



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Sabres' win streak comes at a price

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 1, 2012

MONTREAL -- Even after winning consecutive games for the first time in 11 weeks, Sabres coach Lindy Ruff left Montreal shaking his head at Buffalo's bad luck.

The Sabres used a 40-shot barrage to earn a 3-1 victory over Montreal, giving them back-to-back victories for the first time since Nov. 11. Thomas Vanek, though, wasn't around to celebrate. The Sabres' leading goal scorer suffered an upper-body injury in the first period Tuesday. He played a regular shift, including the final one of the frame, but didn't return for the second.

"The sense of winning was great," Ruff said. "The sense of losing Thomas to another injury is something that you just shake your head as a coach again. You're trying to gain ground. You're trying to move up. You're trying to put a little streak together, and we lose another important piece.

"He's going to be out for a period of time. ... Our initial thought is maybe a week, but our doctor is going to have to evaluate it. It's the type of injury we're going to have to dig a little deeper on."

The Sabres will go for three wins in a row tonight when they host the New York Rangers in First Niagara Center.

Despite their persistent peppering of Canadiens goalie Carey Price, the Sabres were stuck in a 1-1 tie entering the third period. They scored the game winner with 13:43 left.

Brad Boyes circled behind the Montreal net and spun at the goal line with two defenders on him. He put a pass through the crease perfectly onto the stick of Paul Gaustad, who deflected the puck home and immediately pointed to Boyes as the crowd of 21,273 in Bell Centre groaned.

"I know that's where Paul's going to be," said Boyes, who earned just his second assist and third point in 15 games. "I was just looking to throw it on net. Especially with those guys, you've got to change the way you play because you know that's where they're going to be. Paul did a great job of getting in position and being strong with it."

The goal was Gaustad's second in five games and fifth of the season. He earned his second assist of the night when he helped Patrick Kaleta find the empty net with 51.1 seconds left.

The three-point night wasn't what had the Canadiens cursing Gaustad, however. He had a verbal battle with Montreal's Max Pacioretty following Kaleta's goal, and the Habs said Gaustad taunted Pacioretty by bringing up Zdeno Chara. The Boston captain broke Pacioretty's neck on a hit in Montreal.

"I don't think it was right to talk about a guy that had an incident that broke his neck," Montreal forward Mathieu Darche said. "It was classless. They were arguing, and he said, 'Where's Chara? Where's Chara?' You know that's what he implies."

Said Montreal's Erik Cole: "I didn't hear it, but I know a lot of guys from our bench were asking him where he was when [Milan] Lucic ran [Ryan] Miller."

Miller was at his best while the Canadiens tried for the comeback. The Sabres' goaltender made 13 saves in the third period and finished with 27. His 234th victory tied Dominik Hasek's franchise record.

"It's one of those things you kind of smile about looking back later on," Miller said. "I'm going to take it for what it is because I think Dom would have won a few shootouts in his day."

The Canadiens put the Sabres in a 1-0 hole after just 4:09. Pacioretty stole the puck from Matt Ellis and skated three-quarters of the ice alone toward Miller. The goalie stopped the breakaway attempt, but Pacioretty was still alone for the rebound and slid it under Miller's right pad.

Buffalo got on the board with 4:01 elapsed in the second, tying the game at 1-1. Christian Ehrhoff entered the Montreal zone and dropped a pass for Gaustad. The center quickly slid the puck to Ville Leino on the left side. The winger dangled to get around sliding defenseman Raphael Diaz, then ripped a shot past Price's glove.

The goal was Leino's first since Dec. 7, ending an 11-game drought.

"The last five games I've been feeling confident," Leino said. "I've been working hard on my game every day. It's been a tough season for me and the whole team, but hopefully we'll start to get going here."

"We were skating well. We were shooting. We were confident in making plays when they were there, really hard on the puck. That's how we've got to play. When you work hard and make plays, it's contagious."

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Sabres look to Ennis for creativity as a center

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 1, 2012

MONTREAL -- Tyler Ennis, at times, can be the Sabres' top playmaker. He's shifty, has speed and knows how to pass.

Now that he's playing center, Ennis hopes he'll have the puck more and show those skills. It might help Buffalo sustain an offensive attack.

Ennis, who'd been out since reinjuring his left ankle Dec. 17, returned to the lineup Tuesday night for the Sabres' 3-1 victory over to Montreal. In a change, the erstwhile left winger skated at center in the middle of right wing Drew Stafford and left wing Nathan Gerbe.

"I can play center, and I'm excited to," Ennis said in Bell Centre. "Maybe they just want a little change or switch it up a bit. I'm comfortable with it, and they're comfortable with it. It's going to be fun."

The move to the middle comes with the Sabres struggling to score and short at the position. They entered Tuesday's schedule averaging just 2.37 goals per game, which ranked 25th in the NHL.

"We need a little bit of creativity there in the middle," coach Lindy Ruff said. "I think that his speed and creativity should give us some of that. I think he's always had a pretty good link with Stafford. We started the season with those guys together, and obviously it wasn't a great start for those two individuals, but Tyler was in on a great number of Staff's goals last year, and I think if he could free him up for that extra one or two times during the game, it should help us generate a few more goals."

The Sabres also needed a center because Jochen Hecht is sidelined indefinitely with a concussion. Center Paul Gaustad also returned Tuesday after missing three games with an upper-body injury.

"We're going to need somebody to step in there," Ruff said. "It's a little bit of a gamble, it's a little bit of a guess [on Ennis], but it's something worth taking a shot at."

Ennis said he played center during his first two seasons of junior hockey and had a 50-50 split between center and left wing during his final two seasons. The Sabres used him at center at minor-league Portland in 2009-10, but he's been almost exclusively at left wing in the NHL.

"I feel like I might have the puck a little bit more, kind of create a little more that way," Ennis said. "Just maybe having the puck a little more, skating the puck out, kind of taking charge a little bit. I played center in the minors. I played it in juniors, a little bit up here every now and then, so I'm excited to just switch it up a bit."

Ennis, who played in all 82 games as a rookie last season, skated for just the 16th time this year. He suffered an ankle injury Oct. 22 when he crashed into the post in Tampa Bay. He sprained it again Dec. 17 in Pittsburgh when he turned to block a shot.

He was getting close to returning a couple of weeks ago but had another setback.

