



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Thursday, October 27, 2011

Reunited line puts on a show of force for Sabres

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 27, 2011

There was surprise when the Sabres' season opened and the lines were unveiled. The trio of center Paul Gaustad, left wing Nathan Gerbe and right wing Patrick Kaleta was no longer together despite a summer of training and a stellar preseason. It didn't matter, they all said. They could play with anybody.

They showed again Tuesday they play better together.

The linemates, reunited last week, combined for 12 of the Sabres' 39 shots against Tampa Bay. Gerbe scored on an assist from Gaustad in the final minute, pulling the Sabres close during their 4-3 loss.

There's little doubt they'll be together tonight against Columbus when the Sabres try to end their two-game losing streak in First Niagara Center.

"No matter what, the work is going to be there," Gerbe said. "All three of us want to work hard. That's our goal.

"I'm comfortable with these guys. I know exactly what they're going to do, and I think they know me pretty well offensively. We all go to the net pretty hard, so it's pretty simple."

The unit was a force from the drop of the puck to the final whistle last game. Kaleta mixed it up with Lightning captain Vincent Lecavalier on the opening shift and fought Steve Downie later in the period. He finished with three hits. Gerbe, who pushed and shoved with big defenseman Eric Brewer, added two hits.

"We all do different things well, and I think we complement each other well," Kaleta said. "For me personally, nothing else would make me happier than to have one of my linemates score a goal or make a nice play. I think that carries out through the line. We care about each other, and we care about what we do on the ice. We work for each other."

Gerbe is tied for fourth on the Sabres with five points, including two goals. Gaustad has a goal and an assist, while Kaleta is one of three Buffalo players (Robyn Regehr, Tyler Ennis) searching for his first point.

"I joked with them at the end of practice we had to pull the goalie to help them out, but they finally got rewarded for all the work they put in," coach Lindy Ruff said. "If you put that much work in, good things will happen."

* * *

Columbus became the final team to win this season, dropping Detroit, 4-1, Tuesday. The Blue Jackets are 1-7-1 for an NHL-worst three points.

"I'm glad for those guys to get that monkey off their back," Columbus coach Scott Arniel told reporters after the victory. "I don't think anyone in that dressing room has been through anything like the three weeks of hell we've been through."

The victory was helped by the debut of defenseman James Wisniewski, the free-agent acquisition who was suspended for eight games after a preseason hit to the head. Another offseason pickup, Jeff Carter, missed practice Wednesday because of a foot injury and is unlikely to play.

"They're probably feeling much better about their game after beating one of the best teams in the league," Sabres captain Jason Pominville said.

* * *

The Sabres will wear their third jerseys, the 40th anniversary sweaters introduced last season, for the first time this year. They are expected to wear them eight times.

Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller did extra work at the end of Wednesday's practice, making it likely Jhonas Enroth will get his second start of the season.

"We gave the goalies their schedule at the start of the week," Ruff said, "and I'll stick to it."

Sabres get no boost from power play in crunch time

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 27, 2011

The Buffalo Sabres' power play has its share of problems, with scoring, shot selection and playmaking decisions among them. What has really hurt the free falling unit, however, is its inability to make a difference when it matters.

The Sabres had glorious opportunities during their two-game losing streak to change the outcome. In Tampa Bay on Saturday, the referees gave Buffalo's power play a chance to tie a 1-0 game early in the third period. Failure. Midway through the period, the Sabres earned another man-advantage. Instead of cutting their deficit to 2-1, the Sabres were soon on their way to a 3-0 loss.

During Tuesday's rematch, the officials again presented the Sabres' with a third-period power play and a chance to tie the game. All they had to show for it was a 4-3 defeat.

"We've had good chances to win games with the power play, and we haven't done it," defenseman Marc-Andre Gragnani said Wednesday. "All the power-play guys, we need to step it up."

They should get an ideal opportunity tonight. The Sabres welcome Columbus to First Niagara Center for the second game of their five-game homestand. The Blue Jackets arrived in Western New York high off their first victory of the season, a 4-1 win over Detroit that finally moved their record to 1-7-1. They also possess the NHL's worst penalty kill, a unit that has stopped opponents just 67.7 percent of the time.

The Sabres need to start capitalizing. The whole mood of an arena changes when the ref's arm goes up. Tampa fans sensed trouble. Buffalo backers felt a rush.

