

Krueger, formerly coach of Switzerland's National Team, worked in lockstep with General Manager Kevyn Adams to reconfigure the roster in the aftermath of the Sabres firing 21 employees last June, including Jason Botterill and his two assistant general managers.

With Krueger gone, replaced by interim coach Don Granato as the Sabres sit last in the National Hockey League at 6-18-4, Adams told the media during a videoconference call Wednesday that he is looking to hire an assistant general manager.

Industry sources confirmed to The Buffalo News that Jason Karmanos, formerly assistant general manager of the Carolina Hurricanes and Pittsburgh Penguins, is high on Adams' list of candidates. The Sabres have received permission to interview Karmanos, who is still under contract with the Penguins.

"I'm currently looking to fill the assistant GM role now," Adams said. "We'll be speaking to, I guess the search will be ongoing here and definitely. I think if you go back to June, one of the things we talked about is finding the right people and kind of maybe catching my breath and understanding everything that was going on and evaluating where we see that we need to fill in, knowing all along that we absolutely had to fill in certain roles. That's something that I'm working on right now and I'll keep you posted on it."

Karmanos, 46, worked under former Penguins General Manager Jim Rutherford in Carolina and Pittsburgh from 1998 through the 2019-20 season. The two won three Stanley Cups together, including one in Carolina in 2006 when Adams was a veteran forward for the Hurricanes. Karmanos' father, Peter, was principal owner of the Hurricanes and Hartford Whalers from 1994 through 2018.

Karmanos joined Rutherford in Pittsburgh, where the two built back-to-back Stanley Cup champions in 2016-17. Karmanos was a behind-the-scenes figure for the Penguins, occupying the assistant general manager role while helping build a strong analytics department. He was fired in October and Rutherford resigned in January.

The Sabres have filled few roles left vacant by the mass firings in June. The franchise is currently without scouts in Finland, Russia and the Western Hockey League, which recently launched its season and has several notable draft-eligible prospects. Buffalo also does not have a scout to cover the Ontario Hockey League, which hopes to begin play this spring.

Adams' top lieutenants in hockey operations are Jeremiah Crowe, director of scouting, and Jason Nightingale, who holds a dual title as assistant director of scouting and director of analytics. Matt Ellis, director of player development elevated to interim assistant coach, has also been a resource for Adams as he navigates the challenges of his first season as an NHL general manager.

Mark Jakubowski, a longtime hockey operations employee with the Sabres, has assisted Adams with all matters related to the salary cap and contract negotiations. Jakubowski was an assistant general manager under Tim Murray from 2014-17 and is now vice president of hockey administration.

Beyond an assistant general manager, it's unclear how many positions the Sabres plan to fill. Their staff directory currently lists only three development coaches, two of which are now working under interim head coach Don Granato, and eight scouts. Nightingale leads an analytics staff that, as of July, had only one graduate student as an intern.

The Sabres are using more video scouting to supplement their in-person viewings at the pro and amateur levels. Ownership always planned to employ fewer people in hockey operations following Botterill's dismissal. Botterill and his assistant general managers were under contract through the 2021-22 season.

"I mentioned three words: effective, efficient and economic," owner Terry Pegula said after Botterill's firing. "Today's sports world – and I'm the last guy to know anything about technology, I can't even mute this thing we're talking on here – but I can tell you this, with all the existing technology that exists in the world of sports today, we can move forward much leaner than we operated in the past and much more efficient.

"So, we're – you're right – we're going to get leaner. It's just the way the world's heading. Any business today, you look at the things you do, they're more efficient, they do things quick, they use this new technology that we all have at our fingertips."

Eichel update

Jack Eichel and the rest of the Sabres' leadership group were the first players informed of the decision to fire coach Ralph Krueger, General Manager Kevyn Adams said Wednesday.

Eichel, amid his sixth NHL season and third as team captain, has missed the past five games with an upper-body injury. He is completing a mandatory quarantine after traveling out of state to receive a second opinion from a doctor.

The 24-year-old remains out indefinitely, but Adams expressed hope that Eichel could return before the final regular-season game May 8 in Pittsburgh.

"Jack is one of the best players in the world," said Adams. "We just want to get him healthy and back on the ice and able to do his thing."

Hall talks

Sabres winger Taylor Hall recently told the media he remained open to returning to Buffalo next season after signing a one-year contract in October.

However, Hall was recruited to Buffalo by Krueger, whom he played for in Edmonton from 2010-13. With Hall set to be an unrestricted free agent in July, the Sabres could trade the 29-year-old before the April 12 deadline.

Adams will need to first ask Hall to waive his no-movement clause.

"My job is to do anything and everything to make this franchise move in the right direction," said Adams. "I have a very good relationship with (agent) Darren Ferris and Taylor. Open lines of communication, and obviously days are moving forward here, so there will be a lot of conversations around that."

Sabres GM Kevyn Adams on firing Ralph Krueger: 'It felt right that it needed to be done now'

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2021

Sabres General Manager Kevyn Adams told reporters that he spoke to Ralph Krueger on Wednesday morning to fire him as head coach. Assistant coach Steve Smith was also fired.

Adams addressed the decision with the media.

Here are some excerpts:

"It's been a tough day. ... They're great people. I have a lot of respect for both of them. I want to thank both of them for what they've done for this organization. ... It felt to me that it felt right that it needed to be done now. ... For me, this is about results that haven't been good enough. I look and evaluate everything and I was trying to take a real honest, fair evaluation, understanding the adversity that our team was in. It felt like the right time. This is about moving forward. Every crisis is an opportunity for positive change."

On coaching search: "I'm not going to put any guardrails right now. The search will be effective immediately. I have in my head and I've thought a lot about this characteristics and attributes that I think will be important for this team and organization. A lot of people I will speak to. A lot of people will be involved in the decision. I don't want to rush into anything or make a quick decision. This is about getting it right. Great to say I'm looking for this or that, but this is about getting the right person and it's critical.

What's next?: "We have to be better in every single part of this organization. I have to manage better. We need to coach better, we need to scout better, we need to develop players better. You name it we need to do it better. Period. It's unacceptable in every area. We're doing it because we feel we have to start to improve. Of course, results matter. But it's deeper than that to change the culture and get headed in the right direction, I felt this is what we had to do."

What do you say to the players?: "I'm going to have a very honest conversation tomorrow when our players are here. There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey. There has to be a pride of showing up and being a National Hockey League player. That has to be something that's inside you. That has to be inside the DNA of our team. If we don't show up at the rink tomorrow and the rest of the season and have that characteristic that is going to be unacceptable. You have to love to show up every day and compete and want to be a Buffalo Sabre."

How do you change the culture?: "It starts with stacking wins. How I look at this, we all stack wins in the things we do every day and they start to add up. The culture shift and then I've seen it before because we get some buy-in and people feel good. Have to look into the mirror and say how in my world do I stack wins and get better in my world. ... Little things that players have to do in practice and work together in practice and start to stack on top of each other. Big picture, we have to do it. But it starts with each of us individually and pushing and challenging and getting up every day having a burning desire to be part of the Buffalo Sabres."

What did you need to see rest of the season?: "Compete. We need to be better in harder areas of the game. We need to defend better and quicker. Better job in the offensive zone of getting inside. We need to manage the game better. A lot of little things that point you in the right direction. If you do the right thing, you start to win shifts, then you start to win periods, then you start to win games."

When did you tell Ralph?: "I spoke to Ralph first thing this morning. I met with him and then Steve shortly after. Ralph is disappointed. As I have learned a lot of from Ralph as a person, his leadership qualities ... It was an honest and hard conversation. He believed to his core that he could turn this around. My job is to tell him where I felt we were and to have an honest conversation."

On reaching the decision: "Ultimately wins and losses are what you are judged on, but it's deeper than that. Part of this was understanding our players' mindset and the players really, really love Ralph Krueger. Understanding our dynamic of what the locker room is like. ... All the other parts of the coaching part. We're not where we need to be and I felt that we needed to make a change."

On the new staff: "Don Granato has been a head coach for many years on different levels. He has a background as a teacher mentality. He's commanded a room as a head coach before. Matt (Ellis) has been with the team all season. He'll continue in the development. The players have been with him every day on the ice. Dan Girardi is someone for me that was very well respected when he played in the league. High compete. High character. Thought the game really well as a defenseman. Been really impressed with the amount of work he's done with us this season. I have no doubt all three of them will jump right in. ... I'm excited for the opportunity that all three of them have."

On Jack Eichel: "We're hopeful that Jack will be able to move forward and be in the lineup. ... As any young leader, especially, you're constantly learning and juggling and what it takes to be at your best and what's happening with the team overall. Jack is one of the best players in the world. We just want to get him healthy and back on the ice and let him do his thing."

On hiring more staff: "I'm currently looking to fill the assistant GM role now. The search will be ongoing. I think if you go back to June, one of the things we talked about is finding the right people, catching my breath and seeing where we need to fill in, knowing that we needed to fill in."

On Steve Smith: "Steve is a great coach, a great person. It was just getting a fresh perspective, a different voice. Steve has been here a couple of years. Across the board, our players need to be better so that wasn't any one particular thing."

More on Eichel: "I communicated with the leadership group this morning about the decision I made with Ralph and Steve. ... We've spoken at length in the offseason and in the season. The last seven to eight days, he's been in quarantine, but it's important. You want to have communication. We talk regularly."

On concern about fan backlash with fans returning: "Never even entered my mind. That, for me, if I start thinking about those types of things, it takes me away from doing my job, which is this hockey team. ... I wasn't thinking about that in making this decision."

Mike Harrington: Ralph Krueger's buzzwords made no impact on his players

By Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2021

Farewell to The System, whatever it was supposed to be.

Farewell to The Principles, which were clearly never adhered to by the players.

Farewell to Synergy, another of Ralph Krueger's infamous buzzwords.

Krueger's shelf life expired in stunningly quick fashion with the Buffalo Sabres after just 97 games as his firing was mercifully announced Wednesday morning. These players, many of whom have been through this before, quit on yet another coach. This recent stretch felt much worse than the final days of Dan Bylsma and Phil Housley.

The Sabres should be firing about 20 players here, but we know how this goes with any team: The coach always takes the fall in these situations.

And there's plenty of blame to be directed at Krueger.

Krueger's hire was hailed as out of the box and overdue by the oogling Canadian media when it came in 2019. Krueger, remember, was fired via Skype by the Edmonton Oilers in 2013 after just one lockout-shortened season. Clearly, he made a lot of media pals north of the border by being a background source for Team Canada at the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

The praise was far and wide, especially when the Sabres started last season 8-1-1. When the Sabres fell apart at the end of the 2019-20 campaign and proved utterly noncompetitive through much of the last 15 games of this one, there was nary a peep about Krueger being an issue from the other side of the border until the last few days. Funny how that works.

The Oilers, whose lack of success in the Connor McDavid era feels oddly familiar here, have proven to have no monopoly on wisdom. But maybe the folks out West were on to something about Krueger.

He lost his lone Edmonton team at the end of the 2013 season, falling out of playoff contention with a 1-9 slide that included a six-game losing streak. The 2019-20 Sabres? A six-game losing streak right at the end with the playoffs within reach. Hmmm.

Since starting last season 8-1-1, Krueger's Sabres have gone 28-48-11. That's a dreadful .385 points percentage, and that's ahead of only lowly Detroit in that span. They're 7-24-4 in the last 35 under Krueger and Monday's 6-0 disaster against Washington rates as one of the single lowest points in franchise history, an embarrassment that drew shocks and snickers from across the league.

In the last few weeks, they could only beat lowly New Jersey. And they couldn't even do that Tuesday night, their hideous winless streak stretching to 12 games in a loss to the Devils on a night Krueger clearly seemed to know marked the end of his time.

With all these first-round draft picks on this roster, how in the world are the Sabres still in the nether regions of the NHL?

It's clear Krueger's success is rooted in small sample sizes, be it the Olympics or World Championships or World Cup. Same with the Sabres' first 10 games of 2019. Over the course of a long NHL season, opponents either figure out what Krueger is doing and he just doesn't know how – or is unwilling – to adjust. In the case of the Sabres, a defensive-oriented system with a bunch of offensively skilled players was just a lousy fit.

Krueger clearly lost Jack Eichel, who has been a sham of a captain this year because he hasn't been healthy. Still, even though he hasn't been 100%, I barely know what to say about Eichel's two-goal season.

The fiasco around whether Eichel was injured in a pregame warmup that clearly infuriated the captain? It was baffling to the media and to insiders in the organization. Krueger has seemed noticeably distracted and disjointed during his recent video calls with reporters.

Has he just been overwhelmed by the stench of losing or, at 61, has he legitimately been suffering from brain fog in the wake of his battle with Covid-19? We've wondered.

