



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Saturday, November 19, 2011

Sabres at home on the road

Pominville's goal stands up, Enroth makes 34 saves in 1-0 triumph at Carolina

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 19, 2011

RALEIGH, N.C. — The Buffalo Sabres seem to be living in a crisis-of-the-day mode all month but they keep pushing forward in the standings, at least when they're on the road.

Friday night's 1-0 win over the skidding Carolina Hurricanes in the RBC Center was the latest example. It was an ugly game that garnered two points, and it makes no difference none were awarded for style.

Jason Pominville scored a power-play goal at 13:04 of the first period and Jhonas Enroth made it stand up for the final 47 minutes. Enroth (7-1) made 34 saves to post his first shutout of the season and second of his career.

For a team badgered by legitimate question marks focused on character, injuries and lack of scoring balance, the picture is surprisingly rosy.

The Sabres (12-7-0) have the most wins in the Eastern Conference and are one point behind Philadelphia for the top spot. They're 7-2-0 on the road, tied with Florida for the most wins and points away from their home rink in the NHL (and remember, one of Buffalo's "home" wins actually came in Helsinki, Finland).

Now the Sabres have to start doing something at home — where they will play five of their next six games and 10 of their next 12.

"We've been smarter. Just flat-out," said coach Lindy Ruff. "Break it down any way you want. We've been a lot smarter on the road."

The Sabres returned to Buffalo immediately after the game and will host the Phoenix Coyotes tonight at 7 in First Niagara Center. The Coyotes are 2-1 on a five-game road trip.

Carolina outshot the Sabres, 34-20 — including 26-10 over the final 40 minutes — but Enroth never really had to make a highlight-reel kind of save. It was a nice bounceback for Enroth, who was unhappy to give up five goals Wednesday against New Jersey in his first regulation loss in nearly a year.

"It's a good feeling, always special to get a shutout," Enroth said. "It was good to come back after a game like that. When you play like that, you always just want to get right back out there."

"Overall, I thought we did a pretty tidy job with the game," said Ruff. "We stayed away from the two-on-ones, the breakaways, the high percentage."

The Hurricanes (6-11-3) were shut out for the second straight game, increasing the heat on embattled coach Paul Maurice. They're 14th in the East and the building was half-empty, no matter what the silly crowd count of 15,072 might say.

The Canes have gone 135 minutes, 24 seconds without a goal and Friday's defeat was the franchise's first 1-0 loss at home since Dec. 21, 1984 against the New York Islanders — when it was still based in Hartford.

Perhaps out of desperation, Maurice started veteran backup Brian Boucher in goal at home for the first time this year over veteran Cam Ward. Boucher was only beaten by the Pominville goal, which came with Jussi Jokinen in the box for slashing.

After a faceoff to Boucher's left, the puck went into the corner and Brad Boyes outworked the Carolina defense to gain control. He got the puck to Thomas Vanek at Boucher's right and Vanek's pass to the goalmouth was flipped home by Pominville on the second try, beating Boucher to the top corner.

"That was a good job off the draw," Pominville said. "We've talked about it for a while. We want to have good jumps and try to get on them if we do lose the draw. It was a good example of being hard [on the puck] and getting in there."

"Entries are big on power plays but retrievals are even bigger," Ruff said. "If you don't get the puck back, it's going to cost you extra time. The jump we got on that faceoff, the effort by Brad, led to that goal."

At the other end, Enroth simply stayed tough in his crease, controlled rebounds and forced numerous faceoffs when the Hurricanes were outworking the Sabres in their own zone.

"That's a big part of goaltending too," he said. "You have to be aware how long guys have been out there for. Sometimes you have to just freeze the puck and get a whistle."

It's heady thinking. The kind the Sabres need to show more of at home, beginning tonight.

"We're happy about the way we play on the road but we've got to bring it home," Pominville said. "This is a tough back-to-back game with the travel and we have to regroup, get some rest and be ready to compete."

Shanahan warns Myers about hits to head

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 19, 2011

RALEIGH, N.C. — Tyler Myers escaped the arm of the NHL's law with a warning from league discipline czar Brendan Shanahan: Watch the head shots, big guy.

Myers was not suspended for hitting New Jersey's Dainius Zubrus during the third period of Wednesday's game in First Niagara Center and took his usual spot on the Buffalo blueline Friday in the RBC Center. Before the Sabres left for Carolina on Thursday, however, Myers got a phone call from Shanahan about the hit.

"I was pretty relieved. You never want to get suspended," Myers said here Friday. "[Shanahan] just wanted to discuss what my thoughts were on it. I can really tell he's trying to inform all the players, tell them what is a legal hit, what's an illegal hit. It's a thin line, pretty tough, but it was a good conversation.

"There was contact with the head but there was contact with the body too. If it had been a more lateral hit and just contact to the head, then there would have been a hearing and most likely a suspension. One of the things we discussed is that I drove up rather than across, [and that] is a reason I wasn't punished."

The 6-foot-8 Myers knows he has to be careful with the renewed emphasis on head shots in the NHL. That's quite a dilemma for him, given the way he can tower over opposing forwards.

"That's how it's been throughout my whole life," he said. "It's tough some times. My shoulder is going to be at the level of the head a lot when I engage players. It's tough but you have to try to manage it."

The Sabres did not think Myers would be suspended, and such a ruling would have been a setback after his strong play in Wednesday's 5-3 loss to New Jersey. In his first game back after getting scratched Monday in Montreal, Myers scored his first two goals of the season and was a strong physical presence.

"We've obviously challenged him to be a little more physical and I thought he was physical," coach Lindy Ruff said. "I thought he played a great game, the way he needs to play as a big man. It will be though. There are situations the way his body his, his elbows are head-high and that makes it tougher on a big man."

