



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 31, 2021*

## **Flyers visit the Sabres after overtime victory**

Associated Press

March 30, 2021

Philadelphia Flyers (17-13-4, fifth in the East Division) vs. Buffalo Sabres (6-23-5, eighth in the East Division)

Buffalo, New York; Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. EDT

**BOTTOM LINE:** Philadelphia visits the Buffalo Sabres after the Flyers defeated Buffalo 4-3 in overtime.

The Sabres are 6-23-5 against opponents in the East Division. Buffalo serves 6.2 penalty minutes per game, the least in the NHL. Jean-Sebastien Dea leads the team averaging 2.0.

The Flyers are 17-13-4 against the rest of their division. Philadelphia ranks ninth in the Nhl recording 8.7 points per game, averaging 3.1 goals and 5.6 assists.

The teams square off for the second straight game.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Sam Reinhart leads the Sabres with 21 points, scoring 12 goals and adding nine assists. Brandon Montour has four assists over the last 10 games for Buffalo.

James van Riemsdyk has 31 total points while scoring 13 goals and totaling 18 assists for the Flyers. Claude Giroux has five goals and four assists over the last 10 games for Philadelphia.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Sabres: 0-9-1, averaging 1.5 goals, 2.3 assists, 3.7 penalties and 8.5 penalty minutes while giving up 3.7 goals per game with an .890 save percentage.

Flyers: 4-5-1, averaging 2.7 goals, 4.6 assists, 3.6 penalties and 9.7 penalty minutes while giving up 4.5 goals per game with an .827 save percentage.

**INJURIES:** Sabres: Dylan Cozens: day to day (undisclosed), Carter Hutton: out (lower body), Jake McCabe: out (knee), Will Borgen: out (forearm), Jack Eichel: out (upper body).

Flyers: None listed.

## **Odds say Islanders are favorites to land Taylor Hall in trade with Sabres**

The Buffalo News

March 31, 2021

As the NHL trade deadline approaches, the question seems to be when, not if, the Sabres will trade Taylor Hall.

According to BetOnline.ag, the New York Islanders are the favorites to land Hall at 5-4.

Here are the top six potential destinations and odds, per the site.

Islanders 5-4

Toronto 3-1

Florida 9-2

Colorado 5-1

Boston 6-1

Edmonton 15-2

Hall, who signed as a free agent with the Sabres in the offseason, has two goals and 16 assists in 34 games.

## **Casey Mittelstadt thrust into prominent role with Sabres low on centers**

By Lance Lysowski

The Buffalo News

March 30, 2021

The actions that led to the tying goal Monday night haunted Casey Mittelstadt as the 22-year-old attempted to fall asleep hours after the overtime loss.

As soon as Mittelstadt skated into the shot lane in front of his own net, the puck ricocheted off Tage Thompson's stick, past Mittelstadt, through the Buffalo Sabres' line of defense and was eventually tipped over the goal line by Philadelphia Flyers winger Sean Couturier with 1:29 remaining in regulation.

"I think looking back, it hurts," Mittelstadt lamented following practice Tuesday. "It was tough to fall asleep last night with that. Just got to bear down."

Mittelstadt was also on the ice when the Flyers' Ivan Provorov tucked the puck past Linus Ullmark with a backhanded shot in overtime, completing a three-goal comeback for Philadelphia and extending the Sabres' winless streak to 18 games – tied for the 14th longest in NHL history.

Neither sequence shook Mittelstadt's confidence. Nor were those mistakes viewed by interim coach Don Granato as a breach of trust. Mittelstadt, who was drafted eighth overall by the Sabres in 2017, has proved this season that he's able to learn from any growing pains and apply those lessons when in the lineup.

Mittelstadt will receive another significant opportunity Wednesday night against the Flyers when the Sabres will be without rookie center Dylan Cozens, who suffered an upper-body injury in the first period Monday. Mittelstadt might receive top-line minutes and responsibility while centering a line between former Hart Trophy winner Taylor Hall and Thompson, a promising 23-year-old winger.

"Casey, it's nice to see him get that opportunity," said Granato. "He has a lot of potential to grow into that nicely. This is a great opportunity for experience and that's what we're seeing. He's a fast learner. He's a competitive guy. He's put in a lot of work. I'm excited that he does have this opportunity. I'm excited to work with him in regard to that."

It wasn't long ago that Mittelstadt's future with the Sabres appeared uncertain. The general manager who drafted Mittelstadt is gone. So is former Rochester coach Chris Taylor, who worked closely with Mittelstadt in the American Hockey League last season.

With Kevyn Adams now running the Sabres' hockey operations, Mittelstadt did not re-sign with the team as a restricted free agent until a week before training camp began in January. Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman wrote Monday that he wondered if Mittelstadt will receive a change of scenery in the near future.

Mittelstadt's value to the Sabres has risen exponentially over the past three months. He worked his way from the taxi squad all the way to the top line, first carving out a role as an effective right wing and eventually earning a spot on the Sabres' top power-play unit.

Last month, former coach Ralph Krueger suggested Mittelstadt's future might be on the wing, a significant statement considering the former University of Minnesota product was drafted as a center. However, Granato told the media following practice Tuesday that Mittelstadt earned an opportunity to play the position.

The move was mostly made out of necessity with Jack Eichel (upper body) injured, Eric Staal traded and the top prospect in Rochester, Arttu Ruotsalainen, not being ready for game action. With Cozens out for an uncertain amount of time, Granato's top four centers are Mittelstadt, Curtis Lazar, Riley Sheahan and Cody Eakin.

Mittelstadt played a career-high 18:27 on Monday night, helping his line log 17 combined shot attempts at 5-on-5.

"It's no secret it's a big opportunity for me," Mittelstadt said. "I feel like I've been playing well and making plays. It's just we got to get the results."

According to Evolving-Hockey.com, Mittelstadt ranks fourth among all Sabres in generating on-ice shot quality at 5-on-5, trailing only Hall, Jake McCabe and Staal. Perhaps a better indicator of Mittelstadt's development is his impact defensively, as he's sixth among all Sabres forwards in limiting shot quality in 5-on-5 situations.

Generating opportunities has not led to production yet. Mittelstadt holds a 14-game goal drought and has one goal with four assists and a minus-14 rating in 19 games. However, it's important to acknowledge that he appeared in only two of the team's first 14 games, tested positive for Covid-19 and spent much of the season playing a new position: right wing.

