



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Top two teams in East on tap for Sabres

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 24, 2012

Patrick Kaleta looked at the Sabres' weekend plans and immediately knew what he had to do.

"I might have to go in the weight room here and do a couple extra reps," Kaleta said Thursday.

That was not a bad idea. The Sabres will need all the strength they can muster.

The Sabres host Boston tonight in First Niagara Center and visit the New York Rangers on Saturday. The Bruins are second in the Eastern Conference. The Rangers are first. Obviously, it doesn't get much tougher for a Buffalo team trying to surge into the playoff race.

"Both teams, it's a good test for us," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said. "It will tell us where we're at."

The Sabres, in last place in the conference as recently as last weekend, feel they're headed back to contention. They are 2-0-1 in the last three games and 7-3-2 in the last 12. They have pulled within eight points of Winnipeg and the final playoff spot with 22 games to go.

"We've been playing our game and playing extremely well, solid defensively, cut our goals against way down over the last 12 games here," defenseman Mike Weber said. "It's just another huge test for our team. We've put ourselves into a position now where we've got to some life, and we've battled ourselves back to a situation where every point counts. We can still do this."

The Sabres have indeed played better defensively during their past dozen games. Buffalo has allowed 2.87 goals per game this season, 21st in the NHL, but that average has dropped thanks to their goals against of 2.17 during the 12-game run.

Included in that surge is a 6-0 shutout of Boston on Feb. 8.

"We played Boston extremely well last time," Weber said. "The biggest thing that's changed lately is our consistency."

Ryan Miller has also played a role. The goaltender has a 1.85 goals-against average and .935 save percentage in his last 12 appearances. He was 11-15-2 with a 3.15 GAA and .897 save percentage entering his 2-1 shootout victory over New Jersey on Jan. 24. His numbers entering tonight are 18-17-4 with a 2.75 and .908.

"Lately you see Millsie getting the big save, letting you know he's in the game, he's back into form," Weber said. "When you've got an elite goaltender like Ryan Miller going it puts everyone's confidence level at a new height. That gives everyone a little boost. When he's going, I think our team's going. I think that's what you've seen lately."

Miller and the Sabres' shutdown unit of forwards Nathan Gerbe, Paul Gaustad and Kaleta, with defensemen Robyn Regehr and Andrej Sekera, will need to be at its best this weekend. The Bruins are second in scoring in the NHL at 3.22 goals per game. New York, which boasts forwards Brad Richards and Marian Gaborik, is 12th at 2.72.

"It's a good challenge for us, a good test, too," Sekera said. "It makes you a better hockey player when you play against better guys. You've got to make sure when you get on the ice against them you think defense first. You make sure nobody's cheating behind you, then jump in the play and create opportunities to punish those lines."

The Bruins haven't forgotten the punishment they absorbed during their last trip to Buffalo. The six-goal setback was the worst of the year for a team that's just 5-7 in its last 12 games.

"They have a real good team, especially when they're all playing together and working hard," Bruins forward Brad Marchand said. "They seem to get up when they're playing us, and the last three games have been very good battles. They really owned us last time, so we have to be prepared."

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Bruins' Marchand has laugh at Buffalo's expense

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

February 24, 2012

Brad Marchand hopes fans in the worst place in the NHL know how to take a joke. He'll find out tonight.

The Boston Bruins' forward, called the "Little Ball of Hate" by President Obama, became the latest in a long line of people to mock Buffalo on Thursday. He said it was the "worst place in the NHL" during his Boston radio show, then arrived in town for practice a few hours later.

"People have to learn how to have some fun and take a joke," Marchand said in First Niagara Center, where he and the Bruins will face the Sabres tonight. "It's always cold and usually rainy when we come here, and I was just playing around. I hope I didn't offend anyone."

Odds are good he did, judging by the reaction earlier this month when fellow New England athlete Tom Brady ripped Buffalo's hotels. Marchand formulated his opinion based on weather and lack of activities.

"I heard it was a little cold in Buffalo, and I'm allergic to the cold," said Marchand, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, who listed Montreal as his top road city to visit. "Like I said, it's a little cold here. There's not a ton to do. You come and just kind of hang around in the hotel. [Teammate Daniel Paille, a former Sabres forward] spoke very highly of it, especially in the summertime, so I'm sure it's great. There's nothing around so I don't know a whole lot about the city."

The left winger doesn't need to go far to learn about Buffalo. Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs is from Western New York, and his Delaware North Companies is headquartered in town.

"I heard that, but he's got houses in every city in the United States, so he's OK," Marchand said.

Sabres coach Lindy Ruff, who has spent 25 of his 52 years in Buffalo, shrugged off Marchand's initial statement.

"I just laugh," Ruff said. "It's just another guy that hasn't lived here or been here."