Remember, Krueger said last week that he felt the Sabres' first two games after their Covid pause against the Islanders – when they combined for one goal – were "actually pretty solid."

He can't be serious. Maybe he just didn't remember them.

Krueger fumbled the Jeff Skinner situation after his initial scratching of the \$9 million winger, which was completely justified. Too much gobbledygook to the media and too much disrespect to the player by scratching him three straight times. Virtually everyone on this team, sans Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen, has badly regressed under Krueger.

Rasmus Dahlin, where are you?

Let's not forget this is Krueger's team as much, if not more, than it is Kevyn Adams'. The firing of Jason Botterill and the hiring of a first-time GM from down the hall gifted too much power to the head coach.

It was Krueger who was the rainmaker to bring in Taylor Hall, who is losing millions of dollars in a future deal with his play here. It was Krueger who recommended to sign Cody Eakin and Matt Irwin, two veterans with recent playoff pedigree who have helped the team's woeful penalty kill and not done much else. We'll give Krueger credit for Tobias Rieder, a pretty decent addition.

The shame of it all is we'll never really know how this season would have gone had the Sabres not endured their Covid outbreak, and Krueger will probably rue that point forever.

Buffalo was 4-4-2 when the season was shut down. The Sabres, remember, were one of the NHL's leaders in shots in the early going of the season. These days, two goals is a full night for this club and 30 shots on goal a pipedream. But other teams have had Covid situations as well and haven't collapsed like this one did.

In what felt like some weird last-ditch effort to save his job, Krueger started throwing around "The Process" during his recent pressers, as if it were some sort of subliminal message to Terry Pegula that he subscribes to the same theories of Sean McDermott, the owner's beloved football coach.

Krueger said he and McDermott have been regular texters the last couple of years. Not enough has rubbed off. Players run through walls for McDermott. When it comes to Krueger, these players see a wall and they just do a big loop on the ice and exit stage-left without ever scraping the thing on the way by.

The Pegulas can't figure this out from the executive suite. It appears Adams has no idea how to figure it out from the GM's office, his recent faux anger notwithstanding. And no coach has figured this out from the bench in far too long.

Next man up. Good luck to you. It's a decade of futility and counting.

'It's been a tough day': Ralph Krueger fired as Sabres' coach

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 17, 2021

Under the guise of a curious traveler, Ralph Krueger visited Buffalo bars in the spring of 2019 to meet locals and take the pulse of a Sabres fan base frustrated by turmoil and failure.

Krueger, then weeks removed from a five-year stint as chairman of English Premier League's Southampton FC and in Buffalo for his interview with the Sabres, walked away from those encounters with a desire to try to resurrect the proud hockey franchise and, shortly thereafter, became the 19th coach in team history.

Less than two years later, and after only 97 games on the job, Krueger was fired Wednesday morning with the Sabres amid a 12-game winless streak and sitting last in the National Hockey League at 16 points (6-18-4) through 28 games.

"It's been a tough day," lamented Sabres General Manager Kevyn Adams.

Adams delivered the news to Krueger in the aftermath of a 3-2 loss to the Devils in New Jersey on Tuesday night. Shortly after speaking to Krueger, Adams informed assistant coach Steve Smith that he, too, was fired.

Assistant coach Don Granato will take over as interim head coach, while Matt Ellis, director of player development, and development coach Dan Girardi will be behind the bench as assistant coaches. The search for a permanent head coach will begin "immediately," according to Adams. The Sabres were off Wednesday and host the Boston Bruins in KeyBank Center on Thursday night.

"Ralph was disappointed," said Adams. "I have learned a lot from Ralph as a person and his leadership qualities and different attributes that he has. It was a very honest and hard conversation. Obviously disappointed and believed to his core that he could turn this around, but my job was to tell him where I felt we were and have a honest conversation and that's what we did earlier today."

The Sabres have been shut out as many times as they've won games (6) and rank last in the NHL with 2.07 goals per game, scoring a league-worst 36 times at 5-on-5. The production fell far short of the high expectations created when Buffalo added former Hart Trophy winner Taylor Hall and accomplished veteran center Eric Staal during the offseason.

Adams waited patiently to see if the Sabres' performance would improve, but he chose to make the change with Krueger owed \$3.75 million next season.

Krueger's rapid fall began shortly after his return from a bout with Covid-19. The 61-year-old endured multiple symptoms during the Sabres' two-week pause last month. Since returning to the ice, the team has posted a 2-14-2 record, a stretch that includes four shutouts.

Over his relatively short time as coach, Krueger led Buffalo to a combined 36-49-12 record and the franchise is closing in on a 10th consecutive year outside the playoffs, which would match the longest drought in NHL history.

Owners Terry and Kim Pegula have hired and fired five coaches since purchasing the team in February 2011. Since the sale was approved Feb. 18, 2011, the Sabres have a combined record of 282-367-96. Their 660 points are the fewest in the NHL during that span.

On the first day of his first training camp as coach in September 2019, Krueger delivered an impassioned speech to players and staff, a moment veteran forward Kyle Okposo later described by saying, "I talked to five or six guys after – Ralph talked for 15 or 20 minutes, and every single one of them said they wanted to run through a wall after he was done talking. He definitely got the guys' attention and knows how to deliver a message."

The message did not translate to consistent production on the ice. His first season featured some encouraging moments, particularly the Sabres' 8-1-1 start and Jack Eichel scoring a career-high 36 goals to become a viable Hart Trophy candidate.

A system built around defense allowed the 10th fewest 5-on-5 goals in 2019-20, elevating the Sabres into possible playoff contention at the February trade deadline. Buffalo then encountered a second six-game winless streak and the season ended when the NHL suspended play March 12 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Krueger seized more power in the organization in June with the dismissal of former General Manager Jason Botterill and 21 other hockey operations employees. Krueger, working alongside Adams, recruited Hall to sign a one-year, \$8 million contract with Buffalo in October and hand-picked other offseason additions, including Tobias Rieder and Cody Eakin.

The Pegulas' vision for the Sabres had Adams and Krueger working in lockstep to build a roster that fit the coach's preferred style of play.

The Sabres started the season with encouraging performances in the rugged, temporarily aligned East Division during this truncated 56-game schedule. The team's top forwards were stricken by bad puck luck, particularly in 5-on-5 situations. Then the season was paused for two weeks because of a Covid-19 outbreak, the result of a two-game series against the New Jersey Devils on Jan. 30-31. Nine Buffalo players were placed on the protocol list, some of whom were symptomatic.

Then Krueger's system began to crumble, and he came under scrutiny for how he handled the benching of a star player.

Shortly after the Sabres' return, Krueger scratched Jeff Skinner, a two-time all-star left winger who signed an eight-year, \$72 million contract with Buffalo in June 2019, for three consecutive games. Skinner's agent, Don Meehan, had a lengthy phone conversation with Adams to express concerns about the situation.

In 18 games since returning from the pause Feb. 18, the Sabres have posted a negative-26 goal differential at 5-on-5 while ranking last in the NHL in limiting an opponent's shot quality.

On March 5, on the heels of another ugly loss, Adams did not give Krueger a public vote of confidence and told the media during a videoconference that he was evaluating all aspects of the team. Even in his final days, Krueger's confidence was unwavering, as he proclaimed that his system would soon produce results.

When asked about Adams' comment afterward, Krueger said: "My reaction is we have a game here in an hour and a half, and that I am completely, wholly focusing on doing what I do every day here and that's getting up in the morning, meeting with my coaches, looking at what we can improve on, what we want to take with us and the lineup we have and the growth. Anything beyond that right now would be a waste of focus and energy. The team needs me to be 100% present and that's what I am here, right now."

The Sabres have since lost seven consecutive games, including once in a shootout, while being outscored 32-12. In addition to the Covid-19 pause, the team has lost several important players to injury, including Jack Eichel, Dylan Cozens, Jake McCabe, Linus Ullmark and Zemgus Girgensons.

Yet, in the end, Adams did not see enough progress and decided to make the change, despite the possible challenges that lie ahead for Granato.

"I said it a couple weeks ago, it's unacceptable in every area," said Adams. "So, why do we do it? Well, we're doing it because we feel we have to start to improve. Of course, results matter. This is a results business and where we are is unacceptable, it speaks for itself. But it's deeper than that. To change the culture and to do what we have to do to get this headed in the right direction, I felt this was the move that we had to make, regardless of all those things that you mentioned."

Krueger previously served as head coach of the Edmonton Oilers for the 48-game lockout-shortened 2012-13 season. He first entered the NHL as an assistant in Edmonton, spending two seasons under Tom Renney from 2010-12. Prior to that, he was the coach of Switzerland's National Team for 13 years. Krueger also was lauded for his work coaching Team Europe at the World Cup of Hockey in 2016.

Kevyn Adams: Many reasons went into firing Ralph Krueger

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 17, 2021

Buffalo, N.Y. (WGR 550) – Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams fired head coach Ralph Krueger and assistant coach Steve Smith on Wednesday with the team in a 12-game winless skid.

Adams spoke at length about his decision Wednesday, and said the results haven't been good enough.

"I was trying to take a real honest, fair evaluation, and this is an opportunity for positive change," Adams said during his Zoom conference call with the media. "This is a chance for us to move forward and get this pointed in the right direction."

Adams is going to do a thorough search, because he knows that unlike Tim Murray and Jason Botterill, he must get this right.

"I have in my head the characteristics and attributes that I think will be important. This about getting it right," Adams said.

I have never seen a team sloppier in practice than the Buffalo Sabres. Simple passes aren't completed on a regular basis, and going offside during drills is a regular occurrence that is never corrected.

"I need to manage better, we need to coach better, we need to scout better, we need to develop players better and we need to practice better," Adams said passionately.

Players on this team have been going through the motions for weeks. They all say they liked Ralph Krueger, but they had a funny way of showing it on the ice. Adams said he is going to have a "very honest" conversation with the players on Thursday, because attitudes need to change.

Adams had anger in his voice, because I can tell you many players on this team have no respect for this team's history. Many of them wouldn't know Gil Perreault, Danny Gare or Pat LaFontaine if they fell over them.

"There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey," Adams said. "There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey League player, and that has to be something that just is inside of you and drives you to be better every single day.

"To love to look around the city of Buffalo and see signs and people wearing jerseys; that matters, and that has to be in the DNA of our team. So I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of this season and have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable. That is going to be a message, and as we evaluate and scout players, that needs to be a part of it."

I think Adams is right, and if he's talking about the players in that dressing room right now, he better be prepared to move quite a few of them because he won't get what he wants.

There are many things Adams sees on the ice that aren't done by his players. That's why it's so puzzling that he waited so long to make this change.

"It's compete. We need to be better in the harder areas of the game," the general manager said. "We need to defend better and quicker, and more tenaciously. We need to do a better job in the offensive zone of getting to the inside in the harder areas. We need to manage the game better. Those are the little things."

Adams revealed that he's been interviewing candidates to be the team's assistant general manager.

Under Steve Smith, Jake McCabe and Rasmus Ristolainen have been playing the best hockey of their careers. At the other end, Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju have taken huge steps backwards.

New assistant coach Dan Girardi played 13 years in the NHL for the New York Rangers and Tampa Bay Lightning. He retired in 2019, and Adams is looking forward to the Welland, Ontario native getting to work with the kids on defense.

"Dan is a fresh perspective and will be very relatable in certain ways, especially with the way the game's played now," Adams said.

The team was off on Wednesday, so their first exposure to the new coaching staff will be at Thursday's morning skate. Girardi is under quarantine, so Rochester Americans head coach Seth Appert will help out on Thursday.

In case you missed any of Adams' comments with the Buffalo media, you can listen to the entire conference call below:

Sabres fire Ralph Krueger as head coach

By Brayton J. Wilson

WGR 550

March 17, 2021

Ralph Krueger's tenure as head coach of the Buffalo Sabres is officially over.

The team announced Wednesday morning that Krueger has been relieved of his duties with the team after a 36-49-12 run in 97 games as head coach.

General manager Kevyn Adams also announced late Wednesday morning that assistant coach Don Granato will serve as the interim head coach on the Buffalo bench. Sportsnet hockey insider Elliotte Friedman was the first to report this shortly after the announcement of Krueger's firing.

In addition to Krueger's exit from the organization, the team has also relieved assistant coach Steve Smith of his duties.

With Granato shifting to become the interim head coach, director of player personnel Matt Ellis will step in behind the bench to serve as one of his interim assistant coaches. Meanwhile, player development coach and former NHL defenseman Dan Girardi will also step in behind the bench to replace Steve Smith.

The Sabres are currently staring at a 12-game winless streak that dates back to Feb. 25. It is the second-longest winless streak in franchise history, where Buffalo has gone 0-10-2 in that stretch. The Sabres also have the worst home record in the NHL this season at 2-10-2, currently riding a nine-game losing streak at KeyBank Center.