"Everything was feeling good," Ennis said. "I was fine walking around. I could do everything. I was skating good, then in practice I just kind of did the same twist movement and kind of did it again. We were more patient this time and took a lot of time off, didn't try to rush it. It feels great now. I can do everything fast, I can battle, and I'm just going to try to provide us with energy."

* * *

Rookie Luke Adam enjoyed his All-Star experience. The opening game after it? Not so much. Ruff scratched the forward hours after saying Adam's journey to Ottawa probably wasn't worth it for his forward.

Adam has gone 17 games without a goal and has just one point in the last 22 outings.

"Luke has had a tough run," Ruff said. "Like any young player, he's going to have his ups and downs. He had a couple tough games on the road. I actually thought that [Matt] Ellis and [Cody] McCormick had been playing better and the puck possession was good. It's not earth-shattering that a young player sits out a game. I think it's the trials and tribulations a lot of time, but he's got to stay around the puck more."

* * *

The Sabres want to make a run following the All-Star break for the second straight year, but it could be tough. They have the fifth-hardest schedule remaining, according to Elias Sports Bureau, as opponents have a .575 points percentage. Nashville has the hardest schedule (.596) while Florida has the easiest (.532).

"We went on a real good run last year," Ruff said. "The players know they can do it. That's one good thing. We were counted out, and we had a 24-game stretch where we went 16-4-4, and we're going to have to put together a real good stretch here."

"It's winning period by period. The execution inside those periods will lead to victories. If we do the right things and take advantage of some key situations, obviously we can win games. We know we can win. It's just going out and getting the job done."

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Fans, Sabres lost January games

Flap forced followers from basements to bars to watch cellar team

TJ Pignataro

The Buffalo News

February 1, 2012

Today marks a full month since the MSG Networks — exclusive regional television carrier of Buffalo Sabres hockey — went off the airwaves for Time Warner Cable subscribers.

A lot has happened in those 31 days but with little result.

Consider that while both sides have been locked in this Cold War-like stalemate:

- Time Warner watched many Western New York subscribers — including numerous area bars and restaurants — switch service to Direct TV or Verizon while the cable giant sprinkled out credits to customers and sent 10 New York City basketball fans on a trip to North Carolina.
- Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman attempted, without success, to negotiate a truce between the two sides, disappointing many hopeful Time Warner customers.
- MSG, despite protestations to the contrary, has clung tightly to industry trade secrets on the expiration of its contracts with TV providers and hosted a half-dozen "viewing parties" in Buffalo and Rochester, urging Time Warner customers to switch providers.
- The Sabres were outscored 32-20 in 11 games that weren't televised on Time Warner in a month that saw the team post an underwhelming 4-7-1 record, as it neared the basement in the Eastern Conference standings.

"Unfortunately, there has been no meaningful dialogue between MSG and Time Warner Cable. They have rejected every overture to meet with us," Dan Ronayne, MSG Networks' executive vice president and general manager, said late Tuesday.

Ronayne said MSG continues seeking to have its programming valued by Time Warner "like other TV providers — nothing more, nothing less."

Time Warner, meanwhile, maintains MSG reneged on a deal to increase its price by 6.5 percent and now seeks a 53 percent hike for its programming. MSG has repeatedly characterized the figure as "a gross mischaracterization."

"Fans lost 11 Sabres games in January and will miss 10 more in February," Ronayne said, "so, we are continuing to urge fans to switch providers so they won't miss all these games."

Joli Plucknette-Farmen, Time Warner's communications manager, said the cable provider continues to wait on MSG. "We're still waiting for MSG to come back to the table and hoping that when we do meet with them again, they will make a reasonable proposal so that we can get the Sabres back on for our customers as soon as possible," she said.

She said Time Warner is extending its free preview of its 15-channel Sports Pass for customers. The normally \$5.95-per-month subscription that features NBA TV and the NHL Network will be available as "replacement programming" for MSG and MSG-plus, she said.

That's not going to help Andy Reardon of North Tonawanda, whose "die-hard" dedication to the Sabres forced him outside his home "eight or nine times" in January. Reardon was one of about 100 people who jammed into Mr. Goodbar on Elmwood Avenue Tuesday night for the latest MSG-sponsored viewing party, to watch the Sabres defeat the Canadiens, 3-1, in Montreal.

"There are definitely times I'd like to sit in bed in my pajamas and watch the game," admitted Reardon, who was wearing his blue Sabres' jersey.

Up and down Elmwood, bars were telecasting the Sabres, suggesting that many either switched or were fortunate enough to have satellite television before Jan. 1. None, however, looked as busy as Mr. Goodbar.

"The only reason we're so busy is because we have the games," said Brad Thomas, manager of Mr. Goodbar, explaining the decision to switch providers earlier in January paid off.

The viewing party no doubt contributed to the crowd. The free food, Sabres souvenirs, a ticket raffle and "more fun" drew Tony Iomi, of the Town of Tonawanda, to the bar. He switched to Direct TV about halfway through January because he couldn't take missing the Sabres. "I thought the whole thing would just blow over," he said. "Even though the Sabres are doing poorly, I wanted to watch the games."

He said Time Warner even offered to knock \$70 off his combined monthly cable television and Internet bill to stay with them — without MSG.

Several readers of The Buffalo News — and Time Warner customers — revealed in recent weeks they were given credits by Time Warner when they called to complain about losing MSG.

One reported receiving a \$20 credit. Another said he was told MSG "was not something extra" that was paid for, but when he persisted for a reduction, his monthly bill was cut by \$2. Then, upon complaining again, he received the \$20 flat rate credit.

Others, however, reported being denied credits after calling to complain about missing Sabres games.

Plucknette-Farmen wouldn't confirm the claims because Time Warner, she said, has a "commitment to customer privacy," so it doesn't discuss the issues of individual customers.

"It has not been our policy to offer credits routinely due to MSG's blackout of Time Warner Cable customers because customers don't pay us on a per-channel basis," she said.

"The monthly price of Time Warner Cable includes a package of channels, the network and infrastructure needed to get it to their homes, and the service it takes to keep it running

smoothly," she said. "We empower our representatives to work directly with customers, including providing credits when appropriate, to resolve any service issues. Each customer is different, so we work with customers individually."

Meanwhile, the State Attorney General's Office has been quiet for nearly three weeks about the issue after holding meetings with each side in mid-January.

Schneiderman's office on Tuesday declined comment on the issue.

Now, we're in February — a short month packed with 13 Sabres games.

