



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Saturday, October 29, 2011

Sabres offense wants more balance

Vanek, Pominville have been shouldering the scoring load.

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

October 29, 2011

Brad Boyes says he feels comfortable working on a power-play unit with Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville. How could he not? Boyes has earned a dream assignment, skating alongside the second- and third-best scorers in the NHL. Of course he feels comfortable.

The good vibe from the grouping has allowed the right winger to record two goals and four points in two games. He's given the Buffalo Sabres a scoring threat not named Vanek and Pominville, even if those two are the players helping him out.

"It's nice to get a chance on the power play, and I'm trying to take advantage of it," Boyes said.

Coach Lindy Ruff is hoping the rest of the team catches up with Vanek and Pominville, too. The Sabres welcome the Florida Panthers to First Niagara Center tonight (7 p.m., MSG, Radio 550 AM) and their main goal is to provide a more balanced attack.

Ruff said following Thursday's 4-2 victory over Columbus, a game in which Pominville and Vanek combined for two goals and six points, that he'd like to see a "line controversy." He wants each trio to battle to be the best on the squad because, at the moment, there's no doubt who's No. 1.

"You'd like to see your lines competing to be the best," Ruff said Friday. "I think we're making strides."

There have definitely been signs of complementary production. The line of Paul Gaustad, Nathan Gerbe and Patrick Kaleta has found the net once in each of the past two games. One of Boyes' goals came while skating with Matt Ellis and Cody McCormick.

"The Gaustad line is kicking a few in, and obviously Brad's gotten on the board the last couple, but you'd love to have it where another line is starting to heat up," Ruff said.

The line that's really looking for a flicker is center Derek Roy, left wing Ville Leino and right wing Drew Stafford. They combined for just three shots and a minus-3 rating against the Blue Jackets.

Roy and Stafford have gone four games without a point. Leino has one goal and one assist in the season's nine games.

"Other lines maybe haven't contributed as much as they've wanted, including ours," Leino said. "But I'm sure it's going to come sooner or later. We've had some good shifts, now we've just got to keep them more consistent."

Leino and his linemates found the net several times during a light practice Friday, and they made sure everyone knew about it. They shouted and raised their sticks as if it were overtime of the playoffs.

"It was more fun than we've had in a while in practice," Leino said, "sometimes that's what you need."

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Jochen Hecht was well enough to sign autographs on his way out of the arena, but the Sabres forward could do little else Friday. Hecht, who has been out since suffering a concussion on the second day of training camp, had to take a day off that was "not scheduled," he said.

"He wasn't doing that well," Ruff said with a sigh. "We're just trying to figure some things out. Not to go into detail, but he could be back to full go [today]. He's seeing some people [Friday], and there's a good chance he can practice again."

Kaletka, meanwhile, added a piece of equipment to make it through practice. The right winger has an infection on his nose that has caused his face to redden and swell up, and he has been forced to attach a full cage to his helmet. He is expected to play tonight.

"We're hoping with medication that that'll go down," Ruff said. "He's not the prettiest guy right now, but he can still be effective."

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The Sabres will host the grand opening of their "Tailgate Tent Party" before tonight's game. The 3,200-square-foot heated tent, which was set up earlier this week, will be open for two hours prior to home games and will feature concessions and live music. Admission is \$10, and participants must be 21 or older. A package including a 300 Level II ticket and the tent party is available for \$55.

Sabres hope to continue strong start vs. Panthers

Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

October 28, 2011

PANTHERS (5-4-0) at SABRES (6-3-0)

TV: MSG-B

Season series: This is the second of four games between the teams this season. On Oct. 20, [Ryan Miller](#) stopped all 22 Panthers shots and [Thomas Vanek](#) scored a pair of goals to lead the Sabres to a 3-0 win in Florida.

Big Story: The Panthers will look to end their three-game road trip through the Northeast Division on a positive note, while the Sabres look for their second win on home ice.

Team Scope:

Panthers: The Panthers know they let two points slip away Thursday in Ottawa. Nick Foligno scored with 2.5 seconds left in regulation to steal a win and two points for the Senators. It came not long after [Kris Versteeg](#) scored with 47.1 seconds left, a goal that seemed certain to send the game to overtime.

