



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres' Ehrhoff is picking up the pace

Sabres' blue-liner has filled larger role in recent games

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2011

The numbers don't lie. Christian Ehrhoff is the NHL's highest-paid defenseman this season and hardly played like it in October. The Buffalo Sabres needed a lot more from him in recent games, especially with a rash of injuries on the blueline.

Slowly but surely, Ehrhoff is starting to deliver. He played a season-high 27 minutes, 32 seconds and had a pair of assists in Saturday's win over Washington. And in the last four games, Ehrhoff has averaged 26 1/2 minutes and collected 15 shots on goal. He's probably going to keep getting that kind of heavy ice time tonight against the New York Islanders in First Niagara Center.

"There's pressure there for me but I can tell you this: I put a lot of pressure on myself too," Ehrhoff said after practice Monday downtown. "I don't think there's more pressure on me than what I put on myself. I'm a pretty competitive guy and I want to play good hockey for this team."

After an up-and-down start, Ehrhoff has been doing that lately. He's cut back on his defensive mistakes, both in positioning and passing, and is finding ways to get more shots to the net.

It's hard to live up to the \$10 million he's making this season in the first year of his 10-year, \$40 million deal. But at least Ehrhoff is looking far more like the player owner Terry Pegula coveted last year while Ehrhoff was playing in Vancouver and getting to Game Seven of the Stanley Cup final.

"Nobody says it's easy going from one team to another. It takes time and you're going to make mistakes," said coach Lindy Ruff. "You could make those same mistakes with the team you're just with and not get noticed as much because you're not the new guy on the block."

"In Christian's case, I really like the way he's skated in the last four or five [games]. I think he's been involved a little bit more on the offensive thrust for us and that's what his game is about."

Ehrhoff averaged 14 goals, 47 points and a rating of plus-27.5 the last two years in Vancouver. He's not going to get near those numbers this season as he has only two goals, 13 points and a minus-4 rating in 23 games.

Ehrhoff was minus-6 in October and his only goal was an empty netter Oct. 18 in Montreal. He's plus-2 in November and his ice time has picked up appreciably, especially in the wake of the injury to Tyler Myers.

He's formed a solid pair with Marc-Andre Gragnani, who played a career-high 24:17 alongside Ehrhoff Saturday. They were both plus-2.

"It always helps the confidence to get more ice time and to get in the game more," Gragnani said. "I thought Christian and I had a solid game, played well defensively, moved the puck, had a couple chances.

"He's always felt at ease. I never thought he felt nervous or anything," Gragnani said. "He's very professional, comes to the rink every day to get better. He takes the same approach and that's such a big thing in our game."

Ehrhoff has been impressed by Gragnani's abilities too.

"Very talented, very skilled and makes good decisions," Ehrhoff said. "He's very good with the puck. The toughest thing as a young player is to find a way to be ready every night and he's been doing that."

Tonight's game, technically, is against one of Ehrhoff's former teams. Ehrhoff, remember, was property of the Islanders for a few hours in June after they acquired his rights in a trade from Vancouver on the eve of free agency.

But Ehrhoff wasn't interested in signing with a rebuilding organization after coming so close to winning the Cup, so the Islanders traded his rights to Buffalo for a fourth-round pick.

"It wasn't realistic I'd sign with them," he said. "I was looking for another opportunity to have a shot at the Cup. I just didn't see it with them so it wasn't really an option."

Ehrhoff said his adjustment period here is starting to settle down nicely.

"I feel pretty comfortable now," he said. "The last few games have been more consistent and able to find a rhythm here to be more consistent than I was the first 20 games. At times it's tough but the coaching staff and the guys here have really helped me a lot and made it pretty smooth."

Miller says it's time to practice with team

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

November 29, 2011

Ryan Miller was back in net taking a few shots prior to the Buffalo Sabres' practice Monday morning and is close to rejoining his team for workouts.

Miller said he expects to take today's morning skate as a third goalie and would like to fully return to practice Wednesday.

"I think that's realistic," said coach Lindy Ruff. "In his situation, it's really how he feels. If he'd like to practice, I'll get a practice plan together so that he can face some shots."

Miller has done rides on an exercise bike and said he is symptom free from the hit he took Nov. 12 from Boston's Milan Lucic. The Sabres said that resulted in a concussion and Miller also had plenty of neck troubles in the aftermath of the play.

"I aggravated a disc in my neck pretty good," Miller said. "We had an MRI and CT-scan showing that kind of backed that up and was the source of a lot of the tension and a lot of the discomfort. It definitely was limiting my range of motion.

"Talking to the doctors, they felt it was important to let it settle down. We've let it settle down and I'm trying to improve some strength in that area."

Miller was one of nine players who missed Saturday's 5-1 win over Washington but said he was impressed with the way the Sabres filled their gaps with callups from Rochester.

"We've had some pretty devastating injuries pile up here," Miller said. "I think we've had good reaction out of the guys coming up and guys filling in different roles. ... It's good to see new guys coming up can step in, know what's going on and make contributions."

