



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 21, 2011*

## Color Regehr a player ready to go

By Bucky Gleason  
Buffalo News  
September 21, 2011

Shortly after the trade was completed, Robyn Regehr called Sabres equipment man Dave Williams and asked that he send along some new gear. The veteran defenseman hoped to make a smooth transition from Calgary to Buffalo and figured the first step was getting comfortable wearing blue and gold.

Naturally, it was a little strange at the beginning. Regehr had spent his entire 11-year career playing for the Flames, wearing the blazing "C" sweater and No. 28. He was waiting for a few items from Buffalo when he started working out in Prince Albert, Sask., so he patched together a wardrobe that looked like something out of a beer league.

"I had some Buffalo stuff on, some Calgary stuff on," Regehr said with a laugh. "I looked like Frankenstein. The hardest thing is the change with the numbers when I sign [autographs.] It just becomes automatic. It's almost like breathing. You don't even think about it. Then, all of a sudden, you're screwing up."

Last week, he was delivering Sabres season tickets with Ryan Miller when a woman asked for his signature. He signed his name with "28," as he did for years with Calgary. One problem: Paul Gaustad wears No. 28 for the Sabres. Regehr will wear No. 24 when he plays his first game in a Buffalo uniform tonight against Montreal.

"Sorry," he told the woman. "It's still preseason."

Good point. If it matters, Regehr is a nice guy. He was born in Brazil, where his parents served as Mennonite missionaries before moving back to Saskatchewan. He spent four years of his childhood on a church mission in Indonesia, where his pets included a jungle cat and a monkey. He should be plenty prepared for a few exotic animals he'll see in First Niagara Center this season.

He's also a good, tough defenseman who is certain to improve the Sabres' blue line with aggression you should expect from his 6-foot-3, 225-pound frame. His friendly, engaging personality away from the game contradicts what you see on the ice. Let's just say he plays with a surliness and oomph that have been lacking in these parts for several years.

"If guys weren't trying to score on me, I wouldn't be so mean," he said. "You almost need two different personalities to be effective out there. The stuff you do off the ice doesn't always translate to being an effective player. You need to put yourself in a place where the hair on the back of your neck is standing up."

For now, it all sounds like music. The Sabres are getting the proper pieces in place for what many believe will become a contending team, but it's going to take time for them to work out the kinks. Regehr has been here for less than a week and didn't have a clue who would be his defense partner for tonight's game against the Canadiens.

Regehr recently moved into a new home, and his wife gave birth to their second child, Shane, July 28. He's living in a new city for the first time since 1999. He has new teammates, is playing in another conference and under a different system. It could take several months before he fully adjusts to Buffalo.

Be patient, my friends.

Just know that the guy can play. He was among the Flames' most dependable and consistent defensemen for nearly a decade. He had a no-movement clause in his contract with the Flames and could have killed the trade that brought him to Buffalo, but he was impressed by what he heard from owner Terry Pegula.

Now, with Regehr wearing blue and gold, it looks like a good fit.

"I'm very anxious to get going," Regehr said. "We've been here for a little while now and all the guys have skated. Everybody is getting antsy with what we've seen and the expectations around here. We can't wait to really get moving here. It's going to be a little awkward, but I've had my practice jerseys on."

## Sabre trio fits in with big boys

*Line of Foligno, Adam, Kassian is man-sized*

By John Vogl  
Buffalo News  
September 21, 2011

There's a tendency during training camp to call anyone who's not a veteran a "kid." As in, "Wow, that kid looked good," or, "Man, that kid has a lot to learn."

There is one exception to that in Buffalo Sabres' camp. It's the line of center Luke Adam, left wing Marcus Foligno and right wing Zack Kassian. They're essentially new -- Adam played 19 games for Buffalo last season as a rookie, while the other two are entering their first seasons as pros -- but no one is calling them kids in First Niagara Center.

"They're a man line, they're not a kid line," coach Lindy Ruff said.

The three have been inseparable for the past couple of weeks, skating together on the ice, joining each other for film sessions or walking the halls to get ready. Averaging over 6-foot-2 and weighing more than 210 pounds, they certainly stick out despite their youth.

Ruff would like them to be even more noticeable. The trio played together during Monday's 3-1 exhibition victory over Carolina. Although they had a couple of odd-man rushes late, they didn't score or control play. They might get another chance tonight when the Sabres visit the Montreal Canadiens (7 p.m., 550-AM).

"They did some good things," Ruff said Tuesday. "There were some plays inside the game that you'd like them to be harder on as a big line. They were in on two two-on-ones, and both Marcus shot. One created a pretty good rebound for Kassian.

"Overall, I thought they were good. They can be better than that, though."

