



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*September 30, 2011*

## **Sabres' Sekera works to be a constant threat**

*Defenseman taking nothing for granted with blue line crowded*

**Media Outlet:** Buffalo News

**Author:** Mike Harrington

**Date:** September 30, 2011

At 25, Andrej Sekera is heading into a phase of his career at which he has shed the prospect label. It's his fourth season with the Buffalo Sabres and he should be firmly entrenched as a regular, both because of his play and the four-year, \$11-million contract he signed in July.

There's the issue for the Sabres. They've seen brilliant play from Sekera and there's been some brutal stretches that have caused coach Lindy Ruff to make Sekera a healthy scratch.

There should be no more of that. Everyday contributions are what's expected of Sekera now.

Maybe it's too much to ask him to be the guy who was the NHL's Second Star of the Week in March after joining John van Boxmeer (1981) as the only Sabres defensemen ever with five straight two-point games. But he shouldn't look like an overmatched youngster any more either.

"I felt I was doing the same things I have always been doing," Sekera said this week in First Niagara Center. "I was moving my feet, passing the puck and a little bit more aware of my defensive zone play and things worked out great. Sometimes you're trying and nothing is going to work out, sometimes you're not even pushing and it happens for you."

Sekera scored three goals in 76 games last season but posted career highs in assists (26), points (29) and plus-minus (plus-11). An upper-body injury limited him to just two games in the playoff loss to Philadelphia.

"He played at a very high level. He was an important player for us down the stretch," Ruff said. "The injury in the playoffs obviously hurt us."

Sekera's hot streak came immediately after a three-game benching.

"Consistency involves the battle in your own end," Ruff said. "It's having the jump to get up offensively to make a difference, which is his strong point. We want to play him to his strongest asset, which is getting up ice and making things happen."

Ruff got a first-hand look at another strong stretch by Sekera when the defenseman was one of the stars of Slovakia's 2010 Olympic team in Vancouver. Sekera's homeland is only about a six-hour drive from Berlin, and he said he will have nearly two dozen friends and family members in the stands next weekend when the Sabres meet the Los Angeles Kings there to wrap up their European sojourn.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience for some guys," he said. "To see a different rink, international style hockey, different people, cities and lifestyle out there will be a very good experience for us."

The Sabres' seven-man defense corps is clearly improved with the additions of Christian Ehrhoff and Robyn Regehr. Tyler Myers, Sekera and Jordan Leopold all have big-money deals while Mike Weber and Marc-Andre Gragnani are still in the prospect mode but offer huge upsides.

"It's going to be tough," Ruff said. "There's seven players that can all play. ... I know one thing for sure: We're going to use all seven."

Sekera is taking nothing for granted.

"Every single guy can play NHL level hockey and it's up to us how well we perform," he said. "Whoever plays good will play. I know I have to play a bigger role on this team than I used to and continue the strong games I had last season and keep improving."

Sekera said the contract won't put any more pressure on him to perform.

"I want to be helpful for my teammates and it doesn't matter if you have a one-year deal or a five-year deal," he said. "You still have to perform. They believe in you and you don't want to disappoint the trust they showed. I was very happy to get a deal done. It shows how they believe in me and the potential I have."

## **Kaleta ready to go after getting 'smoked' by Vanek**

**Media Outlet:** Buffalo News

**Author:** Mike Harrington

**Date:** September 30, 2011

Buffalo Sabres winger Patrick Kaleta returned to practice Thursday, although he had bit of a black eye and a cut on his right cheek -- from a check absorbed at the hands of teammate Thomas Vanek during Wednesday night's public scrimmage in First Niagara Center.

"It happened. It's over with. You practice hard and I'll be the first one to back him up on the ice whenever he needs it," said a smiling Kaleta. "It is practice and stuff but it happened. It was a good hit. He felt bad about it. All in all, he smoked me."

Kaleta was turning with the puck in front of the net but had his head down and took a strong shoulder-to-chin shot from Vanek that drew ooohs and ahhs from the crowd. He was woozy and had to be helped from the ice.

"If you start smoking guys like that, I'm pretty sure it will be better off for our team," Kaleta said. "I just gotta stay out of the way."

Coach Lindy Ruff said he expects Kaleta to play in tonight's preseason game in Washington.