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Defenseman T.J. Brennan joined the Sabres from Rochester but instead of making his NHL debut, he served as a healthy scratch. Ruff explained Brennan was here on an emergency basis in case someone was injured or became ill on game day, and he would have replaced Myers had a suspension been handed down.

With Mike Weber, Cody McCormick, Jochen Hecht and Tyler Ennis all out of the lineup, the Sabres have no extra players on hand in case of another injury.

Hecht skated with the team again Friday morning and Ruff upgraded him into the day-to-day category on his road back from a concussion. He has not played in a game this year. Ennis is still skating in a red (non-contact) jersey and Ruff joked he is in the "every-other-day" category.

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The second episode of "The Game 365" featuring the Sabres' trip to Europe debuts Monday at 10:30 p.m. on MSG Plus.

Hosted by former Yankees catcher Fran Healy, part two features Ruff's speech to his team the night before the season opener in Helsinki against Anaheim and his ceremony to announce Jason Pominville as team captain.

It also includes more interviews with owner Terry Pegula and his family, as well as Helsinki-area natives Ville Leino and assistant coach Teppo Numminen.

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The Sabres second "Power Play Luncheon" of the season has been moved from Dec. 2 to Jan. 13 and will feature NBC/VERSUS play-by-play announcer Mike "Doc" Emrick as the guest speaker. It begins at noon in the 100 Level Harbour Club at First Niagara Center.

Emrick, who has been calling NHL games for 32 years, won the 2008 Foster Hewitt Award from the Hockey Hall of Fame for contributions to broadcasting.

The dress code is business casual. Free parking will be available in the ramp adjacent the building. If refunds are requested because of change in date, contact Lauren Yurko at 855-4468.

Sabres blank struggling Hurricanes 1-0

Kurt Dusterberg

NHL.com

November 18, 2011

RALEIGH -- [Jhonas Enroth](#) bounced back from the worst performance of his career in a big way.

Two nights after allowing five goals on 19 shots before being lifted in a loss to New Jersey, Buffalo's rookie goaltender stopped all 34 shots he faced as the Sabres blanked the struggling [Carolina Hurricanes](#) 1-0 on Friday night.

"It was good to come back after a game like that," Enroth said. "When you play like that, you just want to get out there again. I'm glad I got the start right after that game."

[Jason Pominville](#)'s power-play goal in the first period stood up as the game-winner. Combined with heroics of Enroth, who improved to 7-1-0 this season, the Sabres (12-7-0) moved into first place in the Northeast Division with 24 points.

"Jhonas did a nice job," Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff said. "He had a couple of scramble saves, but again, I think people got back, and we had people get sticks on the shots. We had a couple guys lay down and block shots, which showed the desperation they had."

The Sabres finished with 21 blocked shots, including five by [Tyler Myers](#).

The loss deepened the gloom in Carolina. The 'Canes (6-11-3) were shut out for the second time in three days, though they played better than they did in Wednesday's 4-0 loss at Montreal. General manager Jim Rutherford has openly admitted he is consulting within the organization to determine a plan for the rest of the season. Coach Paul Maurice is in the final year of his contract and is clearly on the hot seat with the team in a 3-9-2 skid.

"The zero on our side tonight and the zero on our side in Montreal are two completely different animals," said Maurice, whose team held a 76-43 advantage in shot attempts. "Putting the puck past the goalie wasn't there tonight, but everything else was. That was the best all-around team game we've played this year I think."

The Sabres took advantage of their first power play to score the game's only goal. [Thomas Vanek](#)'s centering pass from behind the net rattled off the skates of Carolina defenseman [Tim Gleason](#) before Pominville poked a rebound past [Brian Boucher](#) at 13:04. Pominville extended his points streak to six games, during which he has nine points. Vanek and [Brad Boyes](#) earned the assists.

"It wasn't a pretty win, but we played good enough with the lead to get it done," said Pominville. "We're just happy to get out of here with the two points."

Boucher was sharp in his fourth start of the season. He spelled [Cam Ward](#), who has a 1-6-0 mark in his last seven starts. Boucher entered the game with a lifetime 2.14 goals against average in seven games against the Sabres.

"There is no pity part and no one is going to feel bad for the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) around the league," Boucher said, reflecting on the team's struggles. "I know guys are frustrated we didn't score, but I'm telling you that was pretty solid for us. That's something to take to the rink tomorrow and to the game on Sunday."

Carolina's best chance to crack the scoresheet came on a power play in the second period. The Hurricanes had a lot of offensive zone time and managed three shots with [Derek Roy](#) off for hooking. But neither team could muster many chances for the remainder of the second period. In fact, Buffalo didn't take its first shot until 7:10 remained in the period and wound up with four.

The third-ranked Buffalo penalty kill was only tested twice by Carolina. Despite having the most advantages in the league, the Hurricanes rank 29th with the extra man.

For Maurice, the job watch continues. He was fired once before in Carolina by Rutherford in 2003-04 after an 8-12-10 start. Known for his quick wit and patience, Maurice showed some poise at the end of his postgame remarks when he was asked if it was difficult to watch the Hurricanes fail to bury any rebound chances.

"In my situation," he began, as a wide smile crossed his face, "I don't think I can fully describe the frustration of not seeing one of those second pucks go in."

Enroth stops 34, Sabres blank Hurricanes 1-0

Associated Press

November 18, 2011

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—Buffalo backup [Jhonas Enroth](#) got a chance to make up for a bad game right away.

With [Ryan Miller](#) out following a concussion, Enroth got the start even after he gave up five goals two days earlier.

