

Ducks face off against Sabres in Finland

NHL.com

October 7, 2011

DUCKS (0-0-0) at SABRES (0-0-0)

2011 Compuware NHL Premiere in Helsinki, Finland

TV: PRIME (HD), MSG-B, TSN2

Season Series: First of two matchups this season, with the teams meeting again in North America on Feb. 29, 2012, when the Ducks will host the Sabres in a Leap Year game. Last season, Buffalo won the lone meeting 5-2 on Dec. 21, 2010, as [Tyler Ennis](#) scored a pair of goals. [Ryan Miller](#) took a shutout into the final five minutes before Corey Perry beat him twice.

Big Story: Even though Anaheim will be considered the "road" team in this game, a couple of their players are much more likely to feel right at home. Teemu Selanne -- also known as "The Finnish Flash" -- is a conquering hero in Helsinki, as evidenced by the many loud ovations he received Tuesday in a preseason game against his former Jokerit team. Saku Koivu, a national team captain, is quite popular in his own right. The Ducks have a third Finnish player, blueliner Toni Lydman, who won't play due to injury. The Sabres may have their work cut out in getting the crowd at Hartwall Areena behind them in this one.

Team Scope:

Ducks: There's a lot to be excited about for Anaheim, which played extremely well down the stretch last season and captured the fourth seed in the Western Conference despite losing goalie Jonas Hiller from pretty much the All-Star break on. Hiller is healthy again and ready to resume his duties as the No. 1 in net, while Perry, fresh off winning the Hart Trophy, returns along with linemates Ryan Getzlaf and Bobby Ryan. It's perhaps the top trio in the NHL, though the second line with Selanne, Koivu and Jason Blake may draw more attention from the crowd Friday. It's going to be a banner day for hockey, but coach Randy Carlyle doesn't want the Ducks losing sight of what's at stake.

"We're putting it on the line -- these are points for the season. Points in October are much easier to get than they are in March," Carlyle said. "You look at the playoff races -- take last year for instance -- we had 99 points and we only made the playoffs by three. It is competitive. It is also like you're looking at getting 100 points to qualify for the playoffs, and that is tough."

Sabres: Trying to find some continuity on its top line, Buffalo received some positive signs as it concluded the preseason with an 8-3 win over German club Adler Mannheim on Tuesday. Ennis, [Brad Boyes](#) and [Ville Leino](#) all lit the lamp, Ennis scoring twice. Boyes struggled in the playoffs last season after coming over in a trade deadline deal with St. Louis, while Leino signed a lucrative free-agent contract during the summer after coming into his own with Philadelphia. If they can mesh with Ellis, who put up 20 goals and 49 points in his rookie season, it bodes well for the Sabres' chances.

"Playing with Ville makes my job easier, just give him the puck and get open," Boyes said. "Tyler's play just speaks for itself, the way he uses his speed."

Who's Hot: Perry, Getzlaf and Ryan had a slow start to the preseason but teamed up for 6 points against Jokerit, with Perry scoring a pair of first-period goals and Getzlaf winning the game in overtime. ... [Thomas Vanek](#) scored twice against Adler Mannheim and had 3 goals in his final two preseason games. [Jason Pominville](#) finished with goals in consecutive games.

Injury Report: Buffalo forward [Jochen Hecht](#) (head) is day-to-day. ... Lydman is still recovering from shoulder surgery and on injured reserve for Anaheim, as is fellow defenseman Matt Smaby (hand). Forward Matt Beleskey (shoulder) and defenseman Kurtis Foster (thigh) are day-to-day.

Stat Pack: The Ducks won 47 games last season, tied with the Red Wings and Flyers for fifth-most in the League. ... The Sabres averaged the fourth-highest total of shots per game (32.8) and the Ducks allowed the fourth-highest total of shots (32.3).

Puck Drop: Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff was a good sport when asked about the "home" crowd that will probably spend most of its time cheering on Anaheim -- or at least Selanne, its local hero.

"Yeah, that part is going to be interesting," Ruff said. "I have so much respect for Teemu. There's not many players who could do what he's done and play at the level he is playing at right now at that age. He'll always be known as a tremendous goal scorer. ... If I were a fan in Finland, I'd be here cheering for him, too. I think that part is tremendous."

GAME ON!

By Kevin Snow
Sabres.com
October 7, 2011

HELSINKI, FINLAND --- It was about this time six years ago when [Jason Pominville](#)'s days as a member of the Buffalo Sabres organization could've been over. Pominville was placed on waivers prior to the start of the 2005-06 season, but he eventually cleared and started the season with the AHL's Rochester Americans.

My, how times have changed.

When Pominville skates onto the ice at Hartwall Areena tonight for Buffalo's season opener against the Anaheim Ducks, he will do as the 16th full-time captain in franchise history. The announcement was made by head coach Lindy Ruff at a players-only dinner last night.