Overall this season, the Sabres are 6-18-4 in the NHL standings, sitting in last place with just 16 points and a points percentage of .286.

Here is where the Sabres stand in other areas of their game compared to the rest of the NHL:

- Ninth-best power play unit in the NHL (26.0%)
- 15th-best penalty kill unit in the NHL (79.7%)
- Lowest scoring team in the NHL (58 goals)
- Lowest goals per-game rate in the NHL (2.07)
- Eighth-most goals-against in the NHL (95)
- Third-highest goals-against rate in the NHL (3.39)
- Fifth-lowest shots per-game rate in the NHL (28.1)
- 13th-highest shots-against per-game rate in the NHL (30.8)

Krueger was hired as head coach of the Sabres in May of 2019 after serving as a chairman for the Southampton Football Club in the English Premier League for five years.

In his first season as head coach with the Sabres, Krueger led the team to a 30-31-8 record in 69 games before the season was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team finished the 2019-20 campaign in sixth place in the Atlantic Division standings, while missing out on the NHL's Return To Play plan by three points as the 12-seed in the Eastern Conference.

The 61-year-old had previous head coaching experience in the National Hockey League with the Edmonton Oilers during the 2012-13 lockout shortened season. In 48 games as head coach in Edmonton, Krueger led his team to a 19-22-7 record and 45 points in the standings.

Krueger's coaching track record dates back to 1989, when he served as a player-coach in the German second-tier league with Duisburger SV. He ended up becoming the head coach of VEU Feldkirch in the Austrian National League during the 1991-92 season, and went on to lead the team to five-straight league championships. In 1998, he was named as the head coach of the Swiss national men's ice hockey team, and he served in that position until 2010. During that time, he also served as a European Consultant for the Carolina Hurricanes from 2005 to 2010, which includes the team's Stanley Cup in 2006.

After his coaching tenure with the Oilers, Krueger went on to serve as a team consultant to Hockey Canada for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. He also served as the head coach for Team Europe at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, where he led the European squad to a surprising second-place finish in the tournament. They ended up losing to Team Canada in the final round in a best-of-three series.

In case you missed any of Kevyn Adams' comments with the media, you can listen to the entire conference call below:

Ralph Krueger's firing, what the Sabres do now and what comes next: GM Kevyn Adams speaks

By John Vogl

The Athletic

March 17, 2021

Kevyn Adams listened to the Sabres' players, which is why Ralph Krueger's coaching tenure lasted longer than expected. Now it's the players' turn to listen to Adams.

"There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey," the general manager said Wednesday. "There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey Player, of looking around and saying, 'I'm one of the 700 or 800 in the league that get to do this every day.'"

"And that has to be something that just is inside you and drives you to be better every single day. (They need) to love to look around the city of Buffalo and see Sabres hats and signs and people wearing jerseys. That matters, and that has to be within the DNA of our team."

The coach helps instill that attitude, and the search is on yet again. Adams fired Krueger after a 6-18-4 start, a necessary move as the Sabres continue to look for an identity during their 10-year journey into the abyss.

"There will be a lot of people that I will speak to," Adams said. "What I don't want to do is rush into anything or make a quick decision without truly taking as much time as we need because this is about getting it right."

"This is about getting the right person, and it's critical."

As the Sabres look for their seventh coach in nine seasons, here's a Q&A on what happened and what's next.

Why was Krueger fired?

The numbers say it all. The coach was 7-24-4 in his last 35 games, including 0-10-2 in the last 12. This season, on a per game basis, the Sabres are last in goals scored and third in goals allowed.

"It felt right that it needed to be done now," said Adams, who called Krueger early Wednesday morning. "It was a very honest and hard conversation. (He was) obviously disappointed and believed to his core that he could turn this around, but my job was just to tell him where I thought we were and have an honest conversation."

"This is a chance for us to move forward and to begin to get this thing pointed in the right direction."

The only reason Krueger lasted this long was the fondness most players had for him.

"Wins and losses are what you're judged on and what happens in the standings, but it's deeper than that," Adams said. "Part of this was understanding our players' mindset, and the players really, really love Ralph Krueger."

"Ultimately, the results speak for themselves."

What's the monetary impact?

Krueger remains under contract through the 2021-22 season at \$3.75 million per year.

Who's coaching now?

Assistant coach Don Granato is the interim coach and will be joined on the bench by director of player development Matt Ellis and development coach Dan Girardi. Assistant coach Mike Bales and video coach Myles Fee remain on the staff.

Granato was a head coach in the American Hockey League, but neither Ellis nor Girardi has been on an NHL bench.

"Matt has been with the team all season in his development role," Adams said of the taxi-squad leader. "He's been on the ice every day, so I don't see any sort of burn-in time for him in terms of relationships with players."

"Dan Girardi, for me, is someone that was very, very well-respected in the league when he played. High character, high compete, thought the game very well as a defenseman, which I thought would be very helpful in a short time to bring some fresh perspective."

Adams fired assistant coach Steve Smith, who was a holdover from the Phil Housley era.

"It was just getting a fresh perspective, different voice," Adams said.

Who's coaching next?

The field is wide open. Adams is willing to wait for the NHL, AHL and NCAA seasons to end so he can interview the largest pool possible.

"This isn't that easy of a time to just have conversations and meet people face-to-face," Adams said. "I don't want to be rushed in anything. It's about getting it right."

What traits appeal to Adams?

"Relationships are important," he said. "You need to build trust and relationships with players, but there has to be an accountability that goes with that."

Going back through the most recent coaches, Dan Bylsma was unable to connect with the players. Housley was too easily ignored. Krueger lacked the X's and O's.

The Sabres need a combination of those three, someone who will demand the best out of players and actually get it.

Will Adams have help hiring the next coach?

The biggest surprise of the Zoom call was Adams revealing he will hire an assistant GM. While he was always open to the idea, he had never formally embraced it.

"If you go back to June, one of the things we talked about is finding the right people and maybe catching my breath, understanding everything that was going on and evaluating where we see that we need to fill in," Adams said.

One candidate, according to Eliotte Friedman of "Hockey Night in Canada," is former Penguins assistant GM Jason Karmanos. He was an executive in Carolina when Adams played there. Karmanos has won Stanley Cups with the Hurricanes and Penguins.

Will the firings make a difference on the ice?

Maybe a small one. Hopefully, Granato relaxes some of Krueger's "defensive principles" and plays more aggressively.

But at the midpoint of the season, the Sabres have zero chance of making the playoffs. The goal now is to have respectable outings rather than 6-0 shellackings.

"I don't care where we are in the standings right now," Adams said. "You have to just love to show up every day and want to compete and be a Buffalo Sabre."

What moves are next?

The trade deadline is April 12. Adams' goal should be to find new homes for all the pending unrestricted free agents, including Taylor Hall, Eric Staal, Tobias Rieder and Brandon Montour.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said. "My job is to do anything and everything to make this franchise move in the right direction."

What's the overall message from the GM?

"We have to be better in every single area of this organization," Adams said. "It starts with me. I need to manage better. I need to be better in every way. We need to coach better. We need to scout better. We need to develop players better. We need to practice better."

"You name it, we need to do it better. Period."

Ralph Krueger's firing was inevitable as Sabres fall to laughingstock status

By John Vogl

The Athletic

March 17, 2021

The Sabres did something rare in the hockey world when they hired Ralph Krueger. They went outside the box. They skipped over the group of coaches who get hired in a never-ending circle, opting for fresh thinking from a worldly man.

It started well in 2019. Players adored Krueger, calling him the best coach they ever had and an alpha male with the leadership skills to turn around the organization.

They won his first game in Pittsburgh. They blew out New Jersey in his home opener, a game that had harkened back to the good old days. Buffalo started 9-2-1, and it seemed a new era had begun.

That era is over.

With the Sabres sinking to Tank-like levels, Buffalo fired Krueger on Wednesday. It was inevitable. There was listless play on the ice and increasing distractions off it. The Sabres and their coach had descended to laughingstock status.

Despite writing a book on motivation, Krueger couldn't coax Buffalo out of the basement. The retooled roster is littered with underachievers, starting with the top line and filtering down to the taxi squad. In Krueger's final days, his only answer for the disappointing year was the players' lack of confidence.

There was so much more.

The Sabres were lost in the defensive zone, giving opponents time and space to torment goalies. The team did nothing in the offensive end, simply pushing the puck into traffic. The Sabres wilted under the slightest adversity, steadily watching their deficits double in a matter of minutes.

The teamwide trends pointed the blame toward Krueger. Established scorers Jack Eichel, Taylor Hall, Jeff Skinner and Eric Staal forgot how to find the net. Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju didn't recall how to defend.

It seemed no one had a clue, which was endorsed by the standings. First, the Sabres sank to the bottom of the East Division. A horrible 2-15-2 skid sent them to the bottom of the NHL. All but one of those games came after the Sabres paused two weeks because of COVID-19.

"Anything I mention right now is going to be perceived as an excuse and misunderstood, so it's a dangerous area to go to," Krueger said after Tuesday's loss in New Jersey. "I think everybody knows what the facts are. Everybody knows there was adversity along the way. Everybody knows that we are still dealing with that.

"But it's not that anybody's interested in. Everybody's measuring it all on results."

Last place has been a common home for the Sabres during the past decade, but most of those teams had last-place rosters. After adding Hall, Staal and Dylan Cozens to the core of Eichel, Dahlin, Skinner, Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson, the Sabres thought they had a chance to end their playoff drought.

Instead, it will reach an NHL-high 10 seasons this spring.

Krueger's lineup choices routinely antagonized fans. He'd claim 20-year-old Cozens needed rest but skated Ristolainen for 22 minutes despite COVID-19 fatigue. The coach bumped Kyle Okposo and his zero goals into the top six.

But his two-season use of Skinner rankled fans the most. Fresh off a 40-goal season under former coach Phil Housley, Skinner got sent to the bottom six. Then Krueger sent him to the press box. Though it started as a hockey decision – the coach wanted scoring on all lines – it appeared to become personal, based on the coach's comments about Skinner compared to the rest of the players.

Krueger also got caught fabricating a story about his star player this season. While all coaches bend the truth with player injuries, this was different. Eichel wasn't playing hurt, Krueger said, then he was. The center missed two games after sustaining a new injury in warm-ups, Krueger said, but Eichel came back to say he didn't get hurt in warm-ups.

The coach's credibility took a hit.

Even when everyone was healthy, Krueger stuck to his defensive "principles" despite a potentially powerful offense. The focus was preventing goals, not scoring them, but the Sabres did neither. The five-on-five offense slid to embarrassing levels, but Krueger steadfastly maintained his system wasn't to blame, just the players' confidence.

Each of the missteps, not necessarily fatal on their own, combined to make Krueger's employment indefensible. He remains under contract through next season at \$3.75 million.

Former general manager Jason Botterill plucked Krueger from relative obscurity, at least compared to previous bench bosses Dan Bylsma and Housley. Krueger had a half-season stint with the Oilers in 2013, but he spent most of his career in Europe, winning titles in Austria and leading the Swiss Olympic team.

He devoted the five years prior to his 2019 arrival as chairman of the Southampton soccer club in England. He had a brief stint coaching Team Europe at the 2016 World Cup of Hockey, but other than phone calls to coaching friends, he was essentially out of the sport.

Still, the hiring was worth a shot. Sabres players disliked the egocentric Bylsma. They chewed up the inexperienced Housley. Krueger walked in as a man of knowledge with a background in motivation. The players gravitated toward him.

But they couldn't play to their potential under him, so he's gone.

After firing Ralph Krueger, Sabres GM Kevyn Adams wants more passion

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 17, 2021

In explaining why he fired Ralph Krueger, Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams appealed to his players' pride.

Adams wanted to keep Krueger, a coach he said his players believed in and "really, really love." The rookie GM stood by him for weeks, allowing the Sabres to implode and their losing streak to balloon to 12 games.

But Wednesday morning, hours after the Sabres' 3-2 road loss to the New Jersey Devils, Adams knew he had to make a change and start overhauling what has become a rotten culture. He met with Krueger, 61, and dismissed him.

"The results speak for themselves," said Adams, whose Sabres rank dead last in the NHL. "The standings speak for themselves. We're not where we need to be and I felt it was the right time to make the change."

Adams named Don Granato, one of Krueger's assistants, the interim coach. He said a search for a replacement will begin immediately.

When the Sabres arrive at KeyBank Center on Thursday morning to prepare for their game against the Boston Bruins, Adams said he will have a "very honest conversation" with his players. He's clearly livid with them.

If they loved playing for Krueger so much, why did they abandon the on-ice principles he often spoke about and give so many soft, embarrassing efforts over the last month? Why weren't they more accountable?

"There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey," Adams said on a Zoom call. "There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey League player, of looking around and saying I'm one of the 700, 800 ... that get to do this every day.