\* \* \*

Ruff said he's toying with the idea of splitting the goaltending tonight between Jhonas Enroth and Ryan Miller. He had originally planned on using Miller the entire game tonight but wants to get Enroth more work.

Derek Roy is skating fully after suffering a shoulder injury last Friday in Toronto, but may sit out.

Said Ruff: "Unless he really feels almost 100 percent, it doesn't make a lot of sense to use him and put him in any way, shape or form of jeopardy to play in a regular season game."

Center Jochen Hecht continues to be the only player not practicing with the team. He skated on his own after practice.

\* \* \*

The Sabres have yet to make an announcement on the status of winger Ales Kotalik, who has not reported to Rochester after he cleared waivers earlier in the week. The team continues to work on an arrangement with Kotalik to play in his home country, the Czech Republic, rather than the American Hockey League.

\* \* \*

The Sabres have finalized plans for "Pucktoberfest", their fan viewing party for the Oct. 8 game against the Los Angeles Kings in Berlin.

Festivities begin at 11:30 a.m. in the plaza outside First Niagara Center as the Auslanders perform traditional German music. Dancing to the Bavarian sounds will be the Schuhplattlers, a Western New York traditional German dance group.

Fans can then head inside the arena to watch the 2 p.m. game on the HD board. European-themed food and beverages will be available for purchase on the plaza and throughout the arena.

Admission is free, and so is parking in the arena ramp. The Sabres Store will also be open.

There is no viewing party planned for the Oct. 7 season opener against Anaheim in Helsinki because that game is on a Friday.

## **New food and drink enter Sabres' roster**

**Media Outlet:** Buffalo News

**Author:** Andrew Z. Galarneau

**Date:** September 30, 2011

Buffalo Sabres fans, thrilling to the prospect of seeing new faces in Sabres sweaters, are going to find new players in First Niagara Center's food roster as well.

Many of the new menu items resulted from fan requests on the Sabres' website, said Executive Chef Scott Green, who oversees the center's food operations for Delaware North. "It was great this year because the Sabres were able to get their fans involved," Green said. "We used a lot of those ideas this year."

New choices available to all ticketholders will include a chicken finger sub made with Anchor Bar wing sauce (\$7.25), a baked chicken parmigiana sandwich (\$7.75), and a cheesesteak with peppers and onions (\$7.75).

Two specialty dogs, the "Main & Fillmore," with chili, cheese, mustard and onions, and the "Downtown," with chili, sauerkraut and mustard, will go for \$5. Those aren't Texas Hots imitators, by the way; the chili has kidney beans in it, though that might change as the season goes on, Green said.

Pizza got an upgrade, too, with more toppings, local favorite Margherita pepperoni, and specialty pies like chicken finger being added on a rotating basis, said Green. The slices are also bigger, as a 16-inch pie is being cut into six instead of eight wedges. They'll be \$5.50 for cheese or pepperoni slices, \$6.25 for specialty pies.

The choices for fans in the 100s, 200s and suites have moved solidly into gourmet territory. There's lobster macaroni and cheese, a beef on weck sushi roll and homemade jumbo ravioli with Parmesan crisp joining the 100-level offerings, while the 200s are joined by grilled steak flatbread, Greek salads and "margarita" shrimp cocktails with lime salt.

Suiteholders will be offered menus that include artisanal cheese and charcuterie boards, beef tenderloin quesadillas and shrimp scampi. Green's staff is smoking its own bacon for the triple-bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches, which sport pancetta and house-made bacon and Canadian bacon.

There will also be an expanded roster of wine and beer offerings, including more stations serving more flavors of Flying Bison beers, a locally brewed favorite.

The Pegula Era touches are everywhere. Guests, journalists and other food moochers were greeted by the dulcet tones of a jazz trio as they arrived for the news conference and sampling.

## **Sabres in talks to have F Kotalik play in Europe**

**Media Outlet:** Associated Press

**Author:** John Wawrow

**Date:** September 30, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—The Buffalo Sabres are attempting to reach an arrangement allowing forward Ales Kotalik(notes) to play in Europe this season.

Without going into specifics, general manager Darcy Regier would only say, “We’re working on it,” Thursday. Playing in Europe became an option after Kotalik did not report to the Sabres’ American Hockey League farm club in Rochester upon clearing waivers Monday.