They'll need to be if they want to make the Sabres' roster. Foligno will start in Rochester, but Adam is in contention for a job. Kassian is a long shot.

"I've just got to show that I can play both ends of the rink," Adam said. "I learned a lot last year in my 19 games, whether it was playing away from the puck or D-zone coverage or offensive zone. I'm real grateful for the opportunity that I'm going to be given, and hopefully I take full advantage of this and make this hockey team."

The Sabres gave Kassian a good look last preseason before sending him back to juniors. The 6-foot-3, 214-pounder feels he's better prepared to make an NHL push this year.

"I definitely feel more confident," said Kassian, the Sabres' first-round selection in the 2009 draft. "I wouldn't say more relaxed, but I just know what to expect and I know what I have to do.

"I think I've developed more of a pro game. I think I've worked on a lot of skill work to hopefully be a good player in this league at some point. I kind of rounded out all the edges of my game. Obviously, there's still work to be done, but I think I've improved in all my areas."

Foligno continues his rapid ascension. Selected as a project in the fourth round of the 2009 draft, he's become a top prospect.

"You're talking about two players that got here different ways," Ruff said. "Marcus has got here probably purely on hard work. He became a better skater and realizing that he's got to be a banger and going through people.

"Zack's ... got a tremendous amount of skill, can play in the special teams situations, power play especially, fighting-wise was one of the toughest guys in the Ontario League, so they've gone down different paths. I think it's easier to

say Marcus is more adaptable or a little bit ahead because his game would probably be a little bit on the simpler side."

The preseason game against Carolina was Foligno's first at the NHL level. He helped the Sabres' youngsters win the prospects tournament last week in Michigan, but pulling on an NHL sweater in his hometown was different.

"It means a lot," Foligno said. "I obviously played in front of the fans in world juniors [for Canada], but to be in the Buffalo Sabres' uniform and to experience the fans here as the home team, it's a lot of fun. It was great to wear that jersey and play that game.

"Hopefully, I'll get another shot at it."

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The Sabres have made their first cuts of camp, sending 10 players to their junior teams and another to his minor-league squad.

Mark Pysyk, Buffalo's first-round pick in the 2010 draft, and West Seneca's Alex Lepokowski head the list of junior trims. The defensemen will head back to Edmonton of the Western Hockey League and Barrie of the Ontario Hockey League, respectively. Also getting sent down were: forwards Steven Beyers (Barrie, OHL), Dan Catenacci (Owen Sound, OHL), Cedrick Henley (Val D'Or, Quebec Major Junior Hockey League), Steven Shipley (Niagara, OHL), Kevin Sundher (Victoria, WHL) and Gregg Sutch (Barrie, OHL); defenseman Jerome Gauthier-Leduc (Rimouski, QMJHL); and goaltender Nathan Lieuwen (Kootenay, WHL).

Ryan Rondeau was returned to Laredo of the Central Hockey League.

The Sabres have 52 players in camp (30 forwards, 17 defensemen and five goalies).

## **Sabres return 10 players to juniors**

By AP

September 21, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—The Buffalo Sabres returned 10 prospects to their respective Canadian Junior Hockey teams, including defenseman Mark Pysyk(notes), the team's 2010 first-round draft pick.

Pysyk returns to Edmonton of the Western Hockey League.

Forward Steven Beyers was among the players returned after the undrafted rookie free agent was invited to attend training camp. The Sabres also returned Ryan Rondeau to Laredo of the Central Hockey League.

The moves were made Tuesday, four days into training camp, and leave Buffalo with 52 players (30 forwards, 17 defensemen and five goalies).

## **Pair of Minor Injuries for Sabres**

By Joe Buscaglia

WGR 550

September 20, 2011

Buffalo, NY -- After Tuesday's double session concluded at the First Niagara Center, Buffalo Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff met with the media. One preseason game and just a few practices in, the Sabres are relatively healthy heading in to preseason game number two on Wednesday.

"A couple of guys are a little nicked up," said the head coach. "Jochen [Hecht] has missed a couple days and Brad Boyes has missed a couple days. Nothing but minor stuff. It looks like they should be back on the ice [Wednesday]."

One other lingering concern health-wise is over the condition of Jason Pominville after a few days of skating hard at training camp. Pominville suffered a gruesome severed tendon in his ankle that required four-to-six months of rehab time. The forward said so far, so good.

"It feels pretty good," said Pominville. "[Wednesday] will be my first regular game. We had a scrimmage, maybe a little tentative at the start of it but no, it feels good. I'm capable of doing everything I want to do whether it's on-the-ice or off-the-ice workouts, it feels good. So I'm happy of the progress I've made."

