



Buffalo Sabres

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Regier says no shake-up imminent as struggles intensify

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

January 7, 2012

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Sabres are in a rut. There's no denying that. They lost again Friday, their seventh setback in nine games. They haven't won consecutive games since mid-November, a drought that will hit the eight-week mark today.

The extended malaise seems to scream for some sort of change, but anyone expecting a huge shake-up should stop holding his or her breath.

In an interview with The Buffalo News following Friday's 4-2 loss to Carolina, General Manager Darcy Regier said no big changes are imminent.

"At this time of the year and where we are, I've done a lot of talking to teams around the league, so I'm aware of some of those situations," Regier said. "Right now there's nothing imminent, and that's part of the business. We'll keep working."

Does this team need a shake-up?

"I wouldn't call it a shake-up," Regier said. "If there's a move that makes sense for us, we'll do it if something is going to improve our hockey club. There's nothing imminent, as I said, right now."

There are numerous players rumored to be on the trade market -- including Anaheim stars Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry and Bobby Ryan -- but price seems to be a sticking point.

"Without specific rumors, there's truth to those rumors," Regier said. "But the price right now, and I think things will build between now and the trade deadline. I think teams that are going to be sellers are going to try and maximize what they can get for what they are selling. I think that will build as we get closer to the trade deadline."

The latest loss merely mimicked the story of the season so far. The Sabres failed in their attempt to win back-to-back games, missed multiple scoring chances and lost another key player, this time center Derek Roy.

"The effort's better," Regier said. "The scoring isn't there. The chances are there, but the finishing ... for me it's more the focus on secondary scoring. We're heavily reliant on [Jason Pominville, Thomas Vanek]. Guys are getting chances, but ultimately we've got to find a way to get them producing."

"I actually thought we were coming out of the hole here until Derek's injury. We're getting some guys back, but when you're missing two guys, [Andrej] Sekera and [Christian] Ehrhoff, on the back end, it seems that we're somewhere between five injuries and nine. But that's part of it, too."

I still go back to if we can get to where we're finishing better, getting more scoring, getting secondary scoring, that will go a long ways to helping us."

Buffalo couldn't muster a third comeback Friday night, falling behind Carolina for the final time with 11:50 to play. Buffalo quickly countered each of the Hurricanes' first two goals, but Chad LaRose's slap shot on an odd-man rush during a four-on-four proved to be the winner. Brandon Sutter added an empty-net goal with 1:31 to play.

The Sabres fell to 2-6-1 in their last nine, 3-7-2 in the last 12 and 8-13-4 since losing to Boston on Nov. 12. The setback was the Sabres' first in regulation in RBC Center since Oct. 24, 2007, ending a streak of eight straight games with at least a point.

"I don't want to stand here and talk about Grade A scoring chances because we probably had maybe our highest total of chances for the whole year, and you walk out of there with two goals," coach Lindy Ruff said. "To make the play we did on the winning goal where we get caught, it wasn't a wise decision by [Jordan Leopold] to hang in there. You can go in and take a look, but you've got to get out."

Roy watched the ending from the back. The Sabres lost him just 6:19 into the game. The center took a faceoff against Carolina's Jussi Jokinen and headed to the bench, his final shift lasting just eight seconds.

"Derek's going to be out for a little bit of time," Ruff said.

The Sabres host Winnipeg tonight.

"Same theme," Vanek said of Friday's loss. "It was a great start for us, skated well, good plays, especially our line had some good chances. I think we could've taken a 3-0 lead in the first 10 minutes, and it would've been a different game."

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Pominville travels long road to 500

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

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RALEIGH, N.C. -- Jason Pominville has come a long way. In case anyone has forgotten, he got waived once. He spent three full seasons and part of another in the minor leagues.

Now he's the Buffalo Sabres' captain and one of their most dependable players. Tonight, when the Sabres host Winnipeg, he'll become the 27th player to play 500 games with the organization.

"It's a pretty cool milestone," Pominville said prior to Friday's 4-2 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes. "To be able to do it with the same team and with a great group of guys is pretty cool. Who would have thought earlier on in my career that I would have played that many games? To be able to stick around and help the team out is definitely nice."

He'll become the third Buffalo player to hit the 500 mark this season, joining Derek Roy and Thomas Vanek. It's the third time in team history three players have reached the milestone in the same season, joining the 1977-78 trio of Craig Ramsay, Don Luce and Rick Martin, and the 2003-04 group of Curtis Brown, Jay McKee and Miroslav Satan.

Gilbert Perreault has played the most games in a Buffalo uniform with 1,191. He stepped in right away. It took Pominville more time to become a regular. He played for Rochester from 2002 to 2005, finally getting a full-time call-up early in the '05-06 season.

"It took me a little longer," said Pominville, 29. "I got sent down and was able to fight back and find a way into the lineup, and I've kind of been in ever since. It was a little bit more of a grind, but it probably made me a better player and helped me out along the way."

Tonight's game in First Niagara Center will be the Sabres' 41st, the halfway point of the regular season. That means Pominville is at the midpoint of his first season as captain.

His on-ice production has been steady -- has 42 points in 40 games -- and he says he's still the same guy off the ice, a vow he made when coach Lindy Ruff assigned the "C."

"You might have to take charge a little more whether it's in the locker room or with the coaches, but besides that it's just the same old Jason," he said. "There's been a lot more meetings with Lindy individually than I've had in previous years. That was something to expect."

"You're named for certain reasons that they see in you, and I think the players have embraced it. I was up to the challenge. It's definitely been a cool experience and a great opportunity. It's a little bit of a grind with all the injuries we've had and stuff, but guys are getting healthy and looking to get everybody on the right track."

* * *

The Sabres welcomed their franchise defenseman back against the Hurricanes, with Tyler Myers playing for the first time since breaking his wrist Nov. 19.

"It's a long process, but I'm very excited this game came," said Myers, who missed 19 games and watched the Sabres go 6-9-4 in his absence. "It's always frustrating when you're not doing as well as you want to, but I'm not going to stand here and say they need me to win. I'm very happy to be back and help the team as much as I can."

Ruff hopes Myers helps on the power play. The Sabres ranked seventh the night Myers got hurt against Phoenix. They ranked 13th entering Friday's game against Carolina.

"It gives us that look that we liked at the start of the year where you've got the one-timer on either side, so if you bring it up the walls we can shoot a little bit easier," Ruff said in RBC Center. "It gives us a couple more options. His reach and what he does with the puck once he's in the zone is something that's helped open up other people."