"If you get in the zone, you set it up and you execute, you give yourself a chance to score, it lifts the team," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. "If you go outside those parameters and just have a terrible power play, the building goes a little bit quiet, the bench gets a little bit down. That's the effect it has on you."

The Sabres went 0 for 3 in the most recent loss to the Lightning, extending their skid to 1 for 17 during the past six games. They had a 3-for-8 start to the year, ranking second in the league after two games at 37.5 percent. They hit Wednesday's schedule in 14th with a 16 percent success rate.

"It's ebbs and flows during the year," defenseman Jordan Leopold said. "Sometimes you go through a good streak, then you feel that things aren't working out. Earlier in the year, we were just moving the puck and getting it to the net. It's pretty simple. Right now, we're maybe overpassing, taking a little more time with the puck instead of putting it in places where it needs to go to get opportunities."

"It just takes one, then you go from there."

We all have a job to do, and we need to be able to create opportunities and create a little momentum for our team."

As expected, the Sabres spent a chunk of Wednesday's practice working on the power play. They mixed up the units earlier this week. Now they may change part of their philosophy.

Christian Ehrhoff, who works the point on the top unit, proved during the preseason and the opening two games that he can fire the puck. Opponents have taken notice, getting in his shot lanes.

"His decision to try and shoot through people is something that we'd like to change a little bit," Ruff said. "Teams know what Christian's strength is, and it is his shot. He had the one really good look [Tuesday], and it wasn't much wide but it was wide.

"We may have to put him up top at times, give teams a little bit different look. Instead of having the one-timer from the side, have it from the middle of the ice."

There's different looks we can approach the game with."

Things haven't been all bad with the man-advantage.

The Sabres have been pleased with their rushes and ability to enter the zone. It's what happens when they get there that needs to improve.

"Once we get in the zone, we have to keep it more simple and get pucks to the net, crash the net," Gragnani said. "It doesn't matter how pretty it looks, how good we move the puck, how good our entries are. It's about scoring."

Jackets chase second straight as they visit Sabres

Brian Compton

NHL.com

October 26, 2011

BLUE JACKETS (1-7-1) at SABRES (5-3-0)

TV: FS-Ohio (HD), MSG-B

Season Series: This is the first of two meetings between the teams. They will meet again in Columbus on Nov. 25.

Big Story: After going winless in their first eight games of the season, the Blue Jackets finally earned their first victory Tuesday night. [Ryan Johansen](#) and [R.J. Umberger](#) each had a goal and an assist in a 4-1 win against Detroit at Nationwide Arena.

"I don't think anyone in that dressing room has been through anything like the three weeks of hell we've been through," coach Scott Arniel said. "A lot of baggage came with it. I thought the Dallas game (a 3-2 loss last Tuesday) we played well and didn't get rewarded. In Ottawa we played well for 59 minutes. ... Tonight everyone in the lineup stepped up and played a part.

"We were energized for 60 minutes. I'm glad for those guys to get that monkey off their back."

Team Scope:

Blue Jackets: Columbus might be 1-7-1 on the season, but it's 1-0 with [James Wisniewski](#) in the lineup. The Blue Jackets' free-agent signee, who was suspended for the first eight games of the season, made his debut Tuesday night and played more than 27 minutes.

"It's tough to say that one guy can win a hockey game," goalie [Steve Mason](#) said. "But having Wiz back there is huge. His confidence, not just in the way he plays but in the way he carries himself, kind of rubs off on the guys, especially the younger guys.

"He's a real vocal guy in the dressing room, which was great to have tonight. Just a confident presence on the blue line, and hopefully we don't have to go long stretches without him. "

Sabres: [Nathan Gerbe](#) made it a one-goal game at 19:10 of the third period, but Buffalo couldn't find the equalizer and suffered a 4-3 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning at the First Niagara Center on Tuesday night. After getting off to a 5-1-0 start, the Sabres were swept in their home-and-home series with the Bolts.

"We got on them hard, we skated well, and did some good things early on," captain [Jason Pominville](#) said. "After that, we kind of slipped away from our game."

Who's Hot: [Rick Nash](#) and [Vinny Prospal](#) each have 3 goals and 5 assists in nine games for Columbus. ... Buffalo forward [Thomas Vanek](#) scored his team-leading seventh goal of the season Tuesday night. Pominville has 10 points (2 goals, 8 assists) in eight games.