He’s a nine-year NHL veteran, who was reacquired by Buffalo in a trade with Calgary in June. From the former Czechoslovakia, Kotalik expressed a desire to play in Europe rather than in the minors.

The Sabres waived Kotalik to get under the NHL salary cap. He’s set to make \$3 million this season.

His agent, Larry Kelly, has not returned two messages.

## **Sabres Kotalik assigned to Europe. Kaleta not mad at Vanek**

**Media Outlet:** WGR 550

**Author:** Paul Hamilton

**Date:** September 30, 2011

Ales Kotalik was down at The Center today to collect his equipment and head home. He said he's been assigned to a team in his hometown in the Czech Republic. He was born in Jindrichuv Hradec. The winger had been sent to Rochester after not getting into a preseason game with the Sabres.

During Wednesday Night's open practice Thomas Vanek hit Pat Kaleta so hard he had to be helped to the medical room. Kaleta is OK and went full go in practice on Thursday. He said, "It happened, it's over with, but you practice hard and I'll be the first one to back him up on the ice whenever he needs it."

In practice players really aren't braced for that type of hit. Kaleta said, "True, it is practice, but it was a good hit!"

Vanek did sit down and discuss the matter with his teammate. Kaleta said, "Yah, I think he felt bad about it because I don't think it was necessarily on purpose, but it happened and all and all he smoked me, I took care of what I needed to take care of afterwards, (a cut cheek) and I was out there. You practice hard and each and every day we want to get better and if he starts smoking guys like that, I'm pretty sure it'll be better off for our team, I just got to stay out of the way."

Lindy Ruff said he's leaning towards splitting the goaltending between Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth Friday in Washington. He said again he will take a cautious approach with Derek Roy, so it's likely he won't play Friday.



## **‘Late-bloomer’ Leino ready for role with Sabres**

**Media Outlet:** Niagara Gazette

**Author:** Bill Hoppe

**Date:** September 30, 2011

NIAGARA FALLS — Less than two years ago, frustrated, unsure if he would ever establish an NHL career, Ville Leino gave himself a deadline. If things remained the same, if he couldn't start playing regularly, then at the end of the season he would return to his native Finland, where he was a superstar.

Believe it or not, Leino, who signed a six-year, \$27 million contract with the Sabres in July, went undrafted. But as he rapidly improved, he earned notice and an NHL deal. Leino picked the Red Wings, a stacked team with a history of developing unheralded Europeans into stars.

The choice was equally frustrating and rewarding.

Leino immediately grew tired of riding buses in the minors. He wanted to be in Detroit, not Grand Rapids. He had played only 13 NHL games two years ago at this time.

He knew he belonged in the big leagues. Once he arrived, however, he soured on the experience. He barely played. Stars like Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg kept him on the wing, away from holding puck, his strength.

By Christmastime 2009, Leino had made his decision.

“I was thinking about going back and having fun again playing,” Leino recalled Tuesday inside the First Niagara Center. “Playing in the minors really wasn't the place for me, and I knew I was supposed to play in the NHL, too. So I was thinking, ‘I don't want to be here.’”

Later in the season, Leino got his wish — or so he thought. Salary-cap concerns forced Detroit to trade him to Philadelphia.

“I didn't get to play when I got there,” Leino said. “I was sitting for seven games.”

Then, almost magically, Leino morphed into a star. After watching the Flyers' first four playoff games, he began skating on the wing with Daniel Briere and Scott Hartnell. The line quickly became the Flyers' best, a big reason the team caught fire and roared through to the Stanley Cup final.

In his 68 regular-season games before that, Leino had only 11 goals and 20 points. He compiled seven goals and 21 points in the 19 postseason contests.

What changed so suddenly?

“Good linemates, we thought the game the same way, so we had good chemistry right away,” said Leino, who had 19 goals and 53 points in 81 games last year, essentially his first full NHL season. “I don’t know. I guess I was just thinking, ‘I’ll play my own game. Whatever happens, I will play my own game.’”

Leino’s ability to hold the puck is probably his best asset. The idea of the 6-foot-1, 190-pound Leino lugging it around and creating offense enticed the Sabres, who badly needed to find a No. 2 center in a thin market.