Three of them will air on NBC Sports Network or NBC, which can be seen by Time Warner viewers. Those games are tonight against the New York Rangers; next Wednesday versus Boston and Feb. 19 against Pittsburgh.

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Sabres beat Habs 3-1 but lose Vanek

NHL.com

January 31, 2012

Winning back-to-back games for the first time in 11 weeks should have left the [Buffalo Sabres](#) smiling. Instead, they headed home after Tuesday night's win in Montreal minus their leading scorer.

[Thomas Vanek](#) wasn't around to celebrate the 3-1 victory -- he suffered an upper-body injury in the first period and didn't return for the second.

Losing Vanek took away some of the enjoyment for the Sabres as they prepare to host the New York Rangers on Wednesday in their first home game since Jan. 13 following a seven-game trip.

"The sense of winning was great," coach Lindy Ruff said. "The sense of losing Thomas to another injury is something that you just shake your head as a coach again. You're trying to gain ground. You're trying to move up. You're trying to put a little streak together, and we lose another important piece.

"He's going to be out for a period of time. ... Our initial thought is maybe a week, but our doctor is going to have to evaluate it. It's the type of injury we're going to have to dig a little deeper on."

In Vanek's absence, [Paul Gaustad](#) stepped up with a pair of assists and the game-winning goal. [Ryan Miller](#) added 27 saves for the Sabres (21-24-5), who won their second straight road game after a stretch in which they lost 12 in a row away from First Niagara Center. Buffalo beat New Jersey 2-1 on Jan. 24 in its last game before the break.

"It's always good to get a win on the road. We just have to turn it around quickly and quit patting ourselves on the back and go out and get the next one," Gaustad said.

[Ville Leino](#) and [Patrick Kaleta](#) also scored for Buffalo.

After [Max Pacioretty](#)'s first-period goal gave the Canadiens a 1-0 lead, Buffalo got even when Gaustad set up Leino for his fourth goal of the season 4:01 into the second period. Off a drop-off from Gaustad, Leino used a toe drag to gain the slot on defenseman [Raphael Diaz](#), then fired a wrister past [Carey Price](#) from just inside the left circle.

Gaustad broke the tie at 6:17 of the third period. After the Canadiens failed to clear the puck, [Brad Boyes](#) skated to the right of the crease, turned and fired across the crease. Gaustad made himself available on the back post to deflect the puck past Price.

Gaustad got his third point of the night when Kaleta finished into an open net at 19:08 of the third. It was Gaustad's first three-point night since Dec. 9, 2010.

Tempers flared between Gaustad and the Canadiens after Kaleta's goal.

"He's got a big mouth and he likes to run it, so what can we do?" Price said. "You can't worry about what he's got to say because he doesn't do much out there."

The loss was a tough one for Montreal (19-21-10), who entered the break riding a 2-0-1 stretch, including a 7-2 rout of Detroit last Wednesday. This time, Buffalo controlled much of the final 40 minutes, and without 37 saves from Price, the margin could have been much wider.

"Price was unbelievable to keep us in it for as long as he could," Montreal coach Randy Cunneyworth said. "Obviously simple plays like throwing pucks through the crease, things we did the night before, we didn't do tonight. Those are the simple things that you have to do."

Early in the game, it looked as if Montreal might continue its strong play when Pacioretty notched his 18th of the season. [Tyler Myers'](#) wild shot flew around the boards to mid-ice, where Pacioretty was waiting to take it the other way. With only [Matt Ellis](#) to beat, Pacioretty flicked the puck off the boards, rounded Ellis and raced in alone on Miller. He stopped the initial shot, but Pacioretty put the rebound under the goaltender's right pad at 4:09.

Miller was at his best in the third period, making 13 saves in his 234th victory -- tying Dominik Hasek's franchise record.

"It's one of those things you kind of smile about looking back later on," Miller said. "I'm going to take it for what it is because I think Dom would have won a few shootouts in his day."

Material from team media and wire services was used in this report.

Gaustad goal lifts Sabres 3-1 over Habs

Bill Beacon

The Canadian Press

February 1, 2012

MONTREAL - [Carey Price](#) played his heart out, but it was rival goaltender [Ryan Miller](#) who came away with a record-tying victory.

Miller made 27 saves to pick up his 234th win as a Sabre, tying [Dominik Hasek](#)'s team record, as Buffalo beat the [Montreal Canadiens](#) 3-1 on Tuesday night.

Price was spectacular in the net for Montreal (19-22-9), making 37 saves in a losing cause.

"I knew I was close because I've been sitting on it way too long, considering where I was at the start of the season," said Miller, who is 13-15-2 with the struggling Sabres this season. "It's nice.<

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"It'll be something to smile about looking back on my career later on. I'm going to take it for what it is because I think Dom would have won a few shootouts in his day, so I think we can safely say Dom would have had a few more wins. I'll keep plugging away for the regulation wins."

[Paul Gaustad](#), back after missing three games with an upper body injury, had the winning goal in the third period and added two assists for Buffalo (21-24-5).<

He also ignited a skirmish at the end of the game with a comment to Montreal's [Max Pacioretty](#), which some players said was "Where's Chara" — a reference to the Boston defenseman who sent Pacioretty to hospital with fractured vertebrae with a hit into a stanchion late last season.<

A Montreal player apparently shot back a remark about Gaustad's failure to come to Miller's aid after he was flattened by Boston's [Milan Lucic](#) early this season.<

"He said something that upset me, so I think it went tit for tat," said Gaustad. "I'm not a guy that talks about stuff on the ice to the media, so I'm just going to leave it at that.

"He said something that upset me along the exact same lines, so if he's got a problem with it he can handle it with me next game."

[Ville Leino](#), with his first goal since Dec. 7, and [Patrick Kaleta](#), with an empty-net goal, also scored for Buffalo, which has won two in a row since ending a five-game losing streak. The Sabres are 3-0-0 against Montreal this season.

Pacioretty had the lone goal for Montreal, which had won its previous two games.

The hungrier, harder-working Sabres outshot the Canadiens 40-28 overall and pulled even with Montreal on 47 points, but both remain well out of playoff position in the NHL Eastern Conference.

Price, back from his all-star game appearance in Ottawa, did his best to steal a win, but erratic play by his team in its zone proved too much.

On the game-winner, Gaustad battled [Hal Gill](#) to hold position at the Montreal crease and tipped in a [Brad Boyes](#) pass.