Pominville and his teammates will suit up against the Montreal Canadiens at the Bell Centre on Wednesday evening. You can hear the play-by-play action on WGR Sports Radio 550.

The Sabres also announcing they've trimmed 11 players from their training camp roster. Here's the full list:

Forwards Steven Beyers (Barrie, OHL), Dan Catenacci (Owen Sound, OHL), Cedrick Henley (Val D'Or, QMJHL), Steven Shipley (Niagara, OHL), Kevin Sundher (Victoria, WHL) and Gregg Sutch (Barrie, OHL); defensemen Jerome Gauthier-Leduc (Rimouski, QMJHL), Alex Lepkowski (Barrie, OHL) and Mark Pysyk (Edmonton, WHL); and goaltender Nathan Lieuwen (Kootenay, WHL).

## **Sabres' McNabb Getting Taste of NHL**

By Joe Buscaglia

WGR 550

September 20, 2011

Buffalo, NY -- When fans of the Buffalo Sabres start speaking about the youth of the organization, it gets them fairly excited.

The names roll out. Zack Kassian, Luke Adam and Marcus Foligno are three that seem to be on the prowl for a roster spot maybe as early as this season. But one name that follows closely after those three is Brayden McNabb, the offensively gifted defenseman from Saskatchewan.

McNabb put those that monitor hockey prospects on alert with this past season in the Western Hockey League. Skating for the Kootenay Ice, the 6-foot-4 blue-liner put together a campaign of 21 goals, 51 assists and a plus-minus of 25. Now signed to his entry-level deal with the Sabres, McNabb is just adapting to training camp.

"It's obviously a few steps up," he said. "I think the speed and the strength are the biggest things, so I've just been kind of working towards getting my feet moving at all times. Getting faster I think is the biggest step."

Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff has taken notice of the 2009 third round pick just a few days in to camp.

"He's a big man with a physical side to him and he's got good hands," said Ruff. "I think he may have the longest stick on the team and he uses it well. I think he's one guy that when he's defending, can break up a lot of plays with his reach. When it comes to guys knowing the tools they have, I think Brayden has done a pretty good job with it."

Throughout camp, he's been in the same skating group as newly acquired defenseman Robyn Regehr. McNabb says it's been something he's really taken advantage of, just trying to learn as much as he can from one of the most physical defensemen in the NHL along with the rest of the veterans.

"When you watch them, they never stop moving their feet and communicate a lot," McNabb remarked. "I think that's another big thing coming from junior to pro is communication. When you communicate, it makes life a lot easier out there."

As a young guy being in Buffalo for an extended amount for the first time, McNabb feels the excitement building all throughout the city as hockey season approaches.

"There's changes with the new owner and everything. It's a pretty exciting time here and I'm looking forward to the future," he said. "You can tell [Mr. Pegula] wants to win, and just hearing about stuff around town, everyone's talking about it. It's an exciting time for Buffalo."

The Sabres take on the Montreal Canadiens Wednesday night at the Bell Centre. You can hear the play-by-play action on WGR Sports Radio 550.



## **Gladiators Become Buffalo's ECHL Affiliate**

By Christine Troyke  
Gwinnett Daily Post  
September 20, 2011

DULUTH -- The Gwinnett Gladiators signed an affiliation agreement with the Buffalo Sabres on Tuesday, their second such deal in the last month.

The Gladiators already contracted with Phoenix for the 2011-12 season and now add Buffalo to the mix.

The Coyotes became an affiliate in August and preliminary estimates suggest they will be sending Gwinnett a goaltender, two defensemen and up to four forwards.

Buffalo won't be assigning quite so many players, perhaps as few as one or as many as five, Gwinnett president Steve Chapman said. But he's looking further down the line than just next season with this relationship.

"During the initial search for affiliates, there were a few teams that came into focus and Buffalo was one of those," Chapman said.

The Sabres have eschewed an ECHL affiliate in the past, preferring to scavenge the league for the best players not already under contract with another NHL team. That practice hasn't endeared Buffalo to many of the teams in the ECHL.

"Candidly, people in the league started hating them," Chapman said. "But with the new ownership, from what I've heard, he's interested in developing the organization."

Chapman had talks with the Sabres' general manager Darcy Regier and explained that one of the Gladiators' main focuses has always been on moving players up to the next level.

Gwinnett has fielded 156 call-ups involving 112 players in its eight-year history. At least 22 players have been called up to the AHL in each of the last four seasons, including a record 28 in 2009-10 and 23 last year.

"Having two affiliates could be a challenge," Chapman said. "We could be stocked very well by our affiliates. Gwinnett should have several good prospects, but any of those players can be called up at any time leaving the team short-handed.