The original shot at the city came when Marchand was talking with two radio hosts at WEEI. One said, "Do you like Buffalo as a road trip spot? Buffalo is kind of a boring town, I would think."

"Buffalo is the worst place in the NHL," Marchand responded. "I'm not too excited to go there, but I'll be excited to leave."

* * *

The Sabres could be without Brad Boyes. The forward missed practice after getting injured midway through the third period of Buffalo's 2-1 victory over the New York Islanders on Tuesday.

"We dealt with it, had treatment on it [Wednesday], but we'll see whether he can get through it," Ruff said.

Forward Cody McCormick skated in Boyes' spot on the fourth line, but he is not ready to return from the upper-body injury that has cost him six games.

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Adele has a Grammy-winning voice, but her ballad "Someone Like You" usually has little place in a sports locker room. When the Sabres hit their dressing room following practice, however, Adele was blaring.

"This gets me pumped up," Patrick Kaleta said with a grin.

Added center Derek Roy, "I had nothing to do with this."

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Bruins, Sabres try to build on victories

Frank Mentesana

NHL.com

February 23, 2012

BRUINS (36-20-2) at SABRES (26-27-7)

TV: NESN (HD), MSG-Buffalo

LAST 10: Boston 4-6-0; Buffalo 5-3-2

Season Series: This is the fourth of six meetings between these Northeast Division rivals. Boston took the first two during its near-flawless November, winning 6-2 at home and 4-3 in a shootout at Buffalo. The Sabres gained a substantial measure of revenge with probably their best showing of the season, a 6-0 trouncing of the defending Stanley Cup champions on Feb. 8 at the First Niagara Center. [Jason Pominville](#) -- who leads Buffalo with four points in the season series -- tallied two goals that night, and [Ryan Miller](#) made 36 saves. [Tyler Seguin](#) tops all Bruins with three goals and five points against the Sabres this season, while [Brad Marchand](#) has two goals and two assists.

Big Story: Buffalo hopes to build on a three-game point streak as it looks to make a run at the postseason, while the Bruins aim to return to form on the heels of a noteworthy win at St. Louis. Since a three-game losing skid, the Sabres have gone 2-0-1 as they conclude a four-game homestand. With a victory against the Islanders on Tuesday, Buffalo jumped into 12th place in the Eastern Conference, a point ahead of both the Isles and Montreal and six points out of a playoff spot.

After sending the Blues to their first regulation home loss in 22 games, Boston visits Buffalo for the fifth stop of a season-high six-game road trip. The Bruins, who are 8-9-1 since they last won back-to-back games from Jan. 10-12, have a two-point lead over Ottawa for the top spot in the Northeast with four games in hand.

Team Scope:

Bruins: Having already dropped two straight, the deck was stacked against the B's Wednesday in St. Louis -- the Blues were riding a franchise-record 21-game point streak at home and hadn't lost in regulation to an Eastern opponent all season. However, Marchand scored twice and [Milan Lucic](#) and [Chris Kelly](#) each had a goal and an assist in the opening period, as Boston jumped out to a 2-0 lead 6:19 into the contest and held on for a 4-2 victory. The Blues tied the game midway through the opening period with two goals on their first five shots, but [Tim Thomas](#) settled in to stop the next 27 shots and 30 overall. Kelly's goal, his 15th of the season to tie a career high, gave the B's a 3-2 edge with 40 seconds left in the first and proved to be the game-winner.

"This was a big win for us after being shut out in the last game," said Marchand, whose 21 goals ties him for the team lead with Lucic. "We had a couple of losses in a row and we wanted to make sure we followed up with a good game. If we didn't win, we wanted to get back to playing our type of hockey. We had a great game tonight."

Sabres: [Ryan Miller](#) lost his shutout bid late in third period of Tuesday night's game, but he stopped the other 30 Islander shots to anchor a 2-1 victory. Pominville and [Derek Roy](#) each had a pair of assists for

their second multi-point games in a row, while [Tyler Myers](#) and [Thomas Vanek](#) provided the offense with early goals in the first and second periods, respectively.

"We're happy, but at the same time, we've got to get some more points," Roy said. "We've got to keep winning hockey games. We can't win one, lose one anymore. We've got to put a streak together. We've got to gain some ground right now."

The schedule-makers have made it a hard task for Buffalo "to put a streak together" this weekend, though. After hosting the defending champs on Friday, the Sabres head to Madison Square Garden for a clash with the East-leading New York Rangers on Saturday night.

"It's a good test," coach Lindy Ruff told the team's website. "They've got good size, good grit; both of them. It's a good test for us. It'll tell us where we're at."