Pominville isn't known for being the loudest player on the team, but he believes that his voice will be just one of many that will provide direction.

"I think we have a lot of different type of characters on the team. I'm not the only guy that's going to step up and say things. I might be more of a one-on-one guy, just kind of going up to the guy and talking to him.

"I don't know if the yelling and screaming method still works in today's game, I think we'll see a little bit of both on this team. Hopefully we don't have to see any of it. There are different guys that can do it in different ways."

Ruff said the decision to name Pominville as captain was made by the coaching staff, and even owner Terry Pegula had some input. Ruff is confident they made the right choice.

"In the end it was an easy decision. Jason prepares himself well for games, he's a consummate pro and even the way he's come back from injuries say as a lot. He's well respected among his teammates. I think the way he plays speaks for itself. The decision turned out to be the right one."

[Mike Weber](#) will be a healthy scratch for tonight's game, along with Matt Ellis. Ruff says that [Marc-Andre Gragnani](#)'s contributions on the power play are an invaluable asset, but he also knows that Weber can still play an important role as well.

"It's extremely hard taking Mike out of the lineup. We knew that when we had seven defensemen, we're going to have one really disappointed player. But there will be situations when we can utilize Weber, and we'll need our top six to play well for us."

IN HIS OWN WORDS: VILLE LEINO

Ville Leino discusses the culture of Finnish hockey.

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

October 5, 2011

Before [Ville Leino](#) plays a regular season home game as a member of the Buffalo Sabres, he will have the rare opportunity to play in front of his “home” fans in Helsinki this Friday night when the Sabres open up the 2011-12 NHL season against the Los Angeles Kings. A native of Savonlinna, Finland, Leino – who turns 28 on Thursday – now makes his offseason home in Helsinki and is expecting as many as 40 friends and family to be in attendance at the Hartwall Areena on Friday. Leino recently sat down with Kevin Snow of Sabres.com to give some insight into the Finnish hockey culture.

DESCRIBE THE YOUTH HOCKEY PROGRAMS IN FINLAND...

It's different than North America. I started playing hockey when I was seven years old. You play in the town you are from, where you grew up or where you are living now. Depending on where you live, you could travel as far as 250-300 miles to play a game. After about 13 or 14 years of age, the good players are recruited to play with some of the better teams. They have junior team programs as you get older, and that becomes national team development programs if you are good enough to continue on.

HOW MUCH EXPOSURE DID YOU HAVE TO THE NHL WHILE GROWING UP?

We would get occasional games at night time, but they were always very late. I remember we had the NHL Weekly highlights program. We would watch that show every Sunday, and it was highlights of all the big games and best players. I would collect hockey cards of all my favorite players, but I wasn't able to watch that many games.

DID YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PLAYER GROWING UP?

When I was younger, I followed my local teams and wanted to be just like those guys. But as I got older I started to pay more attention to NHL players like Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg. I really enjoyed their style of play. It was a real thrill for me to be able to play with them in Detroit.

DESCRIBE THE TYPICAL FINNISH HOCKEY PLAYER...

I think Finns are most commonly very hard workers. They are trust worthy and don't do too much fancy stuff on the ice. I think it's a product of how the national team program has been built up, and how we've been able to have so much success. We don't have that many players in the NHL, or playing hockey in general like they do in North America or Russia. That's how we've been brought up. Now they are trying to bring more skill into the program because there are not enough pure players coming. So now they realizing they have to work more on the skills.

Sabres spread out scoring touch

Each of the top three forward lines features at least one former 30-goal scorer as Buffalo opens Friday against Anaheim

John Vogl

Buffalo News

October 7, 2011

HELSINKI, Finland — The Buffalo Sabres gathered around Tyler Ennis near center ice Thursday, took a deep breath, then began serenading him with a rendition of "Happy Birthday."

Truth be told, it wasn't very good. The volume fluctuated from line to line, and everyone was off key. The players definitely shouldn't quit their day job, a profession that includes scoring goals.

That's one area where they can be chart-toppers.

The Sabres begin the 2011-12 regular season against Anaheim today in Helsinki's Hartwall Arena (1 p.m., MSG, Radio 550 AM) as part of the NHL Premiere Series. The Ducks have the premier scorer from last year in 50-goal-forward Corey Perry, but the Sabres have the look of a team that can fill the net as well as anyone.

Buffalo's top three lines each boast at least one former 30-goal scorer, while two of the units have players who have scored 43 goals in a season.

"This is one of the better, more balanced teams that I've been on as far as being able to roll every line through," right wing Drew Stafford said Thursday. "On any given night in the preseason, one line was scoring more than another. That's a positive."

The three-line potency leads to the question: Which line is the Sabres' No. 1 line? The candidates and their credentials are:

* Choice A — left wing Thomas Vanek, center Luke Adam, right wing Jason Pominville.

Vanek has led the Sabres in goals for five straight seasons, including 32 last year. He's never scored fewer than 25 and he's reached 40 twice, including a career-high 43. Pominville, who was named team captain Thursday night, has reached 20 in five straight seasons, including a personal-best 34.