He atoned and then some—making 34 saves for his first shutout of the season, helping the Sabres beat the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) 1-0 Friday night.

“After a game when you play like that, you just want to get out there again,” Enroth, said. “I’m happy I got the start right after that game.”

[Jason Pominville](#) scored for Buffalo, which won its seventh road game.

“We’ve been a pretty good road team,” Pominville said. “We’re happy with the way we play on the road.”

Carolina has lost seven of its last eight games to sink to the bottom of the Southeast Division standings and prompt speculation about the job security of coach Paul Maurice.

The Hurricanes have only scored nine goals in their last seven losses and have been shut out in back-to-back games after losing 4-0 in Montreal on Wednesday.

“The zero on our side tonight and the zero on our side against Montreal are two completely different animals,” Maurice said. “We had maybe some chances in Montreal but gave up 10 to get each one we got.”

Back-up goalie [Brian Boucher](#) made 19 saves for the Hurricanes while starting in place of [Cam Ward](#). Boucher has yet to post a win this season.

Pominville extended his point streak to six games midway through the first period. With the Sabres on the power play, Pominville finished a scramble in front of Boucher by smacking a rebound into the top-right corner of the net.

Pominville has three goals and five assists during his streak.

[Thomas Vanek](#) got an assist on the play for his eighth point (three goals, five assists) in his last six games. Vanek and Pominville have combined on a goal 19 times this season.

Despite the team’s struggles, Carolina general manager Jim Rutherford said Thursday he had no plans to make any major changes.

Even with the high shot attempts, Carolina had few golden scoring chances, although Enroth made a nice glove stop on [Eric Staal's](#) wrist shot early in the third period.

“I think Ehrhoff tipped that shot,” Enroth said. “I was a little lucky on that save. That was a pretty good save, actually.”

The Sabres, who have the third-best penalty kill in the league, did have to kill a late Carolina power play.

It was only the third time this season the Hurricanes had allowed fewer than two goals.

“That was the best all-around team game that we’ve played this year,” Maurice said. “It’s a game we hope we can replicate. They did exactly what I’d asked them to do.”

Notes: Buffalo hosts Phoenix on Saturday night. The Sabres lead the NHL with 21 back-to-back games this season. ... Carolina's [Anthony Stewart](#) played after being scratched the previous three games. ... Miller was hurt Nov. 12 against Boston.

NO BUMPS ON TOBACCO ROAD

Sabres now own league-best 7-2-0 road record

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

November 18, 2011

RALEIGH, NC – Jhonas Enroth made 34 saves and Jason Pominville scored the game's only goal at 13:04 of the first period, as the Buffalo Sabres defeated the Carolina Hurricanes 1-0 before a crowd of 15,072 at the RBC Center.

The win improved Buffalo to 12-7-0 overall, and a league-best 7-2 on the road. For all the concern over the team's early struggles at First Niagara Center, the Sabres have been able get the job done all season on the road.

Lindy Ruff says it comes down to one simple thing.

"We've been smarter, just flat out," explained Ruff. "You can break it down any way you want, we've been a lot smarter on the road than we have at home. We've gotta take that game into our building and play that way."

You can break it down any way you want, we've been a lot smarter on the road than we have at home. We've gotta take that game into our building and play that way. - Lindy Ruff

The shutout was the second of Enroth's career – with both resulting in 1-0 victories. Even though Enroth faced 34 shots, the Sabres defense made his life easy all night by clearing rebounds quickly and avoiding the second chance scoring opportunities.

"We had people back, and got some sticks on opportunities," said Ruff. "And we had some guys lay down to block shots, which showed the desperation in the game."

Enroth was forced to make a few big saves late in the game, including a highlight reel glove save on a slapshot from Jamie McBain with time winding down in the third.

The quiet netminder has been a big part of the team's road success, with four of his seven wins coming away from home. Enroth has a unique style of play, one that Pominville has grown to appreciate.

"He's been on a roll, playing real well for us," says Pominville. "He's not the typical goalie that you see -- not the butterfly goalie that every team basically has. He gets the job done and finds a way to win. We're excited for him and the way he's been playing."

The Sabres return home to face the Phoenix Coyotes at First Niagara Center on Saturday at 7 p.m.

NOTES: Pominville and Thomas Vanek both extended their point streaks to six games ... The duo have also combined on a league-high 19 goals this season ... The Sabres are now 4-1-0 in the first game of back-to-back sets ... Buffalo improved to a perfect 9-0-0 when leading after two periods ... Tyler Myers topped the Sabres with five blocked shots and 23:17 TOI ... Thomas Vanek took a team-high four of Buffalo's 20 shots.

6:50- Good evening from the RBC Center in Raleigh, NC!

6:53- It was a beautiful 50 degree sunny day here in NC. Sabres fans are everywhere!

6:54- Starting lineups coming soon...

7:01- BUF starters: Vanek-Roy-Pominville ... Myers/Regehr ... Enroth

7:02- BUF scratches: Miller, McCormick, Brennan

7:04- CAR starters: Sutter/Dwyer/Ponikarovsky ... Allen/Gleason ... Boucher

7:05- Pitkanen and Joslin scratched for Carolina

7:08- Game on!

7:11- Anthony Stewart harmlessly flips a wrist at Enroth for the night's first shot.

7:15- Tonight's D pairings: 17/44, 24/57, 10/3

7:16- Sabres are 7-3-0 when scoring first -- Canes are 4-4-2

7:17- Leino with slick spin move feeds Boyes in front but he's turned away

7:19- 12:11 left in the 1st. Carolina holds a 4-3 edge in shots.

7:22- Tropp to the box for high sticking. Looked like the Carolina player was hit by his own teammate.