"And that has to be something that is just inside you and drives you to be better every single day. To love, to look around the City of Buffalo and see Sabres hats and signs and people wearing jerseys – that matters."

Adams said that must become ingrained in the team's DNA.

"I don't care where we are in the standings right now," he said. "If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of that season have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable. And that is going to be a message and something that I'm going to spend time on.

"As we evaluate players, as we scout players, that needs to be part of it. You just have to love to show up every day and want to compete and be a Buffalo Sabre."

The Sabres own an awful 6-18-4 record. They've lost 16 of 18 games since their COVID-19 pause ended. They will almost certainly tie a league record by missing playoffs for the 10th straight season.

Adams said Krueger "believed to his core that he could turn this around."

"But my job was to tell him where I felt we were and have an honest conversation," he said.

The Sabres also fired assistant coach Steve Smith, who was in charge of the defensemen.

"It was just getting a fresh perspective, different voice," Adams said of letting him go. "Steve's been here a few years."

Matt Ellis, the Sabres' director of player development, and Dan Girardi, a development coach, will move behind the bench as assistants.

While Adams is unhappy with his players, he knows everyone in the organization must improve.

"We need to coach better, we need to scout better, we need to develop players better," he said. "We need to practice better. I mean, you name it, we need to do it better. Period."

Adams, a Clarence native, said the Sabres must build an identity and create a special environment.

"(The) players love playing, they compete hard, the fans love watching it and it's all connected," he said. "I know, I've seen it in this town before. I know what that does for our fan base, and I understand that and we're not there. ...

"Every part of our organization has to better, and it starts with me. The accountability factor is something that is real and we all have to understand that. And it's not saying, 'Oh, if this guy was better over here or they were better or there.' It's all of us looking in the mirror."

The Sabres' next coach will be their sixth in eight seasons. Krueger ended his tenure with a 36-49-12 record.

In Adams and Krueger, Sabres owners Terry and Kim Pegula thought they possessed a GM-coach duo that would last years, not months. While Adams inherited Krueger, they developed a strong relationship and worked well together, teaming up nine months ago when the Pegulas' mass firings created a skeleton staff.

The Sabres, despite an awful five-on-five attack, enjoyed a solid start this season, entering their COVID-19 pause with a 4-4-2 mark. But they quickly regressed after the break, losing their first three games. They haven't won since Feb. 23.

As the losses piled up, it became only a matter of when, not if, Krueger would be fired.

"It's been a tough day," Adams acknowledged.

Don Granato takes over Sabres with coaching search underway

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 17, 2021

For the time being, Don Granato, a 53-year-old hockey lifer who has spent the last 27 years coaching or scouting in pro, college and junior, is leading the hapless Buffalo Sabres.

The Sabres on Wednesday named Granato their interim coach after firing Ralph Krueger in the midst of a 12-game losing streak.

Granato, who joined Krueger's staff as an assistant last season, will be behind the bench Thursday against the Boston Bruins at KeyBank Center.

"Don Granato's been a head coach for many years at different levels – professional hockey, he's been in the college game, he's been in the national program, has a development background, has a teacher kind of mentality, so he's commanded a room as a head coach before," Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said on a Zoom call.

Adams, who inherited Krueger, said the search for a new coach will begin immediately. He wouldn't put a timeline on hiring someone.

"For me, it's about getting it right," Adams said. "If we felt it was absolutely the right person and it happens quicker than OK. ... It's so important, the people and how we move forward. We have to make sure on this."

"It's so important, the people and how we move forward. We have to make sure on this."

The job, of course, isn't exactly attractive. The Sabres have burned through five coaches – Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley and Krueger – since the beginning of the 2013-14 season, a stunning number that illustrates their futility.

If you're an established coach or a notable coaching prospect, why would you join an organization with a history of dysfunction and losing? The Sabres haven't made the playoffs in 10 years. Adams in their third GM in less than four years.

Adams wouldn't reveal much of what he's looking for in his next coach.

"I'm not going to put any guardrails on anything right now, I'm not going to get into specifics," he said.

Adams, who was hired in June, acknowledged he has been thinking about the attributes and characteristics he believes will be important for the organization.

"There will be a lot of people that I will speak to," he said. "There will be other people part of the process as we go along. But what I don't want to do is rush into anything or make a quick decision without truly taking as much time as we need because this is about getting it right. It's great to say, 'I'm looking for this or that,' or 'They have to have this or that.' This is about getting the right person and it's critical."

Adams said he places an importance on coaches who build relationships, something Krueger did over his short tenure.

"You need to build trust and relationships with players, but there needs to be an accountability that goes with that," he said. "That's something I just think is really important overall and I think every player that's played understands that too. That's what players want."

Granato has been a head coach for 17 seasons during career. He started with the junior United States Hockey League's Wisconsin Capitols in 1993-94. After moving up to pro hockey, he won a championship with the ECHL's Peoria Rivermen in 1999-00.

He parlayed that season into a five-year AHL gig coaching the Worcester IceCats. He led another AHL team, the Chicago Wolves, following a one-year stint as an assistant with the St. Louis Blues in 2005-06.

Granato coached a young Jack Eichel, who's now Buffalo's captain, during his time with USA Hockey's National Team Development program. He has also been an associate coach under his brother, Tony, at the University of Wisconsin, and an assistant with the Chicago Blackhawks.

Their sister, Cammi, was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2010 and is currently a scout for the Seattle Kraken. Tony Granato scored 30 or more goals four times in his 13-year NHL career.

Don Granato was hospitalized in intensive care with severe pneumonia early last season and missed nearly two months. Following the Sabres' COVID-19 pause last month, he briefly fulfilled his coaching duties from a suite instead of the bench.

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Adams said he's looking to hire an assistant general manager. When the Sabres fired GM Jason Botterill last year, they also let go of his two assistants, Steve Greeley and Randy Sexton.

The Sabres haven't hired an assistant for Adams, who had no front office experience before becoming GM.

"If you go back to June, one of the things we talked about is finding the right people and kind of maybe catching my breath and understanding everything that was going on and evaluating where we see that we need to fill in, knowing all along that we absolutely had to fill in certain roles," Adams said. "That's something that I'm working on right now."

The Buffalo News reported the Sabres have received permission from the Penguins to interview Jason Karmanos, who's still under contract with Pittsburgh. Karmanos has served as an assistant GM with the Penguins and Carolina Hurricanes.

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Adams said the Sabres are hopeful Eichel, who's out indefinitely with an upper-body injury, can return this season.

"It's been out publicly that he has to serve a quarantine after getting a second opinion (out of state), so we're almost out of that situation and we'll be reevaluating," he said.

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Adams said development coach Dan Girardi, who has been shifted behind the bench to replace Steve Smith, will likely miss Thursday's game because of quarantine rules. The Sabres might summon Rochester Americans coach Seth Appert to fill in.

Girardi, 36, played 927 games as an NHL defenseman, mostly with the New York Rangers.

"(He) was very, very well respected in the league when he played," Adams said. "High character, high compete, thought the game very well as a defenseman, which I thought would be very helpful in short time to bring a fresh perspective."

"I've been extremely impressed with Dan in his role as a development coach on our staff for the past few months, the attention to detail he's showed, the discipline, the amount of work he's done with our prospects. There's always transition and kind of finding our way."

Adams said Matt Ellis, who was also shifted behind the bench, will continue in his role as the Sabres' director of player development.

Sabres could re-sign or trade Taylor Hall: ‘Open to anything’

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres are “open to anything and everything” regarding winger Taylor Hall’s future, general manager Kevyn Adams said.

The Sabres could re-sign Hall, who can become an unrestricted free agent this summer. Hall, 29, recently expressed interest in staying in Buffalo.

But the hapless Sabres, who fired coach Ralph Krueger on Wednesday in the midst of a 12-game losing streak, could also trade Hall. The 2017-18 NHL MVP has a no-movement clause in the one-year, \$8 million contract he signed.

Adams said he has already spoken to Darren Ferris, Hall’s agent. The NHL trade deadline is April 12.

“My job is to do anything and everything to make this franchise move in the right direction,” Adams said on a Zoom call Wednesday. “I have a very good relationship with Darren Ferris and Taylor. Open lines of communication and obviously days are moving forward here, so there will be a lot of conversations around that.”

Hall, who joined the Sabres, in part, because of Krueger, has struggled this season, compiling just two goals, 16 points and a minus-17 rating in 28 games.

Sabres fire coach Ralph Krueger, tab Don Granato as interim leader

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres fired coach Ralph Krueger this morning in the midst of a stunning stretch in which the hapless team has lost 12 consecutive games and 16 of 18 since its COVID-19 pause ended.

Don Granato, an assistant under Krueger, will serve as the Sabres' interim coach, general manager Kevyn Adams said. The Sabres also fired Steve Smith, Krueger's top assistant.

Matt Ellis, the Sabres' director of player development, and Dan Girardi, a development coach, will move behind the bench as assistants.

Adams said a search for Krueger's replacement will begin immediately.

The Sabres own an awful 6-18-4 record and rank dead last in the NHL. They will almost certainly tie a league record by missing playoffs for the 10th straight season.

"It felt right that it needed to be done now," Adams said on a Zoom call this morning. "I think we could talk about could have been done before. For me, this is about results that haven't been good enough and I look and evaluate everything and I was trying to take a real, honest, fair evaluation, understanding the adversity and the situation our team was in, taking it all into account.

"But it felt like the right time now and this is about all moving forward. This is about, how do we improve? I do believe every crisis is an opportunity for positive change and this is a chance for us to move forward and to begin to get this thing pointed in the right direction."

Tuesday's 3-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils, who had lost 11 straight home contests, was Krueger's final game.

The Sabres compiled a 4-4-3 mark in January, a solid start by their low standards. But they quickly fell apart when their two-week pause ended Feb. 15. Krueger and seven players tested positive for COVID-19.

They've been downright terrible over the last month, struggling to score goals and defend. They've often showcased an alarming lack of passion and looked soft, buckling under the tiniest bit of adversity. Nearly every player is having a down season.

Krueger received criticism for not adapting his system to his players' talents. For example, struggling winger Jeff Skinner, who has a history of goal scoring, has been relegated to the fourth line nearly all season. Krueger scratched him three consecutive games last month and even sent him to practice with the taxi squad.

The Sabres' current 0-10-2 streak began Feb. 22, the day Krueger benched Skinner for the first time.

Krueger, 61, ended his season and a half tenure with a 36-49-12 record.

When asked about his tenuous job status following Tuesday's game, Krueger said he doesn't "go there with my mind."

"All I can say is I continue to enjoy doing this job, also in a difficult time," he said on a Zoom call. "It's easy to stand here when things are going well. It's not that easy to stand here right now in this adversity. But I know we are learning and growing as an organization and we will take strength out of this in the future."

Granato, 53, is the Sabres' sixth coach in eight seasons. He's in his fifth season as an NHL assistant. He has been a head coach in the AHL, ECHL and the United States Hockey League.

"This is about moving forward", Sabres to finish season without Ralph Krueger

By Jenna Callari

WKBW

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO, NY (WKBW) — "I need to be better in every way. We need to coach better, scout better, develop players better, practice better. You name it, we need to do it better, period."

It wasn't an easy decision for GM Kevyn Adams, but it was a decision that had to be made. On Wednesday the Sabres relieved head coach Ralph Krueger of his duties, midway through the 2021 season and less than two years from the day he was hired.

"This is about results that haven't been good enough. I look and evaluate everything and I was trying to take a real honest fair evaluation, understanding the adversity and the situation our team was in, taking it all into account," Adams said about why Ralph's firing came Wednesday morning. "But it felt like the right time now and this is about moving forward."

For fans, it felt like a long time coming. The Sabres are off to a 6-18-4 start and are currently winless in 12 straight games [0-10-2] dating back to February 23rd. In that time span, the Sabres have been shut out four times and outscored 49-19. Adams plans on having a conversation with the players on Thursday when they return to the building for a morning skate.

"There has to be a pride in putting on a Sabres jersey," Adams said. "I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we can't show up at the rink and for the rest of the season, have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable. As we evaluate and scout players, that's going to be a part of it. You have to show up every day to compete and love to be a Buffalo Sabre."

Krueger becomes the latest victim of the Sabres' head coach carousel. Since Lindy Ruff's firing in 2013, five coaches [Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley, Krueger] have been hired and let go with each lasting no more than two full seasons.

"The focus is moving forward. I understand from the fan base and the media that's been living through this over the last couple of years, I have sympathy. I get it. I understand," Adams said about the outside frustration. "It's about getting this right and moving forward and doing anything and everything to make that happen."

Along with Krueger's firing, assistant coach Steve Smith was also let go. The team announced Don Granato would take over as interim head coach with Matt Ellis and Dan Girardi joining the team as assistant coaches. Granato will coach tomorrow's home game against Boston.