Myers' return sent defenseman T.J. Brennan to the press box. Cody McCormick was the healthy scratch among the forwards. Ville Leino again skated and remains a possibility to return tonight from the foot injury that has sidelined him since Dec. 13.

"Ville is progressing," Ruff said. "He was ready two weeks ago, and that's his personality. ... Ready means different things for Ville than it does for me."

* * *

Friday's meeting was the Sabres' first against Carolina since it hired Kirk Muller as head coach Nov. 28. He is 6-8-3 during his first stint behind the bench.

"The big thing is you've got to implement the mental fact that losing's not acceptable," Muller said. "The mentality that it's all about winning. I think we've got to get hungrier. We've got to get feistier. We've got to be harder to play against. Obviously, goals against is a big thing. All the top teams have a great goals against. Those are all areas that we've got to learn every day."

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5,000-plus fans watch game on scoreboard TV

T.J. Pignataro

The Buffalo News

January 7, 2012

You couldn't spread out on the couch and watch the game in your pajamas. There was a longer walk to the bathroom. And, knocking things off the "honey-do" list at intermission just wasn't a possibility.

But more than 5,000 die-hard fans of the Buffalo Sabres wouldn't trade Friday night's viewing party at First Niagara Center for any of the usual comforts of home.

They got to see the game.

"We're going," Christina Mott of Lockport told fellow Sabres fan Alisha Smith when she heard about the team inviting fans to watch the Blue-and-Gold's road game against the Carolina Hurricanes. "I like the fact they thought about us and opened it up to the community."

The event, announced days ago by the Sabres, was a party thrown by the team for all of its fans, but designed for those affected by the MSG-Time Warner Cable blackout. MSG, the network with the exclusive rights to telecast the Sabres, was removed from Time Warner on Jan. 1 after its contract expired. They remain embroiled in a dispute over programming fees.

"I hope we get to do this again but not out of necessity next time," said Ted Black, Sabres president, who took time meeting fans to trade stories about the team and their shared plight as Time Warner cable subscribers.

Friday night's party at the arena wasn't a necessity for Silver Creek resident Samantha Leclerc -- she officially switched from Time Warner to Direct TV Thursday -- but it was an opportunity to don her Ryan Miller jersey and cheer the Sabres with thousands of other fans.

"I love this," Leclerc said. "I love being here, wearing my jersey and being with everyone."

Eric Pawlikowski of West Seneca had a message for the Sabres: "Even if the Sabres games get back on Time Warner Cable, do this again."

The event was so successful that lines at concession stands were, in some places, more than a dozen fans deep. The team had handed out vouchers for free soda and free popcorn at the front gate.

If there was one thing Black wished was different about the party, it was the crush at the concession stands.

"I'm not happy with that," said Black. "To the folks who waited so long in line, I certainly apologize for that. I don't want people to have a sour experience."

It's more than likely if there's another viewing party, things will improve. The team staffed the game for about 3,000 fans.

"We didn't know what to expect," Black said. "I wouldn't have been surprised if there was 500 or the 5,000 to 6,000 we have."

Crowd count at the first intermission stood at 5,026. Those fans filled a large portion of the lower bowl. The high-definition screen on the scoreboard was lowered to that level to allow fans to view the game comfortably.

The event captured many of the features of a live Sabres game. No matter that the teams were skating 650 miles to the south while a sheet of home ice remained untouched.

Lights dimmed. The Sabres' entrance song and video -- AC/DC's "For Those About to Rock (We Salute You)" -- pumped up the crowd. Doug Allen sang the Canadian and American national anthems. The first "Let's Go Buffalo" chant erupted early in the first period. There were "oohs" and "aahs" on close chances. T-shirts were blasted into the stands. Sabretooth was in the house.

"It shows they care about their fans," said Angelica Marlatt of Buffalo, a Time Warner subscriber, who said she "had to" come to the arena because that was the only place to see the game.

William Francis of Blasdell grudgingly pulled his Ryan Miller jersey over his head Friday evening and headed to the arena for the same reason. Francis just returned "home" to Buffalo after two decades in Florida and got a brand-new large high-definition TV for Christmas.

"This is cool," Francis said, "but, I'd kind of like to be watching it in my living room.

"Man, just get it done," an exasperated Francis advised Time Warner and MSG before his face turned to a smile thinking about Sabres owner Terry Pegula. "They did a great thing by the city. Thank you, Terry."

Francis wasn't the only one saying "thanks."

A Verizon FiOS booth was attracting frequent traffic and a roving Direct TV representative was almost as popular Friday as Ryan Miller himself. Both carry MSG -- and, the Sabres games. "They [the fans] don't even care about price," quipped Don Weber of M3 Communications, wearing his trademark Direct TV jacket. "They just want their Sabres."

Ken Jagodzinski, senior marketing manager for Verizon FiOS in upstate New York, said Tuesday's home win against Edmonton -- the first game blacked out by the cable dispute -- proved "very good" for Verizon's booth with upticks in interaction and sales.

There was plenty of attention there again Friday night. Fans are finding Jagodzinski.

"Our approach has been very low-key [during the dispute between Time Warner and MSG]," Jagodzinski said. "But, we're here as an option."

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State to intervene in cable dispute

Schneiderman wants 'to help consumers out'

T.J. Pignataro

The Buffalo News

January 7, 2012

Officials of Time Warner Cable and MSG Media will meet next week with representatives from State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman's office in an attempt to resolve the dispute that has left many local hockey fans unable to watch telecasts of Buffalo Sabres games.

"We have had constructive discussions with Time Warner Cable and MSG networks as part of an ongoing effort to facilitate progress in their talks," said Michelle Duffy, Schneiderman's press officer.

"We are hopeful that the two parties will come to an agreement in short order so that Sabres, Rangers, and Knicks games are available to subscribing New Yorkers as soon as possible," she said.

Sources familiar with the situation suggested that Schneiderman decided to get involved in the stalemate -- which will cost Sabres' viewers with Time Warner Cable their third game tonight -- because he wants "to solve the problem and help consumers out."

The contract between the national cable television giant and New York City-based regional sports carrier that telecasts Buffalo Sabres games as well as sports in the New York City metropolitan area expired Jan. 1.

Since then, MSG networks have been off Time Warner Cable. Time Warner has substituted NBA-TV on its regular MSG channel this week.

The two sides reportedly had been trying to reach agreement on a new deal for nearly two years before talks broke down in recent weeks. Both sides then began an emotionally charged and highly publicized campaign to explain their positions.