"That's the type of goal we need to score _ just throw it on the net," said Price. "He didn't even see the puck coming. It hit his stick and went in. That's exactly the type of goal we need."

"That's a shame because he played great," Gill said of Price. "He tried to steal one for us and we didn't let it happen."

Price was also upset with Gaustad.

"He's got a big mouth and he likes to run it," a seething Price said. "We can't worry about what he's got to say because he doesn't do much out there."

The Sabres did it mostly without first-line forward [Thomas Vanek](#), who left the game after the first period with what the team called an upper body injury. Coach Lindy Ruff said he may be out for a week, but doctors needed to evaluate Vanek.

Pacioretty chipped the puck past [Matt Ellis](#) at the red-line and went in alone to score on his own rebound 4:09 into the game. It was the Montreal winger's career-high 18th goal of the season.

The Sabres poured 18 shots on Price in the middle period but managed only a rare goal from off-season signing Leino, who put a sweet drag move on defenseman Rafael Diaz on a counterattack and scored with a wrist shot from close range. It was his fourth goal of the season.

Buffalo had its entire team working, but the Canadiens had only Price, defenseman [Josh Gorges](#), the line of Pacioretty, [David Desharnais](#) and especially [Erik Cole](#), and perhaps one or two others who looked like the win mattered.

"We had a handful of guys with the desperation, but not enough," said coach Randy Cunneynworth.

Notes: Miller has played 430 games for the Sabres, while Hasek set the team record after 491 games... [Tyler Ennis](#) returned for Buffalo after missing 17 games with an ankle injury. [Marc-Andre Gragnani](#), [T.J. Brennan](#) and [Luke Adam](#) sat out... Montreal scratched [Chris Campoli](#), while [Travis Moen](#) missed with an upper body. [Andreas Engqvist](#) played after being called up from AHL Hamilton.

Sabres 3, Canadiens 1

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

January 31, 2012

MONTREAL – It took 81 days and nine different attempts, but the Buffalo Sabres have finally won consecutive games.

[Paul Gaustad](#) matched his career-high with three points, and the Sabres scored three unanswered goals to topple the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 in front of a frustrated Bell Centre crowd on Tuesday night.

Coupled with last Tuesday's 2-1 shootout win in New Jersey, the Sabres have now won two games in a row for the first time since November 8-11. It was also Buffalo's first two-game road winning streak since November 14-18.

"It was something where we needed to play 60 minutes, and we did that tonight," said Gaustad, who had missed the previous three games with an upper body injury. "I thought we played well with the lead, and when things went bad on that first goal, we stuck with it. It didn't deflate us. We didn't say 'oh no here it goes again.' We went back at it, and I thought that showed some good character."

[Ryan Miller](#) turned aside 27 Montreal shots to earn his 234th career victory, tying him with Dominik Hasek for the all-time franchise lead. With all of his and the team's struggles lately, just reaching the milestone was a long time coming for Miller.

"I knew I was close because I've been sitting on it way too long, considering where I was at to start the season," joked Miller. "It's nice, one of those things you can smile about looking back on my career later on. I'm gonna take it for what it is though, because I think Dom would've won a few shootouts in his day."

[Tyler Ennis](#) didn't show up on the scoresheet, but his speed and offensive creativity were a welcome breath of fresh air in the Buffalo lineup. Ennis had missed the last 17 games after reinjuring his ankle in Pittsburgh on December 17. Lindy Ruff praised Ennis' work, especially since he was playing center for the first time this season.

"I thought he played really well for his first tilt. We had him [at center] a couple of times in practice," Ruff said. "But I thought he really moved. He made the Canadiens back off; his speed was real evident in the game. It gives us another tool down the middle."

Ennis went eight-of-15 on faceoffs, and recorded two shots on goal in 18:46 of ice time.

[Thomas Vanek](#) left the game after the first period with an upper body injury, and did not return. Ruff said Vanek is likely to miss at least a week, but he'll be evaluated on Wednesday back in Buffalo.

FIRST PERIOD

Montreal started the scoring at 4:09 on Max Pacioretty's 18th goal of the season. Pacioretty was stopped on his initial shot, but was then able to bang the rebound under Miller's right pad. The Sabres outshot the Canadiens 11-8, with their best scoring chances coming off the sticks of [Jason Pominville](#), [Mike Weber](#) and [Thomas Vanek](#).

SECOND PERIOD

Buffalo held the offensive edge in the second as they outshot the Habs 19-7. [Ville Leino](#) answered Montreal's first period goal with a slick tally of his own at 4:01. Leino took a pass from Gaustad just inside the Montreal blueline, then pulled the toe drag move in front on Raphael Diaz before burying the wrister past Price.

THIRD PERIOD

Buffalo took the lead for good at 6:17 when Gaustad parked himself in front and outworked Hal Gill to redirect [Brad Boyes'](#) pass in front. [Patrick Kaleta](#) added some insurance with his fourth goal of the season into an empty net goal at 19:08. The Sabres had 10 shots in the period, finishing the night with a 40-28 advantage.

SABRES NOTES: [Luke Adam](#) (healthy), [Marc-Andre Gragnani](#) (healthy) and [Brayden McNabb](#) (concussion) were Buffalo's scratches. It was the first game this season that Adam has missed.

Three star selections

1st: CAREY PRICE
2nd: ERIK COLE
3rd: PAUL GAUSTAD

Winning Goaltender

Ryan Miller

Losing Goaltender

Carey Price

Gamenight: Sabres win 3-1 over Montreal

WGR 550

February 1, 2012

The Buffalo Sabres defeated the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 Tuesday night on goals by Villie Leino and Paul Gaustad as well as a strong performance by goalie Ryan Miller.

The surprise news from the Sabres' side to start the game was that rookie forward Luke Adam was either a healthy scratch or injured. WGR's Paul Hamilton reporting from Montreal that Adam was not sick or injured.

Early in the first period, the Sabres gave up a breakaway to Montreal forward Max Pacioretty, who was initially stopped by Ryan Miller, but popped in his own rebound to give the Habs a 1-0 lead.

The Sabres had no shortage of opportunities, both Thomas Vanek and Jason Pominville both hitting the post in the first.

Buffalo managed few opportunities during the remainder of the first and finished the period down one goal. The Sabres, however, given the opportunity to start the second period on the power play after Josh Gorges was called for hooking with 14 seconds remaining in the frame.