"When you end up on the wrong side of those ones, it has a lot of sting," coach Kevin Dineen told the Miami Herald. "There are some lessons to be learned. It was sloppy play by us. I don't think that's the defining moment for our season. But it's a tough loss."

The loss spoiled another fine outing by rookie [Jacob Markstrom](#), who had been going for his third straight win and stopped 92 of the last 96 shots he faced prior to Foligno's goal.

"They controlled the walls most of the game and we can't win that way," Versteeg told the Herald. "We have to get back to the way we played in Montreal (a 2-1 win Monday). We left (Markstrom) out to dry all night. That's junk. You can't expect the goalie to win for you every night."

Sabres: It appears [Jochen Hecht](#) has suffered a setback in his attempt to return to the lineup. The veteran forward, who has been out with a concussion since being hit on the second day of training camp, was held off the ice Friday, an off-day that was "not scheduled" according to Hecht.

"He wasn't doing that well today," coach Lindy Ruff told reporters following Friday's practice. "We're just trying to figure some things out. Not to go into detail, but he could be back to full go (Saturday). He's seeing some people today, and there's a good chance he can practice again (Saturday)."

Hecht has played just one game -- Game 7 of last year's playoffs against the Flyers -- since March 29, when he suffered an upper-body injury in a game against the Maple Leafs.

Who's Hot: Versteeg has points in three straight and leads the Panthers with 5 goals and 11 points. ... Sabres forward [Thomas Vanek](#) has 4 points in his last two games; he's second in the League in scoring with 14 points and is third with 7 goals.

Injury Report: Newly-acquired [Mikael Samuelsson](#) is with the team in Buffalo, but his playing status is in question while he continues to recover from complications from offseason surgery to fix a sports hernia. Also out of the lineup for the Panthers are goalie [Scott Clemmensen](#) (knee) and forward [Sean Bergenheim](#) (lower body). ... Besides Hecht, Sabres forward [Tyler Ennis](#) is out with an ankle injury, but forward [Patrick Kaleta](#) will play wearing a full cage to protect his infected nose.

Stat Pack: Vanek had the first 3-assist game of his career Thursday against Columbus.

Puck Drop: [Mike Weber](#) thought he had done enough last season to establish himself as a full-time NHL player. But with the offseason additions of [Christian Ehrhoff](#) and [Robyn Regehr](#), Weber has been pushed off the ice. After playing 58 games and all seven in the playoffs, he has yet to play a game this season.

"Of course there's frustration building," Weber told the Buffalo News. "I want to play. Sitting out is not easy. It's a tough situation when you have the caliber of defense that we have. There's seven of us, and every one of us is a top-six or top-four guy."

Ruff said he's glad to hear Weber is frustrated.

"Not (taking it) very well, and no player should," Ruff said. "He was a good part of our team last year. It's a tough situation. There's some things that I'm still trying to make up my mind on, the importance of certain individuals and whether we should rotate a couple of individuals. Short term, he's the guy that's taking the bullet."

Weber said he's willing to wait, but knows when he does get his chance, he'll make the most of it.

"I have to trust the coaching staff and know they're trying to do what it takes to win right now and that I'll get my chance," Weber said. "And when I get my chance, I'll do the same thing I did last year."

Florida (5-4-0) at Buffalo (6-3-0)

Matt Becker

STATS

October 28, 2011

The [Buffalo Sabres'](#) [Ryan Miller](#) hasn't won since shutting out the [Florida Panthers](#) last week.

After getting a day off, it seems likely he'll be back in goal Saturday night as Buffalo seeks a fourth straight victory over the Panthers.

Miller has surrendered six goals on 48 shots in losing two games since making 22 saves in a 3-0 win over Florida on Oct. 20. He has been in net for the last three meetings with the Panthers, posting a 1.30 goals-against average in winning each.

The 2010 Vezina Trophy winner has gone 11-4-0 with a 2.21 GAA and two shutouts in his last 15 starts in the series, and the Sabres are 12-5-0 in their last 17 meetings with Florida.

Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff rested Miller for the second time this season Thursday and backup [Jhonas Enroth](#) came up with a strong performance, stopping 41 shots in a 4-2 victory.

[Jason Pominville](#) had two goals and an assist for the Sabres, who finally got their power play on track.

Buffalo (6-3-0) scored on two of three power-play chances, getting goals from with Pominville and [Brad Boyes](#), after the team had gone 1 of 17 with the man advantage in its previous six games.

"We went out early yesterday with the coaching staff and talked about it and figured stuff out," said Boyes, who has recorded a goal and an assist in each of the last two games. "All five guys on the power play have to be cohesive, and we did that."

They'll try to replicate it against a Florida team that killed off both penalties in a 4-3 loss to Ottawa on Thursday. The club surrendered at least one power-play goal in each of its previous five games.

The Panthers (5-4-0) appeared to have a good chance of earning at least a point against the Senators, as [Kris Versteeg](#) tied the score at 3 with 47.1 seconds remaining with his team-leading fifth goal. Ottawa's [Nick Foligno](#) got the winner with 2.5 seconds left, however, banging in the rebound of [Daniel Alfredsson's](#) slap shot.

"There's some lessons to be learned," coach Kevin Dineen said. "At the end of the day it was a sloppy play by us, but I don't see that being a defining moment of our season."

Dineen didn't announce his starting goaltender for the Buffalo game afterward.

Rookie backup [Jacob Markstrom](#) made his second straight start Thursday and stopped 34 shots. He made 40 saves in a 2-1 win over Montreal on Monday.

[Jose Theodore](#) hasn't played since leaving his start against the [New York Islanders](#) last Saturday with a lower-body injury. He stopped 35 shots against the Sabres last week.

Pominville had a goal and two assists in that game, and has three goals and six assists in the last four meetings.

[Thomas Vanek](#), who had three assists Thursday, had a pair of goals in last week's matchup with Florida.

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY FOR VANEK

Thomas Vanek is off to the best start of his NHL career

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

October 28, 2011

In hockey terms, referring to [Thomas Vanek](#) as a “reliable” performer over the past six seasons would be as deadly accurate as his slapshot. Vanek has only missed 21 games due to injury since debuting in the 2005-06 campaign, and has played in 80 or more games four times. Last year he became the only player in Sabres history to lead the team in goals for five consecutive seasons. But the 27-year-old Vanek is off to the best offensive start of his career this season, and the term “consistency” is likely going to become the new buzzword for the Austrian sniper.

Vanek’s 14 points (7+7) are one more than the 13 he started the 2006-07 season with through 10 games, and place him two points behind Toronto’s Phil Kessel for the league scoring lead. With one game left to the 10-game mark, Vanek’s has a chance to match Chris Drury’s 10-game start to the 2006-07 season, and possibly surpass the 16 scored by Maxim Afinogenov to start that same season. Those 10-game totals sit second and third to the franchise record of 29 points (9+20) in 10 games set by Pat LaFontaine to open the 1992-93 season.

“Consistency is the biggest thing, even as a young guy. It’s something I still work on, to be effective every night,” explains Vanek. “Not every night you’re going to feel 100 per cent, so you need to find other ways to contribute to the team.”

The consistency Vanek has shown this season has carried over from the midway point of last year. Since December 26, Vanek’s 62 points (26+36) in 54 games are tied for fourth in the NHL with Henrik Sedin – trailing only Daniel Sedin (73), Corey Perry (64) and Martin St. Louis (63). In this time he’s only been held pointless in three consecutive games once (Feb. 25-Mar. 3), and has scored at least one point in eight of nine games this season.

Vanek credits much of this success to playing alongside [Jason Pominville](#), who is fourth in the league in scoring with 13 points (4+9) in nine games.

“Ever since Rochester, Jason and I have never really played together. We practiced together a few times, and had some games here and there. But last year after Derek went out, we got put together and ever since then we’ve been clicking.

“That’s what you need. It’s tough in this league to do it on your own. You need a five-man pack, but on a forward line you need at least two guys that can click and I think we have that. We’ve got that chemistry, and Luke (Adam) is doing a good job for us down the middle.”

Adam calls Vanek “the best player he’s ever played with,” and says there more to his game than just goal scoring.