Time Warner alleges that MSG seeks a 53 percent hike in its fee to telecast its channels. MSG officials have called that "a gross miscalculation" and continued to advise Time Warner's customers to switch providers in order to continue to view their favorite sports teams.

"If Time Warner Cable is willing to value our programming in the same manner as other television providers, we could make a deal today," Michael Bair, president of MSG Media, said. "Until that happens, we're encouraging Time Warner subscribers to switch providers so they don't miss any more games."

In response to the Schneiderman announcement Friday, MSG Media issued the following statement: "We appreciate the attorney general's offer to meet with us to discuss our dispute with Time Warner Cable and we look forward to meeting with him."

MSG officials said no further information about the meeting with Schneiderman was available late Friday, including whether the meeting was intended to be held jointly with Time Warner Cable officials or if each side would present its position separately.

The two sides, according to MSG, had "no meaningful dialogue" this week.

Meanwhile, Time Warner Cable officials didn't immediately respond for comment Friday. The company has relied on the same statement all week in which it says it is "committed to the negotiation process," is "still waiting for MSG to come back to the table" and that it does "want MSG to return to our channel lineup for our customers ... at a price they can afford to pay."

It was unclear late Friday whether Schneiderman was swayed by Thursday's comments by three Buffalo lawmakers.

Common Council President Richard A. Fontana, Majority Leader Demone A. Smith and University Council Member Bonnie E. Russell joined in asking Schneiderman to intervene because of the dispute's potential "to cause significant fiscal harm to the City of Buffalo and its taxpayers."

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Staal's three points help 'Canes top Sabres

Kurt Dusterberg

NHL.com

January 6, 2012

RALEIGH -- Carolina coach Kirk Muller had mixed and matched forward lines throughout his first 16 games behind the bench, trying to shake the Hurricanes out of their tailspin.

In his 17th game, he found the winning combination: [Jussi Jokinen](#), [Eric Staal](#) and [Tuomo Ruutu](#).

Staal had a goal and two assists, while his linemates each added an assist as the Hurricanes held off the [Buffalo Sabres](#) 4-2 Friday night at the RBC Center.

Staal has three goals and eight points over his last four games, showing signs that he is breaking out of a season-long slump.

"Tonight our line was aggressive and physical," said the Hurricanes captain, who raised his point total to 28 through 42 games. "When you play with a guy like Ruutu, he's a big, physical fast winger, and he's in on the D and he opens up space. We controlled the puck well, and when we had chances in and around the net, we put pucks there and had opportunities."

The game was full of scoring chances for both team. Twice the Hurricanes jumped in front by a goal, only to have the Sabres tie the game. But the Hurricanes got the critical go-ahead tally midway through the third period when [Chad LaRose](#) carried the puck in on a 2-on-1 with [Brandon Sutter](#). When Sabres defenseman [Robyn Regehr](#) took away the passing option, LaRose sent a wrister past Buffalo goaltender [Ryan Miller](#) at 8:10.

"I looked (for a) pass the whole time to see if (Regehr) would give me a lane to shoot," said LaRose, who is second on the team with 11 goals. "Once I knew he was staying in the middle, I was shooting 100 percent from there on out."

Sutter added an empty-netter to cap a night of frustration for the Sabres, who generated 33 shots, many of them quality chances from in close on Carolina goaltender [Cam Ward](#).

"I don't want to stand here and talk about Grade A scoring chances, because that was maybe our highest total chances for the whole year — and we only came away with two goals," Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff said.

The Sabres had a late opportunity to tie the game when Carolina's [Justin Faulk](#) took a cross-checking penalty with less than four minutes remaining. Still, the Sabres couldn't convert.

Starting the night just four points behind eighth-place Washington, Buffalo is looking to make a second-half charge. With defenseman [Tyler Myers](#) returning to the lineup after a 19-game absence with a broken wrist, the Sabres were hoping to build a little momentum. But with the loss to Carolina, Buffalo has gone

25 games without recording back-to-back wins.

"It's frustrating," Ruff said. "We work to find that slot area at least ten times a game. But you know what? They're only really good opportunities if you bury them. Not converting isn't any good."

Staal's 10th goal of the season at 1:11 of the third period put the Hurricanes ahead 2-1. Carolina's captain gathered a puck behind the net, brought it to his forehand and tucked it into the net. But Buffalo captain [Jason Pominville](#) tied the game 2-2 less than two minutes later. The Buffalo forward and Hurricanes defenseman [Jamie McBain](#) both swiped at the puck, with McBain appearing to knock it into his own net.

The Hurricanes have buckled under the weight of third-period comeback goals this season, but not this time. Muller had a good idea why the Hurricanes held up Friday night.

"Everyone was involved and felt good about their game," he said. "I don't think we had any passengers. We've been preaching the last couple games about our competitive level, winning one-on-one battles. I think that was the part of the game I liked the most with our team tonight."

The Hurricanes started the scoring early in the second period, wasting no time on their first power play of the game. Faulk skated the puck off the boards to the middle of the ice and ripped a shot past Miller at 2:39 for his third goal of the season -- just seven seconds after [Mike Weber](#) was sent off for high sticking [Brett Sutter](#). [Jussi Jokinen](#) and Staal earned the assists.

The Sabres answered 21 seconds later when Vanek tapped his 19th of the season past Ward from the left post after Pominville and [Jochen Hecht](#) worked the puck into scoring position. It marked the 30th time that Vanek and Pominville have recorded points on the same goal this season, second only to Vancouver's Daniel and Henrik Sedin, who have combined on 36 goals.

If Myers' return to the lineup was the good news for Buffalo, it was quickly offset by another injury. [Derek Roy](#) left the games after three shifts and did not return. Ruff indicated Roy will be out of the lineup with an upper-body injury. If he ends up missing a game, he will be the 19th player to miss time with an injury.

For the Hurricanes (14-21-7), the win is a welcome one. Like Buffalo, they have struggled to get on a roll all season. But Muller's continued preaching about competitive level is slowly taking root. For this night, it was the enough for a hard-fought win.

"It seems like good defense is leading to good offense," LaRose said. "If you know your role and everybody plays their role, you win hockey games like this."

Staal's 3 points lift Hurricanes past Sabres 4-2

Joedy McCreary

Associated Press

January 6, 2012

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) often say their play mirrors that of captain [Eric Staal](#).