Patrick Kaleta (groin), Drew Stafford (groin) and Robyn Regehr (arm/shoulder) all returned to practice Monday after missing Saturday's game and could be ready to play tonight. Forwards Corey Tropp and Paul Szczechura and defenseman T.J. Brennan were returned to Rochester.

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Tyler Ennis' high ankle sprain is rapidly getting better but he said he will not play tonight. Still, Ennis is hopeful some good practices could put him in position to play either Friday against Detroit or Saturday in Nashville.

"I think I'm pretty close. Today felt like my best day on the ankle," Ennis said. "I felt like I was skating well and tested out pretty good. I depend on my agility and being quick side to side and

laterally. So I need it to be pretty much 100 percent because if I can't be quick and darting around I'm not going to be as effective."

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When Washington's Bruce Boudreau and Carolina's Paul Maurice were fired Monday, that pushed the number of coaching changes to 166 since Ruff joined the Sabres in July, 1997.

"I feel fortunate to have my job as long as I've had," Ruff said. "When you see two fellow coaches lose their job, you don't feel good about it. It sums up how tight this league is and the pressure to win. It's tough. Both teams have struggled. When you look at it, sometimes that's the route they go."

Dale Hunter, a former Sabres antagonist during the 1980s with the Quebec Nordiques, was named to replace Boudreau and Ruff had several dustups with Hunter back in the day.

"That dirty dog knocked me out with a hit," said a smiling Ruff. "That would have been a suspension now. I woke up snoring."

* * * *

The Sabres announced Monday that they have signed Rochester defenseman Joe Finley to a multi-year NHL contract. The 6-foot-8 Finley was playing in the AHL on a minor-league deal after getting a tryout during training camp.

Terms were not disclosed but the contract is believed to be a two-way, three-year deal with an NHL salary of \$525,000 per season if Finley makes it to Buffalo.

Finley, 24, was Washington's No. 1 pick in 2005. After playing just 50 games the last two seasons due to injuries, Finley has been an early-season revelation in Rochester with a team-high plus-10 rating.

Finley has one goal and one assist and leads the Amerks with 57 penalty minutes in 18 games.

Islanders chase second straight road win vs. Sabres

Eric Goodman

NHL.com

November 29, 2011

ISLANDERS (6-11-4) at SABRES (13-9-1)

TV: MSG PLUS, MSG-B

Last 10: [New York Islanders](#) 2-6-2; Buffalo 5-4-1

Season series: This is the first of four meetings between these clubs. The Isles took three of four games in the 2010-11 regular-season series.

Big Story: The Sabres remain in the thick of the Northeast Division race despite entering their eighth consecutive game without franchise goalie [Ryan Miller](#) due to post-concussion symptoms. The Islanders have struggled in the early going, but will look to build off their first road win of the season earned with a 3-2 decision over the Devils this past Saturday.

Team Scope:

Islanders: Nothing has come easy for the Islanders this season and Saturday's nail-biting affair against New Jersey was no different. While New York appeared destined for the 3-2 win in the closing seconds of regulation, the Islanders were able to rest easy only after a video review determined that the Devils' Zach Parise's goal with 2.1 seconds left would be overturned because of a distinct kicking motion on the play.

Coach Jack Capuano was happy to finally get his first road win of the season, no matter how dramatic it was.

"I think we played pretty well," Capuano told [newyorkislanders.com](#). "It was a situation where both goaltenders stole the show. There were a lot of odd-man rushes and a lot of breakdowns. We were fortunate that we won the game."

Sabres: With losses in four of its last six games, Buffalo is a team looking to kick it up a notch as it closes out an inconsistent and injury-filled month of November. But the Sabres did manage a 5-1 victory in their last game against Washington on Saturday, despite missing nine of their regular starters from the lineup.

Forward [Luke Adam](#) scored twice, rookie forward [Zack Kassian](#) notched his first NHL goal and goalie [Jhonas Enroth](#) made 26 saves in his seventh straight start since Miller went down against

the Bruins on Nov. 12.

"It was great to get through this one without any injuries," captain [Jason Pominville](#) said following the win. "It's fun to see guys come up, be prepared, and be ready to play."

Who's Hot: Forward [Michael Grabner](#) has 2 goals and 4 points over his last four games for the Islanders. ... Pominville is averaging a point per game in 21 career games vs. New York.

Injury Report: New York goalie [Evgeni Nabokov](#) (groin) and defenseman [Mark Eaton](#) (sprained MCL) are on injured reserve. ... Miller remains out indefinitely for Buffalo with post-concussion symptoms. Other Sabres on the injured list include defenseman Robyn Regher (upper body) and forward [Drew Stafford](#) (lower body), who both left Friday's game vs. Columbus. Forwards [Tyler Ennis](#) (ankle), [Cody McCormick](#) (upper body), [Brad Boyes](#) (right leg), [Patrick Kaleta](#) (lower body) and defensemen [Tyler Myers](#) (broken wrist) and [Mike Weber](#) (upper body) are also injured for Buffalo.