* Choice B — left wing Nathan Gerbe, center Derek Roy, right wing Drew Stafford.

Stafford threatened to snap Vanek's stranglehold on the team goal title last season, finishing with a career-high 31 in only 62 games. Roy was well on his way to leading the Sabres in points for the fourth straight year until a leg injury halted his season at 35 points in 35 games.

* Choice C — Ennis, center Ville Leino, right wing Brad Boyes.

Leino is the team's marquee addition at forward, a guy with 26 points in his last 30 playoff games. Ennis scored 20 times as a rookie. Boyes' resume includes 76 goals over two seasons — 43 and 33 — from 2007 to '09.

"Somebody asked me who was the first line, and I said the line that gets the most points that night is going to be the first line," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. "I like the fact that all lines are participating in the scoring."

The Sabres averaged 3.29 goals during the preseason, including Tuesday's 8-3 victory against Mannheim. The Leino line contributed four goals in its first game together.

"We've got a real strong team," Ennis said. "We've got a lot of balance. We've got four lines that can play hard and compete and score goals. We know that if we're all rolling and playing hard we've got a chance."

The Sabres finished ninth in goals last season, scoring 293. With the arrival of Leino, the consistency of Vanek, the return of Roy and the maturation of Gerbe and Ennis, another top-10 performance is expected.

"It's a pretty balanced lineup all the way through," Stafford said. "Now it's just a matter of getting it done on the ice."

It could take time for the units to get rolling. Adam is in a new spot after spending most of last season in the AHL. If Gerbe stays to Roy's left, it essentially will be the first time in Roy's career the center sees someone other than Vanek on that wing. Boyes and Leino have a combined 21 games in Blue and Gold.

"The scoring will be there, but you're looking for the players to get the chemistry, to fit together as quickly as possible," General Manager Darcy Regier said. "Ville, Boyes, Ennis, their chemistry was very good [Tuesday in their debut], and that's a big deal. When that comes together the way it came together, those are the types of things that become real positives. You're looking for that to start the season."

Pominville named Sabres captain

Ruff pins the 'C' on longest-tenured player in private team event

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 7, 2011

HELSINKI, Finland — Since Nov. 27, 2005, the Buffalo Sabres have played 504 games. Jason Pominville has dressed in 494 of them, more than any other player. Obviously, he's a fixture in Sabreland.

When he skates out today for his 495th game — and for every foreseeable outing after the season opener against Anaheim — he'll do it as captain.

Sabres coach Lindy Ruff announced Pominville would wear the "C" during a private team event Thursday night. Pominville fills the vacancy left in February when the Sabres waived Craig Rivet, who began his captaincy in 2008-09.

Pominville actually preceded Rivet as the team leader, wearing the "C" in March and April 2008 during a season in which Ruff rotated the honor monthly. Pominville has been an alternate captain the past three seasons.

His alternates will be Thomas Vanek, Derek Roy, Paul Gaustad and Drew Stafford, with two wearing an "A" each game.

Pominville isn't the loudest Sabre. He is, however, talented and dependable. The 28-year-old is on the ice with his teammates nearly every day, and he's always front and center in the dressing room to give his take on what is going wrong or right.

His resume also includes 358 points in 459 regular-season games. Pominville will start the year with five straight 20-goal seasons, including a career-best 34 in 2006-07. The Quebec native set personal bests in assists (53) and points (80) the following season, becoming a fan favorite who forced observers to keep track of Pominville's goal "population."

A second-round pick in the 2001 draft, Pominville earned a starting job with the Sabres in 2005-06. He played all 82 games in each of the next four seasons, a streak that was halted last year by an early concussion. He still played 73 times, recording 22 goals and 30 assists.

He is entering the third season of a five-year, \$26.5 million contract he signed prior to the 2009-10 season.

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, he'll spend the rest of the time with the title of captain.

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The Sabres are technically the home team for their game against the Ducks in Helsinki's Hartwall Arena, but they shouldn't expect to be the crowd's favorite.

The Ducks boast three well-known Finns, led by future Hockey Hall of Famer Teemu Selanne. The 41-year-old Helsinki native started his career with Jokerit, the team that calls Hartwall Arena home. A huge picture of Selanne hangs on the side of the building.

"If I was a fan in Finland, I'd be here cheering for him, too," Ruff said.

The Ducks also feature former Montreal captain Saku Koivu and former Buffalo defenseman Toni Lydman, who will not play because of offseason shoulder surgery. The Sabres should receive some cheers for their two Finns, center Ville Leino and assistant coach Teppo Numminen.

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The Sabres have signed 20-year-old forwards Riley Boychuk and Jonathan Parker to three-year, entry-level contracts.