The 27-year-old, a pivot in Europe, had played the wing almost exclusively in the NHL. But he wanted to look for a center job in free agency. The Sabres had seen Leino up close — remember, he burned them for the Game 6 overtime winner here in April — and watched video of him operating down low.

“Our guess was he was comfortable at playing center,” Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said.

So far, through four preseason appearances, Leino’s performed well between Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford.

“It’s kind of something that never goes off my game,” Leino said about playing center. “I feel comfortable out there. ... It’s something I’m born with.”

Still, despite that natural ability, it wasn’t a coincidence every NHL team passed Leino over.

“I was slow, a late-bloomer,” said Leino, who exploded for 28 goals and 77 points in only 55 games in 2007-08, his last Finnish season. “It took me a while to get used to things. When I got better, I got better a lot.”

Leino improved greatly with the Wings. Sure, the scant playing time nearly drove him home. But learning from a model organization, beside some of the game’s most complete stars made him the player he is today. He likes to model his game after Datsyuk.

“It’s a great working environment, learning environment,” Leino said about Detroit. “You learn a lot. I still, until today, use a lot of the things I had there. It was actually a great learning experience.”

Notes: According to two reports, the Sabres are trying to find winger Ales Kotalik a European team to play with this season. The Sabres waived the veteran last week to get under the cap. He hasn’t reported to AHL Rochester yet. ... Center Derek Roy (shoulder) practiced again but could be held out tonight when the Sabres play in Washington. Meanwhile, center Jochen Hecht (possible head injury) skated on his own again. ... Ruff said goalies Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth could share time tonight.

## **Sabres announce new food offerings**

**Media Outlet:** Metro WNY

**Author:** Mike Haim

**Date:** September 30, 2011

In the past few months, the Buffalo Sabres have improved their roster and dressing rooms, and even added TVs to the restrooms at First Niagara Center. So it's no surprise that the menu of food items available at their home games would be enhanced, too.

Thursday afternoon, the team and its food and beverage partner, Delaware North Companies Sportservice, hosted a media contingent to announce and sample an array of new delights aimed at satisfying the hunger of fans regardless of their seat location.

Some of the new items which will be available at general concession stands are a steak sandwich, chicken parmigiana sandwich, and an Anchor Bar chicken finger sub. Also, there will be a rotating variety of specialty pizzas and all of them will now be made from scratch in the facility's kitchen.

For fans with access to the 100-Level Harbour Club, new items available there include tapas, a "beef on weck sushi roll," lobster mac and cheese, and jumbo ravioli. The 200-Level Harbour Club will feature a beef bomber, grilled steak flat bread, and margarita shrimp cocktail.

Patrons in suites will be able to purchase "hat trick quesadillas," shrimp scampi, and a "BBBLT" sandwich featuring three different types of bacon.

Many of the selections were posted by fans to the Sabres' online "suggestion box."

"Fan suggestions drove a lot of the menu choices that Sportservice came up with," Sabres president Ted Black said. "There was a constant effort under way before (owner Terry Pegula and I) got here and it continues. You always want to improve all aspects of the fan experience."

"It's great that fans can voice what they're looking for," added Scott Green, executive chef at First Niagara Center. "The biggest thing we saw, theme-wise, was Buffalo fare. So we brought in Sahlen's hot dogs and Red Osier roast beef and we're making the pizza in-house, using locally-sourced pepperoni and cheese. They're things that people are familiar with. They know what they're going to be getting."

Though it was impossible to sample every option available, I was especially impressed with the "Lobster Mac" and the Anchor Bar chicken finger sub. The Buffalo chicken pizza also scored high marks.

There's evidently been a movement to keep serving familiar ingredients in new and different ways. After all, a hockey game isn't usually the place where folks are looking for the latest trends from Gourmet magazine.

“(If) you start putting things in that people don’t know about, they get a little scared and won’t try it,” Green said. “(If) you spin it in a little different way, you get the textures and the tastes in there, and people will be receptive to it.”

Green also discussed how the occasional adventurous combination, like the roast beef tucked into sushi, came about.

“I challenged my chefs this summer to come up with some new ideas,” Green explained. “Some things were too far-fetched. Some things we went back to what we normally do and made it better.”

Fans will experience the new menu (and the other improvements) when the Sabres open the home part of their schedule on October 14.

