



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*Wednesday, November 02, 2011*

## **Flyers will test revamped Sabres**

*Leino joins Pominville and Vanek on top line*

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 2, 2011

The Sabres know they didn't fool anyone during their last two games. Their effort just wasn't where it needed to be. They've stood in their dressing room and vowed to be better next game.

In case they needed any outside motivation, tonight's opponent should provide it.

The Philadelphia Flyers arrive in First Niagara Center tonight, their first appearance since shocking Buffalo in Game Six of the playoffs last spring and eliminating the Sabres in Game Seven. Meetings with the historic rival usually bring added intensity. The recent slump coupled with last year's result should add even more.

"It's a big game, especially since we want to focus on our game and pick it up a little bit," right wing Patrick Kaleta said Tuesday. "Our last couple efforts we haven't really been happy with, and there's no better team to face now than the team that knocked us out last year. It should be a fun game to play in and a big test for our team."

The Sabres enter in the midst of their first lull of the season. They have lost three of four, and they're just 1-3 in Buffalo.

The fans booed the team off the ice Saturday. The Sabres blew a lead with four minutes to go and lost to Florida, 3-2. They lost their poise along with the game, which featured long stretches of offensive ineptitude.

"We definitely need a little bit of an adjustment and focus to our attitude at home," said goaltender Ryan Miller, who is expected to start tonight. "There's going to be stretches where you have tough plays and mistakes over the course of a night, but we just have to be a little more consistent with things we can control. We have to definitely control how quickly we're making plays and how hard we are to play against."

The Sabres hope this week's tweak to their top lines will make things tough for the Flyers. Former Philly forward Ville Leino will center high-scoring wingers Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville, while Luke Adam's nine-point start moves alongside Derek Roy and Drew Stafford, who have been shut out during the past five games.

"It's going to be pretty fun playing against guys, a little bit nervous, too, since it's the first game," Leino said. "I'm sure it's going to be different playing on the other side of the ice against them."

He won't see all his former mates. Chris Pronger is out with an eye injury, while old friend Danny Briere will sit because of a rib ailment. The Flyers are 1-2 since losing Pronger and have given up 15 goals.

"They were going good when he was in there, and maybe they've struggled a bit with him out," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said of the 6-4-1 opponent. "He's been a good player in this league, and I think they miss him. I see the goals go up when he's out, and I see the goals go down when he's in."

The Flyers, though, continue to score even after a makeover that saw them ship captain Mike Richards and leading scorer Jeff Carter out of town. They're second in the NHL at 3.73 goals per game. Leino's old linemate, Scott Hartnell, has been hot with four goals and nine points in four games. He's skating with Claude Giroux (15 points) and future Hall of Famer Jaromir Jagr, who has five goals and seven points in the last four outings.

"I loved playing with Ville. It seemed like he would make plays out of nothing," Hartnell told Philly reporters. "With these guys it's a little bit different. Jagr is Jagr. He can score from anywhere, he's got a great shot and you try to get him the puck as much as possible."

Kaleta is among those who feel the appearance of the Flyers will inspire the Sabres. He missed Game Seven with a hand injury, but the memory of his team's elimination sticks with him. The sight of orange and black should drive the Blue and Gold.

"I had to sit there and watch that the whole time, and it's the worst feeling in the entire world," Kaleta said. "I'm looking forward to the game."

## **It's smoother skating on Buffalo home ice**

*Temperature lowered in First Niagara Center to 'meat locker' levels*

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

November 2, 2011

Christian Ehrhoff spent the previous two seasons in Vancouver, which is lauded as having one of the best ice surfaces in the NHL. When the defenseman arrived in Buffalo for training camp, he was decidedly underwhelmed by a rink that hasn't always received high marks.

"In training camp here it was terrible," Ehrhoff said Tuesday. "Now it's actually pretty good. You can tell that they made some changes, and it's improved a lot."

Providing a better ice surface was among the main goals of Sabres ownership and management this offseason. They spent millions on a dehumidifier system, laser-guided Zambonis and ice-making equipment. They've also lowered the temperature in First Niagara Center to ranges that bring "igloo" and "meat locker" to mind.

Through four home games, it seems the changes are working. Game Five is tonight when the Sabres host Philadelphia.

"Overall the ice has been pretty good this year compared to previous years," said center Derek Roy, a vocal critic during past seasons. "It's good for our team, especially. We're a fast team, and we utilize our legs and our speed. To have good ice definitely helps move the puck up the ice and get your legs going."

Smooth ice should help Roy during his return to the Sabres' power play. The center, who has no points in five games, moved to the blue line on the top unit during Tuesday's practice. He worked the point alongside defenseman Tyler Myers, with holdovers Thomas Vanek, Jason Pominville and Brad Boyes up front.

The second group featured Ville Leino, Luke Adam and Drew Stafford at forward, with Jordan Leopold and Ehrhoff on defense.

"It's always fun to be able to help the team, make plays and get scoring opportunities," Roy said. "We worked pretty good, and we've just got to take that into [tonight]."

...

Mike Weber noticed the shake-up on the Sabres' power play and realized it could result in his season debut. Coach Lindy Ruff bumped defenseman Marc-Andre Gragnani from the man-advantage unit, and signs pointed to Weber finally getting a call after being scratched for the opening 10 games.

"Hopefully, I'll get in here and be able to take full advantage of it," Weber said. "It's tough for anyone to sit, but I worked hard, did what they asked me, watched the games, skated hard, things like that, so that when I got this chance I could take full advantage of it."

"I'm not too nervous. I played 58 [games] last year, so I'm just excited to get going here and start my season."

Ruff wouldn't say whether Gragnani's power-play absence would translate to a start by Weber.

"Not necessarily," Ruff said. "We'll see about that."

...

The Sabres started the season 5-1 but have since lost three of four. Poor decisions with the puck have contributed to the slide, according to Ruff.

"We're making plays we didn't make in the first three or four games, and I think that comes with success," the coach said. "You think, 'Ah, we're pretty good. I think we can be a little bit better. We can try a little bit of this and a little bit of that,' and a little bit of that turns into something in your own goal. We're trying to narrow that down and get it back to where we need to be."