The Sabres selected the 6-foot-4, 205-pound Boychuk in the seventh round of the 2010 draft. Boychuk recorded 39 goals, 83 points and 391 penalty minutes in 194 games with Portland of the Western Hockey League.

The undrafted Parker, 5-10, 195 pounds, spent three years in the WHL, including a 45-goal, 86-point season with Prince Albert last season. The 20-year-old, who is 5-10 and 195 pounds, totaled 77 goals and 155 points in 205 games with Prince Albert and Seattle.

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The Sabres celebrated two birthdays Thursday, as Tyler Ennis turned 22 and Leino turned 28. The Sabres surrounded Ennis for a rendition of "Happy Birthday," then began to skate away until Leino told Ruff it was also his birthday. The coach summoned back the players, who sang the song in Finnish.

"We didn't realize it was Ville's birthday, too," Ruff said. "We sang that one in Finnish, and I don't know how that one really turned out because I sort of hummed along. Teppo could've had us singing anything. We really didn't know."

Coaching called Numminen back into the game

Risto Pakarinen

NHL.com

October 6, 2011

HELSINKI -- It's often said that star players never make good coaches, that it's the mediocre players who still have something to prove that make the best bench bosses.

However, there are exceptions -- very successful players, like the [Buffalo Sabres](#)' new assistant coach [Teppo Numminen](#), who have no problem switching one role to the other.

When he skates around, talking to the players in practice, he looks like the right man in the right place, a man doing what he loves.

"I'm here to help the players and be somebody for them to talk to, and maybe get them a cup of coffee every once in a while," he said jokingly, downplaying his role.

After he retired in 2009, Numminen took some time off from the game, and then joined the Team Finland coaching staff before the Vancouver Olympics, doing some North American scouting of Finnish players. That was fun, but he wanted to get closer to a team again.

"He's going to be the guy upstairs on the headset. In the past we've had various people fill that role and now we're going to have a full-time assistant do it. His role is going to be helping out on the player-development side with the younger defensemen." -- [Lindy Ruff](#)

"I've been thinking about coaching for the last two years, and when I worked with Team Finland, I realized that it was really fun to be a part of a team, and that I still had the passion for the game, so I started to see what possible opportunities there might be for me," he told NHL.com.

On the opening day of Sabres training camp, it was announced that Numminen had returned to the club with which he played the last four seasons of his career, this time as an assistant coach, joining [James Patrick](#) and [Kevyn Adams](#) as members of coach [Lindy Ruff](#)'s staff.

"He's going to be the guy upstairs on the headset," Ruff said. "In the past we've had various people fill that role and now we're going to have a full-time assistant do it. His role is going to be helping out on the player-development side with the younger defensemen."

Ruff also noted that Numminen would bring a little bit of a European flair to the Sabres.

Numminen is no stranger to coaching. His father, Kalevi, was Team Finland's coach for almost a decade in the 1970s and early 1980s. In fact, except for a four-year gap between 1982 and 1985, the name Numminen has been a part of top-level Finnish hockey since 1957, when Kalevi made his debut in the top Finnish division.

he's already learned a lot, and that he enjoys his new job.

"I still have a lot to learn, too. We have a great head coach, and assistant coaches, and having known them a long time, it has been easy to join the staff," he said. "It's challenging, and having once beaten the same path as our young defensemen, I'm really looking forward to helping them on their careers."

Numminen will be wearing the headset for the first time in an NHL regular-season game Friday (1 p.m. ET, TSN2), when the Sabres take on the [Anaheim Ducks](#). The European leg of training camp has helped the Sabres come together as a team, but now it's time to get to work.

"First game is always important and the players are a little nervous about the start of the season," Numminen said. "It doesn't matter whether we'll play away, at home, or in Helsinki -- the routines and the preparation are the same."

Numminen said he can sense that the players have started to focus on the regular-season opener.

"It's time to get to work now. There's a little positive nervousness in the air," he said. "While we haven't played as well as we'd like to, our game has improved all the time. We'd like to see that each game is a little better than the one before."

Pominville leads the Sabres into the season of hope

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 6, 2011

Helsinki, Finland (WGR 550) -- When the Buffalo Sabres hit the ice this afternoon with the "C" sewn on the sweater of Jason Pominville they will be starting the season of high expectations.

Those of you that listen to me know I pushed for Paul Gaustad to be captain for three years or so before switching to Thomas Vanek before the start of last season.

I went away from Gaustad because he's a fourth line player that every now and then moves up. He's the most responsible and accountable guy I've run into on that team, but Lindy Ruff could've run into a situation of having to bench the captain at some point just because he's on the fourth line.

My point with Vanek has always been he's grown up a lot and he cares. He plays so much better when he knows he's wanted and he's considered a big part of the team. It also could blow up in their face if he flounders because he's worried too much about being a good captain. I think he would have played his best hockey.

Both men are alternate captains along with Derek Roy and Drew Stafford. I think this is a good step for Stafford to becoming a solid player and a solid leader.