## EUROPEAN BUSINESS TRIP

**Media Outlet:** Sabres.com

**Author:** Kevin Snow

**Date:** September 29, 2011

Normally when someone packs their bags to prepare for a nine-hour plane ride to Germany, they are looking forward to some sightseeing, along with the impending meals of schnitzel, sauerkraut and beer. Who couldn't use a good old fashioned European vacation every now and then, right? Okay, well maybe Lindy Ruff is in the minority.

"Don't call it a vacation," he stated firmly. "It's a work trip for us."

Ruff is referring to Buffalo's participation in this year's NHL Premiere Series, that will see the Sabres open the regular season with games in Helsinki, Finland (Oct. 7 vs. Anaheim) and Berlin, Germany (Oct. 8 vs. Los Angeles). Prior to dropping the puck on the regular season, Buffalo will conclude their exhibition schedule this Tuesday in Mannheim, Germany, against Adler Mannheim, the former club team of forward Jochen Hecht.

The trip gets underway on Saturday night when a travelling party of more than 80 players, coaches, management and media will board a 757-charter plane bound for Frankfurt, Germany. Also along for the ride will be a crew from MSG's "The Game 365," who will document the entire experience while also profiling the Pegula family for a future broadcast.

After a scheduled arrival of 9 a.m. local time, the Sabres will take part in an afternoon practice at the SAP Arena in Mannheim, Germany. But don't expect any work on special teams at this practice. It'll be all about the players getting acclimated to their settings and loosening up after a long flight.

Leopold

"I think the biggest thing is getting the jet lag out," explained Jordan Leopold, who's already gone through the European experience when he traveled to Helsinki as a member of the Florida Panthers in 2009. "We're going to have that long flight right off the bat, and to get adapted to the time that we're on over there is number one. Hydrating, nutrition getting our practice time in and getting a little time to ourselves is important.

The team will practice Monday morning in Mannheim, followed by a team visit to the USO Army Hospital on the Ramstein Air Base. Leopold says it's team events like this that make this such a unique and memorable trip.

"It's one of those experiences that not every hockey player gets to have, especially in our league," he explains. "At our level, we tend to gravitate and stay in North America. It's an honor and privilege for us to go overseas. And I think it's important exposure for the game."

Tuesday will be a normal game day, with an 11:30 a.m. morning skate to prepare for that night's 7:30 p.m. exhibition game against the Adler Mannheim Eagles. In addition to being a homecoming for Hecht, the Eagles will be retiring the jersey of former NHLer Rene Corbet who played with Mannheim from 2001-09. Corbet will only play the first period of the game, before having his number 20 raised to the arena rafters.

The Sabres will hit the road first thing Wednesday morning on a 9:30 a.m. (3:30 a.m. ET) flight to Helsinki. After a quick stop at the team hotel it will be off to the Hartwall Arena for a 2:30 p.m. practice and media availability. Thursday is much of the same for the team, as they will return to the arena for a 10:30 a.m. practice.

Friday's schedule looks daunting, but it's not that much different than the normal routine of a regular season set of back-to-back games – except that there's a very long flight awaiting them after the second game.

In preparation for their season opener against Anaheim Friday night, Buffalo will take part in an 11:30 a.m. morning skate. After a team meal and nap in the afternoon, they return to Hartwall Arena for the 8 p.m. (1 p.m. ET) puck drop. This game will also be going head-to-head locally with the Euro 2012 soccer qualifying match between Finland and Sweden at Helsinki's Olympic Stadium.

Immediately following the game the team will take a one hour and 40 minute flight to Berlin, expecting to arrive at the team hotel around 1 a.m. local time.

The whirlwind week concludes on Saturday night with the first-ever NHL regular season game to be played in Germany at the 17,000-seat O2 World Arena against the Los Angeles Kings. Game time is 8 p.m. (2 p.m. ET).

Approximately 12 hours after arriving in Berlin, the Sabres will pack up their gear and make their way back to Buffalo where they are expected to land around 6 a.m. ET on Sunday morning.

Will it all be worth it? Absolutely says Leopold.

“It'll be a lot of time together, a long time away from our families and home. But we're excited. It's a good opportunity and a good challenge.”