...

Ruff said forward Jochen Hecht, who suffered a concussion-related setback this week, is out indefinitely. ... As of Tuesday evening, the Sabres had 600 tickets available for tonight's game. They also announced a "party bundle," which includes a 300 Level II ticket, admission to their tent party in the plaza and one beverage. The package is \$55 for most games and \$45 for three others. ... The annual Salvation Army kettle drive will begin tonight at the arena. Fans can also donate \$10 to the cause by texting "BUFFALO" to 80888.

...

Ruff, who tortured the players with a grueling, profanity-laced practice Monday, conducted an easier, more light-hearted session Tuesday. He also got into the Halloween spirit when he ordered Stafford off the bench to fill in for Vanek, who briefly retreated to the dressing room.

"Staff," Ruff said, "dress up as a hockey player, take Van's spot on the power play."

## Flyers face Sabres in first-round playoff rematch

Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

November 2, 2011

**FLYERS (6-4-1) at SABRES (6-4-0)**

**TV: VERSUS (HD), TSN2**

**Last 10:** Philadelphia 5-4-1

**Season series:** This is the first of four games between the teams this season. They split four regular-season meetings, but Philadelphia won in seven games in the first round of last spring's playoffs.

**Big Story:** The banged-up Flyers face a big road challenge, while the Sabres look to snap out of a funk that has seen them lose three of their last four.

### Team Scope:

**Flyers:** The hottest line in hockey right now could be the trio of [Claude Giroux](#) centering [Jaromir Jagr](#) and [Scott Hartnell](#). In five games since being put together, they've combined for 11 goals and 12 assists.

Hartnell, however, has been the star, with 4 goals and 5 assists, and a four-game point-scoring streak heading into Wednesday's game. Hartnell had just 2 assists in his first six games prior to the line's construction.

"I had a tough training camp," Hartnell told CSNPhilly.com. "I didn't really feel good. My body didn't feel good ... mentally, you start gripping the stick tighter. It's amazing what one game does.

"Coach (Peter Laviolette) put some confidence in you and starts playing you more, you have to take advantage of that opportunity. I dig playing with these guys and it's exciting."

**Sabres:** [Ville Leino](#) was signed as a free agent this summer to be a top-line center. Now, he's finally going to get to skate between the team's two best wingers. Leino was placed between [Thomas Vanek](#) and [Jason Pominville](#) at Monday's practice, and it's likely that line stays together Wednesday against Philadelphia.

Leino has struggled to find chemistry on any line, and has just 1 goal and 1 assist in 10 games. His ice time has declined three straight games, including just 9:35 on Sunday against Florida.

"It's really tough to play with nine, 10 minutes a game and try to make something happen, feel comfortable out there," Leino said. "It's pretty much every time you feel into it, you're not playing. It definitely is not easy for me."

If he sticks between Vanek -- third in the League with 8 goals -- and Pominville -- second on the team with 14 points -- he'll certainly see an increase in his ice time.

"We'll see how it goes," Leino told the Buffalo News. "They're good players and I know they think the same way about hockey and their games and do the same kind of plays as I, so it should be pretty easy to read those guys."

**Who's Hot:** [Jaromir Jagr](#) has 5 goals and 2 assists in his last five games and was named Third Star of the Week. ... Pominville has three 3-point games this season; he had just two of them in 73 games last season.

**Injury Report:** The Flyers will be without forwards [Danny Briere](#) and [Matt Read](#) due to upper-body injuries. Defenseman [Chris Pronger](#) will be out at least 1-2 weeks while recovering from an eye injury. ... Sabres forward [Jochen Hecht](#) (concussion) is out, and it's likely forward [Tyler Ennis](#) (ankle) also will not play.

**Stat Pack:** Briere isn't just upset because he won't get to play against his former team. In his last 10 regular-season games against the Sabres, he has 5 goals and 7 assists, including 3 goals and 5 assists in four games last season.

**Puck Drop:** Few players are more honest or entertaining for the media to cover than Flyers goalie [Ilya Bryzgalov](#). However, his dealings with the robust Philadelphia media contingent were believed to be one reason for his subpar recent play. Goalie coach Jeff Reese had said talking to the media had become "a little bit of a distraction."

Prior to his solid effort Saturday against Carolina, Bryzgalov had lost four straight games, allowing at least four goals in each.

On Monday, the Flyers' public-relations department introduced a new policy where Bryzgalov would only be available to talk to the media after games. Later that day, they amended the policy to say he would not talk the day before a game or the morning of a game, but would be available at all other times.

On Tuesday, the policy was completely scrapped, and according to the Philadelphia Inquirer, the request came from Bryzgalov and the coaching staff. Bryzgalov now is free to talk to the media anytime he wants.

## **Philadelphia (6-4-1) at Buffalo (6-4-0)**

Noey Kupchan

STATS

November 2, 2011

[Buffalo Sabres](#) coach Lindy Ruff believes his team's been lacking the intensity that led to its tremendous start.

The [Philadelphia Flyers](#) hope [Ilya Bryzgalov](#) has regained his early form after some recent struggles.

The Sabres host the Flyers on Wednesday night in the teams' first meeting since last season's memorable playoff battle.

Buffalo (6-4-0), which outscored opponents 20-10 in winning five of its first six, dropped to 1-3-0 over its last four games with Saturday's 3-2 loss to Florida.

"We have to wake up and do what it takes to play a system in this league," said Miller, who has a 3.04 goals-against average during his personal three-game skid. "You're not going to get away with making cute plays, you're not going to be able to carry the puck in ... you're not going to have that luxury. Too many mistakes, myself included. We're all accountable here."

The Sabres have been outscored 10-6 at even strength over their past four games.

"I said the other night it wasn't acceptable - how we acted and how we played. It's not acceptable," Ruff told the Sabres' official website.

"You can go five or six minutes and play really well. Then we've done some things that have kind of hurt ourselves and we get on our heels. I don't think we've been the team we were that started the year, and we're just trying to get back to that."