Stat Pack: The Islanders are last in the League with a 1.95 goals-per-game average.

Puck Drop: With the Islanders boasting one of the youngest rosters in the League, Capuano is allowed to experiment with switching some of his player's positions according to his team's needs. On Monday, [newyorkislanders.com](#) reporter Dyan LeBourdais wrote that rookie forward [David Ullstrom](#) could move from left wing to center for Tuesday's game.

"It will be fun to go back to center if that happens, but I'm comfortable playing both wing and center. I'm real excited for (Tuesday)," Ullstrom said.

NY Islanders (6-11-4) at Buffalo (13-9-1)

Jeff Bartl

STATS

November 29, 2011

The [New York Islanders](#) have struggled all season, especially on the road.

Facing the injury-riddled [Buffalo Sabres](#) may help create some optimism.

New York seeks its fifth win in six tries against Buffalo when the teams meet Tuesday night at First Niagara Center.

The Islanders (6-11-4), who occupy last place in the Eastern Conference, were shut out three times during a four-game losing streak that ended Saturday with a 3-2 win over New Jersey.

The skid marked their third of at least four games on the young season, and their 41 goals rank last in the league.

Saturday's win was New York's first on the road in eight games. It had not gone winless in its first seven on the road since starting 0-10 with four ties away from home to begin the 1973-74 season.

[Matt Moulson](#) and [Josh Bailey](#) scored, while [Michael Grabner](#) netted the game-winner short-handed in the third period.

Coach Jack Capuano was thankful the bounces went the Islanders' way.

"Our guys battled," Capuano said. "We did get some breaks tonight. It takes a few breaks to win a game. I'm just glad they got the two points."

They've done just that four of the last five times when facing Buffalo, which is banged up heading into this meeting.

The Sabres (13-9-1) played without nine regulars Saturday, but they were able to end a three-game skid with a 5-1 win over Washington.

[Jhonas Enroth](#) made 26 saves and is 3-3-1 with a 2.82 goals-against average in seven starts since [Ryan Miller](#) suffered a concussion Nov. 12 against Boston.

In addition to Miller, Buffalo played without [Robyn Regehr](#) (upper body), [Drew Stafford](#) (lower body), [Tyler Ennis](#) (ankle), [Cody McCormick](#) (upper body), [Brad Boyes](#) (right leg), [Patrick Kaleta](#) (lower body), [Tyler Myers](#) (broken wrist) and [Mike Weber](#) (upper body).

Regehr, Stafford and Kaleta practiced Monday and hope to be ready for Tuesday's contest.

“It’s the longest (injury) list I’ve seen since I’ve been here,” said coach Lindy Ruff, who has been with the team since 1997.

[Luke Adam](#) made up for the missing production, scoring twice.

“You have to play hard every night regardless if you have your full lineup or not,” Adam said. “You can’t afford to make mistakes, and you need everyone going every night.”

Though New York has struggled to score this season, that hasn’t been the case in recent games against Buffalo. The Islanders have registered at least five goals in three of the last five matchups, including a 7-6 overtime victory Feb. 13 in the most recent meeting.

Grabner, who scored the game-winner, and Stafford each had a hat trick in that contest. Grabner has six goals and an assist in four career games versus the Sabres, while Stafford has six goals and five assists in 13 against the Islanders.

[John Tavares](#) has notched a point in seven of his eight career contests against Buffalo, totaling six goals and five assists.

New York has won two straight road games against Buffalo, which ended a three-game home losing streak Saturday.

Sabres getting healthy: Demote 3 to AHL Rochester

Associated Press

November 28, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—The banged-up [Buffalo Sabres](#) are healthy enough to afford returning three players to the minors.

Forwards [Paul Szczechura](#) and [Corey Tropp](#), and defenseman [T.J. Brennan](#) were re-assigned to AHL Rochester on Monday. The moves come as the Sabres had several injured regulars back on the ice for practice.

It's a group that included forwards [Drew Stafford](#) and [Patrick Kaleta](#) and defenseman [Robyn Regehr](#), who each missed at least one game last week.

Forward [Tyler Ennis](#) is also considered close to returning after missing 16 games with an ankle injury.

The Sabres are 3-3-1 in their past seven and were minus nine regulars— including goalie [Ryan Miller](#) (concussion)—in a 5-1 win over Washington on Saturday. Buffalo hosts the [New York Islanders](#) on Tuesday.

HEALTHY CHANGES EVERYTHING

Miller and Ennis optimistic about returning to lineup soon

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

November 28, 2011

An optimistic Ryan Miller said today that he plans to skate as the third goalie at Tuesday's morning skate, and is targeting Wednesday as his first full practice since being injured in a collision with Milan Lucic on November 12. Miller skated lightly and stopped a few pucks prior to today's practice. Afterwards he spoke to the media and said he's encouraged by the progress he's made.