Injury Report: [Jeff Carter](#) (foot), [Kristian Huselius](#) (torn pectoral muscle), [Mark Dekanich](#) (ankle), [Curtis Sanford](#) (groin) and [Jared Boll](#) (thumb) are out for the Blue Jackets, while [Radek Martinek](#) (concussion) and [Marc Methot](#) (thumb) are day-to-day. ... For the Sabres, [Tyler Ennis](#) (ankle) is week-to-week. [Jochen Hecht](#) is out with a concussion.

Stat Pack: Prior to Tuesday night, the Blue Jackets had won only once in regulation in their last 30 games. ... Sabres forward [Brad Boyes](#) became just the 20th player in NHL history to appear in 500 consecutive games. He also ended an 18-game scoring drought Tuesday night, his first tally since March 19.

Puck Drop: "We all have to get better. We all have to improve here. It's not good enough at home. You can credit bounces and teams are tough to play against, but in the end, we lost a hockey game. We've got to figure out how to do it better." -- Sabres goalie [Ryan Miller](#)

Columbus (1-7-1) at Buffalo (5-3-0)

Mike Lipka

STATS

October 27, 2011

[James Wisniewski](#) wasn't the only reason the [Columbus Blue Jackets](#) finally claimed their first victory, but it probably wasn't a complete coincidence that his new team didn't win during his eight-game suspension.

The defenseman now looks to help Columbus notch its first road win in more than seven months Thursday night against the [Buffalo Sabres](#).

Coach Scott Arniel couldn't overstate the significance of Tuesday's 4-1 victory over Detroit, which snapped the Blue Jackets' worst start in franchise history. They spent a week as the NHL's lone winless team.

"I don't think anyone in that dressing room has been through the three weeks of hell we just went through," Arniel said. "The psychological, the emotional, everything that came with it. It was a lot of baggage."

Acquired from Montreal and signed to a six-year, \$33 million deal this summer, Wisniewski had to watch the entire season-opening skid from afar, having been suspended for a preseason hit to the head of Minnesota forward [Cal Clutterbuck](#).

He returned to log more than 27 minutes of ice time - the most of any skater - in his Columbus debut, giving the Blue Jackets (1-7-1) a presence they lacked on the blue line throughout their losing streak.

"It's tough to say that one guy can win a hockey game, but having Wiz back there is huge," said goalie [Steve Mason](#), who stopped 30 shots despite leaving briefly with an injury. "His confidence, not just in the way he plays but the way he carries himself, it kind of rubs off on guys."

That could help the Blue Jackets finally win on the road. Besides going 0-4-0 outside of Ohio this season, they lost their final five road games of 2010-11 - part of a 2-10-4 stretch away from home.

In their most recent road game Saturday at Ottawa, Columbus led in the final minute of the third period before allowing two quick goals to lose 4-3 in regulation.

Buffalo (5-3-0) won 5-0 when hosting the Blue Jackets last season but is still looking for its first true home win this fall. The Sabres were officially the home team for their 4-1 victory over Anaheim in Helsinki, but they've dropped their first two at the First Niagara Center.

[Thomas Vanek's](#) seventh goal and [Brad Boyes'](#) first put them ahead 2-0 in the first 2:31 on Tuesday against Tampa Bay, but the Sabres squandered the lead by the end of the first period and lost 4-3 for their second defeat to the Lightning in four days.

“We all have to get better,” goalie [Ryan Miller](#) said. “We can’t get rattled, and we have to keep going.”

Miller is 0-2-0 with a 4.07 goals-against average in Buffalo and 4-1-0 with a 1.20 GAA elsewhere. The Sabres are in the midst of a five-game homestand.

Mason, meanwhile, has never played in western New York. His two home starts against the Sabres produced vastly different results - a 28-save shutout Feb. 26, 2010, and a 5-4 loss in the teams' most recent meeting April 9.

ARE THE NUMBERS THAT OFFENSIVE?

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

October 26, 2011

Is goal scoring up or down through the first three weeks of the season? League wide it has dropped, but not to the extent that some may think. Using October 25 as the benchmark date for the past two seasons:

2010-11 (116 GP)

Eastern Conference: 318 goals for (2.74/game)

Western Conference: 322 goals for (2.78/game)

League Total: 640 goals for (5.52/game)

2011-12 (121 GP)

Eastern Conference: 337 goals for (2.79/game)

Western Conference: 305 goals for (2.52/game)

League Total: 642 goals for (5.31/game)

The biggest drop off is in the Western Conference where goal scoring is down .26 game, while the East has seen a bump of .05 – likely thanks to the 63 combined goals scored by Pittsburgh (33) and Washington (30) through 18 games. At this time last season, the top two Eastern teams – Tampa (27) and Pittsburgh (27) – combined to score 54 goals in 17 games.