Now that their once-slumping All-Star center seems to be heating up, it's no coincidence that they're threatening to escape last place.

Staal had a goal and two assists to lead the Hurricanes past the [Buffalo Sabres](#) 4-2 on Friday night.

"As he goes, we go," forward [Chad LaRose](#) said.

LaRose scored the go-ahead goal with 11:50 left, [Justin Faulk](#) also scored and [Brandon Sutter](#) added an empty-net goal for the Hurricanes, who never trailed in winning for the fourth time in seven games.

"Everyone was engaged and involved in the game," coach Kirk Muller said. "Everyone felt good about their game, I think. I don't think we had any passengers. So there is a real good atmosphere on the bench (and) a lot of it was from the players. ... That's good to see. That's where it's got to come from."

One of the Hurricanes' most consistent performances from start to finish helped them earn points for the third time in four games, as they try to dig out of the Eastern Conference cellar. They moved two points behind Tampa Bay for fourth in the Southeast Division.

And Staal's surge is a big reason for that recent push.

Now skating on a line with banger [Tuomo Ruutu](#) and [Jussi Jokinen](#), he has three goals and four assists in that four-game span. That's after he managed no goals and just three assists in the nine games before that—including six games in a row without a point.

"Some nights, you just have more time with the puck than the other nights, (when) you just don't have that much time and there's guys in your face," Staal said.

"I think tonight, our line, we were aggressive, we were physical. When you play with a guy like (Ruutu)—and obviously Jus can find those soft areas and make those passes—but (Ruutu) is a big, physical, strong winger and he's in on the D and kind of opens up space, and we controlled the puck well."

[Jason Pominville](#) was credited with a bizarre goal and added an assist, and [Thomas Vanek](#) also scored for Buffalo. The Sabres have lost nine of 12.

[Cam Ward](#) made 31 saves for Carolina while [Ryan Miller](#) stopped 31 shots for the Sabres.

That these teams were involved in a tight game at the RBC Center wasn't much of a surprise: Five of their previous eight meetings here wound up going to overtime, and the Hurricanes won four of those.

For much of the way, this one appeared headed to OT, too—until LaRose broke a 2-all tie with his 4-on-4 goal midway through the third period.

LaRose skated down the ice on a 2-on-1 rush and sent a hard wrist shot over Miller's shoulder for his 11th goal and second in two games.

“The pass was blocked,” Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. “He just caught the far side with the shot.”

The Hurricanes then killed a late penalty after Faulk was called for cross checking, and Sutter sealed it with his empty-netter with 1:31 left.

“They're only really good opportunities if you bury them,” Ruff said. “We work to get position offensively. It was good. Not converting isn't any good.”

Staal put the Hurricanes up 2-1 in the opening moments of the third when he collected a rebound off the backboards and slipped it behind Miller for his 10th goal.

But an odd bounce led to the Sabres' tying goal with 12:56 left when Pominville whacked the stick of Carolina defenseman [Jamie McBain](#) near the end line. That sent the puck past a disbelieving Ward.

That third-period flurry came after a first period that had no goals but plenty of scoring chances for both teams, and a second that included goals by each team in a 21-second span.

Faulk put Carolina up 1-0 with 17:21 left in the period. He blasted a slap shot past Miller for the Hurricanes' third power-play goal in nine games. Buffalo tied it moments later when Vanek chipped a rebound past Ward from point-blank range for his team-best 19th goal.

NOTES: Ruff said C [Derek Roy](#) will be out “for a little bit of time” with an unspecified upper body injury. ... Buffalo D [Tyler Myers](#) was back in the lineup after missing 19 games with a broken wrist. He rang the post with a slap shot about 11 minutes in. ... The Sabres fell to 13-6-4 against Carolina since the teams met in a seven-game Eastern Conference final in 2006. ... Carolina moved to .500 (10-10-3) on home ice. ... The Hurricanes lead the season series 2-1.

Sabres Fall in Carolina 4-2

Dan Cave

WGR 550

January 6, 2012

Tyler Myers' return wasn't enough to give the Sabres a boost in Carolina on Friday night. Eric Staal, who has struggled for the better part of this season, racked up 3 points in a 4-2 Hurricanes win.

The first period ended in a scoreless tie, but not without lack of chances by both teams. The Sabres had several glorious chances to open the scoring, but couldn't find the net. Myers, in his return from injury, blasted a shot that rang off the post and Cam Ward did the rest with 12 saves in the opening period. Ryan Miller also turned in a very solid 20 minutes, stopping all 15 shots he faced.

Carolina finally got on the board 2:39 into the second period when Justin Faulk fired a shot from the blue line that beat Miller on the power play. The Sabres were able to respond almost immediately as Thomas Vanek beat Ward just 21 seconds later. A bouncing puck in front of the net landed on Vanek's stick and he was able to roof the puck over the sprawling goaltender to make the score 1-1.

The Hurricanes and Sabres swapped bizarre goals in the third period, each team finding the net from odd angles. Carolina took a 2-1 lead early in the final frame when much-maligned captain Eric Staal backhanded the puck from behind the net, a shot that deflected off Miller and over the goalline. Pominville was credited with a goal a little over five minutes later when he swatted the stick of Jamie McBain near the Hurricanes net. McBain lost possession and the puck slipped between the pads of Ward to tie the game up for a second time.

Later in the period, Myers came up with a huge defensive play breaking up a 2-on-1 break for the Canes. Moments later, however, Carolina came up with another odd-man rush when Jordan Leopold got caught pinching in and Chad LaRose wristed a shot past Miller to put the Hurricanes ahead 3-2. Carolina added a late empty-net goal for the 4-2 win.

Derek Roy left this game in the first period with an upper-body injury and did not return. Also, Thomas Vanek scored his 223rd goal as a member of the Sabres, moving him into 8th place on the team's all-time list, one ahead of Rene Robert and one behind Miro Satan.

The Sabres still have not won back-to-back games since a four-game winning streak from November 4-11. Buffalo is back home tomorrow night for a meeting with the Winnipeg Jets at 7:00 p.m.

Sabres Ruff knows the time is now

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 6, 2012

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) -- Now it's time to see what this Sabres team is made of. The injury that I think hurt this team the most ends tonight with the return of Tyler Myers.

Myers missed 19 games with a broken wrist. The team has not won two straight since his absence and overall it won just six of the 19 games.