Who's Hot: Boston centers Seguin and Kelly each have points in three of their previous four. ... Pominville, who has team highs of 23 goals and 36 assists, has points in eight of his last nine with six goals and six assists in that stretch. Roy has two goals and five assists during a four-game point streak after totaling just three goals and an assist in his prior 19 contests.

Injury Report: Boston forward [Rich Peverley](#) is out 4-6 weeks with a sprained right MCL, while forward [Nathan Horton](#) (concussion) remains on IR. ... Buffalo defenseman [Robyn Regehr](#) left Tuesday's win in the first period with an upper-body injury, but is expected to play Friday. [Brad Boyes](#) (undisclosed) missed Thursday's practice and is questionable after also suffering an injury against the Islanders. [Cody McCormick](#) (upper body) has missed the last six games, but has started practicing with the team and is "getting closer" to returning, according to Ruff. [Jochen Hecht](#) is still sidelined with a concussion.

Stat Pack: It's easy to argue that Boston is the best third-period team in the NHL. The Bruins have a League-best plus-33 scoring differential in the final period and they are a perfect 24-for-24 this season when leading after two. ... Each team's power play has been struggling mightily. The B's are 2 for 22 in their last 10 games, while Buffalo has converted just 1 of 33 chances in its last 12.

Puck Drop: It has been a rocky season for Miller, but if the Sabres are to going to make a run at the playoffs, he is the man who will be at the center of it. The 31-year-old netminder features an 18-17-4 record on the season, but he is 6-2-2 over his last 10 starts.

"It's been coming around for a little while here, and I do feel a little bit better about my game," Miller told the team's website. "There's a big build-up here towards the end of the season and I want to be as sharp as I can and gather as many wins as possible. Just trying to stay really calm and collected and watch the game. A big help has been the guys are coming through the middle a lot more. I'm getting pretty good reads on the play and when I have one-on-ones with the guys, I can focus on challenging that and it all kind of blends together."

Bruins-Sabres Preview

STATS

February 23, 2012

The last six weeks have been a struggle for the Northeast Division-leading [Boston Bruins](#).

The low point came in Buffalo two weeks ago.

The Bruins look to avenge their most lopsided defeat in four years and string together back-to-back victories for the first time since mid-January when they face the Sabres on Friday night at the First Niagara Center.

Boston (36-20-2) outscored Buffalo 10-5 in winning the first two meetings, with [Tyler Seguin](#) combining for three goals and two assists and [Brad Marchand](#) adding two goals and two assists. Those games, however, took place in November, when the Bruins were nearly perfect.

Boston has been anything but lately, going 8-9-1 since the last time it won back-to-back games Jan. 10 and 12.

The Bruins' most glaring defeat over that stretch took place in Buffalo on Feb. 8, when the Sabres (26-27-7) handed Boston a 6-0 loss. It's the most goals the Bruins have allowed all season and was their most lopsided defeat since falling 8-2 to Toronto on March 6, 2008.

[Tuukka Rask](#) was pulled after allowing three goals on 10 shots and the Sabres -- led by [Ryan Miller](#)'s 36 saves and [Jason Pominville](#)'s two goals -- showed some grit by getting involved in several fights with the physical Bruins.

Although Boston hasn't been playing well lately, it arrives in Buffalo -- the fifth stop on a season-high six-game trip -- feeling a bit better about its situation.

After being shut out for the fourth time in 10 February games with Sunday's 2-0 loss to Minnesota, the Bruins beat St. Louis 4-2 on Wednesday, handing the Blues their first regulation home loss since Dec. 3. Marchand scored twice and [Tim Thomas](#) stopped the final 27 shots he faced after allowing two goals on the first five.

"This was a big win for us after being shut out in the last game," Marchand said. "With a couple of losses in a row, we wanted to make sure we followed up with a good game."

Marchand is tied with [Milan Lucic](#) for the team lead with 21 goals but had been part of Boston's offensive struggles, scoring just once in his first nine games this month.

The Bruins' sputtering power play has also had a lot to do with the scoring woes, going 2 for 22 in the last 10 games.

Buffalo's power play has been even worse, converting 1 of 32 chances in its last 12 contests.

The Sabres own one of the Eastern Conference's worst records but are still in contention for one of the final playoff spots. They're coming off Tuesday's 2-1 win over the [New York Islanders](#), their second straight victory following a four-game skid.

"We're happy, but at the same time, we've got to get some more points," center [Derek Roy](#) said. "We've got to keep winning hockey games. We can't win one, lose one anymore. We've got to put a streak together. We've got to gain some ground right now."

Roy and Pominville assisted on Tuesday's goals by [Tyler Myers](#) and [Thomas Vanek](#) and have been leading Buffalo's offense lately.

Pominville, who has team highs of 23 goals and 36 assists, has six goals and six assists in his last nine games. Roy has two goals and five assists in his last four contests after totaling three goals and an assist in his previous 19.