A chance to avenge last season's loss in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals could have Buffalo more motivated. The Sabres held a 3-2 advantage over the Flyers (6-4-1) before surrendering 10 goals in the last two games and losing the series.

While Buffalo continues to falter, Philadelphia is coming off a 5-1 win over Carolina on Saturday behind a goal and three assists from [Claude Giroux](#) and a pair of goals from [Jaromir Jagr](#).

The Flyers also got considerably better goaltending. Bryzgalov made 24 saves against the Hurricanes, looking more like the goalie who started 3-0-0 with a 1.67 GAA than the one who was 0-4-1 with a 4.62 GAA over his next five games.

"Sometimes, you just need to turn the switch on in your head and everything's changed," Bryzgalov said. "You have to fix your head, turn the switch on and go on."



With five goals and two assists over his last four games Jagr certainly appears to have found his form after going seven games without a goal upon returning to the NHL.

It's Giroux, though, who may draw the bulk of the Sabres' attention. The former first-round pick had a series-high nine points - eight assists - against Buffalo in the postseason.

Three of those assists came on the power play, which right now could use some work. After converting 11 of 40 (27.5 percent) chances through eight games, the Flyers are 1 for 14 over their last three.

"We're always working on it; we've worked on it for every pre-game skate," coach Peter Laviolette said. "I think you look at what you're doing and look at what you're generating and you hope to be opportunistic with the puck going in the net."

They'll have to make do in Buffalo without one of their most significant offensive weapons. [Danny Briere](#), who has five power-play points this season and scored six goals against the Sabres in the playoffs, will miss his second straight game Tuesday with an upper-body injury.

That's good news for Miller, who posted two shutouts in the playoffs versus Philadelphia but gave up a combined 20 goals in the other five games.

Bryzgalov, meanwhile, went 0-3-0 with a 4.23 GAA during his last three meetings with Buffalo while with Phoenix.

Sabres left wing [Ville Leino](#), who signed a six-year, \$27 million contract in the offseason, faces his former team for the first time. He's recorded just one goal and one assist in 10 games.

## OLD FACES IN NEW PLACES

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

November 1, 2011

A lot has changed since we last saw the Philadelphia Flyers in Buffalo. Not only has the arena name since changed, but the Flyers' overtime villain in Game Six of the Eastern Conference Quarterfinals is now wearing blue and gold. But don't let [Ville Leino](#)'s stone-faced expression fool you: he doesn't want to see his old employers leave First Niagara Center with two points on Wednesday night.

"I think it's going to give me an extra boost," said Leino, who will be centering Buffalo's top line between [Thomas Vanek](#) and [Jason Pominville](#) for the first time this season. "You want to show against your old team that you're a good player, and you want to play good against the guys you know and the whole organization."

Leino's departure for Buffalo as a free agent was just a small part of Philadelphia's extreme makeover: offseason edition. The Flyers jettisoned veterans Mike Richards (LA) and Jeff Carter (Columbus) in a pair of trades, and acquired netminder Ilya Bryzgalov from Phoenix in an attempt to put an end to the team's goaltending carousel. Oh yeah, they also signed some free agent by the name of Jaromir Jagr. The name may ring a bell.

Has it helped? The Flyers come into Buffalo with a 6-4-1 record, having lost two of their last three games -- highlighted by a wacky 9-8 loss to Winnipeg last Thursday. Jagr is second in team scoring with 11 points in 11 games, including seven (5+2) in his last four. Bryzgalov is a very ordinary 4-4-1 with a 3.16 GAA and .880 save percentage, and made headlines with his candid post-game comments to the Philadelphia media after allowing four goals on 10 shots against Winnipeg.

But the common denominator to the Flyers' struggles as of late could simply be the absence of rugged blueliner Chris Pronger, who suffered a scary injury last week when he was struck in the right eye by the stick of Toronto's Mikhail Grabovski. Pronger dropped to the ice immediately and could clearly be heard screaming as he was rushed off the ice. There was no long-term damage done to the eye, but Pronger has yet to resume skating. He was placed on injured reserve earlier today.

Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff knows what a player like Pronger means to the Flyers entire lineup.

"He's a big piece for them. They were going good when he was in there, and they've struggled a little bit with him out. He's been a good player in this league and I think they miss him. I've seen the goals go up when he's out, and I've seen the goals go down when he's in.

Ruff has obviously done his homework on this. The Flyers are 4-2-1 with Pronger in the lineup this season, and 1-2-0 since he's been injured. They averaged 3.85 goals for in the first seven

games, while allowing just an average of 3. Those numbers jump dramatically in the last three games -- 4.67 GF/5 GA -- but they are skewed by the loss to Winnipeg.

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Much of today's practice was spent working on the power play, including [Derek Roy](#) manning the point on the first unit in [Marc-Andre Gragnani](#)'s usual spot.

“We used the same three up front. Derek was back there for a period of time last year so we'll see what he can do.”

With Gragnani being moved off the power play, Ruff wouldn't tip his hand as to whether this would see [Mike Weber](#) inserted into the Sabres lineup tomorrow for his first game action of the season.

## **Sabres look to simplify home life**

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

November 2, 2011

BUFFALO — Get back to basics, simplify the game. It's the easiest remedy for the Sabres' home woes. So far, they're just 1-3 inside the First Niagara Center, leaving their frustrated fans howling in disgust throughout the disjointed, sloppy efforts.

You think opponents dread coming into the FNC right now?

"We want to make a team coming in here saying, 'Uhh, we got to play there?' That would be the ideal situation for us," winger Cody McCormick said Tuesday after the Sabres prepared for tonight's home tilt against the Philadelphia Flyers. "We want to be a team nobody wants to play. At home you can really establish that."

Almost a month into the season, the Sabres, 6-4 overall, have only established an alarming penchant for collapsing late, having given up the go-ahead goal in the third period of all three home losses.