Patrick Kaleta took part in Thursday's practice, the day after being hit hard by Thomas Vanek during the scrimmage on Wednesday night. Kaleta, who had a red welt under his right eye, said he holds no ill will towards Vanek and the two have already moved on from the incident.

“I think he felt bad about doing it because I don't necessarily think it was on purpose. But it happened. All in all, he smoked me.”

Ruff said he doesn't expect Derek Roy to play in Friday night's preseason game in Washington, a week after injuring his shoulder against Toronto. Roy is skating well in practice, but Ruff doesn't see a need to rush him back into the lineup.

“Unless he feels 100%, it doesn't make a lot of sense to use him in there in any way, shape or form, and jeopardize him for regular season games.”

## **Dmitry Orlov's status remains unclear as Capitals' regular season approaches**

**Media Outlet:** Washington Post

**Author:** Katie Carrera

**Date:** September 30, 2011

Coach Bruce Boudreau quickly tempered any assumptions Thursday that Dmitry Orlov's continued stay in Washington signaled anything in regard to his chances of starting the year with the Capitals. All it meant, Boudreau said, was that Orlov will play in at least one of the remaining two preseason games.

That doesn't change the fact that the 20-year-old blueliner remains with the Capitals and is continuing to turn heads, though.

Orlov has appeared in three preseason games and appears to grow in confidence with each outing. Against Nashville on Wednesday, he played 16 minutes 7 seconds, finishing with a plus-1 rating and was a bright spot in an overall poor exhibition outing by Washington.

"I think he has a lot of work to do, like a lot of young guys do, but we saw something last night," Boudreau said. "He's got god given talent that you can't invent. We thought he played a lot more secure with the puck and safe against a team that's one of the better teams that we think you're going to see in the NHL."

Boudreau went on to praise numerous aspects of Orlov's game, from his puck-handling, to his vision, ability to get shots through traffic from the point and so on. Orlov's ever-improving performances over the past few weeks of training camp are why, even at his young age, it seems possible the Capitals could elect to keep him in the fold with the start of the regular season eight days away.

Defenseman John Erskine continues to rehabilitate his surgically repaired shoulder but is still a "couple weeks" away from being cleared for contact, which means he won't be ready when Washington opens the 2011-12 campaign against the Carolina Hurricanes on Oct. 8. Earlier in the week, Boudreau said: "If John's not ready to go at the start, somebody's got to stick around. So we'll see who it is."

To be certain, there is nothing to prevent Washington from recalling other more-seasoned AHL defensemen from Hershey in spot duty if necessary at the start of the year even though they have all been reassigned to the Bears at this point.

With the possibility of Orlov starting the year with the Capitals comes the question of whether he would develop best while playing significant minutes in Hershey — as defensemen Mike Green, Jeff Schultz, John Carlson and Karl Alzner all did — or spend time learning in the NHL where ice time is limited.

“That’s a decision you definitely have to talk to [General Manager] George [McPhee] about,” Boudreau said. “You’ve got two trains of thought: Is it better for him to play or is it better for him to practice and learn? It’s something that I’m sure will be discussed.”

For all of Orlov’s impressive qualities there are plenty of reminders that this will be his first full season in North America and that he hasn’t quite learned how to reign in his high-risk, high-reward style of play.

There are a few players in the Capitals’ lineup, though, who know something about trying to balance their offensive tendencies with their defensive job description, and Orlov has impressed them as well. Learning when to take the risk and maximize the reward is something that only experience can teach Orlov, according to Dennis Wideman.

“I played a few games with him now and I think he’s highly skilled,” Wideman said. “Obviously figuring out when to hold on to the puck and when to get rid of it is going to come as he gets more experience and plays more, but I think his overall skill set is really good.

“When you get beat enough over the years you slowly start to learn when to go, but it takes being in those plays, seeing the plays and being in all those situations to learn it,” Wideman continued. “It takes a while, your first couple of years there’s going to be times when you push it and you shouldn’t but that comes with playing games.”



## Caps make another round of cuts; Orlov sticks

**Media Outlet:** Washington Examiner

**Author:** Brian McNally

**Date:** September 30, 2011

For now, at least, the Capitals have decided to keep rookie defenseman Dmitry Orlov after the latest round of cuts trimmed the blueline to seven players plus injured John Erskine.