The second period opened with the Sabres on the power play, but couldn't convert. Minutes later, Villie Leino scored his fourth goal of the season on a wrist shot to tie the game at one a side.

Buffalo dominated much of the period, outshooting Montreal 10-1 in the first nine minutes. They continued to better the Habs with multiple scoring chances, but could not put one past All-Star goalie Carey Price. The Sabres finished the period outshooting Montreal 19-7.

Just over six minutes into the third period, Brad Boyes created the Sabres' second goal with a perfect pass to Paul Gaustad in front of the Canadiens' net. Gaustad punched the puck in to give Buffalo a 2-1 lead with just over 13 minutes remaining in the game.

In the second half of the third period, Montreal turned up the heat on Miller, but the Sabres' goaltender kept the Habs off the scoreboard giving the Sabres the win. Patrick Kaleta finished off the victory with an empty net goal.

1st period:

Goals:

4:09 -- Montreal - Max Pacioretty (18) (unassisted) MTL 1-0

Penalties:

10:15 - Buffalo - Cody McCormick - Roughing - 2 min
10:15 - Montreal - Scott Gomez - Roughing - 2 min
17:05 - Buffalo - Mike Weber - Tripping - 2 min
19:46 - Montreal - Josh Gorges - Hooking - 2 min

2nd period:

Goals

4:01 - Buffalo - Villie Leino (4) (Paul Gaustad)(Christian Ehrhoff) 1-1

Penalties

5:18 - Montreal P..K. Subban Tripping - 2 min

3rd period

Goals

6:17 - Buffalo -- Paul Gaustad (5) from (Boyes) BUF 2-1
19:08 EN - Buffalo Patrick Kaleta (4)

Penalties

1:06 - Montreal Andreas Enqvist -Tripping - 2 min

Power Play

Buffalo -- 0-3
Montreal -- 0-1

Goaltending

Buffalo -- Ryan Miller (28 shots, 27 saves)
Montreal -- Carey Price (39 shots, 37 saves)

Three Stars

1. Carey Price
2. Erik Cole
3. Paul Gaustad

Sabres Miller knows it's now or never

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 1, 2012

Montreal, QC (WGR 550) -- Ryan Miller played a very good game in New Jersey, got a shootout win breaking a 12 game road losing streak and then was able to fly back to California for his All Star break.

Miller seems relaxed and ready to go knowing the tall task ahead.

The team is 10 points out of a playoff spot and Miller's season has not been good.

Overall he's 12-15-2 with a 3.07 goals against and .899 save percentage. He started the season playing two solid games in Europe and posting a 4-1-0 record. In his first six games his goals against was 1.67 with a .946 save percentage.

Many want to trace back to the Lucic hit to when Miller started to have problems, but it was before that. He had lost four of five games going into Boston and let in five goals in the only win he got.

Lindy Ruff has said all along that the team must get good goaltending if it's going to dig out.

Miller has started three straight games and looked great in New Jersey and not too bad in St.Louis. After the break the goaltender said, "It was nice to get a little bit of a breather, but it's kind of exciting to be back and get going here. I think it was a much needed break for some guys in here and hopefully they're finding the energy to dial in and do what's necessary. I think the guys are excited to see each other, you're around each other for a long time you do need a break once in awhile, as much as you like each other there is good energy." As far as his game Miller said, "I started to feel more comfortable in net so hopefully pick up from where I left off. I can identify some things that I think I was doing better and they are building block things for my game."

Making the playoffs is going to take a huge push by this team and Miller knows it, "Expectations are pretty high right now for us. We didn't live up to the billing the first part of the season, but we've been trying to get our feet going, get some traction here and we're just going to try to build off the smallest of positives that we took before the break." Miller added, "We need to get ourselves where we're supposed to be and where we talked about being at the beginning of the season and live up to our full potential. We do have a lot of potential on this hockey team and I just don't think it's been maximized this year for whatever reason. It's many different things, we've all had articles and discussions about it and no one has been able to quite figure it out amongst you guys and ourselves so the think tank that is Buffalo hasn't really yielded too many results, but by trial and error you just get back to basics and the basic thinking is one game at a time and not worrying about the trade deadline or rumors or past performance or anything. We understand there's frustration from management to fans to players, but at some point you have to stop digging the hole and you have to start climbing out so the attitude has to be a lot more

positive and a lot more receptive to constructive criticism and we have to play good hockey.”

With Paul Gaustad and Tyler Ennis coming back only Jochen Hecht is injured from the team that started the season here. Miller added, “We get some players back and hopefully that little bit, the word healthy being passed around here can help a little bit, but healthy as far as attitude too, body and mind, get some guys on the ice and get our team in the right place mentally where we need to be to play hockey games. It’s going to come down to how focused we are, it’s not going to come down to conditioning.”

Canadiens cushion Sabres' free fall

Dave Stubbs

Montreal Gazette

February 1, 2012

The Buffalo Sabres had probably heard the song in their dressing room 2½ hours earlier, rumbling from the Bell Centre's sound system to introduce the Canadiens to the crowd shortly before the opening faceoff.

So now, nearing 10: 30 on Tuesday night, they were hearing Good Feeling again, but the bass-heavy tune's bouncy lyrics now blared on their own speakers.

The Sabres' 3-1 victory over the Canadiens was a battle of two bottom-feeding Eastern Conference clubs. Both almost assuredly will be cleaning out their lockers come early April, on the outside of the playoffs looking in.

But you'd not have known the Sabres entered Tuesday's game with just a 0.6-per-cent chance of making the postseason. Those odds soared to 0.8 per cent with their victory, Buffalo firing 39 shots on Habs goalie Carey Price and finding the mark into an empty net with their 40th.

We had most recently seen the Canadiens six nights earlier on Bell Centre ice, the matchup on paper suggesting the home team would be slapped as brusquely as a pick-up artist at happy hour.

But then they dropped the puck last Wednesday and the Habs put seven pucks behind Detroit's Jimmy Howard and relief goalie Ty Conklin.

Whipping the NHL's best club 7-2 gave the Canadiens a two-game win streak and sent their fans into the all-star break giddy with anticipation. Next up were the lowly Sabres.

That didn't turn out very well, now did it?

"We got ourselves into a hole here," Buffalo goaltender Ryan Miller said, having turned aside 27 Canadiens shots for his and his club's second straight win, the netminder having snapped a personal 10-game road skid last week in New Jersey.