The Sabres also experienced a dreadful home start last season, dropping their first seven tilts (0-5-2) before finally winning Nov. 13. They finished a terrific 21-11-2, however.

Right now, the Sabres, 5-1 on the road — their 4-1 opening-night win in Finland technically counted as a home win — have clearly gotten away from the tighter style they showcased while playing six of the first seven games away.

"We're making plays that we didn't make in the first three or four games, we're trying plays," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. "I think that comes with success that you think, 'Ahh, we're pretty good, maybe we can be a little bit better, maybe we can try a little bit of this, a little bit of that.' And a little bit of that turns into something in your own goal."

Getting too fancy, trying to put on a show for the home fans has hurt the Sabres for years. They make an extra pass, maybe force a play they shouldn't. It often bites them.

"For some reason we try to do too much, hang onto puck maybe a little bit too long," Sabres captain Jason Pominville said. "We know we can't do it but we still do it. I think it has to change if we want to be a better team."

They need get back to "basic hockey," McCormick said.

"That's what works for us when we're on the road," he said. "We're getting in, we're getting chances, we're getting to the hard areas. I think that could really make us successful here."

Fresh off two European wins, the Sabres fell 4-3 to Carolina in the home opener Oct. 14, allowing a late

goal moments after they had fought back to tie it. After a 3-1 road trip, the Sabres began their current five-game homestand ominously.

The Sabres lost 4-3 to Tampa Bay last Tuesday, blowing an early 2-0 lead in a game they outplayed the Lightning. On Thursday, a 4-2 triumph over hapless Columbus, they allowed 43 shots, only getting bailed out by Jhonas Enroth's stellar goaltending.

Then they performed wretchedly in a 3-2 loss Saturday to Florida. Still, they had 2-1 lead with four minutes left, but imploded after Nathan Gerbe's tripping and unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.

"The consistency, our execution with passing — I looked at all the plays, some pucks bounced over sticks, some hit sticks, some we gave away — (it) made for a very disjointed attack," Ruff said about Saturday. "I talked with the team afterwards with just staying aggressive. I think when some of that happens your tendency is to pull back. We need stay aggressive."

The Sabres have earned their boos this season.

"You hear it," Sabres defenseman Robyn Regehr said. "Fans are entitled to their opinions. They come to watch us and cheer us on when things are going well. So they get frustrated when things aren't, so I think that's back to the lack of execution we've had here at home, spotty play. I think they're frustrated with that."

So are the Sabres, who know the FNC should be loathed around the NHL.

"We got to make it a tough place; we got to make it a special place," Pominville said. "It's got to be an intimidating place. Teams, they come in here, they know it's a tough barn, it's not going to be an easy night. I think the biggest thing, it starts with effort. If our effort's there, everything will fall into place."

Notes: The Sabres spent Tuesday practicing the power play, with center Derek Roy manning defenseman Marc-Andre Gragnani's spot at the point. Does that mean gritty defenseman Mike Weber, a healthy scratch all 10 games, could make his season debut against the rough-and-tumble Flyers? "Not necessarily," Ruff said. "We'll see about that." Ruff has said he could tailor the lineup to the opponent. ... Center Jochen Hecht (concussion) is out indefinitely, Ruff said. Hecht had been practicing, but suffered some headaches in the last few days.

## **Pronger won't play for Philly tonight**

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

November 2, 2011

BUFFALO — The Philadelphia Flyers, who zapped the Sabres during an entertaining seven-game Eastern Conference quarterfinal last season, make their first visit this season tonight minus arguably their best player.

Hulking defenseman Chris Pronger hasn't played since a gruesome incident last Monday in which his right eye absorbed the follow-through of Mikhail Grabovski's shot.

Pronger, who left the ice screaming in pain, is on injured reserve and could possibly skate today. The Flyers are 1-2 without him, having allowed 15 goals, including a whopping nine in a one-goal loss to Winnipeg.

"They were going good when he was in there," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said Tuesday inside the First Niagara Center. "Maybe they're struggling a little bit with him out. He's a good player in this league, and I think they miss him. I've seen the goals go up when he's out. I see the goals go down when he's in."

The Flyers beat the Sabres in April despite limited action from Pronger, who had a broken right hand.

"We ended the year with a bitter taste in our mouth," Ruff said about the first-round loss.

Former Sabres star Daniel Briere (upper body) is also expected to sit tonight.

## **Roy at Point on Power Play, Gragnani Removed**

Joe Buscaglia

WGR 550

November 2, 2011

Buffalo, NY -- After running what Buffalo Sabres head coach Lindy Ruff called the hardest practice in three years, the team took Tuesday and devoted it to special teams.

In an unordinary switch from the usual on non-gamedays, the Sabres only dressed in white and blue for practice. The blue, signifying those on the power play, and the white being those on the penalty kill. All hands were on deck to try and improve the power play, with a notable addition to the first unit.

After being taken off the power play, Sabres forward Derek Roy was added in a different role than expected. He was at the point with Tyler Myers on the first power play unit. That's a change from the last point pair on the first unit, which was Christian Ehrhoff and Marc-Andre Gragnani. The forwards on the top unit remain unchanged, with Thomas Vanek, Jason Pominville and Brad Boyes heading up that unit.

After practice, Ruff talked about the move.

"We used the same three up front and trying Derek," he said. "He was there for a period of time last year and we'll see what he can do."

Since the previous season was the last time Roy had been used at the point, how long might it take for him to feel comfortable along the blue line? Roy says it's like riding a bike,

"One practice to tune me up, and then I'm ready to go," he remarked. "I'm ready to contribute offensively and to make plays and to score goals. Being back there is one of the tools I bring to this team and I'm gonna work as hard as I can at it"

Including the second unit, Marc-Andre Gragnani has been removed from the power play completely. The second group included Ehrhoff and Jordan Leopold at the point, with Luke Adam, Ville Leino and Drew Stafford as the forwards.

Gragnani hasn't been pleased with his performance on special teams this season.

"Okay. Nothing great. Nothing exceptional," he lamented. "I think I need to shoot more. Maybe I'm too predictable out there for the opponents. For the other team I'm just passing all the time and never shooting. I think that's my biggest -- the biggest thing I need to work on."