The Sabres have scored 23 goals in the first eight games, compared to 24 in the first nine on this date last season.

The Sabres wore their royal blue pants and helmets in practice today, in preparation for their first “third jersey” game of the season tomorrow against Columbus. They are scheduled to wear the thirds in eight games this season, including twice on the road. The eight-game schedule is as follows:

- October 27 vs. Columbus
- November 5 @ Ottawa
- November 16 vs. New Jersey
- December 3 @ Nashville
- December 9 vs. Florida
- January 3 vs. Edmonton
- February 10 vs. Dallas
- March 14 vs. Colorado

Buffalo will also wear white at home against Toronto on January 13 because the Maple Leafs will be wearing their new third jersey that night.

Be sure to log on to Sabres.com every game night for the live in-game blog. Tomorrow's blog will get underway at 6:45 p.m. Then when the game is over, check back for an enhanced version of the blog featuring game highlights and interviews.

Sabres Pominville likes face-offs

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Last season Jason Pominville dabbled with face-offs taking 88 of them. This season he's really taken an interest in them working with assistant coach Kevyn Adams and Paul Gaustad to get better.

He's already taken 47 draws and won 22 of them for a 46.8 percentage. On the power play he's won 11 of 18 for 61.1 percent.

Pominville said, "I started a little bit last year just practicing and taking more on my strong side which is the backhand side. This year it's been more with Lukie coming in and I think he feels more comfortable taking the draws on his strong side and so far it's been working pretty good."

Pominville said he took draws once in awhile in Shawninigan and Rochester. He said he's always practiced it, "After practice I've always hopped in there. Most of our centermen have been left handed (Tim Connolly was right, but he never practiced draws) so I thought it was good for them to practice against a right hander. I just got into the habit of practicing it and us having Paul Gaustad who's one of the best now and Kevyn Adams who was one of the best when he played it definitely helps us out."

The question is how did Pominville improve in such a short period of time? The winger said, "I think the important thing is we talk about it. We go over tendencies of certain guys which Kevyn will have video of. When we're practicing sometimes, Paul plays it like he's one of their players to help us out."

Adams said watching Pominville he decided it would be worth pursuing, "Last year I noticed a couple of times Pommer being pretty good when he'd go in just out of necessity and then we started talking about it, working with it and to his credit, he works almost every day on it, watches video on it and wants to learn more about it and he's done a real nice job. On that power play unit he's very important because you need to start with the puck."

Adams says he stresses it to his guys, "That's what I talk to our centermen about that we have to get that puck back and then they dig in a little bit more."

Pominville has improved his strength which according to Adams, improves your face-offs, "Where he's improved so much is how strong his stick is. As a guy who didn't take a lot of draws, sometimes it's a shock when you realize how heavy the guys sticks are and how strong the centermen are and I give Paul Gaustad a lot of credit on that too because he works with him and he'll lean on him a little more to get him used to it, but we try to keep it simple, low, get their head in there across the dot as much as you can and the just get that mentality of battling."

Sabres' Boyes ready to break out

Bill Hoppe
Niagara Gazette
October 26, 2011

BUFFALO — Minutes into the Sabres' 4-3 loss Tuesday, Matt Ellis barreled into the Tampa Bay Lightning zone, beat a defender to the loose puck and immediately dished it in front. A split-second later, Brad Boyes swooped into the slot, grabbed the pass Cody McCormick had deflected and quickly backhanded the puck past goalie Mathieu Garon for his first goal.

It was vintage Boyes. At his best, the 29-year-old winger operates skillfully down low, using his 6-foot, 195-pound body and a quick, hard shot to pile up goals.

"Most of my goals have always been around the net or right in front there or off to the side, close to the paint," Boyes said Wednesday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's tilt against the lowly Columbus Blue Jackets. "I don't tend to score a lot from the outside. It's a matter to remind myself to go there and get those opportunities and look for those loose pucks."

But Boyes, a 43-goal scorer in 2007-08, rarely gets those opportunities these days, let alone scores. Tuesday's marker was just his first in 19 games dating back to last season. Counting the postseason, he has two goals in his last 26 games.