Myers has been on the ice for practice for awhile and Lindy Ruff is not going to baby him tonight, "He's had a lot of good conditioning and we're hoping that he can lead our D in ice time tonight. That's really my goal, I said we're not going to hold back. I think we have to evaluate it as it goes, but the goal is to get him right back in the groove and play him plus 20 minutes."

Despite beating Edmonton, the Sabres still hold down 11th in the East and are three points behind 10th place Winnipeg, four in back of 9th place New Jersey and 8th place Washington.

Ruff already said Thursday that he's going to ride Ryan Miller to try to get him going. He's now going by the old saying, "Your best players must be your best players", "If you look at the Hecht line and the Roy line, we need them to be our best players. After that, the kids can fill in, Luke and Kass and those guys. On the offensive side, we need our best players to make the difference on the power play or if it's 5-on-5."

There are 39 games gone, many of them wasted. With Ruff going with Miller and junking his goaltending rotation he said, "We're at a stage now where we have to start making a move. We're starting to get healthy, we just got Nathan back which was a plus for us. Getting Myers back should be a plus on the back end. We're still missing a couple of key pieces on the back end, but we've got to set course, we've got to win games. We're going to have to win some game where we don't play well in, but the goaltender steals it."

With 33 points Carolina is dead last in the East. The Hurricanes have only won one of their last four, but overall are 3-2-1 lately.

Cam Ward has played in 11 of 12 games and has 35 games in this season going 13-15-6 with a 3.22 goals against and .897 save percentage.

Eric Staal is having an awful year. The Hurricanes captain has nine goals and 16 assists in 41 games and is -23. He only has goals in one of his last 12 games. He scored two goals and an assist December 29th vs Toronto.

Jaroslav Spacek has played 11 games since being acquired from Montreal. He has one goal and three assists.

The Sabres healthy scratches are Cody McCormick and T.J. Brennan.

Join Schopp and the Bulldog for the pregame at 6:00 when they'll be joined by Lindy Ruff, Tyler Myers and Mike Weber.

Sabres Myers is back

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

January 6, 2012

Raleigh, NC (WGR 550) -- The Sabres are finally getting a break with injuries as Tyler Myers is back after missing 19 games with a broken wrist.

The Sabres young defenseman can't wait for the puck to drop, "Definitely excited and very happy to be back."

Myers has been on the ice for practice for awhile and Lindy Ruff is not going to baby him tonight, "He's had a lot of good conditioning and we're hoping that he can lead our D in ice time tonight. That's really my goal, I said we're not going to hold back. I think we have to evaluate it as it goes, but the goal is to get him right back in the groove and play him plus 20 minutes."

Myers has been given the OK by the doctor that the bone is fully healed. He played well his last few games before the injury and it was because he was physical. Myers said the injury will not force him to back off, "I think it's exactly how I should look at making my return. You look at those last two games and really analyze it and why I was successful in those two games it's the physical play that is a big part of what makes me the player I am and I'm going to have to try to get back to that. I got good news from the doctor so I don't think I should look at my wrist as a factor to take a step back from any physical play. As long as I know that it's completely healed, I should have a lot of confidence going in."

Myers seems to be at his best when's he's hitting Ruff said, "He just gets involved in the game more. He's engaged, it's a mentality just to be ready, stay on top of people, finish checks, it's just an awareness when you're on the ice." Myers said, "I think a lot of it is the mental side of the game. I think when I play physical it gets me into the game more and now that I've figured out that it does happen, I need to make sure I do it every night."

If the Sabres are to make the playoffs, I think Myers has to be a key figure. He doesn't think his absence meant that much or that he can get them wins, "I'm not going to stand here and say they need me to win. I'm very happy to be back, to help the team as much as I can, but they were doing just fine without. We obviously have to do better. It's not just one or two guys, it's the whole team and we need the whole team to have the success that we expect out of ourselves and that the fans and everyone around us expects out of us so we're going to have to come together as a group and start to figure it out."

Thousands at FNC, and AG gets involved

George Richert

WIVB

January 6, 2012

The State Attorney General is stepping in the rink to referee the dispute that's put Buffalo Sabres fans with cable in the penalty box.

[Attorney General Eric Schneiderman released a statement Friday](#), the day after some Buffalo lawmakers asked him to step in, saying he would ask both MSG and Time Warner officials to meet in his office next week. Time Warner customers would couldn't watch the game turned out by the thousands to watch the Sabres play the Carolina Canes at First Niagara Center Friday night.

>> [PHOTO GALLERY: Sabres vs. Canes](#)

The arena almost had the feel of a real Sabres game. 5,000 fans came out to watch the game, many because they couldn't watch it at home. [The Pegulas let them in the arena for free, and even gave them free popcorn and pop.](#)

Deborah Lewandowski said, "Because we are fans and there's a lot of us. We want them back."

The Sabres opened up the arena and let fans in for free, giving them free popcorn and pop on day six of [MSG's decision to pull Sabres' games off of Time Warner](#). But now, the NYS Attorney General hopes to mediate an end to the dispute, saying, "We have had constructive discussions with Time Warner Cable and MSG Networks as part of an ongoing effort to facilitate progress in their talks. We are hopeful that the two parties will come to an agreement in short order so that Sabres, Rangers, and Knicks games are available to subscribing New Yorkers as soon as possible."

Sherry Park isn't sure if that will make a difference and said, "I don't know. It'd kind of hard. Everybody's trying to step in and stuff. Hopefully, being the Attorney General, I hope he can make a bigger difference."

"It's a shame that the Attorney General of New York has to waste his time. With the stuff that we have going on in New York, because a company wants to raise 52 percent. I mean, I can see where you can make a raise, but not many of us get a 52 percent raise when we go in to do our jobs," said Jeff Schultz.

MSG denies asking for a 52 percent raise and says, "We appreciate the Attorney General's offer to meet with us to discuss our dispute with Time Warner Cable and we look forward to meeting with him."

"All we've asked is Time Warner recognize the value of our programming and our networks the same as other TV providers, no more, no less," said MSG general manager Dan Ronayne.

Time Warner communications manager Joli Plicknette-Farmen countered, "They're saying our numbers are inaccurate, but they're not coming out publicly and saying what numbers they're requesting. We're still looking forward to MSG coming back with a reasonable proposal so that we can move forward and get the Sabres back on for our western New York fans."

Schneiderman has already met with Time Warner and MSG representatives, but not together. He hopes to meet with officials from both companies next week.