Gragnani added he didn't know he was off of the power play until the team got on the ice for practice Tuesday morning. When asked if taking Gragnani off the power play signified Mike Weber would get in the lineup, Ruff was tight-lipped.

"Not necessarily. We'll see about that."

On the topic of Jochen Hecht, there's no new update from Ruff about the forward. The head coach simply said they're going to wait for him to feel better before they get him back on the ice.

The Sabres are up against the Philadelphia Flyers Wednesday night at the First Niagara Center.



## **Gare Takes Stand Against Fighting**

Matt Spielman

Jamestown Post-Journal

November 2, 2011

Add Danny Gare to the list of National Hockey League connections that believe fighting should be eliminated from the game.

Speaking during a luncheon as part of a continuing education seminar at the Robert H. Jackson Center on Tuesday afternoon, the Buffalo Sabres legend who racked up 1,285 penalty minutes during his 14-year NHL career said he didn't really think brawls served a purpose in the sport any more.

"Today's game is much different, where there is one fighter in each game," Gare said during a conversation with Robert H. Jackson Center board of directors President Greg Peterson. "When I played you had to be scrappy and pugilistic. It was more about getting room."

Gare's comments come in the wake of an offseason during which three players who were considered "enforcers" were found dead within a span of four months. Derek Boogaard, who played for the New York Rangers last season, was found dead in his apartment on May 13. A month and a half after signing with the Winnipeg Jets, former Vancouver Canuck Rick Rypien was found dead in his Alberta home Aug. 15. Former NHL player Wade Belak was found dead in a Toronto hotel just more than two weeks later.

"The game is much quicker and much more skilled now. I would abolish fighting altogether," said Gare. "The game is too good for that right now. They want ballet on ice, not goons on ice and they are close to it, but they are hanging on to fighting and I don't understand it."

A couple of players with whom Gare played during the late 1970s and early '80s who rarely dropped the gloves were Sabres Hall of Famers Gilbert Perreault, Rick Martin and Rene Robert - The French Connection.

Gare recalled Wayne Gretzky saying that Perreault was one player who could "dazzle people with his skating more with the puck than without it."

When Gare came into the league he was a little in awe of playing beside Perreault and Martin. Gare's father mentored his son growing up and when the 19-year-old Gare went away to Buffalo for his rookie season, his father told him to get some advice from Perreault about deking with the puck. So after practice one day, Gare finally worked up enough courage to ask Perreault for some help with his deking to which the Quebec-born Perreault responded in his French accent "I don't know how I do dem Danny, I just do dem."

One of the things Gare remembered most about Martin was how much No. 7 valued his tools - in this case his hockey stick. One day during a trip to Montreal, Martin took Gare to a factory about an hour away in Victoriaville to see the actual manufacturing of their sticks and monitor the

specific curves and cuts of the blades. Also Martin would arrive before or stay after practice and shoot hundreds of pucks with Gare if he so desired.

Gare was captain of the Sabres until 1981 when he was traded to the Detroit Red Wings. He said the day he was traded was not a fun day and just piled on to what was already not a fun year. Earlier that year his father had passed away. Gare became the Red Wings captain for the next four years, coincidentally the first four years that billionaire Mike Ilitch owned the team.

"I felt that I had a big part in helping get that team going in the right direction," Gare said.

Gare then joined the Gretzky, Mark Messier, Paul Coffey and others on the Edmonton Oilers for the 1986-87 season, but was forced to retire after just 18 games due to a back injury. Under today's NHL rules, Gare would have gotten his name on the Stanley Cup that season and he would have been included in all of the championship festivities.

"I just didn't feel like I earned it," Gare said. "The guys all wanted me in the pictures and wanted to give me a ring, but I couldn't do it."

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Gare will be joining Kevin Sylvester in the broadcast booth for the first time this season Saturday when the Sabres travel to Ottawa to play the Senators. Gare and Sylvester will do 23 games in place of Rick Jeanneret and Harry Neale.

## **Former Otter Boyes turns into ironman**

Victor Fernandes

Erie Times-News

November 2, 2011

Brad Boyes vividly recalls the last time he wasn't healthy enough to play hockey.

The Erie Otters were on their way to the franchise's only OHL championship when they lost their leader to mononucleosis in November 2001. The frustration from missing two months felt worse.

"I wanted to play in every game," Boyes recalled during a visit to Tullio Arena this past week.

Nothing has changed in the past decade, even while he traveled a circuitous path to playing in more than 500 straight NHL games, starting with a single game as a San Jose Sharks prospect in the 2003-04 season. He has played for four different teams on the way to a milestone that only 19 other players have reached in NHL history.

"I'm not surprised," Sherry Bassin, Otters managing partner and general manager, said of the challenges Boyes -- the most revered Otter ever -- has met in his seven-year NHL career.

"Special players are special because they're special people. I always expect special things from him because he's special."

Bassin pointed to Boyes' strong case for NHL rookie of the year in 2005-06, when he had 26 goals, including eight power-play goals and three game-winners, and 69 points in 82 games with the Boston Bruins.

From 2007-09 with the St. Louis Blues, he produced the two best offensive seasons of his career: 43 goals and 65 points in 82 games in 2007-08 and 33 goals and 72 points in 82 games in 2008-09. The 43 goals ranked among the top six in the league. He ranked among the top 20 in goals the next season.

Boyes, 29, has struggled since then. He had 31 goals and 97 points in 165 games the past two years. The Buffalo Sabres forward scored his first goal of this season during his milestone game Oct. 25. He has two goals and six points in 10 games heading into game No. 504 tonight against the Philadelphia Flyers.

"The first one was nice," said Boyes, who was honored by the Otters for his impressive streak before their Oct. 26 game against the Niagara IceDogs. "I got back into motion. Things just happened."

Boyes needs a strong offensive showing this season. The Mississauga, Ontario, native is in the final year of a four-year, \$16 million contract he signed after his stellar 2007-08 season with the Blues.