The same player who compiled 76 goals over a two-year stretch followed up with seasons of 14 and 17.

What's happened? Tonight will be Boyes' 501st straight game, so he hasn't battled injuries. He should be enjoying his prime, not in decline.

Sabres coach Lindy Ruff thinks the tightness of today's defense-first NHL has hurt the Mississauga, Ont. native.

"It's a little bit of what has hit other players around the league," Ruff said. "It's tougher to score. You don't get many open shots."

Naturally, the likable Boyes, who usually has a wide smile etched on his face, is frustrated.

"(I) keep trying to do little things, try to shoot pucks," said Boyes, who has only 11 shots in eight games. "But then you got to get in areas to shoot pucks and certain spots to do that. So it is (frustrating). I want to continue to keep going ... keep going to the net. Hopefully, keep going from here."

So far, Boyes has only scored consistently with the Sabres once, when he tallied five times in his first 10 games following his late-February arrival from St. Louis.

Injuries forced Boyes to center shortly after that, and his production plummeted. He said he's more

comfortable back on the right wing now. But throughout his scoring struggles, Boyes has maintained a steady game, never looking too shaky or overwhelmed. He's a plus-5 in 29 Sabres contests.

"That's the thing," Boyes said. "I feel alright out there. (Tuesday) we had the puck, it was of a matter just kind of putting it in. (Before) I hit the post or (was) putting it right in the goalie's stomach or just missing the net. Sometimes it's just an inch or two that makes a difference."

Right now, Boyes, who started the season with Tyler Ennis and Ville Leino, is experiencing two wildly different opportunities. He's skating on the fourth line, a far cry from when he comprised part of an elite scoring line beside Paul Kariya and Keith Tkachuk with the Blues.

Still, Ruff recently put Boyes on the first power-play unit, hoping he could spark something (one of last 16). He hadn't played on the man advantage all season. Now he's up front with Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek.

"It's a big boost to my confidence to play with those guys," said Boyes, who has 44 career power-play goals. "Those guys are good players. We've got a very deep team. I'm a guy that history throughout my career has always been on the power play and always produced. ..."

"That opportunity, that's what I'm looking to do, take advantage, get in that rhythm again, hopefully start feeling the puck a lot more and getting those better opportunities that will roll into the five-on-five play."

Don't discount Boyes' regular line, though. Ellis and McCormick work extremely hard and skate well. Tuesday's goal illustrated that. If they can win battles and Boyes gets open in front, the trio could create some nice secondary scoring.

"Elly and myself are going to be the ones kind of wreaking a little havoc and trying to get some loose pucks," McCormick said. "Brad's a guy that puts himself in a great spot to get chances. I think that's how it kind of created for us (Tuesday)."

Notes: Backup goalie Jhonas Enroth will likely start tonight or Saturday against Florida. ... The Sabres, losers of two straight, haven't dropped three in a row since Feb. 16-20. ... Columbus has a league-worst three points (1-7-1).

GAME DAY: at Buffalo

Blue Jackets and Sabres play first of two meetings this season

Rob Mixer

BlueJackets.com

October 26, 2011

When Terry Pegula purchased the Buffalo Sabres in February, he made one thing very clear: general manager Darcy Regier had the “green light” to ice a championship-caliber team.

It was a sigh of relief for the Sabres and their loyal fans, who had endured years of uncertainty surrounding the future of the franchise despite Buffalo’s reputation of being a competitive team in the NHL’s Eastern Conference. Pegula, a natural gas industry executive from Pennsylvania, was also the primary economic resource behind Penn State University’s brand-new Division I men’s and women’s ice hockey programs (his alma mater).

Regier finally had the necessary resources to upgrade his team, and this summer, he did exactly that.

The Sabres finished T-17th in goals against a year ago, yielding an average of 2.78 goals per game – and it could have been worse if not for another solid season from Ryan Miller. The 31-year-old Michigan State product started 66 games for head coach Lindy Ruff last season, posting a 2.59 goals-against average, .916 save percentage and five shutouts. Without a doubt, Miller is the backbone of the Sabres and Regier’s goal was to get him some help.

Buffalo acquired sturdy defenseman Robyn Regehr from the Calgary Flames, instantly giving the Sabres blue line a veteran presence that can play big minutes and kill penalties. And as if one big-time pickup on the back end wasn’t enough, Regier went after the No. 1 target on the free-agent market: Christian Ehrhoff. Regier traded for the rights to negotiate with Ehrhoff prior to July 1, and it didn’t take long for Ehrhoff to agree a 10-year contract ensuring he’ll be the team’s top blue-liner. Those two additions added to a blue line with names like Tyler Myers, Jordan Leopold and Marc Andre-Gragnani give the Sabres one of the best “on-paper” defenses in the Eastern Conference.