Miller surrendered only a first-period breakaway goal to Montreal's Max Pacioretty, who poked home his own rebound after creating a turnover in the neutral zone to rush in alone.

"We don't need to talk about why we're here," Miller said of the Sabres' plight. "It's important we came off the break strong. That was a really nice hockey game - we were responsible and came out on top.

"We have back-to-back wins for the first time in a while (since Nov. 8-11), so we start to build from the positives."

Of course, whatever the Sabres are building is on a bed of quicksand. Their impossible dream of the playoffs is darkened further still by the loss Tuesday of star forward Thomas Vanek, who head coach Lindy Ruff said would be sidelined for "maybe a week," or longer, with an upper-body injury.

Miller's victory Tuesday was the 243rd of his career, all with the Sabres, tying him with Dominik Hasek atop the club's all-time goaltending wins list.

"I've been sitting on it way too long, considering where I was at the start of the season," Miller said. "I'm going to take it for what it is because I think Dom would have won a few shootouts in his day."

Canadiens fans have been on a roller coaster since their heroes dropped a 2-0 seasonopening decision to the Maple Leafs in Toronto, the Habs' subsequent carnival ride one of injuries, blown leads, flickers of hope, invisible players, Pacioretty's stirring comeback from brutal injury, the firing of coaches and the making of trades.

But the Sabres have been mostly in free fall, the retooled club's sad performance having outstripped that of the Habs during a season in which Buffalo was expected to soar.

Pressed snug to the salary cap thanks to the bottomless pockets of new owner Terry Pegula, the Sabres have been the implosion story of the season, arriving here in a battle with Carolina to get into the Eastern Conference basement.

If this is the Wizard of Oz, the Sabres are Dorothy, stomping in vain on the door to get into Uncle Henry and Auntie Em's storm cellar as the tornado twists her way.

Some would suggest they've played like Toto, too.

They closed out their seven-game road trip with a 2-5 record and left Montreal at 21-24-5.

From the executive suites to the training room, the Sabres have been a disaster. The poster boy for the misery has been franchise goaltender Miller, mostly a shadow of his usually magnificent self whose name continues to float as a guy on his way out.

Miller has said he has no interest in being elsewhere, his 429 NHL games all played in Buffalo's blue and gold sweater. And yet the rumours incubate on the Internet.

"I have not and will not ask for a trade," the goalie told TSN two weeks ago.

"I will fall on the 'Sabre' before that. Please no one ask me again."

The 31-year-old native of East Lansing, Mich., won four of his first five decisions, then lost his next four straight, yanked by Ruff after two periods in the fourth.

Three times this season, Miller hasn't been around to finish what he started, given an early hook.

But that's in his rear-view now. It's the Sabres who are riding a two-game win streak, having just delivered the Canadiens' playoff hopes yet another body blow.

Miller played a big role in that, not so long after having said of himself and his team: "You can't sit and wait for somebody else to (expletive) do it."

On Tuesday, following the national anthem ceremony in his corner of the rink, Miller did this: he stood respectfully still almost forever until the Canadian and U.S. flags and every member of the Canadian military present had left the ice.

"You know from when you grow up that you wait for the flags, then you can go about your business," he said.

"They took their time (leaving the ice) today. I thought they'd drop the puck before I was in the net," he added, laughing.

"But you wait. It's the polite thing to do."

So very rude the way Miller went on to treat the Canadiens. But for that brief moment, the goalie showed anyone looking that there was something more important than a win or a loss in the three periods ahead.

Or in any hockey game.

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Bloom off Sabres' rose

Pat Hickey

Montreal Gazette

February 1, 2012

This hasn't been a fun year for Canadiens' fans, but things could be worse.

They could be living in Buffalo, where the local citizenry is wondering what happened to the Sabres.

There was reason to be optimistic last year in western New York after Terry Pegula, who made billions pulling oil and natural gas out of the ground via the controversial practice of hydro-fracturing, bought the Sabres and boldly announced: "Starting today, the Buffalo Sabres' reason for existence will be to win a Stanley Cup."

The way this season has gone, Buffalo will settle for another late-season surge like the one that earned the Sabres a playoff spot last spring after they were 10 points out on Jan. 16. The task is even more daunting this time around. While the win over the Canadiens' last night moved them even with the Canadiens in points, they are still nine points behind the eighth-place Toronto Maple Leafs.

Pegula's arrival as the Sabres' owner was heralded as the start of a new era in Buffalo. The team had gone through a financial scandal and a bankruptcy and, while previous owner Tom Golisano deserves credit for saving the team and keeping it in Buffalo, he kept a close eye on the bottom line. General manager Darcy Regier and head coach Lindy Ruff had a reputation for doing more with less and there were expectations that they could do even better with an owner who was willing to spend his money.

Expectations were high after a number of off-season acquisitions. The Sabres traded for defenceman Robyn Regehr and signed free agent defenceman Christian Ehrhoff and forward Ville Leino. They already boasted one of the league's top goaltenders in Ryan Miller and the consensus was that the Sabres were one of the most improved teams in the NHL.

So what happened?

You can start with injuries. The Sabres were 10-5 when Boston's Milan Lucic ran into Miller on Nov. 12. The goaltender missed nine games with concussion-like symptoms and hasn't come close to the performances with earned him most valuable player honours at the Vancouver Olympics and the Vézina Trophy in 2010. He came into Tuesday night's game at the Bell Centre with a 3.07 goals-against average and an .899 save percentage.

Jochen Hecht, Tyler Ennis, Tyler Meyers and Ehrhoff also have missed significant time this season and Thomas Vanek left last night's game with an upper-body injury. Players like Derek Roy and Drew Stafford have struggled. The Sabres' defence ranks 26th in the NHL, while the offence is 25th. Those numbers don't cut it in a league where 16 teams make the playoffs.

Markov back on the ice: Injured defenceman Andrei Markov skated Tuesday for the first time since he underwent an arthroscopic procedure in early December. Head coach Randy Cunneyworth described Markov's solo exercise as progress, but it should be noted Markov was on the ice for a mere 15 minutes.

The date for Markov's return has been pushed back several times and we're approaching the point at which it doesn't make any sense to bring him back this season.

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Will layoff inspire Sabres?

Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

February 1, 2012

BUFFALO — Like many of his Sabres teammates, Drew Stafford got the heck away from hockey for several days during the NHL All-Star break. The struggling winger briefly escaped to Marco Island, Fla., allowing for some rare quiet time to relax, recharge and block out the noise.