"Obviously didn't play a lot at the beginning of the year so just that mojo and that momentum, and then I got Covid so bit of a feeling-out process," said Mittelstadt. "But now I think my lungs and my legs are really getting under me, I'm starting to play faster and getting more confident every game."

This was the next development step the Sabres anticipated from Mittelstadt after he was sent to Rochester in December 2019. The move came as a shock because he had already played in more than 100 games in the NHL, but former General Manager Jason Botterill wanted to provide Mittelstadt with an opportunity to sharpen specific areas of his game without having to worry about getting benched or impacting team performance in the NHL.

Mittelstadt totaled nine goals with 16 assists for 25 points in 36 games with Rochester. More important, Mittelstadt played in every situation, including the penalty kill. This provided him with a stronger foundation away from the puck. Mittelstadt then spent the summer working with his strength coach, former Sabres forward Erik Rasmussen to improve his strength and fitness.

Equipped with knowledge from two-plus seasons of professional hockey, and the physical tools to win puck battles in the NHL, Mittelstadt arrived at Sabres training camp in January with a determination to carve out a role. His progress at center in the season's final weeks could be one of the more important storylines to watch given the Sabres' need for more talent at the position.

"Yeah, I feel like I've picked it up a lot faster this year than I have any other year," he said. "Obviously the numbers aren't necessarily there but chances and creating chances, I feel like it's been exponentially better than it has been in the past for me. It's more a state of not getting frustrated and just sticking with it because they always come in bunches; you get one and then all of a sudden you get three and you start rolling."

"I think for me it's slowed down quite a bit, just I've gotten stronger, I've been able to hold onto pucks more and pick my head up and make a great play."

#### Return looming

Defenseman Jacob Bryson is on track to return to the lineup Wednesday against Philadelphia after missing one game with an upper-body injury. The 23-year-old practiced Tuesday after not playing in the Sabres' 4-3 overtime loss to the Flyers.

Bryson skated on a defense pair with Rasmus Ristolainen, a move that indicates Matt Irwin will likely be a healthy scratch Wednesday. Bryson, a fourth-round draft pick in 2017, has one goal with one assist in 16 games for the Sabres.

Additionally, forward Steven Fogarty will likely be in the lineup with Cozens out. Fogarty, 27, has appeared in three games with the Sabres, logging an assist and 9:21 of ice time Saturday in Boston.

## **Jeff Skinner playing more, but not producing more under Granato**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 30, 2021

Buffalo, N.Y. (WGR 550) – In the five games Don Granato has been the Buffalo Sabres' head coach, Jeff Skinner has one goal and no assists for one point.

During that time, Kevyn Adams has also served as head coach. Skinner's ice-time has increased to a point where he played over 20 minutes in Pittsburgh against the Penguins, but his dreadful production remains the same.

In 31 games, the winger has just three goals and one assist for four points. Skinner said Granato has shown him that he has trust in his abilities.

"Any player wants to have the trust of the coach, or the coach believes in them and thinks you could be an impact player and help the team win," he said following Monday's morning skate.

In the last two games, the Sabres have been better with Granato's aggressive style of pace for 40 minutes. In both games, they crumbled in the third and lost. Skinner said he really likes what Granato brings to the table.

"For me, most players would prefer to play an aggressive style, and hopefully as we get more comfortable or used to the system, it translates into the ability to score more and a little less time spent in our end," he said.

The increased minutes hasn't translated into results, but Skinner just looks like a happier player.

"Every player wants to play an impact role," the 28-year-old said. "Now I get more opportunities to help the team. You get to be more involved in the game, you get to be more in a rhythm."

Buffalo blew a 2-1 third period lead on Saturday and lost in Boston against the Bruins, 3-2. Against the Philadelphia Flyers on Monday, it was a three-goal lead only to lose in overtime. Skinner said it's the little things that count.

"You've got to build on those things," he said. "Every team is chasing that consistency. There's going to be ebbs and flows and there's going to be changes in momentum, and you just have to stick with it. It's not going to be easy. Especially in this division, you can't let up and you can't play the game in spurts. To do that, you have to find your game and be consistent with it."

Jacob Bryson returned to practice on Tuesday. Dylan Cozens wasn't on the ice after leaving Monday's game early. He got crushed into the wall by Flyers defenseman Philippe Myers. Granato told Howard and Jeremy on Tuesday that he does expect Cozens back before the season ends.

Right after stretching, Granato got Tuesday's practice off with a bang. The team had 3-on-3, half-ice competing drills. It's something he usually saves for the final drill of practice.

With this team blowing leads in the last two games, it looks like the team may be running out of steam. Ralph Krueger was not a coach that pushed his team, and it seems some guys were not in the best shape they could be.

"We had trouble late a couple of weeks ago, so yes, coming out of the [COVID-19 pause and the] 14 days off that we had, we felt, as a staff, that conditioning was an issue," Granato said.

"When I came on over a week ago, I mentioned to you that we lost puck battles. In the first game I was on the bench against Boston, it was the third period when we lost strength on puck battles, and we had a lot of anxiety to our game, which is fatigue. I mentioned at that time that we're going to practice longer and practice harder, and it may cost us in the short-term, but we need to prop up our game conditioning."

Granato thinks they've had a good two weeks of work.

"I feel we've done that, but Boston and Philadelphia elevated in the third period and we were slow to elevate," he said.

Tuesday's lines:

Forwards:

Skinner – Lazar – Okposo

Hall – Mittelstadt – Thompson

Olofsson – Sheahan – Reinhart

Rieder – Eakin – Fogarty

Smith – Dea

Defense:

Montour – Miller

Bryson – Ristolainen

Irwin – Davidson

Dahlin – Jokiharju

## **Casey Mittelstadt's development earns him gig as Sabres' top center**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 30, 2021

**BUFFALO** – Shifting Casey Mittelstadt to center wasn't simply a result of the hapless Sabres trading Eric Staal or Jack Eichel suffering a lower-body injury.

Yes, injuries and Staal's departure have decimated the Sabres at center. The four who practiced Tuesday inside KeyBank Center – Mittelstadt, Cody Eakin, Curtis Lazar and Riley Sheahan – have combined to score 10 goals and 25 points this season.

Interim coach Don Granato, whose Sabres host the Philadelphia Flyers on Wednesday, even briefly used Jean-Sebastien Dea as his top center early in Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Boston Bruins. Dea hadn't played an NHL game in nearly 14 months.