"It is a challenge for the die-hard fans to endure the mass call-ups, but that is part of the game and it's good for the prospects. I think we have the leadership in place behind the bench and on the ice to see us through."

Part of the reason the Buffalo deal came together was new head coach John Wroblewski. Hired as just the second coach in team history Aug. 3, Wroblewski spent several years working with Ron Rolston the U.S. national team. Rolston is the coach in Rochester, Buffalo's AHL affiliate.

"That really solidified it," Chapman said.

This is the third time Gwinnett has served as a dual affiliate for NHL teams. The Gladiators ended an eight-year relationship with the Atlanta Thrashers when the team was relocated to Winnipeg. They added Chicago in 2008-09 when the Blackhawks' affiliate in Fresno folded mid-season and Columbus during the 2009-10 season.

"It one of those things that can be a double-edged sword," Chapman said. "The good news is we can be loaded with talent. The bad news is there can be a bunch of injuries and we might be left scrambling."

The Gladiators open training camp on Oct. 1 and start the season on the road Oct. 14 in Florida. The home opener is Oct. 21 against Greenville.

## TUESDAY'S CAMP NOTEBOOK

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

September 20, 2011

Buffalo Sabres General Manager Darcy Regier announced today the team has returned the following 10 players to their respective junior clubs: forwards Steven Beyers (Barrie, OHL), Dan Catenacci (Owen Sound, OHL), [Cedrick Henley](#) (Val D'Or, QMJHL), [Steven Shipley](#) (Niagara, OHL), [Kevin Sundher](#) (Victoria, WHL) and [Gregg Sutch](#) (Barrie, OHL); defensemen [Jerome Gauthier-Leduc](#) (Rimouski, QMJHL), [Alex Lepkowski](#) (Barrie, OHL) and [Mark Pysyk](#) (Edmonton, WHL); and goaltender [Nathan Lieuwen](#) (Kootenay, WHL).

In addition, goaltender Ryan Rondeau has been returned to Laredo of the Central Hockey League

This leaves the Sabres with 52 players still in training camp (30 forwards, 17 defensemen and five goaltenders).

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[Ales Kotalik](#) is back with the Buffalo Sabres, feeling like the same player he was before he left, but like a person with a different outlook on life.

The Sabres' sixth-round pick in 1998, Kotalik finds himself back in Buffalo's training camp after he was acquired in the trade that brought defenseman [Robyn Regehr](#) from Calgary in June. Kotalik was surprised to hear about the trade because he expected Calgary to buy him out of the last year of his contract.

"I became part of the trade and it felt great right from the start," Kotalik said. "I knew I'm coming back to the place where I grew up and I'll be around the same people who made me the player I am. They kind of made my dream happen to become an NHL player and have a great NHL career. So it was probably the best thing that could happen to me."

With a few days in camp under his belt, head coach Lindy Ruff said that Kotalik has put in hard work and seems to be fitting in nicely.

"I think that Al looks like the old Al before he left," Ruff said.

While finding joy in a new yet familiar situation on the ice, Kotalik's offseason was also marred by tragedy on a personal level. Three of his close friends and players on Lokomotiv Yaroslavl of the KHL, were among the 44 people that died in the plane crash in Russia on Sept. 7.

"It opens your eyes," Kotalik said. "They day that it happened, time stopped for everyone back home in Czech and I wasn't able to do anything for a couple days. I was just staring with the tears in my eyes and just waiting for someone to call me and tell me it wasn't the truth and just that the tragedy didn't happen – that it was a bad dream."

He said the tragedy has allowed helped him realize what tragedy really means and how important it is to spend time around the people he cares about, all while taking it one day at a time. He also said it has modified his outlook on the game of hockey.

"I had a problem the last couple years to have fun playing and that's the worst thing that can happen to a professional athlete," Kotalik said. "I was searching for fun and for the joy of the game and what makes it fun. Along with the tragedy, you take a little different approach and you try to be more positive."

Kotalik played in parts of seven seasons with the Sabres before being traded to the Edmonton Oilers in 2009. He signed as an unrestricted free agent with the New York Rangers that off-season and was traded again to the Calgary Flames in February 2010. He suffered a knee injury while with the Flames last season and played 25 games for the Flames AHL affiliate in Abbotsford.

"You know, everything's connected. Success in this league comes with hard work and then it's a matter of

confidence, role and position in a team and when you have it, you are able to produce and be the player everyone expects you to be,” Kotalik said. “If you don’t have that, it’s always almost impossible to deliver what’s being expected of you and most of all what you expect from yourself. That’s been the issue since I left Buffalo and honestly, I’ve never been the same since I left.”

Kotalik finds himself in a tight battle for one or two roster spots on the Sabres, and is focused only on playing this coming season in the National Hockey League. He says he is determined to not only make the team, but to also be “a force” that can help the team win games.