"There's always a transition and finding your way and we have 28 games in 53 days coming up," Adams said. "It's going to move fast but I have no doubt all three of them will jump right in."

A search for Krueger's permanent replacement is effective immediately. Adams says they don't plan on rushing into a decision, saying it's about "getting the right person".

Ralph Krueger fired as Sabres head coach midway through 2021 season

By Jenna Callari

WKBW

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) — Ralph Krueger is out as head coach of the Buffalo Sabres.

The move was announced Wednesday, less than two weeks after Sabres GM Kevyn Adams admitted his "anger" with how the Sabres have performed this season. When asked about Krueger's status with the team, he would only say everything was being evaluated.

Krueger was hired in May of 2019 to be the 5th head coach of the Sabres since Lindy Ruff was relieved of his duties in 2013 [hired in 1997]. Since then, no head coach has lasted more than two full seasons.

Buffalo Public Schools

The Sabres most recently lost to the New Jersey Devils in a game played Tuesday night, continuing an extremely disappointing season. The team is dead last in the NHL standings with a 6-18-4 record which includes being shut out six times. They haven't won a game since February 23rd, currently riding an 12-game winless streak (0-10-2).

The Sabres are back on the ice Thursday, March 18th when they host the Boston Bruins.

Sabres fire Ralph Krueger, Don Granato in as interim head coach

By Evan Anstey, Troy Licastro

WIVB

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) — After a series of losses, Buffalo Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger is out, and interim head coach Don Granato is in.

Joining Granato is Assistant Coaches Matt Ellis and Dan Girardi.

News of the firing came out Wednesday morning.

On Tuesday night, the Sabres' losing streak reached 12 losses, with the New Jersey Devils claiming the latest victory against them.

This was Krueger's second season coaching the Sabres — a team who's record last season was 30-31-8.

The Sabres are currently in last place in the NHL's East Division, with six wins, 18 losses and four overtime losses.

How the Sabres' latest losing streak stacks up

General Manager Kevyn Adams addressed the media Wednesday morning.

Adams said it felt right that it needed to be done now.

"For me, this is about results that haven't been good enough. I look and evaluate everything and I was trying to take a real, honest, fair evaluation. It felt like the right time now."

Adams said he wouldn't get into specifics when asked about what he's looking for in the next head coach, but said the search will be "effective immediately."

"I have in my head characteristics that will be important for this organization moving forward...this is about getting it right," Adams added.

Adams wouldn't put a timeline on hiring a coach saying it's about getting it right.

"So if we felt that it was absolutely the best person and it happens quicker, then ok," Adams said. "I don't want to be rushed into anything."

He says getting better in every single area in the organization starts with him.

"I need to manage better. You name it, we need to do it better. Period."

Adams also spoke of Krueger's disappointment after learning of his firing first thing this morning.

"I've learned a lot from Ralph and it was a very honest and hard conversation. My job was just to tell him where I felt we were and have an honest conversation," Adams said.

Sounds like the team is hopeful that captain Jack Eichel will return to the lineup this season.

Adams said Eichel had to serve a COVID quarantine after getting a second opinion on his injury. Eichel should be finished with that soon, Adams told the media.

Hamilton Take2: Adams takes command; Sabres' search for coach begins

By Paul Hamilton

WGRZ

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — With Ralph Krueger being dismissed on Wednesday, Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams is now the guy in charge.

I've confirmed that in a meeting with Terry and Kim Pegula, Adams outlined his vision for this organization, and the Pegulas put the team in his hands. Originally they gave Krueger the same type of power they gave Sean McDermott, and they found out quickly that it was an utter failure.

Adams is going to do a thorough search for a new head coach, but in the meantime, it's Don Granato. I totally applaud this approach because with failures like Ron Rolston, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley, and Krueger, this team can't afford to get it wrong.

Adams confirmed that he's close to hiring an assistant general manager, and Sportsnet reports that it's former Pittsburgh Penguins and Carolina Hurricanes assistant GM Jason Karmonos. Karmonos was with the Canes when Adams was a player there, and they won a Stanley Cup together.

I think with the way the Pegulas have gutted this organization in the name of money, Adams is going to have a tough time attracting a top coach here.

What coach wants to come to an organization that fires coaches every two years, has no boots on the ground in the scouting department, and has everybody in the hockey department doing their job for the first time in their careers? I didn't even mention that it's a team that hasn't been in the playoffs for a record-tying 10th straight year.

When Krueger wanted Chris Taylor gone, he brought in a college coach in Seth Appert, who had four winning seasons in 11 years at RPI. His record with the Engineers was 152-221-48, and he was fired after the 2016-17 season, when he posted a record of 8-28-1. He was hired for the Amerks because he came cheap and was no threat to Krueger.

Former Canisius coach Dave Smith took over for Appert at RPI, and after two losing seasons he has turned the program around, going 17-15-2 this season.

I wouldn't be surprised if Adams knocked on the door of Providence coach Nate Leaman or Minnesota Duluth coach Scott Sandelin. Sandelin won three NCAA championships in nine seasons with the Bulldogs, including 2019 in Buffalo. He has always turned down inquires from NHL teams, but who knows when he might be ready to make the jump.

Leaman was also in Buffalo for the Frozen Four with the Friars. He has won one NCAA championship with Providence.

If Adams goes the college way, it would be cheaper, and we all know money drives all decisions when it comes to the Buffalo Sabres these days.

I would have the same questions about two highly successful college coaches. If they decide to jump to the NHL, would they want to put their reputations on the line with a team that has gutted its hockey and scouting departments?

It may boil down to candidates who are desperate to get a NHL head coaching job. That could be Providence Bruins coach Jay Leach. Leach has been a highly successful regular season coach in his three seasons with the Bruins, but he lost in the first round of the Calder Cup playoffs in his two seasons in the playoffs.

Interim coach Don Granato has only been an assistant in the NHL with Buffalo, the St. Louis Blues, and the Chicago Blackhawks. As far as head coaching experience, he spent three years in the USHL with the Green Bay Gamblers. In his last season he lost in the Clark Cup Finals.

Next was three seasons in the ECHL with the Columbus Chill and Peoria Rivermen. He won the Turner Cup with Peoria.

Granato spent six years as a head coach in the American Hockey League with the Worcester IceCats and Chicago Wolves. The best he ever did there was lose in the second round of the playoffs.

He then went back to the USHL for three seasons as coach of the U.S. National Under-17 team, and in his last two seasons he had a combined record of 36-12-0.

Yes, I know, former NHL coaches Bruce Boudreau, Gerard Gallant, and Claude Julien are out there, but I think they would cost way too much money to bring in here.

In 14 seasons, Boudreau has a points percentage of .635 with the Washington Capitals, Anaheim Ducks, and Minnesota Wild.

In 19 seasons, Julien won the Stanley Cup with the Boston Bruins. His overall points percentage with Boston, the Montreal Canadiens, and New Jersey Devils is .587.

Gallant has spent nine seasons coaching in the NHL with the Florida Panthers, Vegas Golden Knights, and Columbus Blue Jackets. His career points percentage is .550.

Both times Adams spoke in the past two weeks, he got angrier and angrier when it came to the players on this team. The GM has watched the same thing that we have seen the past month, a team that goes through the motions with no emotion and no direction.

Adams is going to be addressing the team on Thursday, and his message is going to be crystal clear.

Adams said it will be a very honest conversation about having some pride in the jersey, having some pride in the fact that you're an NHL player, and having some pride in the history of the team and city you play for.

There are players on this team who wouldn't know Gil Perreault if they fell over him, nor do they care. Adams has a Stanley Cup ring and was one of the captains of that Hurricanes team.

That has never mattered to some of these players as they ignore and scoff at players who are long time and respected leaders in this league. They have all the answers, and good luck to Adams trying to get through to them.

Sabres fire head coach Ralph Krueger

By Julianne Pelusi

WGRZ

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres announced Wednesday morning on Twitter that head coach Ralph Krueger and assistant coach Steve Smith have been relieved of their duties.

"For me, this is about results that hadn't been good enough," General Manager Kevyn Adams said after the firing.

"I was trying to take a real, honest, fair evaluation, understanding the adversity and the situation our team was in - taking it all into account - but it felt like the right time now, and this is about moving forward."

The Sabres have struggled through the 2021 season, and are 6-18-4 as of Wednesday morning. Things got worse for the team after their season paused for two weeks in February because of a COVID-19 outbreak among the team. Krueger also tested positive for the virus in that time frame, and said he experienced moderate to severe symptoms, like aches and fatigue.

The Sabres went 2-14-2 since their return from the outbreak and are currently on a 12-game losing streak. The final of Krueger's 97 games as head coach was a 3-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils, who had lost 11-straight games at home, on Tuesday night.

Krueger had been with the team since 2019 and was the sixth coach of the Pegula ownership. Since Terry Pegula was introduced as owner Lindy Ruff, Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley and, until this morning, Krueger have manned the Sabres' bench.

Assistant Coach Don Granato will take over in the interim. The Sabres' Director of Player Development, Matt Ellis, and Development Coach, Dan Girardi, will take over as assistant coaches.

Many analysts have said for weeks now that this announcement was a matter of "when" not "if". In fact, on Tuesday, Channel 2 Sports Director Adam Benigni expressed his surprise that the Sabres had still not made a coaching change.

Adams said the decision was still difficult. "Ultimately wins and losses are what you're judged on and what happens in the standings, but it's deeper than that... The players really, really love Ralph Krueger. They respect him and believe in Ralph... so understanding that dynamic of where our locker room was like obviously talking to a lot of players, how are they doing with each other," Adams said.

"I've been part of situations in the past as a player where when things aren't going well, it can get toxic quick. It really can. Trying to keep a pulse on that, our locker room, the guys are getting along, the coaches communicated well with the players throughout this whole process. For me, that's part of the evaluation and then obviously you have all the other stuff that goes along with the coaching part. Ultimately, the results speak for themselves. The standings speak for themselves. We're not where we need to be and I felt it was the right time to make the change."

Now the search for a new head coach begins, and Adams said he will not rush the process.

"I have in my head and I've thought a lot about this recently, characteristics and attributes that I think will be important for this organization, this team moving forward. There will be a lot of people that I will speak to. There will be other people part of the process as we go along," Adams said. "What I don't want to do is rush into anything of make a quick decision without truly taking as much time as we need because this is about getting it right... This is about getting the right person and it's critical."

Adams will have more than coaching vacancies to fill, and ahead of his first trade deadline as a general manager, he said he is looking to hire an assistant general manager now.

He also plans to address the culture surrounding the team with the players on Thursday.

"I'm going to have a very honest conversation about that tomorrow when our players are here. There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey. There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey League player... and that has to be something that is just inside you and drives you to be better every single day," Adams said.

Adams said the passionate fanbase in Buffalo needs to drive the players and be a part of the team's DNA.

"I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of that season have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable," Adams said. "That is going to be a message and something that I'm going to spend time on. As we evaluate players, as we scout players, that needs to be part of it. You just have to love to show up every day and want to compete and be a Buffalo Sabre."

Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger fired

WHAM

March 17 2021

(WHAM) - Ralph Krueger has been fired as the head coach of the Buffalo Sabres.

The team announced his dismissal Wednesday morning after the Sabres lost 2-3 to the New Jersey Devils, the latest in a 12-game losing streak.

The Sabres will promote current assistant coach Don Granato to interim head coach and then begin a search for a new head coach. that search will likely go into the off-season.

Krueger has been the latest in a string of head coaches to lead the team, which has failed to make the Stanley Cup playoffs since 2011 - the same year Terry and Kim Pegula took ownership of the team. The Pegulas own the Bills and the two franchises are trending in opposite directions.

The Sabres currently rank last in the NHL in victories and points with a 6-18-4 record

General manager Kevyn Adams, who is in his first year, plans to speak to media later Wednesday.

13WHAM Sports will continue to update this story as more information becomes available.

A dark cloud in a winning year

The Observer

March 17, 2021

There have been plenty of feel-good stories in the world of Western New York sports during the pandemic. Regionally, there have been storybook seasons for the University at Buffalo football team, the Buffalo Bills and the current run by the St. Bonaventure Bonnies in basketball.

On the flip side, the Buffalo Sabres are the ultimate horror show. On Wednesday morning, unpopular Coach Ralph Krueger was terminated. He — like so many other previous coaches for the team — is not the problem.

Just like with the Bills, it's all about attitude. For the last 10 years, especially since former General Manager Darcy Regier and Lindy Ruff have left, it has been worse than mediocrity.

No-names and recyclables such as Krueger, Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma and Phil Housley were not able to cultivate a winning attitude. That's due in part to a Sabre scheme in 2015 to lose and win a top draft choice.

In that instance of being the worst, the team succeeded. Unfortunately, it still does not know how to win.