"I feel good. Symptom wise I think it was more neck; something where I aggravated a disc in my neck pretty good. I had an MRI and CAT scan that backed that up. That's a source of a lot of the tension and discomfort, and it definitely was limiting my range of motion."

Miller now isn't sure if he suffered a concussion in the hit with Lucic, but he was definitely concerned about experiencing concussion-like symptoms.

"I don't know for certain what it was. I took a good impact and it definitely felt that way. But I also had the symptoms in my neck, and that was proven through some tests and I had to wait to let that settle down to a place where I can get back on the ice. It's been good for a few days now, and now I have to get through some intense workouts."

For the first time in several days, Lindy Ruff didn't have to stand in front of the media and announce another injury. Instead, Ruff spent most of today's post-practice briefing at First Niagara Center talking about the progress that some of his injured players are making.

"We had a pretty good day when it came to just treatments yesterday and some guys are feeling better," Ruff explained. "We had some guys on the bike, and today that progressed. Everything is looking better."

Ruff said that Patrick Kaleta, Drew Stafford and Robyn Regehr "could be available" for tomorrow's home game against the New York Islanders. Kaleta seems to be the most questionable of the three, as he's missed the last three games and only practiced once in the past week. The only time Regehr and Stafford have missed was Saturday's game against Washington.

All three players took part in full-contact roles today's practice. Stafford was on a line with Luke Adam and Ville Leino, while Kaleta skated with Matt Ellis and Paul Gaustad. Regehr was paired with Jordan Leopold on defense.

Zack Kassian and Brayden McNabb both remain with the big club. Kassian was on a line with Derek Roy and Nathan Gerbe, and McNabb was paired with Andrej Sekera.

Corey Tropp, TJ Brennan and Paul Szczechura were all reassigned to Rochester prior to today's practice.

Tyler Ennis skated in today's practice, but has ruled himself out for Tuesday's game. There's a possibility he could be ready for the weekend.

"I'm getting pretty close, today felt like my best day on the ankle," Ennis said. "I still have to do some things. I've gotta get some down low play in and work on it a little bit, get some guys leaning on (my ankle). But for the most part it feels good."

With the two head coach firings today in Washington and Carolina, there have now been 166 coaching changes in the NHL since Ruff was named Buffalo's head coach on July 21, 1997.

Sabres prospects Mark Pysyk and Jerome Gauthier-Leduc were among the 41 players invited to Canada's 2012 National Junior Team Selection Camp. Pysyk, Buffalo's first-round pick (23rd overall) in 2010 has one goal and 11 assists in 20 games with the WHL's Edmonton Oil Kings. Gauthier-Leduc is second among all Canadian Hockey League defensemen in scoring, and is 13th in the QMJHL league scoring race with 37 points (13+24) in 26 game with the Rimouski Oceanic. He was also drafted in 2010 – 68th overall in the third round.

ROCHESTER AMERICANS LEFT WING DEREK WHITMORE NAMED REEBOK/AHL PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Sabres.com

November 28, 2011

The American Hockey League announced today that Rochester Americans left wing [Derek Whitmore](#) has been named the Reebok/AHL Player of the Week for the period ending Nov. 27, 2011.

Whitmore scored five goals and compiled a plus-3 rating in two games for the Americans, who maintained their hold on second place in the North Division.

Whitmore recorded a big insurance goal late in the third period of Friday's 4-2 win over Albany, but saved his biggest performance for Saturday's contest against Hamilton. Whitmore scored twice in the first 1:53 of the game, and then twice more in the third period to break a 3-3 tie as Rochester grabbed a 5-3 decision over the Bulldogs.

Whitmore became the first Amerks player to score four goals in a game since [Jason Pominville](#) netted five vs. Cleveland on Oct. 21, 2005.

A native of the Rochester suburb of Greece, N.Y., Whitmore leads the Americans with 10 goals and 16 points and is tied for the team lead among forwards with a plus-8 rating in 20 games this season. The fourth-year pro signed as a free agent with the Buffalo Sabres on Mar. 26, 2008, and has registered 67 goals and 53 assists for 120 points in 263 career AHL games with Rochester and Portland.

In recognition of his achievement, Whitmore will be presented with an etched crystal award prior to an upcoming Americans home game.

The Amerks conclude their three-game homestand on Friday, December 2 as the defending Western Conference champion Houston Aeros make their first visit to The Blue Cross Arena in nearly three years. The 7:35 p.m. contest will be the first of two meetings between the two teams this season and will be broadcast live on 107.3 FM and 1280 AM, Rochester's Sports Talk.

Hecht happy to be back in action

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

November 29, 2011

Jochen Hecht remembers visiting the Queen City more than nine years ago, unsure where his career was heading. Edmonton had just traded the German to the Sabres at the 2002 NHL Entry Draft, the second straight summer he experienced the uncertainty that accompanies a trade.

He had played two full seasons in St. Louis and just one with the Oilers. How long could he last in Buffalo?