Miller finished with 30 saves against the Islanders, coming within 5:08 of his first shutout since beating the Bruins two weeks ago.

WEEKEND PLANS

Buffalo plays Bruins and Rangers in back-to-back games

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

February 23, 2012

Back-to-back games are always a challenge, but facing the top two teams in the Eastern Conference on consecutive nights doesn't make life any easier for the Buffalo Sabres as they look to get back into the playoff race with 22 games remaining.

The Sabres open their weekend at home tomorrow against the defending Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins, and then head to the Big Apple on Saturday for a tilt with the East-leading New York Rangers.

"It's a good test," said Lindy Ruff. "I think when Boston rolled in here last time around we knew it was going to be a test. And they had a hard game last night (in St. Louis). I thought St. Louis maybe had the edge in play a lot of the time, but they created a couple of big turnovers and were able to put the puck in the back of the net. They've got good size, good grit; both of them. It's a good test for us. It'll tell us where we're at."

It's not breaking news that the Sabres will have to be at their physical best against the Bruins, similar to the way they played during the 6-0 win here on February 8. [Robyn Regehr](#) expects a different Bruins team than the one they faced that night.

"They're a team that's probably going to be coming back looking for a little revenge after what happened in here the last game. So we're going to have to make sure we're well prepared."

Saturday's game marks Buffalo's first of two trips to Madison Square Garden this season. The Rangers are 19-7-2 on home ice and have allowed the second-fewest goals against (56) at home this season. Ruff knows his squad will have their hands full with King Henrik and company.

"The Rangers have proven that they're an elite team. They've got a couple of high-end players there that have really played well for them in (Marian) Gaborik and (Brad) Richards. And (Henrik) Lundqvist can be a difference maker."

[Brad Boyes](#) was the only player missing from today's practice at First Niagara Center, and Ruff was unsure if he'll be in the lineup tomorrow.

"He's a little banged up, so we'll have to see if he can play tomorrow or not."

Ruff said Boyes has been receiving treatment for the injury that happened late in Tuesday's win over the Islanders.

Regehr expects to be back tomorrow after he only played the first period on Monday.

"It was kind of a freak thing where I got hit in the ear with a stick from a guy that was falling. It messed up my balance, my inner ear. It felt like I was riding six-to-eight foot swells out in the middle of the ocean. But that feeling is gone and I can get back at it."

[Cody McCormick](#) skated in Boyes' spot on the line with [Matt Ellis](#) and [Zack Kassian](#) today, but Ruff said that's no indication he'll be back if Boyes can't go.

"Cody was the first day of a non-contact sense, but he's getting closer."

One player a little further away is [Jochen Hecht](#), however Ruff said he continues to recover from his post-concussion symptoms.

"He's progressing; he was on the bike again today. His fitness rides off-ice are getting ramped up. I would see that progression leading to getting back on the ice again."

As if the Sabres/Bruins rivalry needed anymore heat, leave it to Boston forward Brad Marchand to add more fuel to the fire.

When asked on Boston radio station WEEI this morning about coming to Buffalo, Marchand referred to the Queen City as "the worst place in the NHL ... I'm not too excited to go there, but I'll be excited to leave."

Marchand backpedaled somewhat this afternoon following Boston's practice at First Niagara Center, simply saying he was "joking around."

"I heard it was a little cold in Buffalo, and I'm allergic to the cold," said the 23-year-old who hails from Halifax, Nova Scotia. "I never meant to offend anyone. It's always cold and usually raining when we come here. I was just kinda playing around, so hopefully I didn't offend anyone."

Most of the Sabres were unaware of Marchand's opinions until being told by reporters after practice. They resisted any attempts to respond to his verbal jabs.

"I just laugh, said Ruff. "It's just another guy that hasn't lived here or been here. I heard he's a pretty funny guy."

Angola-native [Patrick Kaleta](#) just smiled when asked if he was bothered by the remarks.

"That's okay, I like it. I think Buffalo is the best place to play. I guess its two different ends of the spectrum, but I wouldn't want to play anywhere else."

Regehr said he wasn't bothered by the comments, especially considering the source.

"Not from him, he talks a lot out there. I'm not sure where he grew up, but it's probably not the nicest place anyway."

AROUND THE NHL

SabresTV's Brian Duff takes his weekly look around the league

Brian Duff

Sabres.com

February 23, 2012

It's not all about the NHL's trade deadline right now. It just seems that way.

But because of our proximity to 3 p.m. Monday, February 27, it seemed like a good time to canvas my NHL Network peers on what they believe will be the story of Deadline Day.

Starting with 1998 Masterton Trophy winner and former netminder Jamie McLennan, I asked the question: Which team will make the biggest impact at the deadline and why?