Up front, the Sabres are equally scary. Regier has assembled a young and talented group of forwards that are big, strong and gritty as well as compact, skilled and fast. It’s that combination which makes game-planning for Buffalo difficult because all of Ruff’s lines have the potential to score goals. Captain Jason Pominville is a regular 20-goal scorer in the league and Thomas Vanek is one of the deadliest snipers in the game. The Sabres acquired Brad Boyes at the trading deadline last year to get secondary scoring, and he’s been able to settle nicely into that role in Buffalo.

Regier signed free-agent forward Ville Leino to a six-year contract, giving the skilled Finn an opportunity to play center for the Sabres. He joins a forward corps with sturdy Drew Stafford, center Derek Roy and young Luke Adam – the latter being one of the standout players for Buffalo in the early going. They will, however, be without one of their top playmaking threats in Tyler Ennis, who is out of the Sabres lineup with an ankle injury.

Through a lot of change in Buffalo, there has been one constant and that is Ruff. Of course, there was speculation after Pegula assumed control of the franchise that the futures of both Regier and Ruff were in question, but Pegula believed in the management staff and the head coach. Ruff is the longest-tenured coach in the NHL, is now in his 13th season behind the Buffalo bench is one of the most accomplished active coaches in the game. Ruff is sixth among active coaches in total wins (438) and owns a .591 career winning percentage in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Since Ruff was hired by the Sabres on July 21, 1997, there have been 163 head coaching changes in the NHL. He is the third-longest tenured coach in the four major professional sports, behind Tony LaRussa (St. Louis Cardinals) and Gregg Popovich (San Antonio Spurs).

STAT CHART

		
G	Prospal, Nash (3)	Vanek (7)
A	Three tied (5)	Pominville (8)
PTS	Prospal, Nash (8)	Vanek (11)
PIM	Dorsett (16)	Gausted (14)
+/-	MacKenzie (+3)	Sekera (+6)
W/L	Mason (1-7-1)	Miller (4-3-0)
GAA	Mason (3.25)	Enroth (2.00)
SVP	Mason (.889)	Enroth (.935)

- This is the first of two meetings between the Blue Jackets and Sabres in the 2011-12 season, and the only game at First Niagara Center. In 12 prior games, Columbus owns a 7-4-1 record in the all-time series and holds a 4-3-0 mark in Buffalo. The Blue Jackets have won three of the last four meetings at First Niagara Center, the lone loss a 5-0 defeat last season.

- D [James Wisniewski](#) made his Blue Jackets debut Tuesday against Detroit and had one shot on goal, a game-high four blocked shots and was +1 in a game-high 27:21 of action. Last season he set career highs in goals (10), assists (41), points (51) and power play goals (7) en route to ranking fifth among NHL defensemen in points and seventh in assists.

- Boyes became the 20th player in NHL history to dress for 500 consecutive games on Tuesday vs. TBL. Boyes notched two points (one goal, one assist) in the loss, scoring his first goal since Mar. 19 vs. ATL. Boyes leads all Sabres skaters with 21 points (nine goals, 12 assists) in 27 career games against the Blue Jackets, after spending the beginning of his career in the Central Division with the St. Louis Blues.

- The Sabres are 21-7-4 since Pegula purchased the team.

- Vanek was a streaky scorer early in his career, but he's becoming a model of consistency of late. He's scored seven goals in Buffalo's first eight games, and his 11 points total are tied for fourth overall in the NHL. His 36 game-winners are fifth-most in Sabres history, two behind Dave Andreychuk for fourth-most by a Sabre all-time. Vanek has scored 32 points (16 goals, 16

assists) in his last 26 regular season games, dating back to Mar. 5. In those 26 games, he has not gone more than one game without recording a point.

- [Aaron Johnson](#) leads all Blue Jackets defensemen and is fourth overall in scoring with 2-2-4 in five games. In his last three games, he has notched 2-1-3 with a +1 plus/minus rating and logged 67:18 of ice time. He tallied 1-1-2 and a season-high 25:21 TOI Oct. 21 at Detroit and scored a goal and was +1 in 24:18 of action at Ottawa the following night. His goal at Detroit was his first with the club since Mar. 29, 2007 vs. Anaheim.