"I'm (playing for) a very good team, a top team," he said. "I've got to put up numbers."

Boyes appreciates playing for a skilled club with a new owner, Terry Pegula, who spares no expense in attempting to put a winning team on the ice.

"He's the owner everybody wants," Boyes said. "He takes care of players."

Yet Bassin said Sabres officials should appreciate Boyes' value to the team now and in the future.

"He wasn't Ontario Hockey League player of the year two years in a row because of the way he spells his name," Bassin said. "Everywhere he's been, he's made a contribution. If the Buffalo Sabres understand what this guy is all about, he'll make a special contribution there."

## **Leino struggling to get adjusted in Buffalo**

Tim Panaccio

CSN Philly

November 1, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- This isn't how Ville Leino envisioned it would be after leaving Philadelphia ... but that's life in sports.

A month into the NHL season, the Buffalo Sabres' high-priced free agent has all of two points (one goal, one assist) as he preps to meet his former Flyer teammates on Wednesday at First Niagara Center.

After the Sabres lost for the third time this season at home, a 3-2 decision to Florida this week, coach Lindy Ruff moved Leino back to center from wing.

He had played seven games at center, didn't like it, requested a move to wing and got it, but now he's back in the middle.

Ruff wants his six-year, \$27 million forward between Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville against the Flyers.

"We got to get more goals, we got to create," Leino told the Olean Times Herald. "There can't be only one line scoring. You can't win games like that. We got good players, but we just got to find the right combination."

Leino, 28, played the right side on Danny Briere's line with Scott Hartnell for most of his two-years as a Flyer. He's a pretty creative player, but still, the center spot doesn't sit well with him.

"I know he wanted to go back to the wing for a little bit, but I think that's normal when you're struggling to get on the score sheet," Ruff said. "You think, 'Well, it'd be better if I went over there.' I think he'd be tickled pink to go over there right now and give that a try."

Leino says he's become too defensive-conscious at wing.

"A lot of the times when you wanted to go you were kind of thinking you're not supposed to go," Leino said. "You just want to play it safe and be on the defensive side. I think I played pretty solid defensively, but offense, that's actually my game."

Hard to think he's going to get comfortable there going up against his former buddies.

"It's going to be fun, kind of a new start," Leino said. "We'll try to make things work."

## **Leino looks to find groove vs. old mates**

Bob Matuszak

CSN Philly

November 1, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Former Flyers winger Ville Leino may have hit the wealth jackpot when he signed a big free-agent contract with Buffalo this summer, but early on his erratic play has been anything but prosperous for him and the Sabres, who host the Flyers Wednesday night.

Hopes were high when the 28-year-old signed a six-year, \$27 million deal with the Sabres on the opening day of NHL free agency. But four months after the ink dried, Leino's offensive production has yet to surface.

After scoring in Buffalo's first game of the season against Anaheim in his native Finland, Leino hasn't found the back of the net since, and has registered just a pair of points through the team's first 10 games.

Ordinary numbers from a player the Sabres expected extraordinary things from.

"There's a lot of things we can do better, and I can do better," Leino said following Monday's practice. "Obviously you're a little bit worried or whatever, and you're not feeling as comfortable as you want to. You just have to work hard every day and get back at it. Once you've got the confidence and got your game going, it's a whole different game."

Lacking depth in the middle, the Sabres envisioned Leino as a center as soon as they signed him, and he began the year in the pivot between wingers Brad Boyes and Tyler Ennis. The results were immediate, as Leino scored a first-period goal against the Ducks, and finished with what is still a season-high 16:59 of ice time.

"I think we have a lot of skill and a lot of good players," Leino said after the game. "It looks good so far."

But things began going south for Leino when the team finished its European trip and headed back east. When he went after a loose puck he'd be a step behind, and on the occasions he did reach the puck first, he'd quickly turn it over.

After a few games he was shifted to the wing and down to the fourth line before moving back up to the second line with center Derek Roy and right wing Drew Stafford.

His short tenure in Buffalo hit rock bottom in the Sabres' 3-2 loss to Florida on Saturday night when he was benched by coach Lindy Ruff for the majority of the game. He played 9 1/2 minutes, but just 5:07 over the final two periods.

The ice time was the second-lowest on the Sabres that night, trailing little-used tough-guy Cody McCormick's 7:02 TOI. Leino averaged more than 16 minutes last year with the Flyers.

"I tried to go down to three lines to get things going, and to that point he didn't have too much going on," Ruff said. "Starting Wednesday, we'll just start fresh again."

On Monday, in an attempt to jump-start Leino, Ruff slid him back to center, but between red-hot top wingers Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek. Pominville and Vanek have combined for 13 goals and 29 points.

"Ville's going to be a big part of this team," Pominville said. "He's a talented player offensively. Obviously he's had a little bit of a tough go, but hopefully by adding him with me and Thomas we'll be able to help him out and get him going because we need him to get some points on the board."

Leino agreed that the shift to the top line may be just the tonic he needs to shake out of his playmaking doldrums.

"They're really good players and they're playing well right now," he said. "They make a lot of plays and they are huge goal scorers. So those are the kind of players you want to be playing with."

Leino enjoyed plenty of success last year with the Flyers on a line with Danny Briere and Scott Hartnell. He finished with career highs in goals (19), assists (34), and points (53). His overtime tally in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals broke the Sabres' backs, and helped the Flyers get to a deciding Game 7 in which they dismantled the Sabres, 5-2. Leino finished with three goals in the series.

Leino's plight is similar to the Sabres as a group. After a lightning-quick start in which it won four of its first five, Buffalo has cooled considerably. The Sabres will enter Wednesday's meeting with the Flyers having lost three of their last four, with two of those losses coming at home.

"We weren't working as hard as we should, we weren't winning many battles, and we weren't fast enough," Leino said. "I don't know if we're thinking too much or whatever, but the work ethic wasn't there. It's tough to win games when you do that."