Granato quickly promoted Mittelstadt, 22, that afternoon, moving him from third-line left wing to the No. 1 center spot between Taylor Hall and Sam Reinhart.

Before he was fired March 17, ex-Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said Mittelstadt would likely remain a winger, a position he only started playing regularly this season. But Granato moved him back to center, his natural position, in his fifth game as coach.

"He's progressed to the point where I'm comfortable putting him at center regardless of the fact that we've lost the guys that we have due to injury or being traded," Granato, whose Sabres have lost 18 straight games, said on a Zoom call Tuesday. "He was starting to earn that position anyway."

Mittelstadt pivoted the top line in Monday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Flyers, this time between Hall and Tage Thompson. Despite being on the ice for the late tying goal, the trio enjoyed a solid night, creating defenseman Brandon Montour's goal.

The line also generated a Corsi For – the percentage of shot attempts by the team while a line is on the ice five-on-five – of 58.6%, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

Granato leaned on Mittelstadt heavily Monday, playing him a career-high 18 minutes, 27 seconds.

"It's no secret it's a big opportunity for me," said Mittelstadt, the eighth overall pick in 2017. "I feel like I've been playing well and making plays."

Considering Eichel is sidelined indefinitely recovering from an upper-body injury and rookie center Dylan Cozens suffered an apparent arm injury Monday, Mittelstadt could remain the Sabres' first- or second-line center.

"It was nice to play center, I felt comfortable," Mittelstadt said.

The Sabres, of course, envisioned Mittelstadt would ascend into a prominent role someday. But his development has sputtered at times over his three-year career.

By December 2019, the Sabres demoted a struggling Mittelstadt to the Rochester Americans for the first time.

After finishing the season in the AHL, he began this year on the taxi squad, looking impressive in occasional spot duty before earning a regular gig earlier this month.

Mittelstadt embraced his move to left wing and later right wing, showcasing a sturdier, more consistent style. He was a defensive liability earlier in his career, and while he's still green, he has earned enough trust to be utilized in difficult situations.

In 2018-19, for example, only 27.5% of his starts were in the defensive zone. That number has ballooned to 51.4% this season. He has killed penalties.



Granato said Mittelstadt used his stint on the taxi squad "as fuel."

"When he came in the lineup, he showed that he was well-prepared," he said. "He wasn't hanging his head. Lots of times, guys that aren't in the lineup through frustration, they don't practice as hard and their conditioning drops unbeknownst to them when they get their opportunity."

"That was not the case with Casey. He stayed competitive, he stayed engaged, he stayed focused on improving and developing and he's progressed."

Mittelstadt said this season has been "a bit of a feeling-out process." In addition to sitting out 12 of the Sabres' first 14 games, he tested positive for COVID-19.

"But now I think my lungs and my legs are really getting under me, I'm starting to play faster and getting more confident every game," said Mittelstadt, who has compiled one goal, five points and a minus-14 rating in 19 games this season.

Lazar said: "He wants the puck on his stick. He wants to make plays. And you're seeing that confidence kind of grow each and every game."

Much of that confidence can be traced to Mittelstadt's ability to quickly process what he sees and hears.

"I feel like I've picked it up a lot faster this year than I have any other year," he said. "Obviously, the numbers aren't necessarily there but chances and creating chances, I feel like it's been exponentially better than it has been in the past for me. It's more a state of not getting frustrated and just sticking with it because they always come in bunches; you get one and then all of a sudden you get three and you start rolling."

"I think for me, (the game has) slowed down quite a bit, I've just gotten stronger, I've been able to hold onto pucks more and pick my head up and make a great play."

## **Sabres' Jacob Bryson set to return; Dylan Cozens' status uncertain**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 30, 2021

**BUFFALO** – Sabres defenseman Jacob Bryson practiced today and will likely play in Wednesday's game against the Philadelphia Flyers, interim coach Don Granato said.

Bryson, 23, missed Monday's 4-3 overtime loss to the Flyers recovering from an undisclosed injury. The rookie stumbled and fell into Bruins star David Pastrnak's lower body late in Saturday afternoon's 3-2 loss to Boston.

"He's looking toward a go," Granato said on a Zoom call following this afternoon's practice inside KeyBank Center. "He had a good practice."

Bryson practiced beside Rasmus Ristolainen. Based on today's defense pairings, Bryson's return would push defenseman Matt Irwin out of the lineup.

In other injury news, center Dylan Cozens, who left Monday's game with an apparent arm injury, did not practice today. Granato said the rookie was being evaluated today and the Sabres would know more Wednesday.

Cozens, 20, left the game after Flyers defenseman Philippe Myers checked him into the left boards deep in the Philadelphia zone 11:43 into the first period.

With Cozens out, Steven Fogarty practiced at right wing on the fourth line.

## **Take 2: Sabres making progress? Paul Hamilton says yes**

By Paul Hamilton

WGRZ

March 30, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The results haven't changed, but the country club atmosphere that Ralph Krueger brought to the Sabres has. Players really liked him because meetings were short and practices were easy.

Krueger's practices were unbelievably sloppy and things were never stopped to get it straightened out.

Buffalo has led after 40 minutes in each of their last two games, but in the end, they lost them both.

On Saturday, in Boston the Sabres were the better team in the first two periods, but got run over in the third and lost 3-2. The Bruins outshot the Sabres 15-3 in the third period and the team just crumbled in front of Linus Ullmark.

Buffalo played even better for the first two periods on Monday against the Philadelphia Flyers. The Sabres led 3-0 and for the first time since their 18-game winless streak started, I had no doubt in my mind that they'd win.

The reason I didn't even give losing a thought was for the first time all season they played fast and played with confidence. Interim head coach Don Granato told our Julianne Pelusi that when he took over, he realized this team needed to work harder.

"We had trouble late a couple of weeks ago, so yes, coming out of the COVID 14 days off that we had, we felt as a staff, that conditioning was an issue," Granato said.

Granato knew the team needed to be in better shape and it may have cost him early to do it.

"When I came on over a week ago, I mentioned to you that we lost puck battles," Granato said. "In the first game I was on the bench against Boston, it was the third period when we lost strength on puck battles and we had a lot of anxiety to our game, which is fatigue. I mentioned at that time that we're going to practice longer and practice harder and it may cost us in the short-term, but we need to prop up our game conditioning."

To me it looks like its working. Monday's loss wasn't because they ran out of gas, it was because they ventured back into their same bad habits and for the fifth time this month, gave up three or more goals in a period.