Rochester Amerks lose in 8-round shootout

Staff Report

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

January 7, 2012

Derek Whitmore of Greece scored his team-leading 15th goal of the season but the Rochester Americans opened a three-game weekend road trip with a 4-3 shootout loss to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton at the Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

The shootout lasted eight rounds before Eric Tangradi beat Rochester goalie Drew MacIntyre to end it.

Paul Szczechura and Jonathan Parker each scored in the shootout to keep the Amerks alive.

Maxime Legault gave the Amerks, who are 4-1-0-1 in their last six games, a 3-2 lead on a short-handed score with 8:16 remaining.

Igor Gongalsky stole the puck in the corner and found a trailing Legault for his third goal of the season.

Tangradi netted the equalizer less than two minutes later to force overtime for the Penguins.

Rochester took a 1-0 lead with 2:49 left in the first period when Phil Varone backhanded home a rebound shot.

Varone has now recorded a point in five straight games.

W-B/Scranton tallied a pair of goals in the second to take a 2-1 lead.

Whitmore tied the game at 3 when he one-timed a pass from Shawn Szydlowski during a 2-on-1 rush 1:12 into the final period.

MacIntyre made 29 saves in regulation and overtime and stopped five shots in the shootout.

Jason Williams had a goal and two assists for the Penguins, who killed all four of the Amerks' power plays.

Rochester plays at Binghamton tonight before heading to Hershey for Sunday's matchup.

Noel says blowouts no big deal

Tim Campbell

Winnipeg Free Press

January 7, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- It wasn't the two straight losses that prompted Jets coach Claude Noel to speak passionately to reporters on Friday.

It was the reaction to the dramatic fall-off of the team's game in 7-4 and 4-0 losses in Montreal and Toronto respectively that had left an impression on the coach.

"This is getting magnified because there's nothing else to talk about," Noel said while his team was engaging in an optional skate on Friday at the First Niagara Center, site of tonight's NHL game between the Jets and Buffalo Sabres. "There's nothing else to do but figure out what type of situation we're going through.

"We're in a two-game scenario that people look and say, 'They had such a good month of December.' The road record has been magnified ... but thank God I put this thing in perspective because if I had to read and listen, we would be in a different institution and it wouldn't be the hockey institution.

"To me, there's no panic, no crisis. This is all part of the season."

With 12 home games, the Jets went 10-3-1 in the month of December.

Noel said he's not yielding on his perspective, that Winnipeg's season is not ruined because of two games.

The Jets are 19-16-5 heading for tonight's game.

"In Canada, they embrace it and it's great," the coach said. "We're happy that we're in the running and we're there. We're knocking on the door. We're still there. We're no different than other teams battling. We're going to be battling from now until the end of the year and that's great."

Friday, the Jets had a video session in the late morning and then opted to give many of their players the choice of whether to skate or not.

"We have some guys with a little bit of the flu that's been going around for about four days now," Noel said. "It's a short stint, this flu thing.

"Between that and three (games) in four days, we watched some video this morning. We watched some things. We're trying to get ourselves back on track in some areas.

"We can get it done with what we have. We just have to be better."

The coach said he hopes that centre Bryan Little, now out eight games after taking a shot off his foot on Dec. 17, could be a player tonight. But neither Noel nor Little were certain.

Noel said there could be options for Little, defenceman Mark Flood and recently recalled forward Patrice Cormier to all draw in tonight.

Defenceman Dustin Byfuglien, out since Christmas with a lower-body injury, remains a few days away.

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Jets sure aren't happy

Tim Campbell

Winnipeg Free Press

January 7, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Winnipeg Jets will remain stuck as the most-displaced NHL franchise for 2012-13 after the NHLPA rejected the league's realignment proposal.

The Jets will continue to play in the Southeast Division with 24 games against Tampa Bay, Florida, Carolina and Washington. Worse for their opponents, they'll need to travel to Winnipeg three times apiece once again next season.

Jets governor and True North chairman Mark Chipman declined comment on the issue when reached late Friday night. He said he will address reporters early today, having been granted leave by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to express his viewpoint.

The league is quietly furious that a realignment plan strongly backed by fans and teams alike is being held up by the players' association, which is readying itself to enter collective bargaining with the league.

The current CBA expires after this season.

Numerous teams are affected adversely by retaining the status quo, including the Jets.

Under the realignment, Winnipeg would have played an additional 13 to 15 additional games in its own time zone, the Central, next season. It plays just three road games this season in the Central time zone.

Travel to one side of the continent or the other is part of either plan.

Under the proposed realignment, the Jets would have to play seven games west of the Central time zone every season, as opposed to four this season. With status quo, that's likely to be six anyway next season.

But under realignment, their travel to the east would be reduced significantly. This season, they play 34 games in the Eastern time zone. Next season, that would have been shaved in half, to 17 games, but the NHLPA wouldn't agree to it.

Leading men

Noel, Ladd explain what makes things tick in the Jets' room

Tim Campbell

Winnipeg Free Press

January 7, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The fascination with the Winnipeg Jets extends in a lot of directions, including the makeup of the team.

It's a makeup head coach Claude Noel frequently says he likes and one that he says is well-led.

How does Noel know this and what does he mean by it?

"In the end, it is about the room," said Noel, who has won professional championships as both player and coach. "I've sat in the room and I've won with players in those rooms and it is about you. Yes, the coach, he steers it, but the more that goes on, it's really about the relationships you have in the room and the accountability between the players.

"That gets driven by you early in the year but you pass it on and it's driven by them."

In Winnipeg, Noel's method has changed little from his season spent coaching the AHL's Manitoba Moose to this year's first full-time NHL assignment.

The 56-year-old native of Kirkland Lake, Ont., takes stock of his roster, sets the overall game plan and then starts the dialogue with his captain and his players.

Early in the season, Noel pushes hard on his strategic agenda, all the while meeting regularly with the team's captain -- in the present case, Andrew Ladd -- and other leaders to get feedback, provide the logic to what they're doing and direction for ways to tack through the daily ebbs and flows of a season.

His eye is constantly in observation mode but Noel prefers the frank one-on-one encounters at least once a month.

"I don't buffalo players," he said. "I just want to give it to you honestly."

The process for these Jets is incomplete, just halfway through the season as of today.

It has ebbed and flowed as he and the team have expected it would, each new to the other, and that includes this week's troubled waters from two resounding defeats in Montreal and Toronto.

But for the dynamics within the team, talk and their body language suggests that the ice has been broken between camps that were strangers as recently as this summer.

The process, according to a key member of the Jets' leadership group, is working.