“He’s much more than a goal scorer; he’s probably one of the best playmakers too. Some of those plays he makes around the net -- working hard down low, getting body position. It’s just

those little plays that a lot of guys can't make, and it just seems to be on your tape every time. He's just as good a passer as he is a shooter.”

[Jochen Hecht](#) was the lone Sabre missing from today's practice, and Lindy Ruff said his timetable for return is still unclear at this point.

"We gave him another day off; he just wasn't doing that well today," Ruff explained. "We're just trying to figure some things out. Not to go into detail, but he could be back into full go tomorrow. He's seeing some people today, and there's a good chance he could practice again tomorrow.”

[Patrick Kaleta](#) practiced with a full cage mask on his helmet, to protect a cut on his nose that has become infected and caused his facial swelling. Ruff said it was a precautionary measure that shouldn't affect his playing status.

“We're hoping with medication that would go down. Obviously it isn't good looking, but it's something that happens when you get cut and you're sweating in it. It's a surface infection. He's not the prettiest guy right now, but he can still be effective.”

Sabres Ennis progressing. Hecht in limbo

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 28, 2011

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Tyler Ennis is working out, but he still has a walking boot on his sprained ankle.

Jochen Hecht missed practice Friday. Lindy Ruff said, "We had to give him another day off, he wasn't doing that well today. We're just trying to figure some things out. Not to go into detail, but he could be back to full go tomorrow. He's seeing some people today and there's a chance he could practice again tomorrow."

Ennis does a full workout in the team gym. He road the bike today and he said, "It's coming along, every day it's getting a little better. Working hard on it, icing it and doing all the little things."

As far as a timetable the winger said he doesn't have one, "No, not really it's week to week kind of day to day type of thing. I think I'm seeing improvements quicker than normal. High ankle sprains can take a long time, but I seem to be moving along pretty good."

This is all new for the kid, "I've been fortunate in my career to not really get injured so this is new to me and definitely sucks. I see why people hate it so much because it sucks to watch."

I thought the Lightning's Ryan Malone made a dirty play slashing Ennis on the ankle from behind forcing him to lose control and go into the post. Ennis doesn't see it that way. "I've thought about it a little bit and watched it a few times, I don't think there was an intent to injure me. I was just going to the net. I kind of lost my footing a little bit and he was just trying to play me and I don't think he meant to hurt me in any way. I think it was more unlucky that I slipped up and went in awkwardly, so I don't think it was his fault."

Ruff kept them on the ice for about 40 minutes Friday working a lot on competing in the offensive zone.

Vanek, Pominville developing chemistry with rookie center Adam

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

October 28, 2011

BUFFALO — OK, it's still a bit early, just nine games into the new season. Sabres sniper Thomas Vanek almost certainly won't finish with 64 goals and 128 points, his current pace. Don't count on captain Jason Pominville having 118 points come April, either.

But the linemates, two slick stars due for breakout seasons, possess a supreme, undeniable chemistry with rookie center Luke Adam. There's a certain precision when the veterans skate together.

Three weeks in, the wingers haven't let up a bit. On the left side, Vanek already has seven goals and 14 points, both good for second in the NHL. Meanwhile, Pominville has four goals and 13 points, fourth in the league heading into tonight's tilt against the Florida Panthers at the First Niagara Center.

What's going on with these guys? Yes, it's not even Halloween, but the Sabres haven't had a 50-goal or 100-point performer since 1992-93, when Pat LaFontaine and Alexander Mogilny both went over the marks.

"We're doing a good job at talking off the ice and seeing what we can do better and where we want to be in certain situations," Pominville said Friday. "I think it reflects on the way we've been playing on the ice. But we're working hard, we're skating hard and we're creating things offensively."

No kidding. Vanek has points in eight games this year, Pominville seven. In Thursday's 4-2 win over Columbus, Pominville had two goals and three points while Vanek added three assists.

"That's what you need in this league," Vanek said about the chemistry he shares beside Pominville. "It's tough to do it on your own. You need someone you can click with, have chemistry with. I think we have that."

Perhaps most impressively, they're doing most of their damage at even strength, where Vanek has nine points and Pominville eight.