7:25- Fans in front of me chanting "We need Tebow." Yep, this is a great hockey crowd.

7:27- In-game contest gives a fan 30 mins to eat a fully loaded cheeseburger with 8 patties and side of fries. Kinda wish I could see him do it. What does he get for winning? Heartburn and 2 tickets to a future Canes game.

7:28- Sabres on the PP - Jokinen off for Slashing

7:30- Ehrhoff with a bomb from the point. Boucher sees it all the way

7:31- GOAL!

7:32- BUF 1-0: Pominville goes 9-iron from in tight to give the Sabres the lead. (13:04)

7:34- Vanek and Boyes with the assists on Pommer's PP tally.

7:35- In case you're wondering, the guy eating the big cheeseburger is about a third done with 21 mins to go.

7:40- Courtesy of Sabres PR guru @NickelCityIan - Vanek and Pominville have combined on a league-high 19 goals.

7:40- Great play by Gerbe to get back and deny Boychuk a scoring chance

7:41- 2:20 left in the 1st

7:42- Enroth stops Ruutu's snap shot from the circle

7:43- Gragnani taps the puck away from Stewart on what would have been a clear shot

7:43- 38.9 left in the 1st

7:45- End of 1: Sabres lead 1-0, and hold a 10-8 shot advantage.

7:49- Sabres lead 14-10 in faceoffs -- Gaustad (4-1), Roy (5-3)

7:53- Sabres are 5-1 when leading after 1 ... Carolina is 0-6-0 when trailing after 1

7:59- Pominville's goal extends his point streak to 6 games (3+5) Vanek's assist puts him on a 4-game streak (1+4).

8:02- Game on!

8:05- Correction: Vanek is on a 6-gm point streak (3+5)

8:06- Tropp with a big shot block in the slot, as Enroth was down and out behind him

8:08- Derek Roy called for hooking at the 4:39 mark. Canes to the PP.

8:10- Jokinen's one-time attempt turns into a floater that Enroth has no trouble with.

8:12- Sabres being outshot 6-0 with 12:00 left in period

8:20- There's shot #1 of the period - by Corey Tropp

8:21- Myers rips one just wide

8:23- Matt Ellis blast is turned away by Boucher

8:24- Nice waffle stop by Enroth!

8:27- 3:06 left in a fast-moving 2nd period. Canes leading in shots 9-3

8:31- Vanek digs the puck out of the corner and almost banks one off Boucher's skate from behind the icing line.

8:31- 1:09 remaining in period #2

8:34- Enroth dives out of the crease to smother the loose puck after a pair of good saves

8:35- End of 2nd: Sabres still lead 1-0

8:35- McBain draws the ire of the Sabres for his shot as the buzzer sounds.

8:52- Game on!

8:53- Enroth with a save early on Ruutu

8:58- Sabres being outshot 24-15 with 17:11 left in the 3rd

9:04- Even with 26 shots, the Canes have had very few second chance attempts tonight. Defense doing a good job of clearing out rebounds.

9:08- Good feed and patience by Leino from behind the net but Boyes can't convert

9:09- Vanek steps into the slot and fires the rebound - right at Boucher

9:10- TV timeout with 9:45 left

9:17- Another 4 minutes flies by with not much to report. 5:45 left

9:20- The big man is back! Myers drills Dwyer into the boards

9:21- Enroth kicks out the right pad to stop Staal, then the puck ends up under a pile in front

9:22- WOW! Enroth flashes the leather on McBain's point bomb.

9:24- Boyes misses on the partial break, and Stafford lifts the rebound over the net

9:24- 1:38 left

9:26- Larose called for holding. Sabres on the PP

9:28- Wraparound attempt by Harrison is stopped by Enroth

9:28- 20.8 seconds left

9:30- FINAL SCORE: BUFFALO 1-- CAROLINA 0

Enroth, Sabres Blank 'Canes 1-0

Dan Cave

WGR 550

November 18, 2011

Only two days after allowing five goals en route to his first regulation loss of the season, Jhonas Enroth responded with a 34-save shutout as the Sabres edged the Hurricanes on Friday 1-0. Jason Pominville scored the lone Buffalo goal.

Pominville's goal came 13:04 into the opening period, when he roofed a shot past Brian Boucher to give Buffalo the 1-0 lead. Pominville, planted in front of the Carolina crease, was able to scoop a loose puck into the net as his point streak reached six straight games.

The Hurricanes outshot and outplayed the Sabres in the second period, but failed to capitalize thanks to several quality stops by Enroth, and one from Corey Tropp who bailed out his netminder on a wide-open net. Enroth stopped 12 shots in the second frame and another 14 in the final period, standing tall in the face of constant pressure by the Hurricanes, en route to his second career shutout, with the previous coming last March in a 1-0 win over the Rangers.

With the victory, Buffalo (24 pts.) pulls back into sole possession of first place in the Northeast Division. The team will get right back at it on Saturday night, playing host to the Phoenix Coyotes at First Niagara Center. Brian Koziol will have the pregame at 6:00 p.m., and the play by play will follow on the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network and WGR SportsRadio 550.

Buffalo Sabres Depth Analysis, Fall 2011

Tony Musso

Hockey's Future

November 18, 2011

The [Buffalo Sabres](#), historically known to produce smaller, hard-skating forwards, have improved their toughness and size over the past couple years and are bursting at the seams in Rochester ([AHL](#)) with numerous players who are close to NHL-Ready.

The organization is much better off in terms of the depth of their prospects then they were at this time last season and they seem to have found a good balance between size, skill, and toughness.