"It's played out pretty well," said Jets defenceman Mark Stuart, one of the team's alternate captains. "On any team, really, the coach is going to take care of his business at the beginning. He's going to be on guys and try to get his plan in place.

"But after a certain point, it all depends on the team. After a certain point, the guys need to take over because it is our locker-room, it is our team.

"It's something we have to police and I think we've done a pretty good job of taking that over for now. Obviously you still need to get your ass kicked once in a while by your coach but it should be taken care of in the room first, really."

Goalie Chris Mason, at 35 the oldest member of the team by nearly four years, is no timid voice in the Jets locker-room and on the question of leadership, he said the big picture is every bit as important as the daily "crisis."

Mason reminded a questioner that the adjustment issues for the former Atlanta Thrashers, 17 of whom are now Jets, are extensive, from coaching to style to scrutiny to just plain living.

"It's been a pretty big adjustment for everybody," Mason said. "(Noel) understands that and he likes to give quite a bit of responsibility in the room to sort certain things out.

"A lot of times it's older guys and our captains. Our captain has been a great leader for this team. One of his strongest attributes is how hard he works and how he carries himself.

"When you lead by example, that's the best way for people to follow. When the leader has the character, the work ethic, that's the standard for what's expected of everybody."

The same message came from Stuart.

"We have a good group of guys that know how to (lead) but it all starts with our captain," Stuart said. "His career speaks for itself, the things he's done speak for themselves. He's a guy we all look up to and we look to him to lead us and I think he's done a great job with that."

Ladd, now 26, has emerged as the leader of the group but not a single person consulted for this story suggested he's anything close to the dominating kind of personality a la Mark Messier or Chris Pronger or even more familiar to Winnipeggers, a Mike Keane.

The captain himself said this week that's not him and that wouldn't work for him.

"It can't be one person," Ladd said. "It's a group of people and I think the best way to do it is by your actions, how hard you work in practice and the little things you do during games.

"There are times to step up and speak but you have to have different guys doing that. If it's one guy all the time, it starts to get old and it goes in one ear and out the other."

The generalities are about as far as Ladd or any other member of the team would go when asked to talk about the specifics of team leadership, like who says or does what to whom.

And that's no surprise. The locker-room is a private, confidential place and anyone who tries to invite, inject or weasel themselves into it rarely gets anywhere.

Still, the Jets leadership pattern is evident.

"There are guys who are more talkers," Ladd said. "They try to get energy going. There are more serious guys who just go about their business and do their talking on the ice. I might fall under that category. Usually when those guys speak, it has more impact because it's not all the time."

Those interactions and the attitudes they develop are the critical phase.

"One of the keys to coaching is that you have to get your players to care like you care," Noel said. "When you do, they care about each other like that, and when they do and they care about the outcome, that's when you've really got something -- something that can win."

And that would be well-led.

Captain

Andrew Ladd

Stanley Cups 2006 Carolina, 2010 Chicago

Is the central figure on the Jets but is quick to insist the team's leadership is a multi-faceted, multi-level equation. "It goes from the four or five guys (coach Claude Noel) really looks to to lead the way but there are so many guys who have been around who have been part of that and you have to lean on each other for advice."

Alternates

Mark Stuart,

Dustin Byfuglien, Chris Thorburn, Tobias Enstrom

Stuart, the warrior, is undoubtedly a binding force. "The same way every night and he's a fierce competitor and that's just the way he is," goalie Chris Mason said about Stuart. "He can't help himself. That's leadership and that's contagious."

Byfuglien is an immensely talented player but very private and something of a mystery to fans. But more than most realize, he is veritably loved in the room, an integral part of this team's heartbeat, including via leadership.

About Thorburn the banger and Enstrom, the small but crafty defenceman, here's Stuart's opinion: "Some guys talk more. Some guys more lead by example. Chris Thorburn, Toby Enstrom, guys like that, are guys that guys look up to on the team."

The old pros

"Experience" and "guys who have been around" are two phrases commonly heard in conversations for this story. Fitting the bill are defenceman Johnny Oduya, centre Jim Slater, goalie Chris Mason and even the soft-spoken Nik Antropov.

It is this group of players -- "unlettered leaders," the term used by one member of the team -- that is a vital element, because if the leaders were just doing their own thing and the rest of the team didn't bother following, it would eventually be pretty hard to miss.

New kids on the block

New players and young players have the toughest time cracking into the identifiable or recognized leadership group. That's just the social reality of most NHL locker-rooms. The Jets are a younger-than-average team but that does not preclude leadership traits. "I have learned this over my career, that everyone has the ability to lead, whether by just doing your job or making the right choices," said goalie Chris Mason, specifically referring to young Jets like, Evander Kane or Zach Bogosian for instance. And new Jets, like Tanner Glass and Kyle Wellwood, bring a wealth of wisdom but require some amount of time to become totally familiar and comfortable inside their new team. Rarely does a young or new player arrive and just "take over."

Jets' Ladd lacking?

Captain feels he can contribute more, but team happy with leadership

Ted Wyman

Winnipeg Sun

January 7, 2012

BUFFALO - Andrew Ladd is his own harshest critic.

If he's not doing things right, he's the first to admit it. Take his play this season, for example.

"I haven't been completely happy with what I've done," the Winnipeg Jets captain said Friday. "I'm happy with the effort I've put forth but I'm definitely looking to bring more than what I have."

There are some who would argue Ladd is having a disappointing season. He led the Atlanta Thrashers in scoring last season with 59 points, but this year he's seventh on the team with 19 points through 40 games. That puts him on pace for about 40 points this season.

The Jets gave Ladd a big contract extension in the off-season worth \$4.4 million per year over the next five years, so big things are expected of him.

"There's no one who has higher expectations than myself, I can tell you that," Ladd said as the Jets (19-16-5) prepared to take on the Buffalo Sabres Saturday night. "I'm a perfectionist and I want to be great every night. I have that pressure within myself."

The pressure is on to score regularly, but it's also on Ladd to be the unquestioned leader of a young team that has seen good times and bad and is struggling to find its identity on the road.

It's times like these, when the Jets have just suffered back-to-back humiliations at the hands of the Montreal Canadiens and Toronto Maple Leafs, that Ladd is under the gun to step up.

The captain is not big on inspirational speeches, but prefers to lead by example and that means maintaining a strong work ethic and a level of accountability.

"If you're not responsible for yourself and holding yourself accountable then you can't hold other people accountable and you can't be the one to speak up and call other people out," Ladd said.