"I think it will be two teams. I believe Los Angeles is going to try and add skill and goal scoring up front, with Dean Lombardi feeling the heat, he must make a HUGE splash in the playoffs. He went to his trusted friend and confidant in Darryl Sutter to turn around the team from behind the bench, now he will attempt to give him more to work with. He has a coveted backup goalie in Jonathan Bernier as a major bargaining chip, yet he has not much cap space to take on salary so he will have to be creative. Maybe even get someone to take on huge salaries (Dustin Penner) or ship guys to the minors.

"The other is Edmonton. I think they will have some activity in the form of moving guys out (Alex Hemsky, and possibly Nikolai Khabibulin or Sam Gagner), looking to land a young goalie and more depth on the back end (a puck-moving defenseman). They are certainly sellers, but aren't going to give away anything for free. The plan is to make the playoffs next year, so they need to add depth and stockpile depth to get better this summer and surround the young kids with veteran leadership to help them grow."

Also an award winner from that same St. Louis Blues team in 1998, King Clancy Memorial Trophy recipient Kelly Chase offered this:

"Just listening to all the general managers talk, they all believe that the asking price for Rick Nash is astronomical and yet teams are willing to pay for him. This is getting to the point where they're asking for something reminiscent of a Lindros-type package of players, yet Nash has not yet got 80 points in a season. If Columbus can pull this off - awesome. It'll be the greatest contributing factor to turning this organization around. A culture change is needed there. This will be big."

Longtime NHL analyst Billy Jaffe agrees with McLennan, that a couple of teams will make noise.

“I see Colorado, even in wake of dealing Kyle Quincey and acquiring Steve Downie, as having a number of pieces that could or will be in play and therefore by volume, could be the biggest player.”

Jaffe added: “When it comes to biggest impact it may well come from Anaheim, by moving one of their better defensemen.”

Is he alluding to Lubomir Visnovsky? We’ll see.

A veteran of more than 600 NHL games, and now of YouTube fame for having his watch destroyed while broadcasting between the benches this week, Mike Johnson also has eyes on a Western Conference contender as being an active one.

“I think the Nashville Predators will have a big impact at the deadline. The organization wants to build off last year and get more than one round. They have several young prospects that they have to deal and a need, which is to improve their scoring. They also realize that this may be the last time they have Shea Weber and Ryan Suter together. And they will want to make the most of that opportunity while also trying to convince Suter to stay. They also have the cap space necessary to make any move they want.”

And the last words belong to that of our longest-serving analyst at the NHL Network, former Washington Capitals coach Gary Green.

“I would have to think that either the Washington Capitals or the Detroit Red Wings will make the most impact at the trade deadline. The Wings have great cap space and want to win another Cup while Mike Ilitch can still enjoy it. They are right there on the doorstep of having the ability to do that. Home ice advantage will have a significant positive impact on that, but their road record this year has been less than desirable considering their place in the standings. Everyone would like to acquire talented young players but the Red Wings may forego giving up anymore of their future top picks (even though later rounds seem to be more prosperous for the Wings) by acquiring another gritty defenseman (preferably a right shot) and a solid, rugged forward, even if that means just renting Ryan Smyth for a few months.

“As far as the Capitals go, so much depends on the health of Nicklas Backstrom, who before his concussion was the Caps best player. I have a feeling that Dale Hunter isn’t as enamored with his team as he was upon accepting the job and GM George McPhee may now agree. It may be time for a major shakeup in Washington since the ‘firing the coach’ card was played to no avail, and waiting until July 1 may be too late for the general manager.”

Enjoy deadline day. Like you, we’ll all be paying close attention.

Nearly five months later, Sabres' Pominville hasn't slowed down

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

February 24, 2012

BUFFALO — Sixty games into the season, Jason Pominville hasn't shown any signs of letting up. With five points in the last two contests, the Sabres captain already has 23 goals and 59 points, seven more than he had all of last season in 13 fewer appearances.

In a disappointing year for the Sabres, Pominville's been the only constant presence, showcasing a remarkable consistency right from opening night, when a goal and two assists began a 14-point month.

The 29-year-old, the lone player to play every contest, has at least one point in 42 games this season entering a critical weekend for the 12th-place Sabres, who host the Boston Bruins tonight and play a road tilt Saturday in New York against the Rangers.

Pominville has only a pair of two-game point droughts this year and just one three-game point drought. He halted that stretch earlier this month by compiling six goals and seven points during a six-game streak.

"He's been consistent from start to finish," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said Thursday inside the First Niagara Center. "In key situations, he's been able to be the guy that's been able to get us through on the offensive side of it. There hasn't been any stretch for him where he's fallen off."