“I came determined to get the spot on this team and really that’s my only option,” Kotalik said. “I am not looking any farther. No other options than making this team. They are not out there for me.”

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[Drew Stafford](#)’s season started last night with some new linemates. The 25-year-old winger skated with new center [Ville Leino](#) and winger [Tyler Ennis](#) in the team’s preseason opener against the Carolina Hurricanes. The line registered six of Buffalo’s 27 shots on goal.

“It’s a lot of fun getting used to each other, working on some plays and we found out we can play keep away from the other team,” Stafford said. “But now we know we need to get more pucks to the net.”

As camp progresses, Stafford said he hopes to continue to feed off his teammates and build chemistry. With Leino and Ennis possessing great playmaking abilities, Stafford said it’s his job to get open and create space for them.

Stafford also served as an alternate captain along with defenseman [Tyler Myers](#) against Carolina. Center [Paul Gaustad](#) wore the “C” for the Sabres. Stafford filled in as an alternate captain last season when the team battled injuries.

“I’m not necessarily a rah-rah kind of guy in the locker room, but I try and do my best to lead by example as far as my play on the ice and my work ethic off the ice with training,” Stafford said. “Like I said, I’m not the most vocal guy. I’ll say something if I feel as if it needs to be said but I’m more the kind of guy that tries to do my best to make sure that I can get better and in the process make my teammates better.”

After finishing the 2010-11 season with a career-high 31 goals and 52 points in 62 games, Stafford said he’s going to take this training camp to improve on all aspects of his game.

“I got my foot in the door last year. I think I took a step at least in the right direction in what player I can be,” Stafford said. “From here on out, it’s continuing to get better in every area – offense, defense, shooting the puck, in my own end, pretty much every single area.”

## Preseason 'games' are risky business

By Red Fisher

Montreal Gazette

September 20, 2011

MONTREAL — Here we are barely four days into training camp and already 'games' are being played, such as Tuesday night's visit by the Dallas Stars.

Go figure, particularly since it's the first of six games a combination of regulars and a large group of rookies and minor-leaguers wearing Canadiens jerseys have scheduled in the next seven days. Need I mention that the Bell Centre 'games' will be played at regular-season prices, as usual?

It's only a guess, but I suspect that even now, so many months before the NHL and the players' association sit down to knock heads over a new collective bargaining agreement, the latter group's leader, Donald Fehr, already has made up his mind a change is needed in that area.

Safety first, don't you know, particularly since several big names haven't been cleared for contact and there's no real way of knowing when they will be.

You don't have to be reminded that the biggest name is Sidney Crosby. Reports had him receiving standing ovations when he appeared skating at full speed three hours after scrimmages started on Saturday, with Crosby wearing a white helmet so that black-helmeted players on the ice were fully aware he was not to absorb contact of any kind while he was on the ice.

It's unlikely, however, that any of the repeated ovations Crosby received had anything remotely to do with a startling suggestion the night before on Pittsburgh radio that Ted Carrick, a chiropractic neurologist who has been working with the NHL's best player, said he "is as ready for contact as any other NHL player who reported to camp last weekend."

Say what? That view is 180 degrees opposite that of Dr. Michael Collins, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center-based concussion specialist who has been overseeing Crosby's care.

Closer to home, there's the matter of Andrei Markov being unable to join his colleagues in training camp until he recovers fully from the knee surgery that kept him sidelined for all except seven games last season.

And then there's the strange situation in New York, where the Rangers' No. 1 defenceman, Marc Staal, isn't taking part in training camp and won't play in any of his team's three North American exhibition games due to lingering effects from a hit last season by his brother Eric, the Carolina Hurricanes' captain.

Strange, because Staal missed the next three games after the hit in February, but played the remainder of the season without incident. During the summer, however, Staal started having problems.

Still, not to worry, coach John Tortorella says.

"He's progressing nicely," Tortorella said. "We just want to be cautious and get him ready for the regular season." (Translation: the Rangers don't know when Staal will be ready to play.)

Frankly, it boggles the mind that exhibition games start so early after the opening of training camp.

Get this, though: the pre-season actually got underway Monday with four games, the first of which took place at 3 p.m. ET between the Nashville Predators and Florida Panthers. Even more startling: in a first for the NHL, the teams met in the second half of a doubleheader at 7:30 p.m.

However, both teams have enough players available to play two games. Apparently, no players performed in both contests. Two more games started at 7 p.m. — the Buffalo Sabres played host Carolina and the Ottawa Senators faced the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Hockey people will tell you that their players are the best-conditioned athletes of all major sports. No argument there. Years ago, players didn't start skating until the start of training camps. Now, they're working out shortly after a season ends and all the players are skating in early August.