Left Wing

Three of Buffalo's left wing prospects are currently playing in Rochester with [Marcus Foligno](#) headlining the list. Foligno is the ideal NHL prospect for Buffalo. He was considered extremely raw and a bit immature in his draft year but his overall game improved each year. He has so far played well in his first year of [AHL](#) hockey, managing five goals in 13 games.

[Jacob Lagace](#) is looking to get back on track after a tough 2010-11 season that saw him spend part of the season in the [ECHL](#). Lagace has started the season well, but the Sabres brass want to see a more consistent effort from him and a little better play in his own end. He has certainly shown a better motor to start this season.

The surprise Amerks left winger on this list is 20-year-old [Riley Boychuk](#). At the start of the season it was thought that he would play his overage year with Portland of the [WHL](#) but he showed enough in Amerks camp to make the opening day roster. He possesses great size and a willingness to play in the dirty areas along the wall which certainly helped his cause this season.

The only left winger not playing pro hockey right now is [Cedrick Henley](#) of Val d'Or in the [QMJHL](#). Henley will try to stay healthy for the first time in his junior career as he has been plagued by wrist injuries throughout. He has started the year off well with Val d'Or, posting 16 points in his first 21 games while playing with more of the edge befitting a player of his size.

Center

The Sabres have some of the best depth in years at the pivot, starting with top center prospect top NHL rookie, [Luke Adam](#). The big center has burst onto the scene this year, getting the opportunity to play with Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville right from the opening puck drop. He has made the most of his opportunities, posting five goals and 13 points in the first 17 games of the season. Adam will be centering one of the Sabres top two lines for many years to come.

The Sabres signed former San Jose fifth rounder, Phil Varone this offseason and he has played well in Rochester to date. So far he has been solid offensively and his speed has eased the blow of losing [Paul Byron](#) to Calgary in the Robyn Regher trade.

[Kevin Sundher](#) has established himself as one of the top centers in the [WHL](#) thus far with 36 points in 20 games.

Also representing the Sabres in the [WHL](#) right now is 2011 fourth rounder [Colin Jacobs](#). He has been injured since the Sabres prospect camp over the summer. He has an undisclosed upper [body](#) injury and is expected back in early December.

The Sabres have two other center's playing in the [OHL](#) in Dan Catenacci and [Steven Shipley](#). Catenacci has progressed well since being drafted in the third round by the Sabres in the 2011 draft. He was one of the standout players at rookie camp this summer.

Shipley is looking to improve on what was ultimately a developmental regression year last season with the Ice Dogs. He was unable to match his previous seasons point totals and his inconsistency was maddening. This season he will get ample opportunity to show what he can do playing on a talent laden Niagara team that should make a deep Memorial cup run.

The lone collegiate center in the Sabres organization is Wisconsin freshman [Brad Navin](#). Navin was the Sabres seventh rounder in 2011 out of Waupaca high school in Wisconsin. He has already played nine games for the Badgers as a freshman and he has the [luxury](#) of time as he can mature at his own pace in the collegiate system.

Right Wing

Buffalo has a well stocked group of talented right wingers, beginning with Amerks leading scorer [Zack Kassian](#). He has continued to display all the traits that made him the Sabres first round pick in 2009 as he is extremely strong and tough to play against along the wall in the offensive zone. He will likely play out the season in Rochester to gain some pro experience and should be a roster lock in Buffalo for 2012-13.

Former Michigan State standout [Corey Tropp](#) is another Amerk who is off to a great start this season. He was one of the final cuts for the Sabres out of camp this year thanks to his great two-way game and non-stop motor. Tropp is a great forchecker with a nose for the net as evidenced by his four goals in ten games this season. He has also played well in a recent four game stint with Buffalo filling in for the suspended [Patrick Kaleta](#) with a goal and an assist.

The other three Amerks right wingers are undrafted free agent signees [Shawn Szydlowski](#) and Jonathan Parker, as well as former Sabres seventh round pick [Maxime Legault](#). Szydlowski is a physical winger with a scoring touch who will likely need a few years of seasoning in the [AHL](#) before he has a shot in Buffalo.

Parker is a scoring winger who had a great rookie camp that earned him an entry-level deal from the Sabres. Despite his diminutive size, Parker is a fearless competitor with a great shot who skates very well.

Legault has had a tough time getting into games this season with all of the Amerks right wing depth. His relentlessness is admirable and he really lays it all on the ice whenever he is out there but he still hasn't done enough to be an AHL regular night in and night out.

The Sabres most highly skilled prospect, [Joel Armia](#), is also the only one that isn't currently playing in North. There are high expectations for the rangy winger as his reputation as a creative goal scorer has put pressure on him to deliver this season. Armia was off to a slow start this season but he has picked up steam of late. He should be one of [Finland](#)'s star players in international competitions this year, including the four nation's tournament and the World Junior Championships in January.

The Sabres have two right wing prospects playing collegiate hockey right now in senior [Justin Jokinen](#) at Minnesota State University and freshman [Christian Isackson](#) at the University at Minnesota. Jokinen is one of the leaders on a weak Minnesota State team and should see the best production of his college career with increased minutes in 2011-12.

Isackson enters Minnesota after one very good season in the [USHL](#) in which he scored 44 points in 58 games.

[Gregg Sutch](#) is the only right winger in the Sabres organization playing in the [OHL](#). His game is still very raw but his skill set being that of a physical high energy player will likely limit him to a fourth line role at the next level due to his lack of offensive skills.

Defense

The top of the defensive prospect list starts with current [Buffalo Sabres](#) rearguard, [Marc-Andre Gragnani](#). After a stellar playoff series against the Bruins last season and solid camp this September, Gragnani has earned a spot in Buffalo's top seven. It remains to be seen given the current defensive struggles of the team as a whole if he can remain in the lineup every night.