Not surprisingly, Pominville's leading the Sabres' resurgence, which has them seven points back of the final Eastern Conference playoff spot.

He opened the scoring Sunday just 53 seconds into a 6-2 win over the Penguins, and then created Tyler Myers' goal Tuesday 1:21 into a 2-1 victory over the Islanders, the first of two assists.

Pominville, half of a dynamic winger duo beside Thomas Vanek, ranks 11th in NHL scoring. His 39 home points are third behind Evgeni Malkin's 45. He's had a hand in 41 percent of the Sabres' goals, quietly becoming one of the league's most valuable players.

"He's been producing and it's been consistent, which is very difficult to do in the league," Sabres defenseman Robyn Regehr said.

Why hasn't Pominville experienced even a brief decline?

The NHL All-Star wasn't sure. He credits playing up front on the power play, where it's easier to accumulate points (he has 20).

“I used to be on defense,” said Pominville, who’s been playing the point again recently. “You get those times where it’s tough to score five-on-five. Now you can rebound around the net on the power play.”

Pominville’s usually rebounding from a slow start around now. He *always* slumps early and finishes fast.

Incredibly, after suffering a sliced tendon in April and being slowed much of the summer, Pominville enjoyed his fastest start.

“My workouts were a little bit different (during the summer). ... I was a little bit worried about how I would be,” Pominville said. “But I’m happy about the way it ended up.”

Now, Pominville’s six goals and 12 points this month might mean he’s just warming up.

Consider what he’s accumulated late each season:

-2006-07: 11 goals and 25 points in the final 24 games.

-2007-08: 16 tallies and 42 points in the last 34 contests.

-2008-09: six scores and 18 points in the final 13 games.

-2009-10: eight goals and 19 points in the last 18 tilts.

-2010-11: 21 goals and 47 points in the final 57 games.

“I honestly have no idea,” Pominville said about closing each season on a tear. “I do think it might be desperation at a time of year where it’s probably the most fun to play, the most fun to be out there and compete for us. It might’ve been for a playoff spot or to be (at the) top of our division.

“There’s different reasons. But these are the games that are tighter. Everything counts. Every little play counts. These are the games that are the most exciting to play.”

Ruff can’t explain the second-half prowess, either.

“It’s one of those great mysteries, I guess,” he said.

Ruff recently reunited Pominville and Vanek following a brief breakup. Vanek’s scoring again after an awful January. They might finally have a permanent center, too. Derek Roy’s been his old self between them, producing seven points in the last four games.

“It’s a good combination,” Pominville said. “I had never really played with both of them other than a couple games here and there. It’s nice that we’ve been able to find chemistry and get things going. There’s no better time than now.”

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Forward Brad Boyes is a “little banged up” from Tuesday and questionable for tonight, Ruff said. Boyes didn’t practice Thursday.

Meanwhile, winger Cody McCormick (upper body) is practicing in a non-contact role. He’s not ready to play.

Regehr, who left Tuesday after a stick smacked him on the ear, will play tonight.

“I didn’t feel like I was able to stay stationary,” Regehr said. “I felt like I was stuck on a boat in the middle of the ocean with six-to-eight-foot swells.”

Bruins agitator Marchand trashes Buffalo

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

February 24, 2012

BUFFALO — Bruins winger Brad Marchand, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, called Buffalo “the worst place in the NHL” during an appearance on a Boston radio station.

“I’m not too excited to go there,” Marchand told WEEI on Thursday morning, “but I’ll be excited to leave.”

Ouch!

Marchand apologized later inside the First Niagara Center. Well, sort of.

“I never meant to offend anyone,” Marchand said after the Bruins prepared for tonight’s game against the Sabres. “It’s always cold and rainy when we come here, and I was just kind of playing around. I hope I didn’t offend anyone.”

Umm, Brad, Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs lives in East Aurora.

“He’s got a house in every city in the United States,” Marchand said. “So he’s OK.”

Marchand explained his “dislike” for Buffalo further, saying: “It’s a little cold here. There’s not a ton to do. You come and just got to hang around in the hotel. (Teammate Daniel Paille, an ex-Sabre) spoke very highly of it, especially in the summertime. So I’m sure it’s great if you live here. There’s nothing around, so I don’t know a whole lot about the city.”

Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said he laughed at Marchand’s words on the radio.

“It’s just another guy that hasn’t lived here or been here,” he said. “I heard he’s a pretty funny guy.”

DuVall: Sabres will be active traders

Eric DuVall

The Tonawanda News

February 24, 2012

Headed into the home stretch of the 2011-12 season, Sabres fans and the team's brain trust are faced with the most difficult — and interesting — trade deadline of their post-lockout era.