Sure, they can change coaches — and probably will do so again in the next year. But this problem is all about the culture of the organization.

Until that gets fixed, the losses will continue to mount.

Sabres firing Krueger as coach only first step toward turning them around

By Nicholas J. Cotsonika

NHL.com

March 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres took a step toward turning themselves around when they fired coach Ralph Krueger on Wednesday, but it was a first step. What matters now is the next step, and the one after that, and the one after that.

Coaching is part of a larger picture. The Sabres (6-18-4) are last in the NHL this season, a big disappointment. But they likely will miss the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the 10th straight season, the longest drought in the NHL. What does that tell you?

"Of course, results matter," general manager Kevyn Adams said Wednesday. "This is a results business, and where we are is unacceptable. It speaks for itself. But it's deeper than that, and to change the culture and to do what we have to do to get this headed in the right direction, I felt this was the move we had to make."

Asked about changing the culture, Adams spoke of each member of the organization "stacking wins" in his or her role. He said he made a tough decision in firing Krueger, a smart, worldly man the players liked and in whom they believed, amid a season filled with injuries and COVID-19 disruptions. Assistant Don Granato replaces Krueger for now.

"Now my next decision has to be the right one, and it has to be the right one after that," Adams said.

The Sabres haven't had stability because they haven't had results; they haven't had results because they haven't had stability. Since 2013-14, they have made three GM changes, five coaching changes and many personnel moves.

Easier said than done, but they need a good plan and good people, and they need to give it, and them, time to work.

"We have to be better in every single area of this organization," Adams said. "It starts with me. I need to manage better, OK? I need to be better in every way. We need to coach better. We need to scout better. We need to develop players better. We need to practice better. I mean, you name it, we need to do it better, period."

Adams replaced Jason Botterill on June 16. He's a rookie GM. Asked if he needed help in the front office, he said, "Definitely." He said the search for an assistant GM is an ongoing process.

The immediate concern is setting the standard for the rest of this season. Adams said he would have a "very honest conversation" with the players Thursday about how they must have pride in wearing a Sabres jersey and playing in the NHL.

"That matters, and that has to be within the DNA of our team," Adams said. "So I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of this season have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable."

"And that is going to be a message and something that I'm going to spend time on, and as we evaluate players and we scout players, that needs to be part of it. You have just love to show up every day and want to compete and be a Buffalo Sabre."

The next concern is the NHL Trade Deadline on April 12. The Sabres need assets for the future and must make decisions on players like forward Taylor Hall, whom they signed to a one-year, \$8 million contract as an unrestricted free agent Oct. 11. Hall has 16 points (two goals, 14 assists) in 28 games, but he won the Hart Trophy as the NHL's most valuable player with the New Jersey Devils in 2017-18.

Adams said he has been speaking with Hall's agent. If Hall doesn't sign an extension, would the Sabres ask him to waive his no-trade clause?

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said.

The coaching decision can wait.

"The search will be effective immediately," Adams said. "I have in my head, and I've thought a lot about this recently, characteristics and attributes that I think will be important for this organization, for this team, moving forward. There will be a lot of people that I will speak to. There will be other people part of the process as we go along.

"But what I don't want to do is rush into anything or make a quick decision without truly taking as much time as we need, because this is about getting it right. It's great to say, 'I'm looking for this or that,' or, 'They have to have this or that.' This is about getting the right person, and it's critical."

Every step for the Sabres right now is critical.

Patience is a word Sabres fans and Buffalo media don't want to hear. Adams understands that. He said it was part of the story and it matters. But impatience could compound the Sabres' problems.

"Trust me," Adams said. "I get it. Like I've said over and over again in press conferences, I get it more than probably most people would. But it's about getting this right and moving forward, in my job doing everything and anything to make that happen."

Hall could be traded by Sabres; GM 'open to anything and everything'

By Heather Engel

NHL.com

March 17, 2021

BUFFALO -- Taylor Hall could be traded by the Buffalo Sabres prior to the NHL Trade Deadline on April 12, general manager Kevyn Adams said Wednesday.

The 29-year-old forward can become an unrestricted free agent after this season. He signed a one-year, \$8 million contract with the Sabres on Oct. 11, 2020.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said. "My job is to do anything and everything to make this franchise move in the right direction. I have a very good relationship with (Hall's agent) Darren Ferris and Taylor. Open lines of communication and obviously days are moving forward here, so there will be a lot of conversations around that."

Hall has scored 16 points (two goals, 14 assists) in 28 games for Buffalo this season, including six points (one goal, five assists) on the power play. Selected by the Edmonton Oilers with the No. 1 pick in the 2010 NHL Draft, Hall won the Hart Trophy voted as the NHL most valuable player in 2017-18, after he scored an NHL career-high 93 points (39 goals, 54 assists) in 76 games with the New Jersey Devils.

The Sabres, who have lost straight games (0-10-2) and are last in the NHL with a 6-18-4 record, fired Ralph Krueger as coach Wednesday and replaced him with assistant Don Granato. Buffalo has not qualified for the Stanley Cup Playoffs since 2011.

"Obviously where we are in the standings lends to the fact I'll be getting phone calls or have been getting phone calls on players," Adams said. "Conversations every day. A lot of conversations. Absolutely, this is my job to make sure not only that I'm proactive but listen as well and [am] doing everything I can to move this thing forward."

Any potential trade will require Hall's approval because of a no-move clause in his contract. He said this month he had interest in re-signing with the Sabres, but that was before the firing of Krueger, who played a key role in Hall's decision to sign with Buffalo. Hall and Krueger were together for three seasons with the Oilers, when Krueger was an assistant (2010-11, 2011-12) and coach (2012-13).

"I'm open to anything," Hall said March 4. "It's not like I've had an amazing statistical year by any means so far this year. So just in saying that, I've enjoyed my time here, I've really liked the guys, the coaching staff, the way we're treated as players. And like we said from the start, my agent and myself, we're open to anything."

"I was never treating this as just a one-year thing. I was always coming into it open-minded. We'll have to see what happens here, if there's interest on their side, but, yeah, of course I'm interested."

Adams said he has had discussions with Ferris since signing Hall, and those discussions have continued.

"We openly in the beginning when [signing Hall] happened ... talked about what would we do moving forward and concepts," Adams said. "So we've had open dialogue back then. Darren and I have been in touch recently and we've had conversations both ways, so we'll see where this goes."

Sabres 'open to anything and everything' after firing Ralph Krueger

By Luke Fox

Sportsnet

March 17, 2021

The Great Pit of Carkoon may be the fictional desert home for the monstrous sarlacc that greedily consumes any living sacrifice dropped into its gaping maw.

Or Star Wars' infamous sarlacc pit might well be located out back of the rink, a blaster's shot away from the KeyBank Center, where the latest victims of the Buffalo Sabres organizational chart can be devoured.

One by one, new hopes arrive to Western New York.

They come with promise and plans, energy and enthusiasm.

One by one, the results — all that losing — swallows them whole.

Head coach Ralph Krueger and assistant Steve Smith, a pair of fresh casualties, were handed their walking papers by rookie GM Kevyn Adams on St. Patrick's Day morning amidst a 12-game losing trench and a dead-last 6-18-4 campaign.

Another reason to day drink in Buffalo.

"It feels like we're in a very deep, dark place right now," Krueger had said after being shut out for a fourth time during the skid. "And the only way we get into any light is keeping the fight in the team and sticking together. We're not going to get any outside help or pity."

Sabres GM 'open to anything and everything' ahead of trade deadline

With no experienced president of hockey ops to turn to, we pity the plight of Adams here. We do.

Caught between an ill-advised ownership group (Terry and Kim Pegula) and a rookie interim coach (the suddenly promoted Don Granato), Adams put on a brave face and said mostly the right things after Krueger's dismal record — 36-49-12, with a minus-59 goal differential — forced his hand.

To his credit, Adams did not act like the meme dog with the top hat sipping coffee as the house burns down around him.

This is not fine. And the first step to solving the problem is acknowledging how deep the rotten runs.

"We have to be better in every single area of this organization. It starts with me. I need to manage better," Adams said. "We need to coach better. We need to scout better. We need to develop players better. We need to practise better. I mean, you name it, we need to do it better. Period."

Adams went on: "There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey. There has to be a pride of showing up every day and being a National Hockey League player, of looking around and saying, 'I'm one of the 700 [or so] to get to do this every day.' And that has to be something that just is inside you and drives you to be better every single day. To love to look around the city of Buffalo and see Sabres hats and signs and people wearing jerseys — that matters, and that has to be within the DNA of our team."

Why now was right time for Sabres to part ways with Krueger

In a month that has also seen Darryl Sutter drive from the farm to the bench, the conclusion of the Krueger experience is both a failure for the out-of-the-box bench hires and another example that coaching can't solve what ails this roster.

Face of the franchise Jack Eichel raved about Krueger in Year 1 of his transition from European soccer back to North American hockey, then put up an MVP-conversation performance in 2019-20. Krueger played an integral role helping Adams recruit fellow ex-Oiler Taylor Hall in the 2020 off-season.

But injuries, a harsh bout of COVID, mediocre goaltending, a treacherous East division and multiple cap-crushing contracts conspired to turn a bad team worse.

Again, the coach — one Adams maintains the players love and respect (and, yet, did not play hard for?) — takes the fall.

The PegulEra began in 2011 and has mowed through six coaches already: Lindy Ruff, Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley and Krueger.

(Ironically, it was Ruff's Devils who delivered the final loss and healthy scratch Jeff Skinner who scored the final Sabres goal of Krueger's run.)

Krueger will still collect a \$3.75-million salary through 2021-22, as the search for his replacement begins immediately. Adams, who will also be hiring an assistant GM, refuses to put a timeline or a list of qualifications on that hire.

"This is about getting the right person — and it's critical," Adams said. "I do believe every crisis is an opportunity for positive change."

For an executive who was told to fire 22 staff members upon his own hire in June, more change is coming.

Adams is open for business at the trade deadline, and he noted the volume of calls coming his way.

The GM's own first two significant acquisitions, Taylor Hall and Eric Staal, must be flipped into longer-term assets, and conversations regarding potentially waving Hall's no-move clause have begun.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said.

Sabres GM says he spoke with Jack Eichel about head coaching change
The less urgent but more important matter surrounding the rebuild of the rebuild is the future of superstar Eichel, under contract through 2026. His no-move clause, however, kicks in after the 2021-22 season.

Adams informed his captain of Krueger's firing Wednesday morning but did not divulge Eichel's reaction. The GM also bobbed and weaved when asked directly about the speculation surrounding Eichel's future in Buffalo, home of the NHL's longest playoff drought.

"From the beginning, one of the things I said was, building a relationship with Jack was important. We've spoken at length in the off-season and into the season," Adams said. "Jack knows my door's always open. We talk regular."

The Eichel issue, much like the Krueger issue, boils down to one thing: winning.

Adams has called for more pride. But can pride exist without wins?

"Let's not overcomplicate this," Adams said. "We want to be better. We have to be better. And we will be better."

They better be better.

Because it can't get much worse... can it?

Five potential trade destinations for Sabres' Taylor Hall

By Mike Johnston

Sportsnet

March 17, 2021

With the NHL trade deadline less than one month away, the hockey world's collective eyes are fixated on the Buffalo Sabres and what potential moves the floundering franchise might make.

One player many expect to be dealt in the near future is 2018 Hart Trophy recipient Taylor Hall. The 2010 first-overall pick signed a one-year deal, \$8-million contract with the Sabres in the off-season and suffice it to say this year has not gone to plan.

The 29-year-old only has two goals and 14 assists in 28 games this season and to add insult to injury, took a puck off the face Tuesday night during his team's 12th consecutive loss.

Hall said earlier this month he's "open" to returning to play in Buffalo next season, but we'll see how everything unfolds.

"It's not like I've had an amazing statistical year by any means so far this year," Hall said via The Buffalo News. "Just in saying that, I think I've enjoyed my time here. I really like the guys, the coaching staff, the way we're treated as players and like we said from the start, my agent and myself, we're open to anything. I was never treating this as a one-year thing. I was always coming into it open-minded and we'll have to see what happens here, if there's interest on their side."

Hall has a no-movement clause and becomes an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season, so it's ultimately up to the player to approve any move to a new city.

With that in mind, here are five teams we feel could make a push to acquire Hall in the coming days or weeks.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs general manager Kyle Dubas addressed the media Tuesday and said forwards are the positional group the team is targeting ahead of the trade deadline. Dubas also mentioned he is willing to move a top prospect and that a rental player deal is his preferred option over a more traditional player-for-player swap.

Toronto doesn't have a third-round selection in 2021, but they're flush with first- and second-round picks through 2023. The Maple Leafs are short on cap space so they could require Buffalo to eat a decent chunk of Hall's remaining salary.