When Ruff announced his captain to the players after dinner on Thursday, he told them that if they don't get leadership from the veterans and the younger players then they're nowhere. He mentioned that these five players have all come up together (Not really true in Stafford's case). There have been times that Ruff has had players vote on the captaincy, but this time he took no player input, "We spent time talking with Darcy and management, even Terry was involved. We just felt this was the right move for this group that has grown up together."

When he introduced Pominville he handed him his sweater with the "C" on it. Pominville got up and did speak. He told his teammates that they need to hold each other accountable. He told them with the commitment that Terry and Kim have given the team and the fans, it's their turn to give back to them. Pominville said this morning, "Obviously excited, it's a great honor. I think it's going to be a good challenge, I'm up to the task. I never put too much thought into what was going to happen with that, but to be named by the organization means a lot."

In my mind Pominville is a typical Lindy Ruff choice for captain. It's no different than Stu Barnes. Both are very good examples for players on the ice that give their all. They don't take shifts off and the team has trouble winning when they aren't playing. They both are stand up

guys and both take the heat for teammates and hold themselves accountable after EVERY game. This team has a problem with that as many run and hide after games forcing the same few to explain away losses every game. Pominville has come a long way since being put on waivers in 2005, "I have come from pretty far, being drafted and spending quite some time in the minors (3 years and 18 games which equals 235 games and 195 points) I really think the lockout year benefited me a lot, being in Rochester, the coaching staff being there every day and seeing most of our games, being able to see what I'm all about and what the other guys on the team are all about and then there was the waiver process, you don't know what to think any more then back with the team and excited, but I have been through some ups and downs and its been a lot of fun."

My ONLY problem with #29 being captain is what happens when times are rough and things get tight. If a player is not holding up his part for the team will Pominville get in his face and straighten it out? He doesn't seem like the type to do that, but we don't really know because we aren't in there. Pominville's response to that is, "I think we have a lot of different characters on the team, I'm not the only guy that's going to step up and say things, but I'm more of a one-on-one guy going up to the guy and talking to him. I don't know if the yelling and screaming method still works in today's game so I think we'll see a little bit of both on the team. Hopefully we won't have to see any of it, but if we do, we have certain guys that can do it in different ways."

I'm old school, I prefer an in your face type of captain. A man that demands the room just by walking in. A man that when times are tough, will put the team on his back and show them the way.

It's important for Pominville to have this dressing room because there are high expectations on this team. There are going to be bumps in the road, but if they want to be the champion the organization talks about being, they will have to overcome adversity.

I will say about Pominville what I always say, let's at least give him a chance.

This team performed pretty well in preseason. With the concussion to Jochen Hecht, Luke Adam took advantage of his chance and has made the team for right now. It's his job playing with Thomas Vanek and Pominville not to give Ruff any chance to taking him out when Hecht is healthy.

Honestly, in my lineup I have no room for Hecht right now. Brad Boyes is playing well and would not come out and Adam is also playing well. Hecht has been on a two or three year down swing and his better years are way behind him. The German League likely awaits him after his contract runs out.

As I've been telling Tweeters all summer, Mike Weber is the number seven defenseman with Andrej Sekera paired with Marc Gagnani. Gagnani has played almost every preseason game

and runs the first power play. He's a gifted passer and always gives Christian Ehrhoff the puck right in his wheelhouse.

The better defense likely means a better Ryan Miller. He admitted his off season last year was "off" and he worked on fixing that this summer.

In the division the Stanley Cup champions Boston Bruins will look different. Gone are Michael Ryder, Mark Recchi and Tomas Kaberle. Boston did add Joe Corvo. They still have Zdeno Chara and the Sabres will have a hard time beating them if Chara plays like he's capable of.

If Adam and Boyes work out, Ruff has the top nine forwards he talked about last year. He felt he had a top nine instead of a top six, but that had to be for the players benefit because many others were not fooled. Have nine good forwards and three lines where you can't name a top line I think it gives you a chance right away.

So the excitement begins tonight. If it doesn't go well to start stay calm, this is a team with experience coming from behind.

Pominville named Sabres captain

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

October 6, 2011

In the unflappable Jason Pominville, the Sabres named their first permanent, homegrown captain in two decades. Not since Mike Ramsey in the early 1990s has the franchise awarded the prestigious letter to someone it drafted and developed.

It wasn't a coincidence, either.

"This guy epitomizes who we are," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said about Pominville at a team dinner Thursday night in Helsinki, Finland. "He's fought through a lot of adversity. He's been in our system for a long time. He grew up playing in Rochester."

So did the Sabres' four rotating assistant captains — Paul Gaustad, Derek Roy, Drew Stafford and Thomas Vanek.

By picking five players who've been Sabres since Day One, Ruff sends a clear message the core group that came up together now has full ownership of the team as they open the season tonight against the Anaheim Ducks.

When they all arrived post-lockout, Daniel Briere and Chris Drury co-captained the Sabres. Later, Craig Rivet, an outsider, was chosen as captain before he even played a game.