"It really is some good chemistry right now between (Pominville) and Thomas," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. "You hope for things like that. They feed off each other really well. I think Luke has been a big part of it. Luke has skated well on that line."

"I like their even-strength play, which is something, when you're starting to score even-strength goals, it makes a big difference on the balance sheet."

The duo might have more exploits ready for tonight. In 24 career games each against Florida, Vanek has 15 goals and 21 points, Pominville nine tallies and 25 points.

They began playing together regularly Jan. 1, immediately shaking off their wretched starts. Vanek compiled 48 points during that stretch, Pominville 37.

Now, after nearly 10 months together, they know each other's instincts.

"You don't have to think as much because we talk and we know a lot of times where we're going to be before we get the puck," Pominville said. "I think it makes a big difference. You don't even have to put your head up. You just know he's going to be there, or he knows where I'll be. Just got to give a yell and it usually works out."

Adam's been the line's glue. With three goals and eight points, the 21-year-old, a late replacement when Derek Roy hurt his shoulder last month, ranks second in rookie scoring.

"Van's had a hell of a start here," Adam said. "They compliment so well. I'm fortunate to be given the opportunity to play with these guys. I'm just trying to take full advantage of it."

Vanek said: "(Adam's) getting better in his defensive zone. He's good in the middle distributing puck to the left and the right. He doesn't favor one side, which I think is important because it keeps the D guessing. He's been good."

The wild October's especially surprising considering Pominville usually starts slowly before going on a second-half tear. A year ago, as he struggled to come back from a concussion, Pominville didn't record his 13th point until Dec. 23, his 26th game. This season, he was recovering from a sliced tendon in his right leg.

"Last year was a battle because of the injury and having to miss time, and then it took a while to kind of get going again, and then (I) got going and got put on a line with Thomas," Pominville said. "That's where we kind of took off, had a good, strong finish to the season."

Pominville's never had more than 34 goals or 80 points. Vanek's never topped 43 or 84. In recent seasons, their statistics, while still strong, haven't reached elite levels.

Now they appear poised to post some gaudy numbers from a past era.

"They know where they're going," Ruff said, "and they know where they're going to put it."

That's in the net.

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Agitator Patrick Kaleta, who fought Thursday despite an infected cut on his nose, was sporting a full cage on his helmet during practice Friday. The cut's turning a yellowish color and causing his face to swell.

"We're hoping with medication that it'll go down," Ruff said. "Obviously, isn't good looking, but it's

something that happens when you get caught and you're sweating in it. He gets a surface infection. He's not the prettiest guy right now, but he can still be effective."

Kaletka scored the late winner against Columbus.

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Center Jochen Hecht (concussion) "wasn't doing well" and received Friday off. The German, who's been practicing fully recently, hasn't played yet this season.

"Some of it's we're just trying to figure some things out," Ruff said. "Not to go into detail, he could be back to full go (today). He's seeing some people."

Back to basics for Florida Panthers after tough loss to Senators

George Richards

Miami Herald

October 28, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- A day after a late meltdown cost the Panthers at least one point in the standings and potentially a three-game winning streak, coach Kevin Dineen went back to the basics.

Dineen's practice on Friday stressed his system and how he wanted the Panthers to use it. Just nine games into a season with virtually an entire new team, Dineen figured it was time to stress how important it was for the Panthers to stay within their game plan.

With two new players in Marco Sturm and Mikael Samuelsson coming over from Vancouver, Dineen felt the need to go over some things.

"We revisited some of our system things," Dineen said after Friday's workout at First Niagara Center, the re-named home arena of the Sabres, where Florida plays Buffalo on Saturday.

"With Marco and Samuelsson here now, we thought it was important to go through some of our systems and continue to work on that area on the ice. ... We just worked on strong execution, and I think we accomplished that."

In Thursday's 4-3 loss to the host Senators, the Panthers were not active against the boards and failed to clear pucks left by goalie Jacob Markstrom at inopportune times. Ottawa scored the game-winning goal with 2.5 seconds left Thursday as Nick Foligno picked up a loose puck in the slot, worked around a Florida defense that looked to be standing still and popped the puck into the net.