"I think that you can go five or six minutes and play really well, but we've done some things that have kind of shot ourselves and hurt ourselves," Ruff added following a grueling Monday morning practice. "I don't think we've been the team we were that started the year. What we've done at home isn't good enough. That might have been one of toughest practices in couple years. I said the other night it wasn't acceptable, and if you're going to play like that we'll practice even harder."

The game against the Flyers could work in two completely different ways for the 6-4-0 Sabres. A win could help them shrug-off the early season-struggles, but a loss could send them into a deeper funk. For Leino, he's thinking about the former rather than the latter for both himself and his teammates.

"It's going to be fun playing against the guys," Leino said about facing Briere the Flyers. "I'm a little bit nervous. I'm sure it's going to be a little bit different playing on the other side of the ice against them. Usually you want to show against your old team that you're a good player. It's going to give me a little extra boost."

## LEINO FACES RUFF ROAD

Frank Seravalli

Philadelphia Daily News

November 2, 2011

**BUFFALO** - Ville Leino and his agent waited and waited last June - even checking back in with Flyers general manager Paul Holmgren hours before the start of free agency at noon on July 1 - until they just could not wait anymore.

Leino had even decided to table contract extensions with the Flyers during last season in order to give the team the salary-cap flexibility to bring in high-priced acquisitions like Kris Versteeg. He didn't want to have to start over, in a new town, with a new coach, in a new system.

Leino wanted to stay in Philadelphia. And Holmgren wanted to keep him in a Flyers uniform - but not at the price of \$27 million.

So Leino ended up signing with Buffalo and is now knee-deep in the same exhausting process, this time under the iron fist of Sabres coach Lindy Ruff.

Under Ruff, who became the second-longest tenured coach in pro sports behind the San Antonio Spurs' Gregg Popovich on Monday when Cardinals manager Tony La Russa retired, Leino has already dangerously flirted with sitting out as a healthy scratch.

Tonight, Leino will face his former team - even if it now bears little semblance to the one he played for less than 6 months ago - for the first time since inking a 6-year, \$27 million deal.

"It's been a tough start to the season, to say the least," Leino told the *Daily News* yesterday. "For sure, things haven't exactly gone the way that I would have hoped. I have a lot of work to do to prove that I am a better player than what I have shown."

How bad has it been? Leino's only highlight so far was opening the season with the rest of his teammates in his native Finland, as part of the NHL Premiere. Leino is one of Finland's biggest names.

"It was definitely a unique way to start a season," Leino said. "It was pretty nice. I had a ton of friends and family there to watch me, who made their way down. Other than that, it's pretty much been a blur. It's been frustrating."

Leino, 28, spent much of Saturday's loss to Florida on the bench. He played a little more than 2 minutes, 30 seconds in each of the second and third periods. Leino's total ice time was 9:35, the third lowest on the team that game. Yet, he is the third highest-paid player on a traditionally small-market Buffalo team, which under new owner Terry Pegula, is suddenly spending as much as the Flyers.

Though his salary cap hit is just \$4.5 million, Leino will earn \$11 million this season, paying him more money than every forward in the league except Brad Richards and Steven Stamkos.



This season, Leino has seen time on the fourth line, the first line and everywhere in between - including the bench.

Leino has just one goal and one assist in 10 games. He has a total of five shots on goal, tying him with Matt Ellis for the least on the Sabres - and Ellis has played seven less games.

Really, it's no surprise. Leino has struggled to find himself in each of the three NHL markets he has played. In search of cap space in 2009 season, the Red Wings let him go for scrapheap defenseman Ole-Kristian Tollefsen after just a 55-game audition.

With the Flyers, Leino cracked Peter Laviolette's lineup just 13 times in his first 26 games with the team. He sat out the first four playoff games in 2010 as a healthy scratch before going on to tie an NHL record for points by a rookie in a single playoff season (21 points) as he led the Flyers to within two wins of a Stanley Cup parade.

We visited Leino at his house in April, learning what makes him tick. He is an interesting character, one who doesn't easily adapt to set standards and practices.

"I can't play in the simple way that others can," Leino said in April. "If I fail, I'll fail as myself and the player I've developed and the player I've always been - not the player that tried to please somebody.

"Before, I tried to do things that made coaches happy. That's the Finn in me. Because I don't want to [tick] anyone off or give a bad impression. But that's not what I am - I decided I wasn't going to change for anyone else."

Therein lies Leino's clash with Ruff, a rigid man who squeezes every last ounce of talent out of his players with a unified system. Nonconformists don't often last on Ruff's teams.

Soon, perhaps even tonight - when Leino skates on the first line for the first time all season with Jason Pominville and Tomas Vanek, who have already combined for 29 points - Ruff will find what makes Leino's silky-smooth game so unique.

Unfortunately for Leino, it's something that Laviolette had already figured out.

"I really liked it in Philly," Leino said, his voice trailing off. "We tried to make it work. Now, I'm going to keep working hard to turn this thing around."

## **Sabres will hardly recognize Flyers**

Frank Seravalli

Philadelphia Daily News

November 2, 2011

**BUFFALO** - Over the weekend, one Sabres player said that facing the Flyers tonight "might as well be like facing a Western Conference team" with all of their changes.

It seems like last spring's tension-filled, seven-game playoff circus, err series, with Buffalo was a decade ago instead of one that wrapped up on April 26.

Heck, tonight's Flyers lineup at the First Niagara Center will be a shell of the one they put on the ice less than a month ago on Opening Night. Decimated by injuries, the Flyers will skate without Danny Briere, Matt Read and Chris Pronger.

That means just seven of the Flyers' 18 players from last season's first-round matchup will be on the ice this time around.

"It's our turn right now, I guess," general manager Paul Holmgren said. "We're confident with the players we can put in the lineup. We think they'll do a good job for us."

To help replace Briere and Read, the Flyers recalled forwards Harry Zolnierczyk and Ben Holmstrom from Adirondack yesterday. Both players joined the team at practice before departing for Western New York.

Zolnierczyk said it was probably his "ridiculously high shooting percentage" that made him so attractive to the coaching staff. Two weeks ago, Zolnierczyk netted his first NHL goal on what remains his only shot in his only game.