Hecht first stayed at a local Residence Inn. Eventually, the center found a house.

“Got here, wanted to rent. I ended up buying. I’ve been here since,” Hecht said Monday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s tilt against the New York Islanders. “We’ve been happy with the situation.”

Today, Hecht, the longest-tenured Sabre, thinks of Buffalo as a second home. In fact, he’s only second in seniority among Buffalo athletes to the Bills’ Brian Moorman, who began punting in 2001.

For a while recently, it appeared Hecht’s long run could be ending. As he began the last season of a four-year, 14.1 million contract, the two-way forward suffered a concussion early in training camp, his second in seven months. He missed the first 20 games, finally making his debut Wednesday.

Before the injuries, Hecht’s normally consistent play had dipped. Once a lock for about 20 goals, 50 points and gaudy plus rating, he wasn’t scoring much or performing as well defensively.

Some observers looked at his \$3.525 salary cap hit and figured the Sabres, a team over or near the cap since July, could part ways with Hecht.

Think again.

The 34-year-old’s looked like his old self through three games. Coach Lindy Ruff threw Hecht right into the fire in his debut Wednesday, awarding him the No. 1 pivot spot between Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville in the Sabres’ fight-filled 4-3 shootout loss to Boston.

Hecht was surprised he received the choice spot so quickly. But he’s seizing the opportunity. He nearly scored his first shift and skated 18:15 against the Bruins. He’s been with the hot wingers since.

“I want to stick with them,” Hecht said.

Ruff said Hecht “had a hell of a game” Wednesday.

“The first game against Boston was really hard,” Hecht said. “There was a lot of controversy about that game. It was really hard on the body, a little sore afterwards the next day. Now I feel like I’m back in the groove.”

Hecht’s first goal Saturday, a short-handed breakaway, put an exclamation point on the Sabres’ 5-1 triumph over Washington. It also marked the first time Hecht had played three straight games since Feb. 26-March 3.

How has someone sidelined so long come back so fresh?

“Well, I’ve been skating for six weeks, even though it’s just conditioning-wise,” Hecht said. “I felt good conditioning-wise. I was surprised the game was not too fast. I was able to keep up right away. I didn’t feel like it was above practice.”

Ruff said Hecht “went through a lot of demanding skates.”

“It wasn’t like we rushed him back,” he said. “He went through a lot of hard workouts. I think he was ready to play. He was ready to play sooner, and we held him out longer than what he wanted.”

Hecht, who began camp in tremendous shape, stopped practicing a couple times when he looked close to returning. He said he felt “about 90 percent for a long period of time.” A week off the ice earlier this month finally turned things around.

“I think that was the point during that week I completely recovered, went back to 100 percent, felt good,” Hecht said. “It just continued on the ice. I worked hard, and I didn’t drop off again. I still feel good.”

Hecht, of course, is playing for a contract, something he’s reluctant to talk about.

“It’s a big year for the team, that’s the way I see it,” he said.

It’s likely the old Tom Golisano regime would’ve let Hecht walk after this season. But anything’s possible now with Terry Pegula in control. If Hecht keeps performing well, he could return for a 10th season.

“I’ve been here for nine years,” Hecht said. “I’ll always feel a little at home here. I’ll feel comfortable. It’s been a good time so far.”



Miller may practice Wednesday

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

November 29, 2011

BUFFALO — So, did, as the Sabres announced after Boston's Milan Lucic steamrolled Ryan Miller recently, the goalie suffer a concussion? Miller isn't sure now, saying "I don't know for certain what it was."

However, Miller, who's missed the last seven games, is improving from his mystery ailment. He's been working out and riding the exercise bike. He faced some shots informally before his teammates practiced Monday. He plans to participate in this morning's skate and practice fully Wednesday if that goes well.

The 31-year-old still has no timetable for a return.

"I'm just going to take it easy and make sure I have everything feeling good," Miller said Monday inside the First Niagara Center after his teammates prepared for tonight's contest against the New York Islanders.

More on Miller later.

There's other good news on the injury front, as the Sabres, down an astounding nine players Saturday for their 5-1 win over the Washington Capitals, should receive a few back tonight.

Wingers Patrick Kaleta and Drew Stafford (lower body) and defenseman Robyn Regehr (upper body) all practiced Monday.

"All three of those could be available," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said.

Defenseman T.J. Brennan and forwards Paul Szczechura and Corey Tropp have been sent back to Rochester.

Miller, meanwhile, said he believed he had suffered a concussion after Lucic leveled him as the two chased a loose puck Nov. 12.

The Sabres, who rarely reveal injuries, were irate at Lucic. Ruff said it couldn't be open season on goalies. General manager Darcy Regier said Miller had been concussed, hoping the NHL would suspend Lucic, which it didn't.

"I definitely felt I took a good impact. I certainly felt that way," Miller said. "(I) also had some symptoms in my neck. That was proven through some tests. (I) had to wait and let that settle down until (it was at) a place I could get on the ice. I've been good for a few days now. Now I just have to get through good after some intense workouts."