The list of AHL defensive prospects is extensive and features more than a few names that may be NHL ready. [Drew Schiestel](#) and [T.J. Brennan](#) headline that list as both have had a good deal of success at the AHL level. Despite an injury in the first game of the season, Schiestel has maintained his high level of play in his return to action. Brennan scored 15 goals and 39 points last year and will look to improve on those totals in 2011-12.

Rookie blueliner [Brayden McNabb](#) has been very good playing in all situations and has managed to score eight points in his first 15 games.

Fellow AHL rookie [Matt MacKenzie](#) was a surprise to make the Amerks considering he had one year of eligibility left in the WHL this year. His strong play at the Traverse City tournament, coupled with a solid

training camp, were enough to earn him an entry-level deal and a spot with the Amerks.

[Alex Biega](#) and [Nick Crawford](#) will try to build off of respectable rookie campaigns in 2010-11. Biega looked very good in Traverse City and was one of the final cuts in training camp. Crawford is poised to have a huge jump in production this year as he will be counted on to be one of the better two way defenseman on the team.

Former first round pick, [Dennis Persson](#) is the final AHL defenseman and thus far he has had a tough time cracking the line up with so much depth in Rochester.

Former first round pick [Mark Pysyk](#) is the lone representative from the WHL and he is the most complete defenseman playing junior hockey in the Sabres organization. Look for him to push for a spot on the Canadian world junior team in January.

Fellow 2010 draftee, [Jerome Gauthier-Leduc](#) has turned into the premier offensive defenseman in the [QMJHL](#).

[Alex Lepkowski](#) is a towering defensive defenseman in the [OHL](#). He was sidelined with an upper body injury to start the season but has since returned.

Buffalo has two collegiate defenseman in [Mark Adams](#) of [Providence College](#) and [Drew MacKenzie](#) at the University of Vermont. Adams is a big sophomore defenseman that is seeing increased ice time this year and MacKenzie is a senior that is essentially playing for an entry-level contract next season.

The Sabres also have one defensive prospect playing for their new [ECHL](#) affiliate, [Corey Fienhage](#). He was the odd man out of the crowded Rochester blue line and was assigned to Gwinnett at the start of the season. Fienhage is a physical defenseman who isn't afraid to drop the gloves.

Goaltending

Goaltending depth is seriously lacking in the Sabres system outside of current Sabres backup, [Jhonas Enroth](#). After filling in admirably for an ailing Ryan Miller at the end of last season, Enroth has picked up right where he left off.

The Sabres underachieving collegiate duo of [Connor Knapp](#) and [Bradley Eidsness](#), both seniors, haven't done anything to stand out on their respective teams. Knapp is still in a time share with Cody Reichard at Miami of Ohio, while Eidsness hasn't been able to overtake Aaron Dell at the University of North Dakota.

[Nathan Lieuwen](#) has been very good as an overage player with Kootenay in the WHL so far this season. Lieuwen played well in Traverse City and he could be in line for an entry-level deal with the Sabres.

Short-handed goal sinks Rochester Amerks

Kevin Oklobzija

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

November 19, 2011

Any time Binghamton native Jerry D'Amigo can play close to home, there's always just a bit more jump in his step.

Like Friday night, for instance, when D'Amigo and his Toronto Marlies teammates came to play in downtown Rochester.

"It's nice when family and friends can see me play," D'Amigo said. "It kind of makes you play better because you want to show them you've improved."

One game-winning goal later, D'Amigo gave his entourage quite a performance to remember — and the [Rochester Americans](#) a loss they won't soon forget.

He converted a pass from Greg Scott with just 2:28 remaining, breaking the 1-1 tie and moving the Marlies into a first-place tie with the Amerks in the American [Hockey](#) League's North Division at 19 points.

The tie will be broken today when the teams play again, this time in Toronto at 3 p.m.

"We have to get it back and cancel this out and save the weekend," said defenseman Joe Finley, who scored the Amerks goal 6:38 into the first [period](#).

The Amerks thought they were in great position to win the game as they headed to a [power](#) play with only 3:25 to play.

Instead, the Marlies penalty killers pressured the Amerks into a turnover, and from the giveaway came D'Amigo's goal, his third of the season.

"You get on the power play, you think you have a chance to win it, and you end up losing on it instead," said Amerks coach Ron Rolston, whose club had a four-game winning streak snapped in front of 6,717 fans at Blue Cross Arena at the Rochester Community War Memorial.

The goal came after Amerks defenseman Brayden McNabb chose to step up in an attempt to hold the puck in the Marlies zone, near the right point.

"He had to go step up," Rolston said. "If he backs off, it's a two-on-one."

Except Scott was able to bat the puck past him and still became a two-on-one fastbreak with D'Amigo.

"The puck hit the guy (Scott) in the stomach and I thought I should step up, but I guess I should have backed off," McNabb said.

Once the puck was out, Scott passed to his linemate and then it took some stick trickery. D'Amigo took a pitching-wedge chip at a rolling puck and picked the top left corner of the net with the shot.

"The puck was on edge and all I could really do was shoot," said D'Amigo, a sixth-round draft pick (158th overall) by the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#) in 2009.

Amerks goalie David Leggio had made at least three really good saves in the third period to keep the score tied, but he couldn't get his arm up in time on the D'Amigo shot.

"It was tough because the puck was rolling," Leggio said. "He fooled me a bit, he wasn't really showing shot, but it was a good play by a skilled player."

Even so, Leggio took the blame. He stopped 22 of 24 shots.

"I just have to come up with a save for my team," he said.