Following three arduous months in which the Sabres tumbled from a prime playoff spot to the Eastern Conference basement, five days off probably never felt better.

“Sat around with a bunch of retirees,” Stafford said Monday afternoon inside the First Niagara Center.

The 14th-place Sabres, arguably the NHL’s biggest disappointment, gathered again Monday, practicing 75 minutes before flying to Montreal for tonight’s tilt against the Canadiens (MSG-TV, WGR, WMXO, 7:30 p.m.).

In between, they spoke positively about the time off rejuvenating them, forgetting about the recent past and focusing on the difficult task — one sportsclubstats.com pegs as a 0.6 percent chance — of climbing into a playoff spot.

Tonight on NBCSN: Streaking Sabres look to roll on against the Rangers

Joe Yerdon

NBC Sports

February 1, 2012

The Buffalo Sabres have done something they haven't done since November by winning consecutive games. They head into tonight's game against the New York Rangers (7:30 p.m. ET on NBCSN) looking to keep the good mojo going but they'll have to do it against a Rangers team upset about losing to New Jersey last night and without a key member of their offense.

[Thomas Vanek](#) left last night's win against Montreal with an [upper body injury](#) and will be out at least for a week. Luckily for Buffalo disappointing forward [Ville Leino](#) stepped up big last night and they'll be hoping that's a sign he's snapped out of his season-long funk. Vanek being one of the Sabres' top two scorers ([Jason Pominville](#) the other) makes his injury a potentially devastating one as the rest of Buffalo's offense has been spotty.

With Vanek out, the focus shifts to goalie [Ryan Miller](#) to be a lot better than he has been. Miller's disappointing season has contributed to the Sabres' struggles this season, but without Vanek around to help bail out the defense with his goals, Miller is going to have to get tough and play huge.

As for the Rangers, life on top of the Eastern Conference would seem to be easy. [Marian Gaborik](#) is scoring goals in bunches, [Henrik Lundqvist](#) is playing as well as he ever has, and their defense would dive in front of a bullet to stop a scoring chance. Although they're coming off a tough loss to New Jersey last night, that came in a game [they thought they played pretty well](#).

Expect to see more of the same from the Rangers as they hope to spoil the Sabres' recent era of good feelings as they hope to get into the mix for the playoffs.

Unusual Problem: Rangers Have Too Many Forwards

Christopher Botta

New York Times

January 30, 2012

Unlike the Devils, whom they visit at Prudential Center on Tuesday night for the first of five remaining games this season, the Rangers have a problem unique to N.H.L. teams as the calendar turns to February: a roster logjam.

This is especially the case at forward, where John Tortorella's club has 14 forwards on the roster. Coaches usually dress 12 forwards and 6 defensemen in each game; sometimes they play 11 and 7.

Erik Christensen has returned to the Rangers' roster after a conditioning stint with the minor league affiliate in Connecticut. Christensen, who has been unable to claim a spot on Tortorella's top three lines but is valuable as a substitute and for his prowess in the shootout, has not played for the Rangers since Dec. 17.

Wojtek Wolski struggled in three games this month after missing 30 with a groin and hernia issues. In Wolski's last game, Jan. 15 at Montreal, he was minus-3 in just 6 minutes 20 seconds of playing time.

Wolski and Christensen are currently the Rangers' 13th and 14th forwards – not necessarily in that order. The organization also has Sean Avery in the minors. Avery would have to clear re-entry waivers to be recalled, and there is a chance he would be claimed.

All this depth is a good problem to have. The trade deadline is Feb. 27. Although Wolski and Christensen would not bring back much in a trade – Wolski makes \$3.5 million this year – the quantity and quality at the position are assets for General Manager Glen Sather. Avery could also be moved for a midround draft pick.

On defense, Steve Eminger and Jeff Woywitka have resumed practicing with the team and will be available to play soon. On the maximum roster of 23, if the Rangers employ 14 forwards, there would be room for only one extra defenseman. Eminger, a veteran who is popular among teammates, is the clear favorite to stick with the Rangers for the rest of the season.

No matter what, expect Tortorella and the assistant Mike Sullivan to give the bulk of playing time to the defense's top four: Dan Girardi, Ryan McDonagh, Michael Del Zotto and Marc Staal. Stu Bickel, who would need to clear waivers to be sent to the minors, has proven to be a surprisingly sturdy player in the defensive zone. Anton Stralman, signed by the club after attending the Devils' training camp as a free agent, has improved over the season and is a decent puck-mover.

The team's lone injured player is a valuable one: defenseman Michael Sauer, who has been sidelined with a concussion since a collision with Dion Phaneuf in a loss to Toronto on Dec. 5. He is still not practicing regularly with the club.

The Rangers appeared revitalized at practice Monday after the five-day break for the All-Star Game. "They practiced really well and were full of energy," Tortorella told reporters. "I wanted to stop the practice after 20 minutes and bottle it because I thought they were that good."

Gaborik Touches Off a Typical Goalfest

Jeff Z. Klein

New York Times

January 30, 2012

OTTAWA — The N.H.L.'s two biggest stars were missing from the All-Star Game, but that did not seem to matter. The event was its usual just-for-laughs exhibition, the climax of a happy weekend for a league that continues to prosper but may be only months from a labor impasse.

[Marian Gaborik](#) led the way with three goals — two against a [Rangers](#) teammate, goalie [Henrik Lundqvist](#) — and added an assist, earning most valuable player honors as Team Chara beat Team Alfredsson, [12-9](#), on Sunday.

“I think he’s one of the best, if not the best, goalie in the league, but I am glad I could get a couple of goals against him,” Gaborik said.

No one in the capacity crowd at Scotiabank Place seemed to mind that [Sidney Crosby](#) missed a second straight All-Star Game, this year because of a recently discovered neck injury compounding his persistent concussion symptoms, or perhaps causing them. Nor did anyone seem to miss Alex Ovechkin, who skipped the game in protest of a league-imposed suspension for an illegal check.

“You obviously want to have those guys, but there are a lot of great young talents in the game,” said Calgary’s Jarome Iginla, smiling after signing the sweater of a teammate for the day, Boston defenseman Zdeno Chara.

Few All-Stars were more fun to watch Sunday than Gaborik, who opened the scoring in the game’s fifth minute. He beat Lundqvist in close and then pointed his stick like a rifle and pretended to fire it at him — an echo of the goal celebration their Rangers teammate Artem Anisimov did earlier this season against Tampa Bay, which touched off a small brawl.