The Jets would be best off not to follow Ladd's example in some situations, particularly when it comes to taking penalties in the opposing team's zone or making occasional soft plays at the blue-lines, leading to turnovers.

Those types of plays have certainly been noticed by the fans, but don't seem to affect Ladd's reputation in the dressing room.

The Jets look up to this guy because of his personality and coach Claude Noel believes leadership is a strong point on the team.

“I have no question marks with the leaders,” Noel said. “Their hearts are in the right place and they want to win.

“I don’t question Andrew Ladd as a leader or a captain. You don’t always have to have the Mark Messiers of the world. There’s different ways to lead. I wouldn’t put any of this on his shoulders. It has nothing to do with leadership. It has everything to do with team play.”

Noel bristled a bit when he believed the team’s leadership was being questioned, but the query was more about finding out how much of an effect a good leader can have when the team hits a bump in the road, so to speak.

A few of the Jets said there have been player meetings in the last two days with plenty of good communication, which Ladd believes is the key to righting the ship.

“When things aren’t going good, you’re always talking and trying to figure out ways to get out of the hole and take momentum in a different direction,” said Ladd, who is second on the team with 13 goals this season.

“You’ve always got to have that communication to get better.”

That’s an important thing about Ladd. He knows he can always be better, as a player and as a captain and says he’s striving to learn and improve in both areas.

That’s an example any team could get behind.

But right now, a few timely goals and a couple of big hits wouldn’t hurt a bit, either.

No realignment big loss for Jets

Ken Wiebe
Winnipeg Sun
January 7, 2012

So it looks like the Winnipeg Jets are going to be stuck in the Southeast Division of the Eastern Conference for one more season.

News broke early Friday night that the NHLPA had declined to approve the realignment plan and modified playoff format that was passed last month at the NHL board of governors meeting.

So instead of what was expected to be a rubber stamp or formality, many believe the NHLPA has fired the opening salvo in what could be a tenuous negotiation on a new collective bargaining agreement.

The current CBA expires Sept. 15 and while many believed negotiations would begin in earnest after the NHL all-star break at the end of this month, many would argue the clock just started ticking.

Naturally, the NHL wasn't happy about the news and deputy commissioner Bill Daly released a statement pointing out all legal options will be pursued.

So while the NHL press release suggested the issue is dead for now and the proposal won't be implemented in time for the 2012-13 season, some believe there could still be a glimmer of hope.

That's an issue for another day.

But for argument's sake, let's assume an agreement can't be reached in time for next season. What does that mean for the Jets?

For starters, it means their chief rivals for next season will be Florida, Tampa Bay, Washington and Carolina (hold your applause, please).

It also means two visits to the MTS Centre by Original Six teams like the Montreal Canadiens, Toronto Maple Leafs, Boston Bruins and New York Rangers.

Count that as a silver lining.

Still, the Jets were among the teams believed to benefit most by the realignment and governor Mark Chipman voiced his unwavering support in December.

Not only would the Jets find themselves in a conference with Chicago and Detroit, there was a natural geographic rival in Minnesota, along with teams in the same time zone in St. Louis, Nashville and Dallas. Columbus rounded out the eight clubs that were to battle for four playoff spots in the new world order.

The revamped alignment simply makes sense for the Jets, though some were hoping for a renewal of the old Smythe Division rivalries and more games against Western Canadian teams.

While the Jets travel schedule hasn't been as horrible as many suspected it would be this season in the Southeast Division, the miles are due to increase next year as they will add a swing through California to the flight plan if the current format is preserved.

The Jets will comment on the matter Saturday morning , but it's safe to assume they aren't happy with the development and we can't blame them for that.

However, the issue that's far more troubling is the prospect of a lockout next fall.

After Manitobans got their NHL team back after a 15-year absence, the thought of a potential work stoppage makes most sick to their stomachs.

Jets Little's foot inches back

Ted Wyman
Winnipeg Sun
January 7, 2012

BUFFALO - Bryan Little is skating, his injured foot is feeling much better and there's a chance — and let's be clear, there is no guarantee — that he'll return to the Winnipeg Jets lineup Saturday night against the Sabres.

Little has been on the shelf for exactly three weeks after taking a shot off his foot and has been skating since Monday.

The Jets brought him on their road trip in hopes of getting him in the lineup but he watched the first two games from the press box.

After getting shut out last game and losing the last two by a combined score of 11-3, the Jets need all the offensive help they can get.

"I think there's a chance," said Little, who skated for an extra half-hour after the Jets optional practice at the First Niagara Center Friday.

"Today I felt pretty good and I hope I can help out the lineup. Obviously I want to contribute as much as I can."

The Jets are 4-3-1 since Little was injured Dec. 17.

Juggling act

If Little does return, the Jets will need to take him off injured reserve and make a coinciding roster move. It could be as simple as putting injured defenceman Dustin Byfuglien on injured reserve retroactively.

At the start of the road trip, Jets coach Claude Noel said he hoped Byfuglien could join the team at some point along the way, but he said no call was put out for the big defenceman Friday.

The Jets also are carrying Patrice Cormier, who was recalled from St. John's Thursday. They could send Cormier down in order to activate Little, although Noel suggested he was looking for a way to get the centre into the lineup.

Noel juggled his lines during Thursday's loss to the Maple Leafs in Toronto and he's likely to do the same Saturday, especially if Little and Cormier go into the lineup.

Candidates to be scratches include RW Eric Fehr, who has no goals this season, RW Kyle Wellwood, who saw time on the fourth line Thursday and C Tim Stapleton, who has been battling the flu.

Swedish pride

Defenceman Toby Enstrom was thrilled for his Swedish countrymen, who won the world junior hockey championship with a 1-0 win on an overtime goal by Mika Zibanejad against Russia Thursday night.

Since the Jets were playing, Enstrom saw very little of the game, but he did manage to catch the overtime period.

“I’m happy for the guys, of course,” Enstrom said. “We haven’t won the world juniors for 31 years but we’ve been close the last couple of years and we finally got the gold medal.”

The Swedes outshot the Russians 58-17 in the game but couldn’t score in regulation, which put extra pressure on them in the extra frame.

“I’m glad Sweden scored and I’m sure the whole Swedish country is happy for the gold medal they got us,” Enstrom said.

“It’s big. Sweden’s been close the last couple of years and more and more people are starting to get into watching these types of games. It’s good hockey and it’s fun to watch and I think it will be important for the Swedish kids growing up to see how fun it is to win.”