General manager Darcy Regier has a history of activity at the trade deadline, making a trade at all but one deadline in his 14 seasons in Buffalo. Most were minor deals involving draft picks, unheralded prospects and veteran rental players who had minimal impact. Bob Corkum, anyone?

Of course, these moves were made under ownership groups that valued financial viability first and a GM's wish list second. Under Terry Pegula, such financial constraints are a thing of the past.

Regier has long argued that the trade deadline is not the best time to make significant roster changes. Players, in Regier's view, tend to be overvalued, making significant multi-player swaps difficult.

The question for fans — and for Regier — is whether this holds true when money is no object.

Despite Pegula's deep pockets, the Sabres are up against the salary cap, meaning any deals will have to be even money or, more than likely, money-out.

Regier is fond of letting other teams set the market leading up to the deadline, then working a deal that puts him on the better side of what most teams are paying. But the Sabres have never had a worse chance of making the playoffs at the trade deadline in the post-lockout era. So does that make them outright sellers? It would be out of character for Regier, whose reputation is for valuing the devils (lower case) he knows over the devils he doesn't. But the price for even marginal players seems to be higher than most years.

To use Darcy's favorite phrase, the market is set — and it's set to sell, sell, sell. Despite his trade deadline history and fans' assumption that the team is reticent to part with core players, I think they will.

The two biggest names floating around the locker room as potential trade bait are centers Derek Roy and Paul Gaustad.

Gaustad is by far the easiest to move. His contract is up after this season and he'll be an unrestricted free agent. With his reasonable cap hit and defensive prowess, he's a nice fit on a half-dozen Stanley Cup contenders looking to bolster forward depth for a long playoff run. Detroit seems like a particularly good fit given their cap space. Gaustad's face off and penalty killing skills would bolster a Red Wings team that emphasizes puck possession and winning the special teams battle as keys to a long playoff run.

If the going rate holds true, Gaustad should bring in at least a 2nd round draft pick and a prospect with solid NHL potential.

Brad Boyes, also a pending UFA, could be had for a song. Despite what most fans might be tempted to say, he holds marginal value for a team on the cusp of a playoff berth. His shoot-out prowess alone might garner some interest. Maybe Florida, which has the cap space and is in a position ahead of Buffalo — and near a playoff berth for the first time this century — would be a good fit. If I were Panthers GM Dale Tallon, I'd offer Regier a fourth-round draft pick for Boyes. If I was Regier, I'd ask it be conditional — that if the Panthers do make the playoffs it becomes a third-rounder.

And finally we come to the biggest piece of the puzzle, Roy. At his best, he's viewed as a two-way center who produces a point per game. At his worst, he's a selfish player and purported locker room cancer. This season, he's a guy in a slump.

Surely Regier knows that Roy's trade value will only depreciate as he heads into a contract year. The Sabres need to make a decision now about whether Roy fits into the future plans. I don't think he does and the player I think it's most likely they net in return makes this an even easier decision.

With the late-breaking news that the Los Angeles Kings have acquired Jeff Carter and reunited him with fellow Flyers cast-off Mike Richards, it would seem as though the Kings, and their perpetually embattled GM Dean Lombardi, are relying on a major overhaul to break a string consecutive first-round playoff defeats. The first two names to pop up as available from Los Angeles are goaltender Jonathan Bernier and their captain, Dustin Brown.

Bernier is a non-starter for Buffalo with Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth in net.

Brown is another story. He's an Ithaca native with decent, though not elite, scoring numbers in his career. Brown's cap hit is smaller than Roy's, making it the money-out ideal for Buffalo. He's a rugged player with leadership intangibles.

Don't be shocked if the Sabres use some of the draft picks they're getting in a potential Gaustad trade to sweeten the pot. I wouldn't even rule out a three-way deal with a team like Tampa Bay that's in need of goaltending, providing added flexibility in meeting both Buffalo and LA's salary cap demands.

One thing is certain, the deadline is shaping up to be more interesting for Sabres fans than just about any point so far in this moribund season.

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Trio Working Together On And Off The Ice

Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

February 23, 2012

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The line combination of Nathan Gerbe-Paul Gaustad-Patrick Kaleta was reunited recently, and their main goal has been to match up with the opponent's top offensive lines. It is a line that worked well for the Buffalo Sabres in the playoffs last season, and is once again being counted on to stop the likes of Evgeni Malkin, John Tavares and Marian Gaborik.

Their line has done a good job of neutralizing the other team's best offensive threats recently, and for Gerbe it all starts with how hard they are willing to work on a nightly basis. The young forward believes that, "the biggest thing that we try to work on is how hard we work and how hard we compete [against] the other line. That's our main goal, that's, I think, what we do best." Buffalo has gone 6-3-2 since the All-Star break, and since January 24th the blue and gold are 7-3-2 overall.