The Sabres looked to be in good shape midway through the third. They led 3-1 and had just killed off a penalty giving up absolutely nothing. The shots were 5-to-5 and there was no reason to play any other way. What I saw was a team that was all proud of itself because it did so well on that penalty kill they forgot the game was still going on.

Sean Couturier made a pass on the backhand through his legs that should only work in a no check hockey game, not against a NHL team. The pass was perfect and Claude Giroux had the whole net for a layup. It was then I knew the winless streak was going to hit 18.

Tage Thompson put a lot of hustle into trying to score into the empty net, but just missed. Philadelphia came up us and forced overtime.

Many were upset that Granato had Thompson out there with Casey Mittelstadt, but that line was excellent in this game and now is the time to see if those players can handle extra responsibility or if they even belong on the team next season. This season is over, so trying things should be done to see which players are up for the challenge. Unfortunately I think Granato and Kevyn Adams are going to find out very few.

## **Sabres' Granato after back-to-back blown third periods: 'I don't feel it's a conditioning issue anymore'**

By Julianne Pelusi

WGRZ

March 30, 2021

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres, now on an 18-game winless streak, were so close to a win, they could "taste it," as forward Curtis Lazar said on Tuesday.

Monday night, Buffalo took a 3-0 lead into the third period against the Philadelphia Flyers and ended the night with a 4-3 loss in overtime.

"We got so close. we could almost taste it. And knowing that we fought hard to put us into that spot, we kind of almost jinxed ourselves in that regard," Lazar said.

Forward Casey Mittelstadt said, "I think everyone could sit here and say something they could have done better. It just comes down to we've got to bear down and pretty much mentally win the battle and get the puck out. I think looking back, it hurts.

"It was tough to fall asleep last night with that."

The loss now marks back-to-back games the Sabres haven't been able to hang onto a lead in the third period. Buffalo led Boston 2-1 in the third on Saturday before the Bruins scored twice in the period, in which the Sabres were outshot 15-3, to win it 3-2. The winning streak continued.

Monday's outcome holds a little more weight. It wasn't a one-goal game. The Sabres had a three-goal lead heading into the third and still couldn't cash in a win.

The game improvement under interim coach Don Granato, who took over the team 13 days ago, has been visible, but the games still aren't ending with wins. The Sabres have played two straight games with a good start in the first 40 minutes before they are unable to finish in the final 20 minutes.

2 On Your Side's Julianne Pelusi asked Granato on Tuesday if the team has a physical fitness problem, affecting their efforts late in games. He said the team needed to work on conditioning when he took over, but that's not the problem anymore - the team needs to put together its fresh conditioning and knowledge of Granato's new system.

"When I came on over a week ago, I mentioned to you that we lost puck battles. The first game that I was on the bench with Boston, it was the third period we lost puck battles, we lost strength on pucks and stamina," Granato said.

"We had a lot of anxiety to our game, which was fatigue. I mentioned at that time we're going to practice longer, practice harder, and it may cost us in the short term but we need to prop up our game conditioning. I feel we've done that. What I felt in the last two games was our opponent being great opponents in Boston and Philly took in the first two periods, elevated in the third, and we were slow to elevate. So, we fell behind and chased in the third period. Now, we need to learn from that, but I don't feel it's a conditioning issue anymore."

Lazar approached the team moving forward taking away what they can from the difficult loss, "Mistakes are going to happen, but it's how do we limit them. How do we keep them out of net first and foremost? All in all, it's all about playing a solid 60 minutes. It doesn't matter the score. It doesn't matter who you're playing or anything like that.

"You've got to continue to compete for the 60 or plus minutes."

## **The Buffalo Sabres' epic winless streak continues: Who is most at fault, and how do they get back on track?**

Emily Kaplan and Greg Wyshynski

ESPN

March 31, 2021

How did they get here and how worse could it get? Plus, how do they get back on track -- and could a Jack Eichel trade be forthcoming at some point down the road?

ESPN's Emily Kaplan and Greg Wyshynski discuss it all:

Wyshynski: Let's start with a definition of terms. The NHL is insistent that the Sabres are on an 18-game "winless streak" rather than a "losing streak." To wit: The standings say their current streak is "one overtime loss" instead of "L18," because the NHL only considers it a loss when the defeat occurs in regulation.

I know this is a real wacky concept, but a loss is a loss, and the Sabres have 18 of them in a row. The confluence of confusing standings format and having a technicality undercut a sensational story is peak NHL, really. What's your take on this streak, Emily?

Kaplan: If you lose in overtime, it still means you lost. I've never heard a hockey player treat an overtime point as a win. My honest take: I hate the debate over semantics almost as much as I hate this streak itself.

And when I say I hate it, I mean I hate how it's affecting players. You can tell it's really grating on them. After Monday's third-period collapse (when the Sabres blew a 3-0 third period lead), Brandon Montour used the words "embarrassing" and "brutal." Rasmus Dahlin claimed the team had a "panic attack."

Interim coach Don Granato is trying to instill positivity, but these are deep-rooted issues. Captain Jack Eichel (upper-body injury) has been out of the lineup for 11 games with no timetable to return. One of general manager Kevyn Adams' big offseason gets, Eric Staal, has already been traded. The other, Taylor Hall, is likely to follow. And all I wonder is: How are they going to dig themselves out of this?

Wyshynski: Optimism and the 2021 Buffalo Sabres go together like an artisanal candle and a pile of rotten fish. But they had a heartbeat on Monday night against the Flyers before things went sideways, playing two of their better periods in the past month.

"If we hit the open net, would we be talking about panic?" Granato asked. "I would say we made some mistakes. I wouldn't say we panicked. We got a little overexcited."

The coach knows he has taken over a team searching for a glimmer of hope. After six games on the job, he is starting to find little moments, little stretches to build on in a film session. It's elementary and embarrassing for a collection of NHL players, but it's the only way out of this.

Buffalo has one more game with the Flyers, and then it has four versus the Rangers and Devils, teams against which the Sabres have wins this season. I wouldn't be surprised if Buffalo goes winless for a 19th game. I would be surprised if this streak isn't over by the end of that set of games on April 8. Emily, do you agree that the 1980-81 Winnipeg Jets' record of 30 winless games is safe?