However, contact starts immediately in training camp and cranks up, along with fighting, in the first exhibition game. At the very least, it's a risky business in what can charitably be described as little more than 'nothing' games.

## Lighter side of Spacek arrives at Habs camp

By Dave Stubbs

Montreal Gazette

September 19, 2011

MONTREAL — Fifty-eight players in the Canadiens' training camp are younger than defenceman Jaroslav Spacek.

That is, every other man on the roster.

But on Monday, an obviously lean and fit and eager Spacek stood in the team's practice rink dressing room positively beaming, in his best camp shape since he arrived with the team as a free agent in September 2009.

"I tried to drink water sometimes," Spacek said of his off-season fluid consumption, his familiar grin beginning to spread.

"Instead of ...?" the playful question interrupted.

"Gatorade!"

Czech beer isn't world renowned by accident, and clearly the 37-year-old native of Rokycany resisted a litre or two the past few months.

The training camp guide lists the six-foot Spacek's weight at 207 pounds, but it would be no surprise if he was a half-dozen or more shy of that.

The mystery remains, because he wasn't offering the information.

"It's a secret, I can't tell you," he said, laughing. "I'm just happy with what I did."

Which includes winning a bet he'd made with friends about his weight and generous loss of same.

Spacek enters the final season of his three-year, \$11.5-million US contract not just without a little excess baggage. He's also lighter his friend and countryman Roman Hamrik, his regular blue-line partner whose four years in Montreal ended in July upon signing as a free agent with Washington.

There remain many familiar faces around the Canadiens dressing room; the Habs roster wasn't as dramatically overhauled this off-season as it was in 2009, the summer that Spacek arrived with a group that included Brian Gionta, Michael Cammalleri, Scott Gomez, Travis Moen and Hal Gill.

"It's nice to come back after a long summer and see the guys ready and so excited to play again," Spacek said. "We didn't change the roster too much, but it's always nice to see other guys coming."

The prime newcomer on defence would be Russian tank Alexei Yemelin, a wrecking machine in Saturday's first camp scrimmage who a day later showed good puck sense and strong positional play.

With rehabbing Andrei Markov probably doubtful for the Oct. 6 season start, Spacek will likely munch some healthy minutes out of the gate. Even with his ice time certain to be dialed back once Markov returns, he's happy to work with a new role.

Ahead of him on the depth chart would be Markov, Josh Gorges, Gill and P.K. Subban, if not necessarily in that order. Spacek should find himself competing with Yannick Weber and Yemelin for ice time.

“I just want to play steady, good defence and help the guys,” he said. “If I have to play with the younger guys, I will, to make them prove they can play in the NHL and be one of the regulars.”

A knee injury sidelined Spacek last season for 23 games, from mid-February through early April. He returned for the final two of the regular season and the seven-game playoff round.

The veteran had struggled on the bum joint for a few weeks before finally undergoing arthroscopic surgery on March 4, having been injured Feb. 2 with a knee-on-knee hit against Florida then aggravating it 10 days later against Toronto.

Spacek, who could headline at Just For Laughs, joked at the time that he knew the operation in Florida had been a success when “I woke up with two knees and no big boobs.”

With torn meniscus removed and a general cleanup, he was relieved not to be dealing with the torn ACL that sidelined Markov and Gorges.

The veteran understood the importance of arriving at camp this fall in superb shape, the 19-day session — just three days of skating before exhibition games begin — not the month-long marathons he endured a dozen seasons and 834 games ago when he landed in the NHL as a 24-year-old rookie with Florida.

“I was a bit younger when I showed up the first time,” Spacek said, chuckling again as he spoke of his first season. “There’s more skating and hitting than there was 13 years ago. ... (Camp then) was over four weeks. It was too long.

“Now it’s not really a time for practising. We have eight games, a lot, to build a team, and you have to come more ready to play right away than you used to. Then, we’d practise two weeks then play four or five games.

“What’s changed are the methods you have to use in the summer to get in better shape.”

A little less weight, team strength and conditioning co-ordinator Pierre Allard suggested, wouldn’t be bad for the knee.

For Spacek, that meant changing his diet, reducing afternoon and evening food portions, adding afternoon workouts and getting back on skates in early August, two weeks earlier than usual.

Then there was the calorie-burning of fatherhood, trying to keep pace with sons age 8 1/2 and almost 4.

“Lots of stuff with them — biking and running around,” said Spacek, who also lifted weights and added new exercises to his routine. “I didn’t have much time to sit around. When I went to bed, I was exhausted.”

After three days of training camp, he looks as fresh as the whippersnappers.