Phoenix Coyotes look to rebound quickly on the road

Phoenix preparing to face the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday

Jim Gintonio

The Arizona Republic

November 18, 2011

Agitation and desperation do not show up on stat sheets, but if the Coyotes hope to rebound from a jolting loss in Philadelphia on Thursday, both will have to be in abundance.

Seemingly headed into overtime with at least one point assured, they had a defensive breakdown, and the Flyers scored the winning goal with 19 seconds remaining.

Forward Mikkel Boedker, who had the lone Coyotes goal, said his team can't waste any time moving forward.

"It's always tough to lose, but I think the way we played the two first periods, it's something we got to get rid," he said by phone from Buffalo. "We've got make sure we play our game, a full 60 minutes. Smitty (goaltender Mike Smith) was by far our best player, and if it wasn't for him, it could have been a lot worse.

"Obviously losing with 18 seconds left, it's something that stinks a little, but we've got to get that out of our heads. We're a good hockey team, and we know how we have to play to win, and we've got to play that way."

Frustration, said coach Dave Tippett, is exactly what he felt watching the Flyers' game-winning sequence.

"When you're 18 seconds away from at least a point on the road, you'd like to get that point, that's what makes it a frustrating situation," he said.

The Coyotes will catch a bit of a break Saturday since the Sabres played in Carolina on Friday. But the Sabres, who are in second place in the Eastern Conference, lead the league in wins in back-to-back situations.

One way to combat that, Boedker said, is to have everyone on the same page.

"We need to have a mind-set that every single guy in the lineup is important," he said. ". . . Everybody's important to our club, and everybody has to contribute."

Boedker's goal against the Flyers, tying the score at 1, was a result of going to the net, something he said Tippett talked to the team about Friday.

"We know we got to go to the net, be a little more aggressive," he said. ". . . That goal happened because we put the puck on net and had people there. That's something we've got to do more of, and hopefully . . . we can get some more lucky bounces."

Langkow out

Center Daymond Langkow, who has not played since Nov. 5, will miss his fifth consecutive game Saturday due to the sudden death of his mother.

Vivian Langkow passed away Nov. 8 in Edmonton at the age of 54. Services are scheduled for Monday, according to the Edmonton Journal.

Mom wishes Paul Bissonnette's Twitter feed had cleaner ... grammar

Sean Fitz-Gerald

The National Post

November 18, 2011

It has nothing to do with the late-night pictures he has posted from Las Vegas, the links to more pictures of women in minimal clothing he has provided, or the frank observations he has offered from almost every aspect of his life. It is the presentation that has bothered Paul Bissonnette's mother.

Yolande Bissonnette was a college professor for 30 years in Southern Ontario, work she often began following a chilly 5 a.m. drive to a hockey rink for one of her son's countless practices. Those predawn drives led to a career in the National Hockey League and an unlikely rise to social media stardom through Twitter, where more than 171,000 fans have signed on to read whatever 140-character thoughts pop into her son's mind.

"For most of the time, I'm OK with what he posts," she said. "The only thing I wish he would get better at is spelling and grammar, because these are the things that I taught when I was at the college. So you can imagine when I see his spelling and grammar and I go, 'Ooooooh! I guess I didn't teach him these two things.'"

She laughed.

Paul Bissonnette of the Phoenix Coyotes has become a new-media fixture around the league. And on top of his expanding social media platform as @BizNasty2point0, the 26-year-old has worked as an analyst with TSN and was recently a guest on Hockey Night in Canada's After Hours show despite playing in only six games this season.

He is an enforcer, a fourth-line fill-in with seven points in 110 regular season games. It has given him grist for Twitter — he posted this on Wednesday: "Goaltender Marty Brodeur got his 37th career assist tonight. But to my defense he plays the whole game. #4thlineproblems" — but it has also contributed to a peculiar fact.

His mother has never seen him play in an NHL game.

For the unknowable number of AAA minor hockey games Yolande has seen, and for all the games in the Ontario Hockey League, the American Hockey League and the ECHL, she has never once seen her son wear an NHL uniform in the regular season. Part of the blame lay with the unpredictability of his coach's roster decisions, but part of it has also been due to her health.

In March 2009, Yolande Bissonnette felt her energy levels drop. She felt unwell, and she had no idea why. She loved teaching, having spent 30 years working at Niagara College, near the family home in Welland, Ont., with courses in office administration, customer service and document formatting.

She has been on sick leave for almost three years, and has been diagnosed with vasculitis, an autoimmune disorder.

“They don’t know what caused it,” she said. “I was pretty bad, but I’ve come a long way, because I refuse to let anything get me down. I’m doing much better. I’m at least at 60%, let’s put it that way.”

It has been six or seven months without any relapse, and Yolande and her husband, Cam, are cautiously planning to make a month-long visit to Phoenix this winter. And she might not have to wait that long to see her son on the ice.

The Coyotes are set to play the Sabres Saturday night in Buffalo, across the border from Welland. More than 50 friends and family members are expected to attend — including Bissonnette’s 85-year-old grandfather, who has also never seen him play — and Yolande and Cam have rinkside seats.

“I’ll have a tear in my eye, for sure,” said Cam, a former steelworker.

“It’s like the cherry on top of the sundae,” Yolande said.

“It’s just good to play in front of your friends and family,” Paul said. “Being so far away it doesn’t happen very often. Hopefully, I can get into the lineup and put on a good show for them.”

Bissonnette has not been in the lineup since Oct. 29, but Coyotes coach Dave Tippett suggested earlier this week that he would, in fact, be in the lineup on Saturday.