Holmgren said it was a "tough conversation" with Zolnierczyk - one of eight players in team history to have a record 11 letters in his last name - when he told Zolnierczyk he was being sent back to the Phantoms the day after scoring a highlight-reel goal in his debut.

"He played well," Holmgren said. "You could even make the case that he deserved to be here [to begin the season]. He had a good camp. The coaches were always talking about him and the energy he brings. He's a tenacious player."

Holmstrom, a UMass-Lowell product, is expected to center Jody Shelley and Zac Rinaldo on the fourth line tonight. Andreas Nodl, who was a healthy scratch for the last three games, could play on the right side with Max Talbot and Zolnierczyk.

## **Pronger update**

To make room for Holmstrom and Zolnierczyk under the salary cap, the Flyers relegated defenseman Matt Walker and his \$1.7 million salary to Adirondack. To make room for those two players on the 23-man roster, Chris Pronger was formally placed on the injured reserve list.

But that doesn't mean he won't be back on the ice soon.

Pronger, who took a stick in the eye on Oct. 24 against Toronto, visited an eye specialist yesterday.

"I'm hoping that he can get on the ice by himself [today] to push it a little harder," Paul Holmgren said. "Hopefully by the end of the week, he'll be able to get on the ice with the team. But he's got to get back with the team before we can start worrying about [a return]."

According to Holmgren, the pupil in Pronger's right eye has been dilated almost continually since the accident to try to alleviate pressure behind the eye. Though he is slowly being weaned off the medication, it has caused blurriness in the eye, which has slowed down the process.

## **Scouting trip?**

Representatives from the Flyers were spotted in Washington at last night's Capitals-Anaheim Ducks game.

The Flyers' top pro scout, Al Hill, and director of player personnel, Dave Brown, were in attendance.

Paul Holmgren has swung a deal with Ducks GM Bob Murray in each of the last 3 years, most notably when he nabbed Chris Pronger in '09. The Flyers could be in the market for a depth defenseman.

## **Slap shots**

Danny Briere, who is nursing an upper-body ailment that is believed to be a rib injury, skated by himself yesterday. He flew with the team to Buffalo. Paul Holmgren said Briere is "possible" for tomorrow night's game against New Jersey . . . Matt Read, also dealing with an upper-body injury, is likely to miss both tonight and tomorrow night's games . . . The Flyers are 4-0-2 in their last six regular-season games at First Niagara Center.

## **Flyers call up two to replace Danny Briere and Matt Read**

Sam Carchidi

Philadelphia Inquirer

November 2, 2011

The Flyers made a handful of roster moves and gave an encouraging update on defenseman Chris Pronger's status Tuesday.

The moves were made because of injuries to forwards Danny Briere and Matt Read, each of whom will miss Wednesday's game in Buffalo. It will be the teams' first meeting since the Flyers won a grueling, opening-round playoff series in seven games last season.

As replacements for Briere and Read, the Flyers recalled Harry Zolnierczyk, who scored a goal against Ottawa in his first and only NHL game on Oct. 18, and Ben Holmstrom from the AHL Phantoms.

At Tuesday's practice in Voorhees, Holmstrom centered wingers Zolnierczyk and Zac Rinaldo on an Adirondack-like fourth line.

"Injuries are a part of the game. When someone goes down, someone has to assume those minutes and contribute," coach Peter Laviolette said after practice.

In addition, the Flyers sent defenseman Matt Walker (\$1.7 million cap hit) to the Phantoms. The Flyers have about \$392,000 in cap space.

Rookie Sean Couturier centered James van Riemsdyk and Jakub Voracek on the second line Tuesday, and the third line had Max Talbot between Wayne Simmonds and Andreas Nodl.

Only the sizzling first unit - Claude Giroux centering Scott Hartnell and Jaromir Jagr - remained intact.

Couturier, playing mostly on the third and fourth lines and being used as one of the team's top penalty killers, has two goals and two assists. He figures to get a lot more ice time Wednesday.

"He hasn't been utilized in that [offensive] role," general manager Paul Holmgren said, "so this will be a good opportunity to see what he can do at that end."

"I don't think we've tagged him as a defensive player, but we just said he's responsible defensively," Laviolette said. "His numbers in junior were very impressive, especially after . . . coming back from mono last year."

If moved to the No. 2 line, Couturier said he won't change the way he plays, that he would "just try to take care of details and do what I do best."

The new-look lineup will try to make up for a lack of firepower with youthful energy.

"It's a great opportunity for everyone," Talbot said. You've got young guys being called up. Everyone wants to prove themselves, and it gives the team a little boost at the same time."

Zolnierczyk, who had five goals in his 10 games with the Phantoms this season, said he tries to play "in people's faces" and that he attempted to impress the Flyers during camp because "you want to put yourself in that position to be the first guy back up."

As for Pronger, he continues to make progress from an injury to his right eye, and there is a chance he will skate on his own in Voorhees on Wednesday, Holmgren said. The earliest Pronger could skate with the team would be at Friday's practice, the GM added.

Pronger was injured on Oct. 24, and the Flyers said he would miss at least two weeks.

Holmgren said there is a chance Briere, believed to be sidelined by a rib problem, can play Thursday against New Jersey, but that Read will miss that game. Holmgren will only say that the players have upper-body injuries.

**Breakaways.** The Flyers and Penguins are upset with an NHL realignment proposal that would leave the rivals playing only a home-and-home series next season. Realignment could be announced at league meetings Dec. 2 and 3. . . . Wednesday's game will match struggling, marquee goalies: Ilya Bryzgalov (1-4, 4.22 GAA in last five games) and Buffalo's Ryan Miller (3.04 GAA in three straight losses). . . .In an attempt to get former Flyer Ville Leino (one goal) untracked, the Sabres have moved him to the top line with Thomas Vanek (eight goals, seven assists) and Jason Pominville (five goals, nine assists). . . . The Flyers are 3-1 on the road, while Buffalo is just 1-3 at home.