PLAYER PROFILE



Tyler Myers

D - #57

0 Goals

2 Assists

2 Points

- Myers is one of the top young defenseman in the NHL, and the 21-year-old from Houston, Texas has played a big role for the Sabres in his first two professional seasons. He stands 6-foot-8 and skates extremely well for a big man, allowing him to join the play and protect the puck as a “second wave” attacker.

- He has averaged between 20-22 minutes per game in the first eight contests of 2011-12, and has shown the ability to play heavy minutes as well. Myers has taken 11 shots on goal so far and is a regular on the Sabres power play. In the 2011 playoffs, Myers led all Buffalo players with an average of 23:52 TOI per game.

INJURY REPORT

G [Mark Dekanich](#) (ankle); indefinitely
LW [Kristian Huselius](#) (pectoral); indefinitely
RW [Jared Boll](#) (thumb); indefinitely
C [Jeff Carter](#) (foot); week-to-week
G [Curtis Sanford](#) (groin); 2 to 4 weeks
D [Marc Methot](#) (thumb); day-to-day
D [Radek Martinek](#) (concussion); indefinitely

Blue Jackets' Mason tries to ignore criticism

Aaron Portzline

Columbus Dispatch

October 27, 2011

The Blue Jackets' dressing room was no longer a highly pressurized container yesterday. An out-of-nowhere 4-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Tuesday replaced the gnashing of teeth with relaxed smiles and an eagerness for practice.

Nobody had a bigger bounce in his step than goaltender Steve Mason, even though he had an ice bag strapped to the left shoulder he injured early in the game.

"The shoulder feels OK," Mason said. "It's really nothing that I'm concerned about."

Winning is a remarkable balm.

The Blue Jackets' losing streak was 0-7-1, but that counts only the start of this season. It's easy to forget that the Jackets ended last season with six straight losses (0-4-2), too. As poorly as many Blue Jackets have played during that stretch, only the goaltender carries a record next to his name on the stat sheet.

For Mason, it showed an 0-9-2 mark since last March 29 and a 2-14-6 record since March 1.

Don't think it didn't bother him.

"We kind of live in a fantasy world," Mason said. "We get to play hockey for a living. We don't have to go to work every day like the average person, so for us to complain, it's not fair.

"But it's been extremely difficult, something that takes a toll on you mentally more than anything else. You get almost depressed. You've been working so hard, and to never get rewarded for that hard work and keep coming to the rink each day trying to stay positive ... it's a tough thing to do.

"Even trying to sleep at night — it's next to impossible to fall asleep, just laying there trying to find a way out of it."

Like all goaltenders, Mason has become a lightning rod for criticism for the Blue Jackets in recent months. True, he has earned some of the grief. His goals-against average and save percentage the past two seasons have been among the worst in the NHL.

But there also have been nights when Mason had no support from his teammates — a lack of goals on the other end of the ice, and woeful breakdowns in the Jackets' defensive zone.

Since the start of the 2009-10 season, the Blue Jackets have surrounded Mason with 20 defensemen. It's hard to build a level of trust when you're always learning new names.

Mason made 30 of 31 saves against Detroit on Tuesday.

But there were derisive cheers — no doubt some from Blue Jackets fans — when he left the ice with the shoulder injury in the first period.

“Everybody wants to put the easy blame on the goalie,” Blue Jackets forward R.J. Umberger said. “People don’t even watch the game, they see you lose, and they say: ‘Mason’s fault.’”

Most goaltenders grow up knowing that, much like NFL quarterbacks, they get the grief and the glory depending on their team’s play. But nothing, Mason said, can prepare a player for the vitriol of fans, especially in the age of social media.

He has let his Twitter feed go dormant, he said, because he didn’t like the wasted hours he spent looking at his cell phone. Given a direct path to the goalie, some fans got ugly.

“You never get used to hearing the negative stuff, but you turn a blind eye to it,” Mason said. “We had some difficult games. I’m sure I’ve been taking a lot of heat for it. So be it.

“You can’t get away from anything nowadays, not entirely. I try to stay away as much as possible, because it’s hard to keep the negative stuff from creeping in. You just have to be strong.”

Blue Jackets notebook: Moore getting more confident

Shawn Mitchell

Columbus Dispatch

October 27, 2011

The first NHL goal scored by Blue Jackets defenseman John Moore came on a slap shot the rookie didn't think had much of a chance.