Kaplan: I'm with you. The Sabres are not a good hockey team -- and will get worse as players are removed from the lineup ahead of the trade deadline -- but they aren't totally incompetent. Since the streak began, the Sabres have an expected goals for percentage of 44% at 5-on-5, per Natural Stat Trick; that's not great by any means, but it's also not the worst in the league over that span. The Coyotes, who are on a three-game winning streak and one point out of a playoff spot in the West Division, have an even lower rate. The Sabres' Corsi for percentage at 5-on-5 in that span is 26th in the league, with two surefire playoff teams (the Wild and the Jets) behind them.

So there are signs of life. Buffalo goalie Linus Ullmark is back after a monthlong absence, and he is quietly been battling hard. A huge lingering question is: When do the Sabres get Eichel back, if at all this season? The 24-year-old is the franchise's most important player, and the emotional heartbeat of this team. It's been pretty mum

on the injury front. Eichel is still rehabbing and feeling better, per Granato, and the team is "hopeful" he can return this season.

But perhaps the better question is: What is Eichel's future in Buffalo beyond 2021? I couldn't imagine this possibility a year ago at this time, but do you think there's a legitimate chance the team trades its captain?

Wyshynski: There are actually two separate questions here. The first is whether Eichel has hit his tipping point. Last summer, he was frustrated. I'm not sure the world's most comprehensive thesaurus could conjure up the word to properly capture how Eichel was feeling after watching the Sabres plummet to a .221 points percentage while a coach he admired was fired. If he wants out, the Sabres have to honor that request.

If he wants to stay ... do the Sabres still trade him anyway? Centers of Eichel's age, ability and contract term rarely become available. There are teams such as the Kings and the Rangers that could restock the Buffalo cupboard quickly in a trade for Eichel. I tend to believe the Sabres are better off using Eichel as the foundation for whatever their next build looks like. But it might not entirely be up to them. Emily, what's the best plan moving forward for the Sabres?

Kaplan: First, the immediate plan: Acquire as many prospects and draft picks as possible ahead of the April 12 trade deadline. Make unemotional decisions -- which means perhaps parting with recent top draft picks who have thus far underperformed.

What we have yet to mention: This season isn't an isolated issue for the Sabres. They're mired in a nine-year postseason drought (soon to be 10), which is the longest in the league. The bandage fixes in free agency haven't helped; they need to build from the ground up. Compounding this issue: Buffalo made massive cuts to its scouting department in the pandemic, and it hasn't filled a lot of those positions. The Sabres haven't had a scouting presence in Russia for the past several years. They don't have a scout in Finland. They also don't have a scout assigned to the WHL or OHL this season (though the OHL season remains in flux). They're relying heavily on video scouting for the 2021 draft, which might not be ideal.

Organizationally, the Sabres need to shore up that area first, but it will mean even more of a financial commitment from team owners Terry and Kim Pegula. What the Sabres crave most is stability. They can't keep cycling through coaches and GMs. They need one voice, one direction, because all of this pivoting has led them nowhere. Greg, do you see reasons for optimism that this could be a quicker fix?

Wyshynski: I was speaking with an executive from another team this week who expressed something that startled me. "I don't think the Sabres are that far off," he said. "A new coach who can change the attitude around the team and they're not nearly as bad as this."

They had the wrong coach. They had a season interrupted by COVID-19. They're now stuck in a losing streak of historic proportions and don't know how to pull the nose up from the tailspin.

I acknowledge that looking at the Sabres and pondering their potential for 2021-22 is like walking into dilapidated, haunted house and measuring for an open-concept kitchen/dining room, but ... I kind of like the flooring and the fixtures? Am I off-base here?

Kaplan: Well, sometimes I think you're off-base (like your insistence that Central Jersey is, in fact, a real place) but not here.

The hardest thing to acquire in the NHL is a No. 1 center. The Sabres have one on their roster, who is signed to a long-term deal and about to hit his athletic prime. (Obligatory reminder that Eichel is only 24).

Buffalo can use the rest of the season to evaluate if Ullmark can be the answer in goal or if they need to look elsewhere. Dahlin, the No. 1 pick of the 2018 draft, was touted as a generational talent. Sure, it's fun to say the Sabres "ruined him," but he's only 20. Perhaps they rushed his development. Even more likely: They underestimated how being surrounded by a losing culture can negatively impact a young player. Get a better support system around him and there's still time for him to flourish.

But maybe I'm an optimist. Maybe this still has to get worse before it can get any better.

## **Insider Trading: Sabres mulling a variety of trade scenarios involving Hall**

TSN

March 30, 2021

The TSN Hockey Insiders Darren Dreger, Pierre LeBrun and Frank Seravalli discuss the Flyers pondering adding some goaltending help ahead of the trade deadline, the Sabres mulling a variety of trade scenarios involving , the Panthers looking to fill the void left by , why Seattle is getting calls ahead of the deadline, and more.

Has there been any talk about the Sabres dealing more big names?

Darren Dreger: Specifically, we're looking at Taylor Hall. I can tell you this. The agent for Taylor Hall, Darren Ferris, spoke with Kevyn Adams, the general manager for the Buffalo Sabres, on Monday. Obviously, they talked about a variety of trade scenarios that might be directed at Taylor Hall. There are some that have some interest in a trade and sign.

Kevyn Adams is wrestling on what the return should look like and as you get closer to the April 12 trade deadline, he becomes less of a cap hit so maybe there's some upside in that. Maybe the price stays at what the ask might be at this stage.

As for the captain, Jack Eichel, he continues to go through treatment and is seeing a specialist. The expectation is that he could have imaging on his injury as early as next week and then the Sabres and Eichel will have a better understanding of his progress at that point.

## **Analyzing Taylor Hall's strengths, how he'd fit on 3 contending teams**

Sportsnet

March 30, 2021

The trade deadline is less than two weeks away and the biggest name on the rental market is Taylor Hall.

He's only a couple of years removed from being named league MVP. He's also sitting on two goals in 34 games. Hall has had more breakaways than any player since the start of last season and he's scored on precisely zero of them.

Forecasting the type of impact Hall might have on a contending team was once a fairly straightforward exercise. Not so simple anymore. So, let's take a look at what Hall can bring to a contending team and what type of team might be the best fit for the speedy winger.

If you want a possession-driving winger, there aren't many better options than Hall. Last season, split between New Jersey and Arizona, Hall ranked seventh in the NHL in controlled zone exits and entries per game. Hall used that speed and skill to generate scoring chances off the rush at an elite rate, ranking third in the league behind only Nathan MacKinnon and Connor McDavid.