"This whole group — from Gaus, to Van, to Roysie, to Staff — you guys gave grown up together," Ruff said in the video, posted by the NHL Network. "As a group, we have to push ourselves to higher levels."

Pominville has always pushed through. By now, seven seasons into a steady career, the 28-year-old's story is well known.

The Sabres selected the winger 55th overall in 2001. In 2005, despite some huge AHL seasons, they cut him. The 29 other teams passed on him during waivers, something Pominville has never forgotten.

Pominville became a NHL regular two months later, and in May 2006 scored the overtime winner to clinch the Eastern Conference semifinal in Ottawa, one of the biggest goals in franchise history.

He's possessed captain qualities for years. When Ruff rotated the captaincy in 2007-08, he served in March and April.

Pominville's been arguably the Sabres' steadiest two-way presence for a long time, playing in every imaginable situation. He's also durable, having played 336 straight games from April 2006 until a concussion sidelined him briefly last October.

The Montreal native rarely gets rattled, showcasing an even-keeled demeanor on the ice. Off it, he's thoughtful and always available, win or lose.

Pominville's averaged 25 goals and 66 points in his five full NHL seasons. While his numbers have decreased a bit in recent seasons — he had 34 goals in 2006-07 and 80 points a year later — he's never had less than 20 scores or 52 points. A notoriously fast finisher, Pominville always goes on a second-half tear.

The Sabres have signed 20-year-old forwards Riley Boychuk and Jonathan Parker to three-year, entry-level contracts.

Boychuk, the 208th pick in 2010, had 14 goals, 30 points and 157 penalty minutes with the Portland Winterhawks last season. He compiled 39 goals, 83 points and 389 penalty minutes in 194 Western Hockey League games over four seasons.

The undrafted Parker had 45 goals and 86 points with the Prince Albert Raiders last season. He had 77 goals and 155 points and 140 penalty minutes in 205 games over three WHL seasons.

Both players should start the season with the Rochester Americans.

Ducks Season-Opening Notes

Ducks.com

October 6, 2011

NHL PREMIERE: The Ducks open their 18th NHL season tomorrow (Friday, Oct. 7) against the Buffalo Sabres at Hartwall Arena as part of the 2011 Compuware NHL Premiere in Helsinki, Finland (10 a.m. PDT, PRIME TICKET/AM 830)...this is the Ducks' third trip overseas overall...the then-Mighty Ducks opened the 1997-98 season in Toyko, Japan on Oct. 3-4, 1997 against the Vancouver Canucks, marking the first-ever regular season NHL contests outside of North America...the club also took on the Los Angeles Kings as part of the 2007 NHL Premiere in London, England on Sept. 29-30...the Ducks are 2-2-0 in overseas competition: Oct. 3, 1997 at VAN (3-2 loss), Oct. 4, 1997 vs. VAN (3-2 win), Sept. 29, 2007 at LA (4-1 loss), Sept. 30, 2007 vs. LA (4-1 win)...right winger and Helsinki native Teemu Selanne is the only current player with the Ducks who competed in Japan, while Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry, Bobby Ryan, Francois Beauchemin, George Parros and Jonas Hiller each played for Anaheim in the London contests...the Ducks are 4-13-0 all-time in season openers, 13 of which have taken place on the road...on Saturday, Oct. 8, the Ducks will travel to Stockholm, Sweden to take on the NY Rangers ("home" game for Ducks) at Ericsson Globe Arena (10 a.m. PDT, VERSUS/AM 830) before returning home to California.

FINNS RETURN HOME: Tomorrow marks the first time both Teemu Selanne and Saku Koivu will compete in a regular season NHL contest on their home turf...a native of Helsinki, Selanne competed in 117 contests for Jokerit of the Finnish Elite League...his stint with the "big club" from 1989-92 & 1994-95 (played 40 Div-1 contests from 1987-89) produced 83-68=151 points...with 637-703=1,340 points in 1,259 career NHL games, Selanne enters the 2011-12 NHL season ranking 14th in all-time goals and 27th in all-time points...among European-born NHL players, Selanne ranks second in all-time goals (Jagr) and fifth in all-time points (Jagr, Mikita, Kurri, Sundin)...Koivu, a native of Turku, Finland, competed for TPS Turku of the Finnish Elite League in four different seasons (1992-95 & 2004-05)...in 158 career Finnish Elite League games, he scored 61-92=153 points...Koivu enters the 2011-12 season having scored 225-513=738 points in 938 career NHL games...defenseman Toni Lydman, who had offseason shoulder surgery and is currently on IR, made the trip overseas but will not compete in tomorrow's contest...Lydman, a native of Lahti, competed for both Tappara (1996-98) and HIFK Finland (1998-00 & 2004-05) during his time in the Finnish Elite League, notching 14-39=53 points...Lydman has earned 36-187=223 points in 738 NHL games...all three Finns have competed for their native country in the Winter Olympic Games: Selanne on five occasions (three medals: bronze in 2002 & 2010, silver in 2006); Koivu on four occasions (bronze in 1994, 1998 & 2010, silver in 2006) and Lydman twice (silver in 2006, bronze in 2010).