Now the real business of hockey begins, and it won’t begin a day too soon for a valuable defenceman and an excellent teammate about whom “dough” now speaks of salary, not body type.

## **Erik Cole can relate to Max Pacioretty**

By Sean Gordon

The Globe and Mail

September 21, 2011

One is a grizzled 32 years old, the other is exactly a decade younger. Despite the age difference, they are members of an NHL fraternity that is mercifully small.

Injuries are a fact of life in pro sports, but some hold a greater squirm factor than others, like those involving eyes or the spine.

Erik Cole and Max Pacioretty of the Montreal Canadiens are used to the questions by now, having both suffered cervical fractures on the ice.

But it's clear they'd be happier if folks would just move on.

Pacioretty suffered his non-displaced vertebral fracture last winter when Boston Bruins defenceman Zdeno Chara rammed him into a stanchion at the Bell Centre, whereas Cole's compression fracture – courtesy of Pittsburgh Penguins defenceman Brooks Orpik's check from behind – dates back to the 2005-06 season.

"He still deals with the situation to this day. Every day I work with him on different techniques to roll out the soft tissue on my neck, different stretches, different rehab exercises," Pacioretty said this week. "He wants to help me out a lot and it's a good feeling because he's been through it and he knows what it takes to get to 100 per cent."

Cole has the benefit of hindsight, and said that while neck fractures are qualitatively different than, say, a knee reconstruction, it's not helpful to think of them as a different animal – the psychological road back to roaring recklessly around a hockey rink is difficult enough as it is.

"You can't just ignore it, but sometimes stuff just happens," Cole said. "Some guys have shoulders, other guys have backs, Max and I had a neck."

The former Carolina Hurricanes forward said that over the years he's developed a practice and pregame warm-up routine to make sure his neck is ready to withstand the rigours of an NHL game.

"The more years you play, the longer the routine gets," he smiled.

It will doubtless help Pacioretty that he and Cole are similar players – big, fast skaters whose game is predicated on the direct approach.

Cole has acknowledged that it took a while before he felt like himself again, but in the first few days of training camp Pacioretty both received and dished out some heavy hits – he thumped 19-year-old prospect Brendan Gallagher in a scrimmage, for example.

"Overall it's good, there are a couple of other times where I got hit into the boards, I think that's a really true test, with my head hitting the boards or hitting someone's shoulder, it went a lot better than I thought it would," he said.

That said, the Connecticut native allowed that he will likely have to adapt the way he plays, particularly along the boards and when he's trying to squeeze past a defender.

"Sometimes I'm going to have to lay off in that situation and realize that I'm in a vulnerable position and the other person might not really care, and they might be willing to put me into that divider," he said.



Those words illustrate the task ahead for Pacioretty: how to protect himself better without diminishing his effectiveness as a player.

On Tuesday night, the Habs kicked off their preseason against the Dallas Stars at a newly refurbished Bell Centre, which has replaced the rink-side glass with a lighter, flexible and more forgiving plastic material.

The new equipment was in the works before the Pacioretty hit, but the incident resulted in a full-scale re-evaluation of facilities around the league.

The stanchion where Pacioretty's career – and, it's not too dramatic to say, life – nearly ended has been moved back by 18 inches, and new curved barriers have been installed at the end of the player benches.

Though Pacioretty didn't dress for the game, Cole did, earning a rousing ovation when he was introduced for the first time since joining the team as a free agent.

The first collision on the new glass came eight seconds into the first period when former Canadiens forward Mike Ribeiro bumped Tomas Plekanec into the side boards.

The sway suggested fans may also have to modify their behaviour, beer cups placed along the boards are liable to end up in the drinker's lap.

## **Montreal Canadiens drop preseason opener to Dallas Stars**

By Pat Hickey

Montreal Gazette

September 21, 2011

MONTREAL - The skinny: The Dallas Stars took a 3-0 lead at the 9:12 mark of the game and held on Tuesday for a 6-3 win over the Canadiens in the exhibition opener for both teams. Former Canadiens Michael Ryder and Mike Ribeiro each had a goal and an assist for the Stars. Brenden Morrow, Adam Parady, Krys Barch and Matt Fraser scored the other Dallas goals. The Canadiens came to life after falling behind 4-0 early in the second period. Erik Cole got things started. The Canadiens also got goals from Andrei Kostitsyn and Jeff Woywitka.

Haven't we seen this before? In a performance that brought back memories of his first exhibition start last year, Canadiens goaltender Carey Price gave up three goals in the first 9:12 of the game. Price didn't look good on any of the four goals he allowed in his allotted 30 minutes of action and, in another flashback to last season, he heard some boos. Frustrated fans should heed Price's words from last fall: "Chill out, the Stanley Cup isn't won in September."