Not the birthday present Dineen was looking for, that's for sure. The Panthers' first-year coach celebrated his 48th on Friday.

Thursday's loss was extremely disappointing not only because of the result — but what led to it.

The Panthers held one-goal leads on the Senators two different times, once off Jason Garrison's initial goal then off the one Stephen Weiss nicked in off a Tomas Fleischmann shot in the second period. With the score tied at 2, the Senators took a late lead after Colin Greening scored with 2:07 remaining.

But the Panthers found new life in the final minute. With Markstrom on the bench, Florida took full advantage of its extra attacker as Kris Versteeg found himself all alone on the left side of the net as he scored with 47.1 seconds remaining to tie the score and presumably force overtime.

Things just didn't work out as planned.

The Panthers must now put that loss in the rearview mirror as they get ready for a tough opponent. The Sabres beat Florida 3-0 in Sunrise last week and have won six of their past nine games.

“We talked about walking by and moving on from [Thursday] night,” Dineen said. “In saying that, shame on us for losing a couple of points.”

Unpleasant memory

Samuelsson doesn't have the greatest memory of his one season with the Panthers as he was injured for most of the 2003-04 campaign.

“If I'm going to be honest, I had a kind of crappy year,” Samuelsson said with a smile. “I was injured a lot; I broke my jaw and had problems with the thumb too. So what [Florida fans] know about me is like, ‘OK I'm hurt all the time.’ But that's not really the case. Since I was in Florida the last time, I've been with Detroit and Vancouver and had decent years.”

Samuelsson is back with the Panthers after being acquired from Vancouver in the David Booth trade last Saturday. He joined the team Thursday in Ottawa and will be flying back to Florida with the team after Saturday night's game. Samuelsson didn't practice on Friday as he is having complications from sports-hernia surgery he underwent last May.

The Panthers do not have a timetable for his return. Samuelsson played in Vancouver's first six games and scored a goal with two assists. Samuelsson said he was “on the right track” and “should be fine.” The soreness came gradually, he said.

Panthers newly acquired Mikael Samuelsson likes what he sees

Veteran forward is still sidelined but is anxious to help new team reach the playoffs

Harvey Fialkov

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

October 29, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Recently acquired forward [Mikael Samuelsson](#) had a good view from the pressbox of his new team in Thursday night's dramatic, last-second 4-3 loss to the surging [Senators](#).

There was a dash of good, mixed in with a heap of bad.

He saw rookie goalie [Jacob Markstrom](#) keep his overmatched teammates in the game with another stellar effort in the net as the [Panthers](#) were outshot 38-25. However, he also must've noticed young defensemen like [Erik Gudbranson](#) and [Dmitry Kulikov](#) show off their offensive skills only to make youthful mistakes that led to Senator goals.

He couldn't help but be impressed by one of the hottest lines in the [NHL](#), as [Stephen Weiss](#), [Kris Versteeg](#) and [Tomas Fleischmann](#) combined on two goals and three assists. But their continued desire to create highlight-reel goals cost them as a Fleischmann flub set up [Colin Greening](#)'s go-ahead goal with 2:07 left.

He couldn't have missed the Panthers being outthit 25-14, or their resilience to tie 3-3 with 47.1 seconds left on Versteeg's one-timer off sweet feeds from Weiss and Kulikov with Markstrom out of the net.

He didn't need binoculars to watch the Panthers continually cough up the puck along the sideboards until it cost them the game-winning goal by [Nick Foligno](#) with three seconds left.

"Absolutely," Samuelsson said when asked if he was watching a playoff-caliber team. "Definitely, they have a lot of old Chicago guys I played against in Detroit, so it's a good group of guys, individual good players.

"But it's another thing to get it together as a team. It's way too early for me to stand here and say anything about that."

It's also too early to say when Samuelsson will begin skating again. He suffered a setback from offseason hernia surgery while playing six games with the [Canucks](#).

Panthers coach [Kevin Dineen](#), who celebrated his 48th birthday Friday by re-emphasizing his systems to newcomers like Samuelsson and [Marco Sturm](#), while putting the team through "wall" drills.