Miller also said: "I feel good. Symptom-wise, I think it was more neck, something where I aggravated a disc in my neck pretty good. We had an MRI and CT-scan (backing) that up. I think that's the source of a lot of tension and a lot of discomfort. It definitely limited my range of motion.

"It's something, talking to the doctors, even they felt it was important to let settle down. We've let it settle down. I'm trying to improve some strength in that area, get my endurance and strength back."

In other injury news, winger Tyler Ennis (ankle sprain, 16 games) practiced on a line Monday. He's nearing a return but is out tonight.

Winger Zack Kassian and defenseman Brayden McNabb, who made their NHL debuts Saturday, are still with the Sabres. Brennan and Tropp were recalled before them, so why have they remained up?

"Various things. Some of it is the five factor," Ruff said, referring to Saturday's score. "We'd like to take a look at those guys again in maybe a tougher situation. ... They weren't challenged as much as they could be."

...

It turns out the Capitals' listless effort here Saturday, their eighth loss in 11 games, cost coach Bruce Boudreau his job Monday. The Carolina Hurricanes also axed Paul Maurice, bringing the total number of NHL coaching changes since the Sabres hired Ruff in 1997 to a whopping 166.

Only NBA coach Gregg Popovich, who took over the San Antonio Spurs in 1996, has a longer tenure in the four professional sports.

"I feel fortunate to have my job as long as I have," Ruff said. "I think that's the one thing when you see two fellow coaches lose their jobs, you don't feel good about it. I think it sums up how tight this league is and the pressure there is to win. It's tough."

The Capitals hired Dale Hunter, who had been coaching the Ontario Hockey League's London Knights.

Ruff remembers Hunter, a notoriously tough player during his 19-season career with the Quebec Nordiques, Washington and Colorado Avalanche, very well.

"The dirty dog knocked me out with a hit!" Ruff said. "That would've been a suspension now, though. East-west. I woke up snoring."

...

The Sabres signed defenseman Joe Finley, the 27th pick by Washington in 2005, to a multi-year contract Monday. Finley has been playing in Rochester under an AHL deal.

The American, 6-foot-8 and 260 pounds, was invited to training camp on a tryout and impressed. Ruff lauded him, saying only Sabres defenseman Tyler Myers, who's the same height, was a better skating big man.

Finley, whose career was derailed by injuries, has turned heads in Rochester, compiling one goal, two points, a plus-10 rating and 57 penalty minutes in 18 games. The 24-year-old had played only eight AHL contests prior to this season.

Miller Working On Ice

Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

November 28, 2011

Injured Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller took the another step in his recovery from whiplash that he suffered at the hands of Milan Lucic in Boston more than two weeks ago. The team's top goalie stepped onto the ice before the full team's morning practice at First Niagara Center to see how his neck would react to facing a few shots.

The goaltender is not feeling any ill-effects from the concussion he suffered, but is working to battle back from neck problems that have dogged him since the incident. Miller was more concerned with his neck problems that he was with the concussion, saying, "symptom-wise I think it was more neck. Something where I aggravated a disc in my neck pretty good and we had an MRI, cat-scan showing that...kind of backed that up. That was a source of a lot of tension and a lot of the discomfort, and definitely was limiting my range of motion."

Miller told us that he hopes to get his endurance and strength levels back to where he can take part in practice. That would be the next step to getting into game shape. The former Vezina trophy winner hopes to ramp up his schedule as soon as tomorrow. He wants to take a few more shots on Tuesday and take part in a full practice on Wednesday.

Head coach Lindy Ruff had even more good news to share with us on the injury front after practice. After missing Saturday night's win over the Washington Capitals both Drew Stafford and Robyn Regehr are on track to play against the New York Islanders tomorrow. Patrick Kaleta's lower-body injury has healed enough that he should also skate against the Isles. Ruff indicated that Kaleta could be the biggest question mark of the three, having only taken part in one full practice in the last week.

As a result of the injury news, the Sabres sent a trio of players back to the Rochester Americans of the AHL today. Forwards Corey Tropp and Paul Szczechura, as well as defenseman TJ Brennan were reassigned to the farm club. Zack Kassian and Brayden McNabb were not sent down, and each worked on regular lines during the skate Tuesday.

Kassian was paired with Nathan Gerbe and Derek Roy on Monday, while McNabb was shuffled around with all of the other blue liners. Mike Weber was on the ice as well, but was wearing a red, non-contact jersey.

Ruff said a number of factors went into deciding who to keep in Buffalo. However ultimately the bench boss though: "the size factor, we'd like to take a look at those guys again in maybe a tougher situation. I didn't think in the Washington game was, was offensively...they weren't challenged as much as we thought they could be."