The Maple Leafs have struggled in March, averaging just 2.5 goals per game during a stretch that saw them lose five of six. In joining Toronto, Hall would be surrounded by more talent than he has currently in Buffalo or had in either Arizona or New Jersey and the results could potentially be special.

Acquiring a rental player of Hall's calibre would be a clear sign that anything besides a Stanley Cup championship this season is a disappointment for Dubas and the Maple Leafs.

Colorado Avalanche

The Avs were thought to be among the favourites to land Hall in free agency. GM Joe Sakic has first- and third-round picks in each of the next three drafts with which to work, but the team dealt its 2021 and 2022 second-rounders to acquire Devon Toews in the off-season, so its draft capital is somewhat limited and not quite as enticing as other teams.

The team has plenty of cap space, though, with a combined \$8 million in Erik Johnson's and Pavel Francouz's salaries tied up on LTIR. Hall, despite having a down year thus far, possesses the skills to fit seamlessly on Colorado's first or second line. With a handful of pending UFAs, Hall would in theory also be a good long-term fit for the Avs.

New York Islanders

The Isles might not be the first team most hockey fans jot down when listing 2021 Cup contenders yet Barry Trotz's group is near the top of the East Division and 16-3-2 since the start of February. Islanders captain Anders

Lee is done for the year so the team can free up \$7 million in cap space via LTIR, which makes a Hall trade doable. Would GM Lou Lamoriello be willing to trade away his team's first-round pick in two consecutive seasons? He sent what ended up being the 28th-overall pick to the Ottawa Senators as part of a package to get Jean-Gabriel Pageau last year.

Florida Panthers

The Panthers haven't won a playoff series since advancing to the Stanley Cup final a quarter of a century ago. Could making a trade deadline splash for Hall be what finally helps propel the Panthers to an extended post-season run? Florida is tied for the Central Division lead, but they could benefit from strengthening the left side of the forward unit behind Jonathan Huberdeau who's having another standout season production-wise. The Panthers have all of their own draft picks plus an additional seventh-round selection in 2021.

Boston Bruins

Boston was another club reportedly interested in Hall when he was a free agent. The Bruins have slowed down after a 10-1-2 start to the season and Hall would certainly breathe some new life into that dressing room and add an element of scoring depth, which is a real concern for Boston.

Would the Bruins consider including a player like Jake DeBrusk as part of the deal? DeBrusk only has two goals this season and was recently healthy scratched. Moving him would help from a salary cap management perspective and also give the Sabres a player with 20- to 30-goal upside. Anders Bjork could be another potential trade chip for the Bruins to consider.

Buffalo Sabres fire coach Ralph Krueger after 12-game winless streak

By Lorenzo Reyes

USA Today

March 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres, who are winless in their last 12 games, fired coach Ralph Krueger, the team announced Wednesday morning.

The Sabres (6-18-4) have the fewest points in the NHL with 16 and are in eighth place in the East Division, six points behind the New Jersey Devils. They have just two points in their last 12 games and are in the midst of an 0-10-2 skid.

"We feel that we have to start to improve," general manager Kevyn Adams said. "Of course results matter. This is a results business and where we are is unacceptable. ... But it's deeper than that. To change the culture and do what we have to do to get this headed in the right direction, I felt this is the move we had to make."

Don Granato was named interim coach, but Adams said he was beginning a search for a full-time coach immediately.

Ralph Krueger led the Sabres to a 30-31-8 record last season.

"What I don't want to do is rush into anything or make a quick decision without truly taking as much time as we need," he said. "This is about getting it right."

Assistant Steve Smith was also fired.

Krueger's last game in Buffalo was a 3-2 loss against the Devils Tuesday night.

Krueger was in his second season in Buffalo and posted a 30-31-8 mark last year in a season that was shortened because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Sabres did not qualify for the postseason last year.

Adams put the onus of players, too.

"There has to be a pride that goes with putting on a Buffalo Sabres jersey," he said.

Krueger is the third NHL coach to be fired during this shortened, 56-game season with all divisional play. He's the first outside the North Division, which has seen Montreal let go of Claude Julien and Calgary replace Geoff Ward with two-time Stanley Cup-winning coach Darryl Sutter.

Sabres fire head coach Ralph Krueger following team's 12th consecutive loss

By Chris Bengel

CBS Sports

March 17, 2021

After losing their 12th consecutive game on Tuesday, the Buffalo Sabres decided it was time for a change. Head coach Ralph Krueger was fired on Wednesday morning, the team announced. Replacing him on an interim basis will be Don Granato, according to Mike Harrington of the Buffalo News, and developmental coaches Matt Ellis and Dan Girardi will serve as assistant coaches.

Along with Krueger, assistant coach Steve Smith was also fired.

Krueger was in his second season with the Sabres. He was originally hired in May 2019 to replace Phil Housley and accumulated a 36-49-12 record during his two seasons behind the bench.

The Sabres own a 6-18-4 record, which is the worst mark in the NHL. The latest blemish came in a 3-2 loss on Tuesday to a New Jersey Devils team that is also not very good and had lost 14 of its last 16 games.

The loss pushed Buffalo's current losing streak to a whopping 12 games. That's good for the third-longest losing streak in franchise history and is the longest since the Sabres lost 14 consecutive games during the 2014-15 season.

If the Sabres miss the playoffs again this season -- which is highly likely -- it would mark the 10th consecutive campaign in which the team failed to taste the postseason.

The Sabres have been playing without their star forward Jack Eichel, who has missed time due to injury this season. Krueger's firing marks the fourth different head coach that Eichel has had since entering the league in 2015.

The Sabres' nine best coaching candidates to replace fired Ralph Krueger

By Jackie Spiegel

Sporting News

March 17, 2021

Finally, it happened: Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams fired head coach Ralph Krueger on Wednesday less than 24 hours after the team lost its 12th straight game. Why it took so long is anyone's guess, but considering the team has looked downright dreadful and is poised to miss the postseason for a 10th straight year, it was definitely not unexpected.

Krueger, who was in just his second season with the club, posted a disappointing 36-49-12 record in 97 games. He was the fifth coach let go since 16-year mainstay Lindy Ruff was fired on Feb. 20, 2013. Five coaches: Ron Rolston, Ted Nolan, Dan Bylsma, Phil Housley and Krueger. Five coaches in eight years and a month.

Yikes.

Stepping behind the bench for now for the East Division's basement dweller is Don Granato, who was an assistant coach under Krueger. The brother of Wisconsin head coach Tony Granato and Cammi Granato, the Hockey Hall of Famer and arguably one of the greatest women to lace up skates, Don also served as an assistant to Joel Quenneville with the Blackhawks. Named interim head coach, there's no guarantee — or expectation — he'll get the job come May.

"I'm not going to put any guardrails right now," Adams said on Wednesday during a call with reporters. "The search will be effective immediately. I have in my head and I've thought a lot about the characteristics and attributes that I think will be important for this team and organization. A lot of people I will speak to. A lot of people will be involved in the decision. I don't want to rush into anything or make a quick decision.

"This is about getting it right. Great to say I'm looking for this or that, but this is about getting the right person and it's critical."

Granato isn't expected to be a miracle worker for the next two months; this is a team that, like mentioned previously, lost 12 straight where they were outscored 50-25 and shutout four times. They're also missing captain Jack Eichel due to injury and other top forwards, like Jeff Skinner and Taylor Hall, have been missing even when on the ice.

So what's next for the Sabres? Aside from the idea that this team's roster needs to be torn down and built back up, an experienced head coach is most likely a must in Western New York.

Here are a few ex-bench bosses — and a few current ones — who could get a call from a 716 number sometime soon.

Sabres coaching candidates

Mike Babcock

Babcock back in the NHL would be interesting and could be the one to change things around in Buffalo as he did in Toronto. However, Adams talked about wanting to change the culture and, while it's definite he would do that, can anyone trust him to do it the right way after how his Leafs tenure ended?

Bruce Boudreau

He's won awards, has coached superstars like Alex Ovechkin and has only missed the playoffs in two full seasons as a head coach. He's expressed his desire to get back in the game after being let go by Minnesota last season.

Gerard Gallant

In a shocking move, Gallant was let go in January 2020 by the Golden Knights. He's got ample experience coaching a rag-tag group — he led Vegas to the Stanley Cup Final in its first year of existence — and may just have the gumption to get this ship righted.

Claude Julien

After getting the ax in Montreal, Julien could be the experienced guy the Sabres need to turn the corner. And he knows the team having coached against Buffalo for years during his stints in Boston and north of the border.

David Quinn

Yes, Quinn is currently employed by the Rangers, and has two more years on his deal, but there have been some calls to see the curtain come down on his Broadway tenure. So why would the Sabres retread Quinn? He coached Eichel during his one year at Boston University, where he won the Hobey Baker as college hockey's best player.

"He's a friend to me, a mentor and he's been pretty close to me even through my first few years in the NHL," Eichel told reporters back in 2018 prior to the two squaring off in Quinn's second game as the Rangers bench boss. "He was so good to me at BU and we have such a good relationship but I think we're all competitors, right? When you get out there, all you're doing is trying to help your team win."

He added: "He cares about you a lot as a hockey player but I think he cares more about you as a person, and as players you appreciate that," Eichel said. "I think that's sort of what we took from him. He was really good at that."

Keeping Eichel happy is priority No. 1 and this could be a good match.

Rod Brind'Amour, Rick Tocchet and Travis Green

Unlike Quinn, who is technically under contract, these three guys are all set to become free agents when the final horn sounds on their respective teams' seasons.

Brind'Amour reportedly isn't looking to leave Carolina but, as The News and Observer's Luke DeCock reported, it may come down to money. And that could be the issue with Green in Vancouver, too. The one thing to keep an eye on with Brind'Amour is that he and Adams won a Cup together with the Hurricanes in 2006.

As for Tocchet, he may just want out of the desert if given the opportunity.

And we'll throw in one inexperienced NHL guy but a guy who knows how to succeed on the big stage. Leaman, who won an NCAA title in 2015 in Providence, is coming off a gold-medal performance in Edmonton at the 2021 World Junior Championship. The U.S. head coach took his squad into a tough battle with the Canadians — in a game many did not see the Americans winning as Canada plowed through the competition — and not only snagged gold but shut out the hometown team in the process.

NHL's Last-Place Buffalo Sabres Fire Coach Ralph Krueger

By Carol Schram

Forbes

March 17, 2021

It's said that every NHL general manager wants the opportunity to hire his own coach.

Buffalo Sabres' rookie GM Kevyn Adams will now get that chance, after relieving Ralph Krueger of his head-coaching duties on Wednesday.

"For me, this is about results that haven't been good enough," Adams told the media via videoconference about his decision. "I evaluate everything and I was trying to make a real honest, fair evaluation — understanding the adversity and the situation our team was in, taking it all into account.

"It felt like the right time now. This is about moving forward. This is about, 'How do we improve?' I do believe every crisis is an opportunity for positive change."

Krueger, 61, was in the second year of a three-year contract which paid him \$3.75 million per season. His firing came after the Sabres dropped a 3-2 decision on Tuesday night, leaving them winless in their last 12 games with an 0-10-2 record.

The Sabres currently sit last in the NHL standings with a record of 6-18-4 and a .286 points percentage. Exactly halfway through their shortened 56-game schedule, they're 18 points out of a playoff spot in the MassMutual East Division. Buffalo is also last in the league in goals per game (2.09) and 29th in average goals against (3.39).

Over one and a half seasons, the Sabres were 36-49-12 in 97 games under Krueger. Last season, they finished 13th in the Eastern Conference, three points out of a playoff spot.

Buffalo is on its way to tying a league record with a 10th consecutive season without a postseason appearance. Lindy Ruff was behind the bench for the club's last playoff game, in 2011. The last series win came in 2007, when the Sabres reached the Eastern Conference Final.

Since Ruff was let go in February of 2013, Buffalo has gone through five more coaches: Ron Rolston (51 games), Ted Nolan (144 games), Dan Bylsma (164 games), Phil Housley (164 games) and now Krueger.

Don Granato is moving up from an assistant's role to take over as interim head coach. It will be the first NHL head-coaching position for the 53-year-old, who has extensive experience coaching in the AHL, ECHL and USHL levels, including with the U.S. National Team Development Program.

He will be assisted by Matt Ellis and Dan Girardi, as well as assistant coach Mike Bales and video coach Myles Fee. Assistant coach Steve Smith, in his third season with the Sabres, has also been dismissed.

Adams has no definite timeline for making his next hire.

"I'm not going to put any guardrails on anything right now," he said. "What I will tell you is, the search will be effective immediately. I have in my head, and I've thought a lot about this recently, characteristics and attributes that I think will be important for this organization, this team moving forward.

"There will be a lot of a lot of people that I will speak to. There will be other people as part of the process, as we go along. But what I don't want to do is rush into anything or make a quick decision."