“We have to have a discussion on the plane back, how much he has to pay in fines,” Lundqvist said, laughing. “I think Anisimov was 2,500 bucks, right?”

Gaborik scored again on Lundqvist in the first, giving him bragging rights in a chirping contest the two have had on Twitter and in the news media.

“I tried to get into his mind over the whole weekend,” Gaborik said.

Gaborik, who played on a line with his Slovakian countryman Marian Hossa of the Chicago Blackhawks and the Russian star Pavel Datsyuk of the Detroit Red Wings, added his third goal against the Los Angeles Kings’ Jonathan Quick in the second period. Gaborik assisted on a third-period goal by Chara, also a countryman.

Gaborik's goals, along with a strong performance by defenseman Dan Girardi, and Carl Hagelin's victory in the [speed skating](#) race during the skills competition, will stoke enthusiasm among Rangers fans that their first-place team is headed to big things this spring.

Gaborik's M.V.P. award was the first by a Ranger since Wayne Gretzky in 1999.

Less than a decade ago, the N.H.L. was thought to be lapsing into obscurity. It bogged down on the ice, stumbled into a lockout that wiped out the 2004-5 season and ran through a series of Sun Belt-based Stanley Cup finals that failed to excite even the most avid hockey fans.

It started bouncing back in the late 2000s. The Penguins' Crosby and the Capitals' Ovechkin emerged as electrifying stars; traditional hockey cities like Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and Vancouver made the Stanley Cup finals; the Winter Classic was born; and revenue and television ratings rose sharply.

According to the conventional wisdom, the N.H.L. would be carried by its biggest stars, Crosby and Ovechkin. But the league is thriving without them, with Crosby sidelined for all but a handful of games over more than a year's time, and Ovechkin's skills diminishing.

But other stars have replaced them, like Tim Thomas of Boston, whose spectacular goaltending led the Bruins to the Stanley Cup championship last season. On Sunday, Thomas stopped 18 of 21 shots in the third period for Team Chara, making him the winning goalie in all four All-Star Games he has played, a record.

It came after a week in which even Thomas's star began to fade after he boycotted the Bruins' visit to the White House for political reasons.

Thomas shrugged it off. One of his saves denied a hat trick to Ottawa's hometown hero, Daniel Alfredsson, who has captained the Senators for 12 of the 16 years he has been with the team.

"I wasn't thinking about his hat trick," Thomas said. "I just didn't want to let the other team get any closer."

Amid the prosperity and jovial mood of the All-Star weekend, there was a reminder that the collective bargaining agreement between the league and the players expires in September.

The players now earn 57 percent of revenue, but the owners may be looking to roll back that figure to around 50 percent, as N.F.L. and N.B.A. owners recently did after lockouts.

"I hope we don't go down that road, because we saw what happened in the other sports," Donald Fehr, the executive director of the players union, said on Saturday.

Devils rally to top Rangers in a shootout

Tom Gulitti

Bergen Record

February 1, 2012

NEWARK – The Devils were less than a minute away from another frustrating loss to another top team in their conference – this one to the rival Rangers.

Then fortune smiled on them and they made the most of it.

After David Clarkson capitalized on a strange bounce to tie the game with just 47.6 seconds left in regulation, Ilya Kovalchuk scored the deciding goal in the shootout to give the Devils a much-needed 4-3 shootout victory over the East-leading Rangers on Tuesday night at Prudential Center.

“It’s a big one for sure,” said Devils coach Pete DeBoer, whose team improved to 9-2 in shootouts and snapped a three-game losing streak. “We’re at the time of year where they’re all big. We really needed a win against ... obviously they are a very good team ... the best in our conference right now.”

The Devils rallied from three one-goal deficits to earn their first win of the season over the Rangers. They are just 2-6-0 against the Rangers (1-1-0), Boston (0-3-0) and Philadelphia (1-2-0), with both wins coming in shootouts, but they’re hoping Tuesday’s win will be a big step for them.

They play the Rangers four more times over their final 33 games, including Tuesday at Madison Square Garden.

“I think we have to do it a little more consistently,” Devils captain Zach Parise said. “It’s a good start, but we’re going to be seeing a lot of them and a lot of other pretty good hockey teams coming up.”

The Devils didn’t deny they got a little lucky on Clarkson’s tying goal.

Defenseman Andy Greene slapped the puck into the left corner glass of the Rangers’ zone from the red line, and it ricocheted off a partition behind the net and caromed directly to Clarkson in front. He fired it between goaltender Martin Biron’s pads for his 17th goal of the season, equaling his career high.

“I guess it was a gift, you’d say, that just landed on my stick,” Clarkson said. “It wasn’t pretty, but I’ll take it.”

All the Rangers could do was shrug it off and move on to their game tonight in Buffalo.

“It’s a bad bounce,” Rangers coach John Tortorella said. “We were in total control. I thought we were doing real well with our situational play; after we get the lead back, 3-2, we get a bad bounce.”

It wasn't completely by accident. The Devils remembered a similar bounce off the glass the Buffalo Sabres got on their only goal in a 2-1 shootout win at The Rock last week. And they've seen the puck frequently take strange bounces off the glass and boards over their five seasons in Newark.

"You never know with the partitions," said Greene, who returned after missing 22 games with a broken left foot. "You put it up there and see what happens."

DeBoer called timeout after that to settle down his players and make sure they got at least to overtime. They had tied the game at 2 on Kovalchuk's power-play goal with 4:35 remaining, only to see the Rangers go back ahead just 36 seconds later on Michael Del Zotto's goal.

The Devils got through the remainder of regulation, then an entertaining but scoreless overtime.

In the shootout, Kovalchuk led off by beating Biron between the pads and that was all Brodeur would need. After Derek Stepan fired wide left, Brodeur made a left-pad save on Brad Richards and then stoned Marian Gaborik in close with a stick save to end the Devils' three-game losing streak.

Brodeur pumped his fist after stopping Gaborik as the Devils earned two big points. Instead of dropping into ninth place in the East if they had lost in regulation, they moved past Florida into seventh with 57 points.

"Every game now is like a playoff game," Clarkson said. "You look at how tight the standings are and we've got to come out every night and play that same way, do the little things that are going to make us successful. Right now, it's the time of season where we've got to rise above it and keep going."

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