Despite ranking third in rush chances, Hall ranked 217th in rush goals scoring on only three of his 78 attempts. Twelve of those rush scoring chances were breakaways and as mentioned, he missed on all of them. That's either an incredible run of bad luck or there's something to the fact that while Hall generates a ton of opportunity with his speed, his finishing skills are not in line with the other elite players who create a similar amount of offence off the rush.

This season, Hall is generating less off the rush, averaging fewer than one rush chance per game, which ranks 62nd overall. His controlled exits and entries, while still well above average, are also down as he ranks outside of the top-10.

In fairness, it's difficult to accurately assess any Sabre's true value given the state of the team -- winless in 18 straight games. However, we are now looking at over 100 regular season games on three different teams with one startling truth: Hall creates chances with his speed at an elite level and has been among the worst finishers in the NHL over the past season and a half.

Will that change in a different environment on a contending team? Perhaps, but like all trade deadline acquisitions, fit will play a major role in whether this trend continues or Hall can break out of his scoring slump and be an impact player.

Let's take a look at a few teams who could benefit most from adding a player like Hall and whether he would be the best fit possible.

### **NEW YORK ISLANDERS**

With fellow left winger Anders Lee out for the rest of the season, one can expect the Islanders to make a move for a top-six forward ahead of the trade deadline.

Lee is still tied for the team lead in goals with 12 so, on the surface, bringing Hall in seems to make sense. However, Hall and Lee are different players, and what made Lee successful on the Islanders' top line won't necessarily translate to similar results for a player like Hall.

Lee is one of the premier net-front, power forwards in the NHL. Great at deflecting pucks and cleaning up rebounds. He works well alongside Mat Barzal, a premier puck possession centre, and Jordan Eberle, a high-skill right-winger. Since entering the NHL, Barzal has been at or near the top of the league in puck possession and zone entries. There's only one puck on the ice, but not many players possess it and like to hang on to it more than Barzal. So, while replacing Lee with Hall might make sense on the surface, it may not be a great fit when you consider the type of game each player plays.

The Islanders are also one of the top defensive teams in the NHL. They dump pucks in at a high rate, rarely make risky plays in the neutral zone, and play a pretty tight defensive system under Barry Trotz. Could Hall thrive in this environment? Perhaps. The Islanders aren't exactly stacked on left wing and if Hall played away from



Barzal on the second line it could be a move that makes sense, but several factors would need to be considered by both the team and the player in determining whether this is a fit that would work.

#### TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

Salary cap gymnastics aside, this could be an attractive match for both sides.

Zach Hyman fits just about anywhere in the Leafs lineup and has great chemistry with Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner. Slotting Hall on the second line alongside John Tavares and William Nylander could make a lot of sense for both parties. That role is currently being filled by Alex Galchenyuk who has performed admirably in a handful of games with the Leafs. That said, Hall would be a significant upgrade.

Tavares thinks the game at an elite level and does a great job of protecting the puck and extending plays in the offensive zone. Nylander is a dynamic winger capable of transporting the puck and creating space in the attacking end. On paper, it seems like Hall's game would fit nicely with both players and with the style of game the team plays.

The Maple Leafs defence likes to hit the team's skilled forwards with speed up the ice and Hall would only benefit from Toronto's puck-possession style of game. For the first time in a long time, Hall wouldn't have to be 'the guy' either. Hall carried the Devils into the playoffs in his MVP season. He was the go-to offensive player for the Coyotes in his time in Arizona and was expected to put up big numbers alongside Jack Eichel in Buffalo.

In Toronto, Hall would be a secondary piece on a roster loaded with offensive talent.

#### BOSTON BRUINS

The Bruins have had trouble scoring at even strength. Then again, so has Hall. Perhaps, this is a move that could put a jolt in both Hall and the Bruins offence. Boston has dined out on its power play in the past, but their scoring woes at even strength this season have hit a new level. Only the anemic Buffalo Sabres average fewer even strength goals per game.

The Bruins were reportedly interested in Hall before he signed with the Sabres and they don't have much in the way of offensive depth beyond their loaded up top line of Brad Marchand, Patrice Bergeron, and David Pastrnak. While Hall may be a gamble because of the aforementioned lack of finish he's shown over the past couple of seasons, Boston needs all the help it can get generating offence.

Hall has a full no-move clause so it will be up to him whether he wants to accept a trade to a contending team or not. What is certain is the amount of uncertainty that exists in what exactly he will provide that potential team.

## Where do the 2021 Sabres rank among the worst teams of all-time?

By Arun Srinivasan

Yahoo! Sports

March 30, 2021

The phrase "historically bad" has become a regular part of sports parlance and gets used far too often, but the 2021 Buffalo Sabres fit that description to a tee. Buffalo lost its 18th consecutive game on Monday, blowing a 3-0 lead to the Philadelphia Flyers before falling 4-3 in overtime.

We've covered the Sabres' descent to rock bottom pretty extensively, and it's been quite a ride. The Buffalo News intentionally ranked the Sabres 32nd in a 31-team league, Eric Staal could barely hide how relieved he was to be traded to the Montreal Canadiens, Jeff Skinner has been inexplicably benched for portions of the season, head coach Ralph Krueger was fired 12 games into the current losing streak, a month after he was placed on the COVID-19 list. Jack Eichel, the team's best player, underwhelmed when he was healthy and is out indefinitely due to injury, top prospect Dylan Cozens left Monday's game due to injury and could join Eichel for an extended stay, while Taylor Hall is on the trade block, looking nothing like the player who captured the Hart Trophy in 2017-18.

Did we miss anything?

As the self-appointed nerd among my Yahoo Sports NHL comrades, it's time to do an investigation into where the 2021 Sabres rank among the worst teams in NHL history. For the purposes of this exercise, intentionality matters – it's far worse to slip to the bottom when it's unexpected, as opposed to being an expansion team, or a team that is actively tanking. We're also cutting off any pre-Original Six era teams. Sorry for the all the fans who can still remember the 1943-44 New York Rangers.

2019-20 Detroit Red Wings

OK, so we don't have to dig that deep to find a contemporary for the Sabres. Last year's Red Wings stumbled out of the gate to a 4-8-1 record in October 2019 and once the new year begun – like all of us, in a sense – things quickly went further downhill.