Moore, 20, took a shot from the blue line on Tuesday that gave the Jackets a two-goal, second-period lead in a 4-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings.

"Right when I was about to hit it, it hopped up on its side," Moore said. "I was thinking, 'Oh, boy,' just get it on net. But fortunately it found its way."

The goal and the win made it the best day of his hockey life, said Moore, who played two games for the Jackets last season and has played two more since being recalled on Saturday from minor-league Springfield.

Better days might lie ahead if he continues to mature.

"He really got confident once he figured out what he is," coach Scott Arniel said. "Coming out of junior hockey, he was a little bit of everything."

Moore, an agile skater and one of the fastest on the team, has simplified his game with the help of assistant coach Brad Berry.

"I've really tried to concentrate on things in my own end," Moore said. "Just being solid and simple in there. The first focus has to be on solid defense."

His physical tools are being put to proper use.

"I think what we saw last year in training camp was a defenseman who was always trying to rush the puck, always trying to beat somebody one on one, probably like he had done in junior," Arniel said. "He wasn't getting away with those things against the speed and quickness of the NHL. Now, he is making really good, quick decisions. And this kid can skate."

Pressure play

The Blue Jackets were thrashed in their last visit to Buffalo, when they lost 5-0 on Dec. 3. Arniel doesn't expect tonight's game to be any easier.

"This reminds me of going in there last year," he said. "They were struggling but we saw their absolute best. They lost (Tuesday), and they're not very happy about it."

The Jackets will make it a point to stay aggressive on the forecheck, as they were on Tuesday against Detroit. The Sabres lack forward size but are slick, Arniel said, and have quick and dangerous defensemen who will join the attacking rush.

“The best way to defend against those kind of teams is to make them play in their end,” Arniel said. “We have to pressure them.”

Down and up

Defenseman David Savard was sent to Springfield yesterday. He was slated to play last night and be recalled in time to join the big club in Buffalo.

“We wanted to get him in a game down there,” Arniel said. “They’re banged up but it also gives us a chance to keep him (fresh).”

Savard was scratched against the Red Wings.

Where Did That Come From?

Aaron Portzline

Columbus Dispatch

October 26, 2011

Still trying to process the Blue Jackets' 4-1 win over Detroit on Tuesday. Typically, a struggling team plays gradually better and gets mixed results while they ramp up to their peak performance. Just as clubs tend to win games they don't deserve as they're sagging toward a losing streak. That's what made last night so odd.

The Blue Jackets -- wandering aimlessly and playing like independent contractors for their first eight games -- went from zero to 60 in one game. Yes, it was one game. Yes, it was against the Red Wings back-up goaltender. But, forgetting the opponent, the Blue Jackets played by far their most cohesive, organized, energetic game of the season to earn their first win of the season.

"It felt like how we're supposed to play, what we're supposed to be," right winger R.J. Umberger said. "I think everybody was excited to see it come together like that."

Umberger's reaction when he scored only 21 seconds into the game was downright Prospal-like. It was his first of his season, only the third time this season the Jackets have scored first in a game.

"We were just talking -- the coaches and players -- about how well we slept last night," Blue Jackets coach Scott Arniel said.

Now, onward.

Vowing to not let down their guard, the Blue Jackets practiced today and are flying to Buffalo, where on Thursday they'll face the Sabres. This is no easy task. The Sabres made sweeping changes and play a style that's not unlike the Red Wings. Backing it all up, however, is Ryan Miller, quite possibly the best goaltender in the game.

The Blue Jackets know they have to forecheck well against the Sabres, who have a very mobile defense. This is no time to take a foot off the pedal.

-- D David Savard was sent to minor-league Springfield today. He's expected to play tonight in Manchester, then return to the Blue Jackets on Thursday in Buffalo. They want him to get a game, as he's been sitting since Friday's loss in Detroit.

-- G Steve Mason (shoulder) practiced yesterday, which was mildly surprising since he missed part of Tuesday's game to get his left shoulder treated. He returned after missing 2:33 of playing time, and he had a bag of ice on his shoulder. "I felt good, the shoulder's fine and I wanted to be out there," Mason said. Simple as that.

-- C Jeff Carter (fractured foot) did not skate today. Mark him down as doubtful for Thursday's game and questionable for the weekend.

-- Lots of raves today regarding the play of rookies Ryan Johansen and John Moore.