Ruff was quick to compliment the contributions of all three that were returned to Rochester, and added, "McNabb turned in a solid performance, has great size. Kassian [has] real good size, makes us a bigger team." Kassian picked up an assist in his first NHL game on Friday, while

notching his first NHL goal in his second game. McNabb logged 13:24 of ice time in the win over Washington.

The pair is just the latest callups to join the big club and make contributions. Brennan scored a goal in his first NHL game against the Bruins, and was on the blue line for 3 games during his recall. Tropp had 2 points (1G, 1A) in 10 games, while Szczechura picked up 2 assists on Saturday. The contributions were not lost on captain Jason Pominville:

"They stepped in, played some big minutes right off the bat. Give credit to the entire coaching staff and the coaching staff down in Rochester to have them prepared to play, to know the system when they come up, and ready play big minutes 'cause they were a big part of our win."

Tyler Ennis said that he is still a few days away from being ready for game action. The second-year forward was the extra forward on the line of: Ville Leino-Luke Adam-Stafford. Ennis thought today was the best he felt skating with the injured ankle. He is hopeful everything checks out when he tests the lower body injury further in preparation for game action.

Sabres sign Amerks D-man Finley

Matthew Coller

WGR 550

November 28, 2011

The Buffalo Sabres announced Monday they have signed current Rochester Americans defenseman Joe Finley to a multi-year contract.

The deal is a two-way contract for a reported three-years, \$1.575 million.

The 6-foot-8, 250 lb. defenseman accepted an invitation to Sabres tryouts in September. After making the cut, he was assigned to Rochester. Finley was drafted 27th overall by the Washington Capitals in 2005. He elected to play at the University of North Dakota from 2005-2009.

After playing just 17 games with an injury in 2009-10 in the ECHL, he was hurt again last season, rupturing an artery in his hand.

For the Americans, not only has Finley been healthy, he's been a force on defense. He's been the Amerks' best hitter and is currently playing on the first pairing with Shaone Morrisonn. Currently, he is leading Rochester in plus-minus with a plus-10.

What Sabres fans may be most excited for is: in a game against Hamilton, prospect Marcus Foligno was hip checked hard into the boards. Foligno stood up to fight, but Finley already had the gloves dropped, his helmet off and the crowd on their feet.

If Sabres fans want someone to step up and be physical, Finley's your guy. He leads the AHL in penalty minutes.

Wang has faith in Snow, Capuano

Arthur Staple

Newsday

November 28, 2011

Charles Wang gave a very short, direct answer when asked if he still believes in general manager Garth Snow, coach Jack Capuano and the direction in which his [Islanders](#), currently last in the Eastern Conference, are headed.

"Yes," the Islanders' owner told Newsday Monday after his team practiced at IceWorks in [Syosset](#). "It's like anything in life -- you embark on this journey and you have people around you that you put your faith in. It's not just about Garth -- it's up to all of us. This is a team game, a team sport."

Wang said he shares Islanders fans' frustration with the ugly season in 2010-11 and the slow start that has the Islanders heading into Tuesday night's game against the Sabres in Buffalo at 6-11-4, four points out of 14th in the Eastern Conference. But he thinks the Islanders under Snow are capable of competing.

"I think the talent is there for this team to do well," he said. "We're on the right track. Last year was a year we felt we should have made progress, but then we had all the injuries. This year, we haven't had a great start, but it's not like we're getting killed out there every night. The kids are learning, and when you learn, you're going to make mistakes."

Wang declined to discuss anything to do with a new arena for the Islanders. The team's lease to play at [Nassau Coliseum](#) expires at the end of the 2014-15 season, and Wang repeatedly has said the team will not stay beyond then without a new arena. It is believed that the Islanders would need to have any deal for an arena, either in [Nassau](#) County or elsewhere, by June or July 2012.

Wang has stuck by Snow through four straight seasons without playoffs. Asked if Snow had the financial freedom to expand the [Isles](#)' relatively low payroll -- it's about \$49.5 million, only \$1.2 million above the salary floor -- Wang said there are limits to what the Islanders can do.

"We're not a big-market team that can spend like some teams do," he said. "But I've never said no to what Garth wants to do. If it makes sense for our team, then we'll do it. We've tried to be conservative and make smart decisions, and that's what we'll continue to do."

After the Islanders were shut out for a second straight game, 5-0, by [Sidney Crosby](#) and the Penguins Nov. 21, Snow told Newsday that he had no intention of firing Capuano.

Notes & quotes: F Jay Pandolfo is out four to six weeks after suffering a broken foot Saturday. Pandolfo has one goal in 21 games but has been a steady fourth-liner and penalty-killer. Rookie RW Nino Niederreiter will return to the lineup Tuesday night after being a healthy scratch for the last four games.

NY Islanders win first road game of season vs. NJ Devils after Zach Parise's late goal is waved off

Kristie Ackert

New York Daily News

November 27, 2011

ISLANDERS 3, DEVILS 2

[Zach Parise](#) smashed his stick against the boards in front of the Devils bench as Islander goaltender [Al Montoya](#) let out a sigh of relief. After a video review by the NHL in Toronto, [Parise](#)'s goal with 2.1 seconds to play was waved off and [Montoya](#) and the Islanders held on for a 3-2 win at the Rock in Newark on Saturday.