ALL-TIME: The Ducks enter the 2011-12 season with a 604-569-189 record for 1,397 standings points and a .513 win percentage in 1,362 all-time games...this is Anaheim's 19th season overall (counting one lockout year in 2004-05)...the club will play its 1,400th game on Jan. 4, 2012 vs. San Jose at Honda Center...over the last six seasons, the Ducks have posted a regular season record of 266-169-57 (.599 win percentage), including a 151-67-28 mark at Honda Center (.671 win percentage)...Anaheim has also qualified for postseason play in five of the last six seasons, one of only seven teams to accomplish the feat (also MTL, NYR, PHI, DET, SJ and NSH).

DUCKS-SABRES: The Ducks and Sabres meet tomorrow for the first of two match-ups this season...Anaheim will also host Buffalo at Honda Center on Wednesday, Feb. 29 (7:05 p.m.)...tomorrow marks the first time the two clubs have faced each other for a season opener...further, it marks only the fourth season opener in which Anaheim has faced a current Eastern Conference club (Toronto in 1996-97, Washington in 1998-99 and Boston in 2001-02)...the Ducks enter tomorrow's contest having won four of the last five meetings with Buffalo, dating back to a 4-1 win on Dec. 5, 2007 at Honda Center...in their most recent contest, Buffalo jumped out to a 4-0 lead, going on to beat the Ducks by a score of 5-2 on Dec. 21, 2010 at HSBC Arena...all-time, Anaheim is 8-12-4 vs. Buffalo...center Saku Koivu paces the Ducks in career points vs. the Sabres, earning 14-20-34 points in 60 games.

ROOKIES: The Ducks carry two true rookies on their 2011-12 season-opening roster...right wing Devante Smith-Pelly, a second-round draft pick (42nd overall) for the Ducks in 2010, appeared in 67 contests with his junior club (Mississauga-OHL) in 2010-11, scoring 36-30=66 points with 50 PIM and a +49 rating en route to a Memorial Cup appearance...should Smith-Pelly appear in tomorrow's contest at 19 years, three months and 23 days (6/14/92), he will be the third-youngest Duck to appear in an NHL contest (Oleg Tverdovsky was the youngest at 18 yrs, 8 mos, 13 days on Jan. 21, 1995 and Cam Fowler was the second-youngest at 18 yrs, 10 mos, 3 days on Oct. 8, 2010...center Maxime Macenauer (22 yrs, 1/4/89) has also yet to make his NHL debut...in 79 contests with Syracuse (AHL) last year, he collected 13-19=32 points with 65 PIM.

2011 PRESEASON: The Ducks wrapped up the 2011 preseason with a 4-4-0 record...in their last preseason contest vs. Jokerit at Hartwall Arena in Helsinki, Finland on Tuesday (Oct. 4), reigning MVP Corey Perry scored two goals, second-year defenseman Cam Fowler scored the Ducks' third marker and team captain Ryan Getzlaf scored the OT-winner to make the final score, 4-3.

MVP: Right wing Corey Perry won the 2010-11 Hart Memorial Trophy as “the player adjudged to be the most valuable to his team”...Perry was the first player from a Southern California team to win the Hart Trophy since Hall-of-Famer Wayne Gretzky earned the honor with Los Angeles in 1989...Perry was also just the third player from a California team to win the Hart, joining Gretzky and San Jose’s Joe Thornton (2006)... his 50 goals (50-48=98) also won him the Maurice “Rocket” Richard Trophy as the league’s top goal scorer and became the second Duck to win the trophy (also Selanne in 1998-99, the inaugural year of the Rocket Richard Trophy)...Perry, who is entering his seventh NHL season, has collected 168-201=369 points with 369 PIM and a +44 rating in 450 career contests.

ONE MORE YEAR?: 41-year-old right winger Teemu Selanne returns for his 20th NHL season and 13th with the Ducks...today at 41 years, three months and four days, Selanne becomes the oldest player to appear in a Ducks contest (also held the record at the conclusion of the 2011 postseason at 40 years, nine months and 19 days in Game 6 of the CQF, Apr. 24 @ NSH)...in 2010-11, Selanne scored 31-49=80 points in 73 contests...only two players in NHL history age 40+ have recorded more points: (Gordie Howe (DET), 1968-98, 103 pts., 40 yrs, 276 days; Johnny Bucyk (BOS), 1975-76, 83 pts., 40 yrs, 234 days)...in 774 career contests with Anaheim, Selanne has scored 410-461=871 points with 381 PIM and a +123 rating...he is the club's all-time leader in goals, points, assists, games played, plus/minus, PPG (163), PPP (367), GWG (69), shots (2547) and OT goals (6)...in 1,259 career NHL games with Winnipeg, Anaheim, San Jose and Colorado, Selanne has earned 637-703=1,340 points