"[The loss] had a lot of sting, so there are lessons to be learned," Dineen said. "We revisited some of our systems and continued to work [on the boards]."

"We talked about ... moving on from last night; we also said shame on us for losing a couple of points."

Dineen promised a long-range prognosis on Samuelsson by Saturday.

"I wish I knew, too, but it's a little tricky," said Samuelsson, 34, who averaged 45 points over the last four years while playing 73 or more games.

Samuelsson, part of a trade with Pittsburgh that brought him and eventually [Nathan Horton](#) to Florida in 2003-04, played 37 games for the Panthers with just nine points.

"I had kind of a crappy year; I was injured a lot; I broke my jaw and had problems with the thumb, too, so what they know about me is, 'OK, I'm hurt all the time, but that's not really the case," Samuelsson said. "I had decent years in Detroit and Vancouver and developed over the years. Hopefully, I can bring that."

The Panthers didn't re-sign him after the lockout season, but Samuelsson went on to help Detroit win the Stanley Cup in 2007-08, where he celebrated with [Tomas Kopecky](#).

"He's a big, strong guy with one of the better shots in the league," Kopecky said. "He's strong on the puck and smart with it. He's going to be a good addition to our team."

Kennedy doesn't look back

Panthers forward [Tim Kennedy](#), who had an outstanding rookie season for the [Sabres](#) with 10 goals and 16 assists in 2009-10 but was waived, has no agenda against his first team.

"I'm just trying to stay here, play hard and show them what I got," said Kennedy, who has one game-winning goal in nine games. "We played them last week and it was good to see some of the guys, but that was it. We got to try to beat them. They're playing pretty well."

Florida Panthers will keep Erik Gudbranson up with big team

With one game left before they had to make a decision on keeping young defenseman on roster or return to juniors Dineen tells him and team that he's staying

Harvey Fialkov

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

October 27, 2011

KANATA, Ontario — There was an emotional scene on the ice at Scotiabank Place when [Panthers](#) coach [Kevin Dineen](#) called the team together and told them that rookie defenseman [Erik Gudbranson](#) had officially made the team.

There would be no return to juniors -- at least for the foreseeable future as all the players cheered and surrounded the 19-year-old with high-fives and hearty congratulations.

In the stands, Gudbranson's father Wayne broke down and couldn't even speak to reporters because he was overcome with emotion when witnessing the on-ice celebration. It's also special because Gudbranson grew up nearby and skated on this ice as a 5-year-old Pee-wee player when he was rooting for the Sens.

His whole family will be in the stands tonight, except for brother Alex, who plays for his old junior team the Kingston Frontenacs. [NHL](#) rules state that once a junior-aged player under contract plays Game 10, his entry-level contract kicks in and moves him one year closer to free agency. Tonight marks game No. 9.

"I was wondering how I was going to deliver it. A lot of times in this business you're delivering bad news, so it's nice to let someone know that's a heck of an occasion, not only for him but for his family, his minor-league coaches, a lot of people can really enjoy that," Dineen said after morning skate. "Playing in your hometown there's enough stuff going on already so I picked the right call to let him know and let him know in front of his teammates."

Gudbranson, the third overall draft pick of 2010, was mobbed by the Ottawa media. "It's exciting and I'm really pumped," said Gudbranson, who doled out about 25 tickets for tonight's game. "It was nice my dad was in the crowd for morning skate, so he got to see it. As much as it's a dream for me I'm pretty sure it's twice as exciting to see his kid do that and I give [my family] all the credit in the world."

It would've been hard to find a beneficial reason to send Gudbranson back to his dreadful junior team in Kingston (OHL) that's 1-10-1-1, other than to help brother Alexander on the blue line.

[Markstrom](#) to start again

Also, Dineen announced that rookie goalie Jacob Markstrom would get his second consecutive start tonight against the red-hot Sens, basing his decision on the Swede's recent play of stopping 58 of the last 59 shots in wins over the [Canadiens](#) and [Islanders](#). Veteran goalie [Jose Theodore](#) took the news well and was totally supportive of Markstrom. He said his, 'core injury,' could use the extra rest and Markstrom's hot streak couldn't come at a better time.