It was the first win for Islanders (5-11-4) on the road this season. It was their first win in six games overall and only their third win in the last 17. The Devils (12-9-1) lost for the second time in six games.

It came down to a mad scramble in front of Montoya as the Devils desperately tried to tie the game. From the corner, Devils right wing [Dainius Zubrus](#) fed Parise, who was right in front of Montoya.

"I knew it hit off my skate and I knew it hit off my stick, too," the Devils' left wing said. "If that's a kicking motion, then I don't know."

Montoya said he was not exactly clear on what happened.

"I thought the puck was in my glove," said Montoya, who made 24 saves but was only really tested on that last play.

Replays in the arena showed the puck sliding off Parise's skate and past Montoya. The official ruling from Toronto was that Parise had "used his right skate to propel the puck into the net."

"I was (really) relieved when they waved that off," said Islander [left wing Jay Pandolfo](#), who played 13 seasons for the Devils. "We got a break tonight."

Infuriated by the call, Parise smashed his stick in a rare flash of temper.

"Of course I was angry. A tight game like that, where we worked to get back into it and they make the wrong call," Parise said. "It was frustrating."

Islanders [left wing Matt Moulson](#) scored 11:28 into the first period, that on a defensive lapse, and the Devils were chasing the Islanders from there. Devils rookie defenseman [Adam Larsson](#) tied it at 4:20 of the second, but [Josh Bailey](#) scored to put the Isles back ahead 2-1 less than eight minutes later. Devils rookie center [Adam Henrique](#) tied it again 3:59 into the third, but Islanders [right wing Michael Grabner](#) scored a shorthanded goal less than two minutes later.

“The important thing is that we stayed in it and then got robbed in the last instant of the game by them not allowing that goal,” said Devils [goaltender Martin Brodeur](#), who made 23 saves, including stopping three breakaway attempts. “We’ve just got to move on. It was an unfortunate game for us.”

Devils lose to Islanders after last-second video review

Mark Everson
New York Post
November 27, 2011

It came amid controversy, complaints, gripes and charges of robbery, but the Islanders' first road victory of the season came, finally, in Newark.

The Islanders moved out of the NHL dungeon yesterday, escaping solitary confinement as the last of 30 teams to win on the road, receiving final-seconds video-review help from Toronto for their 3-2 victory over the Devils yesterday.

"We finally got rewarded with a win, but it's only one," said Michael Grabner, who pickpocketed [Ilya Kovalchuk](#) for the winning third period shorthander. "We have to find what to play with the lead, instead of sitting back, scared of winning."

They learned on the Devils, who squawked despite regularly being their own worst enemy.

"We got robbed in the last instant on that [disputed] goal," [Martin Brodeur](#) said, objecting to the NHL's ruling that [Zach Parise](#) kicked in what would have been a tying goal with 2.1 seconds left.

Parise also disagreed with the ruling.

"If that's a kicking motion ... I don't know," he said. "In a tight game like that, you work to get back into it and they make the wrong call."

Coach Pete DeBoer noted that ref Dave Jackson, who failed to penalize [John Tavares](#) for his late up-chop on Kovalchuk's neck that broke up a golden chance to tie the game, also called nothing on Tavares' slash on Parise in Friday's 1-0 Devils victory at Nassau.

The NHL reviewed Friday's non-call and fined Tavares \$2,500, but neither that fine nor another would help the Devils. Instead, Kovalchuk took an unsportsmanlike conduct call for profane disagreement.

"The same guy [Jackson] who saw Zach slashed [Friday] on the Island," Devils coach Pete DeBoer claimed.

But long before the third, this one had the earmarks of an Islanders breakthrough. For the first time since Nov. 12 (six games), the Devils gave up the opening goal — Matt Moulson's at 11:28 of the first, only the second game in the past five in which the Islanders scored.

Rookie Adam Larsson answered at 4:20 of the second, the trailer on a 4-on-3, taking Kovalchuk's drop to snipe his second career goal past Al Montoya's stick.

Instead of folding, the Islanders struck again when ex-Devil [Brian Rolston](#) dug the puck from the left corner for [Josh Bailey](#) to convert at 11:59 of the second.

After a series of superb Brodeur saves, another Devils rookie, Adam Henrique, tied the game again at 3:59 of the third, slipping a backhand under Montoya.

Grabner gave the Islanders the final lead with their first shorthander of the season at 5:41, stripping Kovalchuk in the Devils slot to victimize Brodeur. It was the fifth shorthanded goal allowed by the Devils this season, most in the NHL.

“I made that mistake on the power play that cost us the game,” Kovalchuk said. “I’ll take all the blame for this one.”

It was one of many mistakes by the Devils. But it was a sharp play by Grabner that gave the Islanders their first victory off Long Island.