HOW THE DUCKS WERE BUILT: The Ducks' opening day 2011-12 roster includes 14 forwards, nine defensemen (two injured) and three goaltenders...a look at how the roster for the season opener vs. Buffalo was built:

Returning players from 2010-11 (17)

Francois Beauchemin - D

Matt Beleskey - LW

Jason Blake - LW

Sheldon Brookbank - D

Dan Ellis - G

Cam Fowler - D

Ryan Getzlaf - C

Jonas Hiller - G

Saku Koivu - C

Toni Lydman - D

Brandon McMillan - LW

George Parros-RW

Corey Perry - RW

Bobby Ryan - LW

Luca Sbisa - D

Teemu Selanne - RW

Lubomir Visnovsky - D

Arrived in the offseason via free agency/trade (5)

Andrew Cogliano - C, Acquired from Edmonton in exchange for a second-round selection in the 2013 NHL Entry Draft, July 12, 2011

Jeff Deslauriers - G, Signed as a free agent, July 12, 2011

Andrew Gordon - RW, Signed as a free agent, July 2, 2011

Kurtis Foster - D, Acquired from Edmonton in exchange for Andy Sutton, July 1, 2011

Matt Smaby - D, Signed as a free agent, July 14, 2011

Competed for Syracuse (Anaheim's AHL affiliate) or junior club (Ducks draftee) in 2010-11 (4)

Nate Guenin - D

Maxime Macenauer - C

Brian McGrattan - RW

Devante Smith-Pelly - RW

THE 2010-11 REGULAR SEASON: The Ducks finished the regular season with a record of 47-30-5 for 99 points, ranking second in the Pacific Division and fourth in the Western Conference...the club's 47 wins were tied for the second-most in franchise history (48 in 2006-07 and 47 in 2007-08)...with 20 games left, the Ducks were 32-25-5 with 69 points and ranked 11th in the Western Conference...the Ducks went 15-5-0 over the last 20 games, climbing to fourth in the West...the club was eliminated by Nashville in six contests (4-2) in the CQF.

A healthy Jonas Hiller is moving forward once again

Lisa Dillman

Los Angeles Times

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He could have handled an injured knee, a sore groin or even a broken bone.

Instead, for the Ducks' Jonas Hiller, this felt as if he was fighting off a clever, unknown opponent, floundering helplessly in the dark. Not only did he not know how he got to this place, but there also was no reasonable plan to get out of the quandary.

Unfortunately, there was no fixed timetable to recover from vertigo, a difficult realization for a goal-oriented athlete, the man assigned to stop goals from being scored.

"That was probably the toughest for me," Hiller said. "Nobody could really tell me what it was. Nobody could really tell me how long it was going to take or what caused it.

"If I should rest. Should I do more? Should I do less? What should I do? I wish something would have hurt, like this way I could say at least say it hurts more today because I did too much. Or it hurts less so it's getting better."

Vertigo derailed an All-Star season for the talented goaltender and cast a long shadow over his off-season — and the Ducks too. The darkness started to lift in mid-July when Hiller attended a goalie school.

"I was feeling a lot better than when I left Anaheim," he said. "I still didn't feel 100%, but I felt like I was moving in the right direction. It's going somewhere and I'm not stuck to the same place. Mentally, that was a relief. It kept on getting better and better, almost day by day."

The hope was that Hiller would be fit enough to start in the Ducks' regular-season opener Friday in Helsinki, Finland, against the Buffalo Sabres. He had many obstacles to overcome to get to that point, especially in training camp, and survived every test.

Hiller appeared in three exhibition games, playing 130 minutes, recording two wins, a 1.38 goals-against average and a .955 save percentage.

You could practically hear the sigh of relief in Honda Center when Hiller survived a spirited onslaught from the Vancouver Canucks on Sept. 28.

Gentlemen, start your fantasy pools.

"If your goalie is average, your team is average," the Ducks' Teemu Selanne said. "If your goalie gives you a chance to win every night, there's no limits, really. That's how important the goalie's job is these days."

The next assignment for Hiller and the Ducks is avoiding the snail-like starts that have bedeviled the team the last couple of seasons.

"We showed last year that we can pretty much play with any team in the league," Hiller said.

"We have the skills, the toughness. We have kind of everything. I guess the biggest problem was sometimes it wasn't working together properly or we had too many nights off."

The small lineup tweaks, familiarity and, of course, a healthy Hiller could reverse that trend of slow Octobers and Novembers.

"I thought the last couple of years it took us almost till Christmas to find who we are and how we want to play," Hiller said. "We have the guys who have been playing together a couple of years now, which also helps. You don't have to take the first month to figure out who should play with whom or have to get to know each other.

"You can start from where you left off."