“He’s arguably one of our top two or three most popular players, which is a credit to him,” Coyotes general manager Don Maloney said. “He’s got a great sense of humour. I cringe sometimes; I fear what he might say in the Twitter world, but I think he’s learned. The last year, he’s found a way to stay on the right side of good-and-evil.”

Bissonnette was once known on Twitter as “@PaulBizNasty,” but terminated the account after posting light-hearted tweets that became contentious when forward Ilya Kovalchuk had his contract voided with the New Jersey Devils.

The second generation of the account has become even more popular for its unique blend of humour, insight and honesty. He posted this on Wednesday: “Lady walks up to me while I’m at dinner tonight and says ‘my condolences for your loss tomorrow.’ Now that’s a sports town haha. #Philly.”

Phoenix did end up losing, 2-1 to Philadelphia on Thursday.

Bissonnette was not in the lineup.

“One of the things that had happened when Paul was very young, I’d seen an interview with an athlete on TV, and I was appalled because the person was not very vocal and couldn’t put a sentence together,” said Yolande, who was born in Chicago but raised in Belgium. “So one of the things I had said to Paul at the time, ‘Whatever job you have, wherever you’re going to be, I want you to really think about what you’re going to say, and say it.’”

“He’s being himself,” Cam said. “He’s a happy-go-lucky guy, and he’s so proud of being in the NHL, no matter if it’s the fourth line — he’s there as a fighter, it’s his primary role — he relishes the fact.”

The Coyotes signed Bissonnette to a two-year contract extension last month.

“He’s the worst person in the world to call,” his father said with a chuckle. “He’s so busy with his social media, he’s got no time to call his parents. When he goes to Vegas, we can keep track through his pictures and his tweets, because he’s telling the rest of the world what he’s up to.”

Phoenix goalie Mike Smith blossoms in desert

Nicholas J. Cotsonika

Yahoo! Sports

November 17, 2011

When the [Phoenix Coyotes](#) traded goaltender [Ilya Bryzgalov](#) to the [Philadelphia Flyers](#) on June 7, they had no choice. Bryzgalov was a pending unrestricted free agent. They couldn't afford to keep him, especially not for nine years and \$51 million, the deal he received from the Flyers.

The Coyotes are a team with an uncertain future in Phoenix, a team owned by an NHL that needs to sell the franchise and sell it soon. This is a team that people figured would turn to dust in the desert, if people paid attention to it at all.

Mike Smith's size and athleticism got him to the NHL. Now he's hoping improved concentration and better consistency can elevate him to the ranks of the league's best stoppers.

(Getty Images)

"Everybody, I think, thought we relied on Bryz so much that we were going to go downhill," said Coyotes coach Dave Tippett.

The Coyotes still might be going somewhere. The Toronto Star reported Tuesday that those familiar with the process estimate there is a "50/50" chance the Coyotes will remain in Arizona beyond this season, and an NHL executive told Yahoo! Sports that it doesn't look good. As hard as the league has worked to keep the team there, it has been unable to close a deal. The clock is ticking. Quebec City?

All captain [Shane Doan](#) can do is crack a joke, because he has been through this so many times before. "It's been 10/90 against us a couple times," he said, "so 50/50's pretty good."

But for now, the Coyotes are not going downhill. They don't miss Bryz a bit. Entering Thursday's night reunion in Philadelphia, Bryzgalov was 7-4-2 with a 2.78 goals-against average and .899 save percentage. His replacement, [Mike Smith](#), who signed a two-year, \$4 million deal July 1, is 8-2-3 with a 2.19 goals-against average and .933 save percentage. He's 7-0-2 in his past nine decisions. The Coyotes are fourth in the West.

The Coyotes' defensive discipline has a lot to do with it. Before the season, while going out of his way to praise Bryzgalov, calling him the team's best player and a phenomenal goaltender, Doan also said: "Dave Tippett's system is kind of set up for your goalie to have success. ... I really think that Mike Smith is capable of being a top-10 goalie, just the way Bryz was."

But Coyotes goaltending coach Sean Burke goes even farther than that now. "He's got to take the next step to where he believes he's one of the top five or so goalies in this league, and I think that's his potential," Burke said. "I really do."

Smith has size at 6-foot-4, 215 pounds. He's athletic and handles the puck well. He's a regular guy with an unremarkable name – Mike Smith? – who relates well to his teammates. He's not a

quirky goalie, unlike Bryzgalov, who was ... well, different. "I would say 99.9 percent of people are a different personality than Bryz," said Doan with a good-natured laugh.

The problem has never been talent or personality. It has been concentration and consistency. Smith said he used to let his mind wander when the puck was at the other end, unable to switch it back on, unable to "find that happy medium between over-focusing and being too relaxed." He found a mentor in Burke.

"He's just such a calming influence," Smith said. "I mean, everyone knows goaltending's a lot mental. I know I have the physical ability to be a great goaltender in this league, but I've struggled with the mental aspect of it throughout my career. I've been through stretches where I've played really well and had stretches where I haven't. So I have to find that consistency, and Sean's been very good for me mentally."

Burke played at almost the same size – 6-foot-4, 208 pounds – and he said Smith is at the same stage in his career that he once was, "just at that point where he's ready to take the next step." Smith has bounced from the [Dallas Stars](#) to the [Tampa Bay Lightning](#) to the Coyotes. He's 29 now, married, with a kid. He's more mature, less intimidated, ready for a No. 1 role – maybe ready for more.

Top five?

"Absolutely," Burke said. "I mean, we're a ways off from probably having anybody agree with that, but that's the potential I see for him, and I think the way he's played right now ... he can consistently play like that for the whole season and into next year and for who knows how long. If he can continue to play like that, I think he is a guy who will be considered one of the top guys in the league."