Detroit went a month and two days without a win in regulation (Jan. 7-Feb. 9) then followed up by losing 10 of its next 11 games. It is admittedly way too small a sample size to jump to conclusions, but Detroit appeared to be finally turning a corner, going 2-2 in March before the COVID-19 pandemic ended the Red Wings' season.

The Red Wings finished with a .275 points percentage, the 38th-worst mark in league history and frankly, that may make this team look better than they were, which was a hapless outfit that was the NHL's worst team from start-to-finish. Detroit finished dead last in goals for (145), goals against (267) and their ghastly minus-122 differential stands out by itself. This was all by design, however.

We're not taking shots at general manager/vice president Steve Yzerman's acumen, as he built most of the infrastructure for the current Tampa Bay Lightning, a perfect hockey team aside from their hideous goal song. Yzerman knew all too well what he was getting into when he accepted the Red Wings job, and 2020 was a planned rebuilding year for the team.

Are the Sabres worse? Yes, albeit not by much. Detroit finished with a .275 points percentage, whereas Buffalo is at .250 and falling. Buffalo projects to have a minus-106 goal differential extrapolated over 71 games, which isn't as bad as Detroit's record last year. But considering the Sabres deluded themselves into thinking they were one or two quality forwards away from a playoff spot and grabbed a former Hart Trophy winner in the offseason, they never saw this coming, whereas the Red Wings knew what they were in for. That counts for a lot, and therefore, the Sabres are worse.

2016-17 Colorado Avalanche

Considering this year's Avalanche are the NHL's most fun team, are a leading Stanley Cup contender and have proven to be the best shot-creation team in the league by some distance, it's easy to forget that it wasn't always roses and sunshine for this group.

Jared Bednar is considered one of the league's best coaches but his first year with the Avalanche was rough as the club finished 22-56-4 with a minus-112 goal differential – the next-worse team finished with a minus-63 goal differential, for comparison. Nathan MacKinnon led the team with 53 points before finally breaking out with the

first of three consecutive 90-point plus seasons the following year. Colorado's 166 goals are tied for the 23rd-fewest in NHL history among teams that played a minimum 70 games. The final year of the Avalanche's rebuild, it was a tough season for all involved while the young core of MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Gabriel Landeskog, all under 25 at the time, underwent some growing pains. This was Jarome Iginla's final season, too, and we'll choose to forget he was ever part of this group.

Are the Sabres worse? They sure are. Colorado's star forward trio weren't the problem and showed signs of development all season, and the club had scheduled the 2017 campaign as the final pillar of the rebuild. After trading a disgruntled Matt Duchene in exchange for a package that featured star defenseman Sam Girard, the franchise's trajectory immediately changed. Suffice to say this year's Sabres are nowhere close to that.

#### 2013-14 Buffalo Sabres

We're not here to pick on the Sabres necessarily, but history doesn't lie. The 2013-14 Sabres finished with a hideous minus-91 goal differential, and their 150 goals ranks as the fifth fewest ever among qualifying teams. Cody Hodgson led the team with 44 points, Tyler Ennis finished second with 43, and the rest of the roster's output is frankly depressing.

What's worse is that the team benefited from quality starting goaltending. Ryan Miller posted a .923 save percentage and a 13.6 goals saved above average (GSAA), but he was mercifully shipped to the St. Louis Blues at the trade deadline. We're sure that current members of the Sabres are hoping for the same fate. This was a hapless ship, largely devoid of talent.

Are (this year's) Sabres worse? Yes. Intention matters and the 2013-14 Sabres debuted four teenagers in their lineup, with no real aspirations of contending for a playoff spot. Not only that but Buffalo's 2014 ghastly differential projects to be better than this year's group. If the 2014 group squared off against the 2021 group, they wouldn't necessarily be the favorite, but considering how badly each of the 2021's group's key pillars (Eichel, Skinner, Hall and Rasmus Dahlin) have underperformed, this year's team probably loses.

#### 1992-93 Ottawa Senators

O, Canada. When the nation's capital finally received a new franchise, bearing the same name as the now-defunct club that won 11 Stanley Cups, they arrived with a 10-70-4 record, with their .143 points percentage tied for third-worst in NHL history. Norm Maciver, a relatively unassuming defenseman, led the team with 63 points, as the rest of his teammates failed to find the net. This team simply didn't have any talent while expansion pick and future pillar of the franchise, Alexei Yashin, elected to stay with Dynamo Moscow for one more year. Good call.

Are the Sabres worse? Well, no. But the Senators knew they'd be terrible and prepared for Alexandre Daigle mania. For those of you who forgot, Daigle was considered well worth the wait. Some even believed the Senators were intentionally losing games in order to secure the uber-prospect, who posted 137 points during his final major junior season. As it turns out, Daigle was a spectacular bust, and though it took five seasons to make the playoffs, the 1993 Senators flat-out sucked.

#### 1992-93 San Jose Sharks

See above. It's more complex than that, obviously, but the Sharks shared the same fate as the Senators, taking a step back during their second professional season. San Jose finished with a 11-71-2 record, tying Ottawa with an identical 24 points and .143 points percentage while allowing 414 goals, the third-worst mark in NHL history. The Sharks also posted a 17-game losing streak during this season. Talk about a sophomore slump.

Are the Sabres worse? No, but c'mon, you should be better than a second-year team in any event.

#### 1974-75 Washington Capitals

The 1974-75 Washington Capitals are widely considered the worst team in NHL history and for good reason. Washington's 446 goals allowed is the worst mark in league history and like Usain Bolt's 9.58 or Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak – not like them at all, quite the opposite in fact – this dubious record may never be topped. The Capitals finished with a 8-67-5 mark, a .131 win percentage, a mere 181 goals scored, and a minus-265 goal differential. That's right, minus-265! Granted, this was Washington's inaugural season but there is a certain level of futility that is inexcusable.

Are the Sabres worse? No, but the fact that they are even drawing comparisons to this historical monstrosity is enough of an insult.

## **NHL On NBCSN: Analyzing Sabres' 18-game winless streak by the numbers**

By Adam Gretz

NBC Sports

March 31, 2021

The 2020-21 NHL season has been a perfect storm of disappointment for the Buffalo Sabres.

An already flawed team, thrown into a new division with an unbalanced schedule, where the overwhelming majority of their games would be against Stanley Cup contenders and teams that finished among the top-10 in the league standings a year ago. Add in an injury to the best player on the roster (Jack Eichel) and a couple of disappointing/unlucky performances from two of the big-money players on the roster (Taylor Hall and Jeff Skinner) and you have a historically bad season.