The other guys: Price and Andrew Raycroft each played 30 minutes before turning things over to their understudies. Ribeiro beat Nathan Lawson on a power play and Matt Fraser scored late in the game for the other Dallas goals, but the Canadiens didn't take advantage of the fact they were facing Tyler Beskoworany, a 21-year-old minor leaguer. They fired nine shots at him and he stopped them all.

Newcomers deliver: Cole, who is guaranteed a job, and Woywitka, who is fighting for one, scored goals in their Canadiens debuts.

Man on a mission: Andrei Kostitsyn scored a power-play goal and was involved in the play. He's battling for a job on one of the top lines and he's also playing for his next contract. He's in line to be an unrestricted free agent in July. The Canadiens went 1-for-3 with the extra man, but the lack of work on the penalty-kill showed as Dallas had two power plays and scored on both of them.

Schultz provides muscle: The Canadiens haven't felt the need for an enforcer in recent years, but if they change their thinking, Ian Schultz is ready. He took on Francis Wathier in a heavyweight duel and was ahead on the judges' cards when won by an ippon.

What's next: Head coach Jacques Martin will unveil a new cast Wednesday night when the Buffalo Sabres come to town. The scuttlebutt around the NHL is that the Sabres are the most improved team thanks to their new owner, free-spending oilman Terry Pegula. In years past, general manager Darcy Regier was operating under a self-imposed salary cap. This time around, Regier has to find a way to trim payroll because the Sabres are currently \$3.595 million over the cap.

## Carey Price finally feeling at home

By Sean Gordon

The Globe and Mail

September 19, 2011

Gone are the days of trolling Old Montreal's narrow streets to find a pickup truck-sized parking space.

Now Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price is a suburban homeowner, which in addition to feeling cozier and more permanent has allowed him to contribute more in the team-building department.

"It makes you feel a little more comfortable for sure, being a guy who's been around for a little while and being able to invite guys over for a barbeque at your place," he said.

"Some guys will be in a hotel for the next two months. So to be one of those guys who can offer a bed or something just to get them out of the hotel for a few days is really huge at this point of the year. I know I've been in the Sheraton for three months at a time and it's just not that much fun."

Beyond making life simpler – "My first three years, just going to get groceries and trying to park my truck downtown, I'd have to search half-an-hour for a parking spot" – the acquisition last year of new digs a short drive from the Habs' practice facility coincided with his breakout season as an uncontested NHL No. 1.

Life wasn't always this good.

While there is much to envy about the modern young NHLer, the good is almost always accompanied by a healthy dollop of deeply unpleasant.

Take the night almost exactly a year ago that Price was lustily booed after giving up four goals to the Boston Bruins in his first preseason start.

On Tuesday, Price will step into the crease at the Bell Centre for the Habs' exhibition opener against the Dallas Stars, but the context will be vastly different.

"A lot of things can happen in a year I guess," Price said dryly.

Gone are the comparisons to erstwhile playoff hero Jaroslav Halak; this team has its franchise goalie, and it's the big kid from Anahim Lake, B.C.

For all the talk about a more physical, higher-octane defensive corps and added offensive depth, the Habs' fortunes will largely hinge on how Price, who started 72 games last year, fares.

And now at least fans know not to expect his best work in preseason.

"I'm still in the same position as I was last year, I still don't feel good, I still need to work on a lot of things throughout these games. [Tuesday] night might not go that great," he said with a laugh.

It seems almost inconceivable that Price, who has both inspired and endured the full gamut of emotions in his 232 NHL games, is still just 24.

He seems a long way removed from the famous "chill out" moment last fall – where Price took on his Bell Centre boo-birds – which teammates call a pivot point in his maturation as a pro.

In the intervening months, the Habs have become Price's team. That's not to say there are no subplots this season.

Price is in the last year of a contract that will pay him \$3-million (U.S.) in 2011-12, a relative bargain.

Like other Habs in contract years – forwards Andrei Kostitsyn and Mathieu Darche, defencemen Josh Gorges, Jaroslav Spacek and Hal Gill – Price has arrived at camp focused and determined to get off to a fast start.

“I want to do everything I did last year and I want to do more,” he said.

The Habs don't typically negotiate during the season, and though Price wouldn't mind if they were to make an exception, the focus is on playing well enough to earn the deal he wants.

“Everybody knows I want to play here and I want to sign an extension,” he said.

In the meantime, Price will work out the kinks in his game and build a rapport with his new back-up, 29-year-old Slovak Peter Budaj.

When it was put to him that this will be Budaj's first season with the benefit of a full-time goaltender coach, Price smiled mischievously.

“He'll have lots of people telling him what he's doing wrong,” he joked.