Well-respected veteran coaches Bruce Boudreau, Gerard Gallant and Claude Julien are currently available, and Boudreau in particular has made no secret of the fact that he wants to get back to work after being let go by the Minnesota Wild just over a year ago. A number of other big names such as John Tortorella and Rod Brind'Amour are currently in the final year of their present contracts, with no extension signed yet for next season. Adams' search could also include assistant coaches ready to move up to a head job, and coaches from the minor league and college ranks.

In a league where the same names seems to pop up over and over, Krueger was seen as an outside-the-box hiring when former general manager Jason Botterill brought him in, in 2019. A hockey lifer who cut his teeth in Europe, Krueger's relationship with Botterill's family dated back to his childhood in Manitoba.

He had a long, successful history as coach of Switzerland's national team before joining the Edmonton Oilers as an assistant coach in 2010. After two seasons with the Oilers, Krueger was promoted to the top job. He lasted just 48 games before being famously fired by fax during his offseason summer vacation.

This time, at least, Krueger's dismissal came face to face. Adams said he informed his former coach of his decision first thing Wednesday morning.

He also acknowledged that Sabres players loved playing for the cerebral motivator. But the results simply weren't there.

"We need to compete," Adams said. "We need to be better in the in the harder areas of the game. We need to defend better and quicker and more tenaciously. We need to do a better job in the offensive zone, of getting to the inside and the harder areas.

"We need to manage the game better. When you have your end of a shift and the puck's on your stick, do you take that hit and get the puck deep so you don't turn it over and have an odd man rush the other way?

"Let's not overcomplicate this. We want to be better, we have to be better and we will be better."

In addition to conducting his coaching search, Adams is also in the midst of navigating his first NHL trade deadline period. Leading up to April 12, he says he's "open to anything and everything" that could help improve his team.

That list probably starts with potentially moving impending unrestricted free agents like Eric Staal and Brandon Montour — possibly even Taylor Hall, who surprised the hockey world when he signed a one-year contract with an \$8 million cap hit in an effort to prove himself and set up a big long-term deal going forward.

So far, the plan hasn't worked as hoped. The 2018 Hart Trophy winner, now 29, has just two goals and 16 points in 28 games this season, and is currently on a four-game pointless streak.

The Sabres will open the second half of their season with a pair of home games against the Boston Bruins, this Thursday and Saturday.

Sabres fire Ralph Krueger amid 12-game losing streak

By Sean Leahy

NBC Sports

March 17, 2021

The Buffalo Sabres announced Wednesday morning that they have fired head coach Ralph Krueger.

Assistant coach Don Granato will take over as interim coach. Matt Ellis, their director of player development, and Dan Girardi, a development coach, will help Granato on the bench. Steve Smith, another assistant, was let go.

"It felt right that it needed to be done now," GM Kevyn Adams said Wednesday. "I think we could talk about could have been done before. For me, this is about results that haven't been good enough and I look and evaluate everything and I was trying to take a real, honest, fair evaluation, understanding the adversity and the situation our team was in, taking it all into account.

"But it felt like the right time now and this is about all moving forward. This is about, how do we improve? I do believe every crisis is an opportunity for positive change and this is a chance for us to move forward and to begin to get this thing pointed in the right direction."

Through 28 games this season, the Sabres are 31st in the NHL with six wins and a .286 winning percentage. They are currently mired in a 12-game losing streak and have not claimed the full two points in a game since Feb. 23. Krueger was hired in May 2019 and he compiled a record of 36-49-12 in 97 games. The .433 win percentage over that span is the third-worst in the NHL, with only Ottawa (.408) and Detroit (.302) lower.

Krueger was signed through the 2021-22 season and is owed \$3.75M, according to Pierre LeBrun.

Two weeks ago Adams said the everyone in the organization was being evaluated. He also used the word "unacceptable" multiple times while talking about the team. It was clear changes were coming, and they likely will not end with Krueger's dismissal.

Moves in the summer by Adams to improve the team have not worked. The Taylor Hall bet isn't working out and he'll likely be traded before the April 12 deadline. Eric Staal is another player likely gone in the coming weeks. Then there's captain Jack Eichel, who is out injured, possibly for the rest of the season. The losing has worn on him, something he's expressed publicly. Will this tire fire of a season be the final straw before a possibly off-season trade is explored?

The Ralph Krueger news out of Buffalo is just beginning. It should be a wild few months for that organization.

'We have to be better' | Kevyn Adams details coaching decision

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 17, 2021

Buffalo Sabres general manager Kevyn Adams said there will be an honest conversation had when the team returns to KeyBank Center for its game against the Boston Bruins on Thursday.

Regardless of the standings, pride should be evident in the Sabres' play moving forward.

"To love, to look around the city of Buffalo and see Sabres hats and signs and people wearing jerseys - that matters," Adams said.

"That has to be within the DNA of our team. I don't care where we are in the standings right now. If we do not show up at the rink tomorrow and for the rest of that season and have that characteristic about our team, it's going to be unacceptable."

Adams relieved head coach Ralph Krueger and assistant coach Steve Smith of their duties early Wednesday morning, following a 3-2 loss in New Jersey that extended Buffalo's winless streak to 12 games (0-9-2). Assistant coach Don Granato will take over as interim head coach. Director of player development Matt Ellis and development coach Dan Girardi will be interim assistants.

Adams said during a conference call with the media on March 5 that the entire team was under evaluation, including the coaching staff. He spent the ensuing weeks reading the pulse of the dressing room and weighing the best course of action, a decision he said was made more difficult by players' belief and admiration for Krueger.

Ultimately, he decided the time had come for the organization to make a change.

"We have to be better in every single area of this organization," Adams said. "It starts with me. I need to manage better, OK? I need to be better in every way. We need to coach better, we need to scout better, we need to develop players better. We need to practice better. I mean, you name it, we need to do it better. Period."

"I said it a couple weeks ago, it's unacceptable in every area. So, why do we do it? Well, we're doing it because we feel we have to start to improve. Of course, results matter. This is a results business and where we are is unacceptable, it speaks for itself. But it's deeper than that. To change the culture and to do what we have to do to get this headed in the right direction, I felt this was the move that we had to make."

Adams said the search for the 20th head coach in Sabres history will begin immediately. The GM has assembled a list of qualities he believes the ideal candidate should have, though he refrained from putting strict parameters on the search.

"For me, it's about getting it right," he said. "If we felt it was absolutely the right person and it happens quicker than OK. If it needs to take a longer time because we haven't found the right person or this isn't that easy of a time to have conversations and meet people face-to-face either - I don't want to rush into anything. It's about getting it right and that's something I've talked about since June."

The Sabres are halfway through a condensed schedule, set to play their final 28 games in a span of just 52 days. They sit last in the NHL with 16 points. That does not mean these next two months are without meaning.

The organizational goal of creating an identity that Buffalo can be proud of stands at the forefront from here on out.

"We need to be better in the harder areas of the game," Adams said. "We need to defend better and quicker and more tenaciously. We need to do a better job in the offensive zone of getting to the inside and the harder areas. We need to manage the game better. When you're at the end of a shift and the puck is on your stick, do you take that hit and get the puck deep so you don't turn it over and have an odd-man rush the other way? Those are the little things."

"That's stacking things on top of each other that point you in the right direction and the results do take care of themselves. This is a results business, but if you do the right things shift in and shift out, you start to win shifts, and then you win periods and then you win hockey games. Let's not overcomplicate this. We want to be better. We have to be better and we will be better."

Here are more takeaways from Adams' conversation with the media.

1. Sabres will add an assistant GM

Adams said the search to fill the role is ongoing.

"I think if you go back to June, one of the things we talked about is finding the right people and kind of maybe catching my breath and understanding everything that was going on and evaluating where we see that we need to fill in, knowing all along that we absolutely had to fill in certain roles," he said. "That's something that I'm working on right now and I'll keep you posted on it."

2. Eichel could return this season

Adams said Jack Eichel is nearing the end of his quarantine after leaving the state for a second opinion on the upper-body he sustained against the New York Islanders on March 7. The Sabres captain will be reevaluated upon rejoining the team.

"We're hoping that Jack will be able to move forward here and get back in the lineup," Adams said.

3. Options are being evaluated regarding Taylor Hall

Adams said he has had conversations with Hall's agent, Darren Ferris, regarding all potential options for the forward. The team could agree to an extension with Hall, who will be an unrestricted free agent after the season, or ask him to waive his no-movement clause prior to the April 12 trade deadline.

"We're open to anything and everything," Adams said. "My job is to do anything and everything to make this franchise move in the right direction. I have a very good relationship with Darren Ferris and Taylor. Open lines of communication and obviously days are moving forward here, so there will be a lot of conversations around that."

Granato named Sabres interim head coach

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 17, 2021

Don Granato will step in as the interim coach of the Buffalo Sabres, starting with Thursday's home game against the Boston Bruins.

Granato was hired as an assistant coach under Ralph Krueger in June 2019. Krueger was relieved of his head coaching duties Wednesday morning by general manager Kevyn Adams.

Assistant coach Steve Smith was also relieved of his duties. Matt Ellis and Dan Girardi will serve as interim assistant coaches. Ellis is the team's director of player development and Girardi is a development coach.

"Don Granato's been a head coach for many years at different levels," Adams said this morning. "He's commanded a room as a head coach before."

Granato's coaching career spans nearly three decades.

Before being hired by the Sabres, Granato spent two seasons as an assistant coach for the Chicago Blackhawks after serving as the associate head coach for the University of Wisconsin during the 2016-17 season.

During his coaching career, Granato spent seven total seasons in the St. Louis Blues organization, including one season as an assistant coach for the Blues (2005-06). He also served as the head coach for the Worcester IceCats, St. Louis' AHL affiliate, for five seasons (2000-01 to 2004-05). In his first season with the IceCats, Granato was the recipient of the Louis A.R. Pieri Memorial Award, awarded annually to the AHL's most outstanding coach.

He later spent parts of two seasons with the Chicago Wolves (AHL) as the club's head coach from 2008-09 to 2009-10.

Granato began his coaching career in the USHL during the 1993-94 season as the interim head coach of the Wisconsin Capitols. He became general manager and head coach of the Green Bay Gamblers the following campaign and led the team to the best record in the USHL in 1995-96 and 1996-97. The following season, Granato moved to the ECHL, where he spent two seasons as general manager and head coach of the Columbus Chill before winning the Kelly Cup in his only season as head coach of the Peoria Rivermen in 1999-00.

A native of Downers Grove, Illinois, Granato also has extensive experience as a coach at the national level for the United States. From 2011-12 to 2015-16, Granato served as a head coach at the United States National Team Development Program, where he led his teams to victories at the 2014 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge and the 2015 IIHF Under-18 World Championship. He was also an assistant coach for Team USA at the 2015 IIHF World Junior Championship and at the 2014 and 2018 IIHF World Championships.

As a player, he captured an NCAA Championship with the University of Wisconsin in 1990. He spent two seasons in the ECHL with Columbus, posting 90 points (26+64) in 103 career contests.

Buffalo Sabres Development Camp, June 27, 2019. Photo by Bill Wippert

Ellis is in his first season as director of player development. He played 356 games in the NHL over nine seasons, including 286 for the Sabres from 2009 until 2015. He spent the past four years working for the Academy of Hockey at LECOM Harborcenter, where he started as a development coach and was named director in September 2019.

"Matt has been with team all season in his development role. He'll continue in the development but he's going to step into this as well," Adams said. "The players have been seeing him every day, he's been on the ice every day so I don't see any sort of kind of burn-in time for him in terms of relationships with the players."

Girardi began his career as an undrafted defenseman and went on to play 13 NHL seasons, amassing 1,070 games between the regular season and the playoffs for the New York Rangers and Tampa Bay Lightning. He

appeared in the 2011-12 All-Star Game and, despite a propensity for blocking shots, played a full 82 games five times. He joined the Sabres player development staff in January.

Girardi's work as an assistant coach will focus on the team's defensemen.

"Dan Girardi, for me, is someone that was very, very well respected in the league when he played," Adams said. "High character, high compete, thought the game very well as a defenseman, which I thought would be very helpful in short time to bring a fresh perspective.

"I've been extremely impressed with Dan in his role as a development coach on our staff for the past few months, the attention to detail he's showed, the discipline, the amount of work he's done with our prospects."

Adams said that Girardi will likely need to quarantine before he can step in behind the bench, so Rochester Americans head coach Seth Appert may serve as an assistant in the meantime.

Assistant coach Mike Bales, video coach Myles Fee and video coordinator Kyle Smith will continue on in their respective roles.

Granato's first game as interim head coach will come tomorrow night with the Bruins in town. Faceoff from KeyBank Center is scheduled for 7 p.m. on MSG and WGR 550 with pregame coverage on MSG starting at 6:30.