Forward Chris Bourque was also returned to AHL Hershey along with defensemen Sean Collins and Patrick McNeill. That's a bit of a surprise. Orlov, 20, is an offensive defenseman entering his first full North American season. You'd think he needs time at AHL Hershey to develop. Bears coach Mark French said as much earlier in training camp.

"That's a decision we definitely have to talk to [general manager] George [McPhee] about," Washington coach Bruce Boudreau said. "You got two trains of thought – is it better for [Orlov] to play or is it better for him just to practice and learn [in the NHL]. It's something that I'm sure will be discussed."

This is an issue because Erskine still isn't healthy after summer shoulder surgery. At about the five-month mark he will be reexamined by team physician Dr. Ben Shaffer. And, yes, Erskine shed his orange no-contact jersey for Thursday's practice. But there wasn't really any contact at all the day after a road preseason game in Nashville. Erskine isn't done with the orange jersey yet. And that leaves an opening for a No. 7 defenseman if he isn't cleared soon.

"It takes time to heal and it's not fully healed yet and ready for contact," Erskine. "It's something I've got to deal with, and hopefully I'll be cleared in a couple weeks."

That seems to completely rule out Erskine for opening night and you have to think at this point he's a lock to go on long-term injured reserve just given the timing. Opening night is next Saturday. Hard to believe a player could get cleared and back into game action right away. You need a few practices, at least, and maybe a rehab stint with AHL Hershey.

But that doesn't guarantee Orlov anything, either. The Caps could always go with six defensemen to start the season. Collins would make sense for a No. 7 as a veteran who at least played in the Stanley Cup playoffs last season. He has to clear waivers first, though. We'll find out at noon tomorrow. Boudreau said Orlov's presence right now only guarantees that he's expected to get one more preseason game with the team – likely Sunday against Chicago. But he's made an early impression.

"Well, I think [Orlov] has a lot of work to do like a lot of young guys do," Boudreau said. "But we saw something last night – he's got god-given talent that you can't invent. We thought he played a lot more secure with the puck and safe against a team that's one of the better teams that you're going to see in the NHL."

## Power play still eludes Capitals

**Media Outlet:** Washington Times

**Author:** Stephen Whyno

**Date:** September 29, 2011

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Washington Capitals' power play: an area of constant worry and woe since December 2010. And while the calendar still says September and there is no reason to panic in preseason, exhibition numbers tell a tale that problems still exist.

In five preseason games so far, the Caps are 2-for-18 on the power play, including an 0-for-5 performance Wednesday night at the Nashville Predators. Those numbers make it unsurprising that the Caps are 1-3-1 going into Friday night's game against the Buffalo Sabres at Verizon Center.

"It'd be nice just to see some goals go in," defenseman Mike Green said. "It was one of the areas last year that we fell off the map a little bit with the ranking, where we ended up. If we're going to be a successful team, our power play has got to be up there. That's how you win games."

The two power-play goals came in the Caps' only preseason game, on a Dennis Wideman point shot and a point-blank wrister by Mathieu Perreault from the side of the crease. Other than that, Washington has come up empty with the man advantage.

Wednesday provided perhaps the most frustrating example in recent weeks of a powerless power play. Much of it could be attributed to the Predators' defensive-minded team style of blocking as many shots as humanly possible, but coach Bruce Boudreau was less than thrilled with how his units (playing without Alex Ovechkin and Marcus Johansson, mind you) executed.

"That part is getting three guys in and competing and winning battles, getting it back to the point, then taking the shot and then opening things up," he said. "The last few, we had some really good looks and some good chances when we got down to playing the way we're supposed to be playing."

Several players criticized themselves and the entire group on the power play in recent weeks and dating to last season for being too cute. Boudreau lamented too many guys looking for the "perfect shot" Wednesday.

But at least the Caps think they realize what they're doing wrong.

"We just have to create, and right now we're kind of just passing around the perimeter," Green said. "We need to use a little more creativity and use our skill."

A popular hockey cliché is that players "squeeze their sticks" tighter when struggling to score. It might go beyond that for the Caps, but gaining some confidence with a few goals could go a long way toward curing what ails the power play.

"It's a big part of our team. Not only that is when we do score goals on the power play, it creates energy for the five-on-five and PK," Green said. "It'd be nice to get going here and get this thing going."