The Sabres not only enter Wednesday's game against the Philadelphia Flyers with what is by far the worst record in the league, they are also riding an 18-game winless streak that goes all the way back to February.

It is every bit as wild as it sounds. It continued on Monday night when the Sabres looked to be on their way to their first win since Feb. 23 when they had a 3-0 lead over the Flyers entering the third period. Then four consecutive goals by the Flyers later, and here we are at 18 games.

What does an 18-game winless streak look like, and what sort of impact does it have on a season?

Let us take a look.

Some numbers on this streak

- During these 18 games the Sabres have been outscored 74-30. That is a minus-44 goal differential, and what is by far the worst goal share in the league during that stretch. During the past 18 games the Sabres have scored only 28% of the goals that have been scored during their games. The next worst mark in the NHL during that stretch belongs to the Anaheim Ducks, who have a 40% share of the goals during their games.
- The Sabres last win came on Feb. 23, a 4-1 win against the New Jersey Devils. The Sabres' past three wins have all come against the Devils. They have not beaten a team that is not the Devils since a 3-2 win against the New York Rangers all the way back on Jan. 26. That is over two months ago. The next time they play the Devils is April 6. They only have two games remaining against the Devils.
- Buffalo's current points percentage of .250 is on track to be the worst the NHL has seen since the Atlanta Thrashers inaugural season when they had a .238 points percentage.
- If the Sabres lose to Philadelphia on Wednesday to close the month of March, that will mean they went an entire calendar month (16 games) without winning a single game. Only one team in NHL history has ever played at least 16 games in a month and failed to win any of them: The 1977-78 Detroit Red Wings had a month (also March) where they lost 15 games and tied one game.
- During their streak the Sabres rank 31st in goals per game and goals against per game, and in the bottom-three of shots per game, shots against per game, save percentage, and on the power play. Their penalty kill has been middle of the pack.
- There are seven players on the roster who are a minus-13 or worse during the streak, including defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who is a minus-20. Rasmus Dahlin is the next lowest at minus-18 during the streak.
- Jeff Skinner (three) and Sam Reinhart (six) are the only players on the team with more than two goals over the past 18 games. Nobody has more than eight points. Eight points in 18 games would come out to a 36-point pace over 82 games.
- The Sabres have spent 573 minutes out of 1,087 minutes during the streak trailing on the scoreboard. That is more than 52% of the time during that stretch. They have held a lead for only 192 minutes. That is only 17% of the time.

## **Mittelstadt seeking to take advantage of opportunity at center**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

March 30, 2021

Casey Mittelstadt acknowledges the opportunity in front of him. The Buffalo Sabres have openings at the center position following the trade of Eric Staal and an injury to Dylan Cozens, setting up a chance for Mittelstadt to contribute at his natural position down the stretch.

"It's no secret it's a big opportunity for me," Mittelstadt said. "I feel like I've been playing well and making plays. It's just, we got to get the results."

Mittelstadt practiced on a line with Taylor Hall and Tage Thompson on Tuesday, keeping the trio intact after a productive first outing against Philadelphia on Monday. The Sabres held a 17-12 advantage in shot attempts during 12:31 with the line on the ice at 5-on-5.

It culminated in a goal for Brandon Montour during the second period. Hall carried the puck with speed through the neutral zone and hit Tage Thompson with an entry pass at the Philadelphia blue line. Thompson took a quick shot, chased his rebound, and found Montour as the trailer.

The attempt was one of a game-high nine on the night for Thompson, who played with an aggressiveness that interim head coach Don Granato hopes to see more of moving forward. Thompson was credited with five individual scoring chances by NaturalStatTrick.com.

The common thread for the line was quick movement through the neutral zone and an eagerness to get to the net.

"I thought our line was great," Mittelstadt said. "I think the biggest part of the game for us was when we were back in the D-zone, we were just breaking pucks out quick, good plays by the D. A couple times they found me in the middle. I think that's huge, that's something we haven't done so much in the past and are trying to utilize it more now.

"I think you get rushes off making good breakouts, it's pretty much that simple. Obviously, Tommer and Hallsy were making plays on the rush and crisscrossing and making plays, so, yeah, it was fun to watch. Obviously, there's some things to build on and definitely some more chances that we can bury."

Granato said the line will get another chance to build on its chemistry against the Flyers on Wednesday, offering the latest opportunity in what has been an up-and-down year for the 22-year-old Mittelstadt. He began the season on the taxi squad, then moved in and out of the lineup before settling into a role on the wing. He was forced to reacclimate to game speed after testing positive for COVID-19 in February.

All the while, Mittelstadt has spoken earnestly about the lessons learned from his first two pro seasons. He admitted to taking his place in the league for granted upon breaking in as a rookie in 2018-19. His reassignment to Rochester last season taught him to treat each opportunity like it's his last.

"He stayed competitive, he stayed engaged, he stayed focused on improving and developing and he's progressed," Granato said. "He's progressed to the point where I'm comfortable putting him at center regardless of the fact that we've lost the guys that we have due to injury or being traded. He was starting to earn that position anyway in being at center.

"Now he has an even greater opportunity and again, he's showing enough that I have confidence in him in that position and certainly, like every player, when there's mistakes the game is fast so you're going to make mistakes. He can correct them quickly and that's the process."

Tuesday's practice

Cozens did not practice after before forced to exit with an upper-body injury during the first period on Monday. Granato did not have an update on his status.

Jacob Bryson returned after missing the past two games with an upper-body injury. Granato said he made it through the session well and appears ready to play Wednesday.

Here's how the team lined up in full:

#### Forwards

4 Taylor Hall - 37 Casey Mittelstadt - 72 Tage Thompson  
68 Victor Olofsson - 15 Riley Sheahan - 23 Sam Reinhart  
53 Jeff Skinner - 27 Curtis Lazar - 21 Kyle Okposo  
13 Tobias Rieder - 20 Cody Eakin - 17 Steven Fogarty

Also practicing: 38 Jean-Sebastien Dea, 49 C.J. Smith

#### Defensemen

78 Jacob Bryson - 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
62 Brandon Montour - 33 Colin Miller  
26 Rasmus Dahlin - 10 Henri Jokiharju  
44 Matt Irwin - 88 Brandon Davidson

#### Goalies

35 Linus Ullmark  
31 Dustin Tokarski  
32 Michael Houser