All three forwards bring something different to the line on a nightly basis, and Gerbe thinks that in the end it is all about how hard they work together to be successful, but said their "mixture all starts with hard work and that's where...winning starts with hard work and that's, that's what as a team we have to...put in to win." One of the ways the trio helped build their chemistry was by working together in the offseason.

Both Gerbe and Kaleta feel that the on and off-ice workouts during the summer have as Kaleta put it a "brotherly feeling out there [on the ice]." They also watched game film together, trying to pick up each other's tendencies better.

The Angola native has had to reign his play in a bit this season. It has seemed like on many nights that Kaleta is being penalized for clean, legal hits. Ruff has said in the past that it can be frustrating to see Kaleta targeted by the officials for what appear to be good hockey plays. The forward is trying to learn from the experience and thinks that, "it's part of changing my game and...I like challenges and I like, you know, where my game has progressed to so far. I still have a lot of work to do but, like I said, I have fun doing it and it's definitely a challenge but I'm up to the task." Kaleta leads the team in penalty minutes, but has done a good job of staying out of the box in recent games. The only exception would be the 17 minutes he gathered in the previous meeting with the Boston Bruins on February 8th.

Head coach Lindy Ruff knew what he was getting out of the three forwards from a defensive style of play, but he has seen an added bonus offensively from the group, saying "I think on the offensive side of it they've been able to contribute maybe a little bit more than I thought." The bench boss is quick to point out that the play of Robyn Regehr and Andrej Sekera has as much to do with the success as anything. Ruff believes that, "from a five man unit, you know, I think that when you look at the five guys that've played, and it takes five, against the other team's top lines they've, they've gone a really good job."

Regehr missed the third period of Tuesday's win over the New York Islanders after he took a stick up high, but the rear guard was back on the ice today. He is healthy enough to go up against the Bruins tomorrow night, according to Ruff. One player whose status is in doubt is Brad Boyes. Ruff told us that he was "a little banged up" late in the game Tuesday, and is not sure if the forward will be able to go tomorrow.

Cody McCormick took the next step in his recovery from a concussion on Thursday, as he took part in the skate fully for the first time since suffering the injury. McCormick said that has not been cleared to play yet, and Ruff added that he has had just one full workout, so it may be a few more games before the forward is ready to rejoin the lineup. Ruff also said that Jochen Hecht is riding the exercise bike again and is progressing in his recovery from his latest concussion.

The Sabres and Bruins drop the puck at 7:30 p.m. tomorrow night on the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network - WGR Sports Radio 550. Tune in for pregame coverage with Mike Schopp and the Bulldog starting at 6:30 p.m.

Twitter: [@PatWGR](https://twitter.com/PatWGR).

Sabres Gaustad will stay in the news

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 23, 2012

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- This week is the time of year where everybody is putting rumors out on the internet whether they're true or not. Yahoo Sports is reporting that the Sabres are back trying to resign Paul Gaustad. This is the conversation with the player on Monday.

Have you had any contract talks with the Sabres this season? Gaustad answered, "No not during the season, no, not really." In the offseason did you talk? He said, "We talked a little bit about just where I wanted to be and for me I always wanted to be a Sabre. I've always wanted to win in Buffalo. I've come to grow up here and my adult life has been in Western New York and winning here is one of my main goals in hockey."

The bottom line is early there were very preliminary contract talks between the Sabres and Gaustad's agent, but it didn't go anywhere and ended fast.

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The bottom line is early there were very preliminary contract talks between the Sabres and Gaustad's agent, but it didn't go anywhere and ended fast.

Many players on the NHL have had to deal with rumors the past month. Gaustad said he knows how to handle it, "I just focus on playing the game and playing on the team I'm on, just like I've done years before it's the same thing, I address it the same way. You can get traded in any season."

As far as if this is a tough week Gaustad thinks if you shut out the hockey world, you'll be fine, "I'm not focused on it. I don't listen to you guys on the radio or read your newspaper articles so it's not too hard for me."

Gaustad has said twice now that his meeting with Darcy Regier on Saturday had nothing to do with trade talks. The center said, "He didn't say anything about that. It was honestly about the team, the position where we were at and the position we put ourselves in. Obviously he's not happy with it, I'm not happy with it, I don't think anybody is here so finding a way to get out of it."

Jordan Leopold has been traded many times before and at the deadline. He said, "You try to believe in what you're doing around here, but in the background is a little bit of that noise. As a player, it's out of your control. There's nothing you can do about it unless you go in and ask for a trade. You trade to leave all those distractions behind you, but it's changed a lot over the years as far as the access to blogs or rumors, Twitter, television with tickers at the bottom of the page, the whole thing has evolved into a social media circus. If you start reading all that stuff and start believing it, you never know, but it's absolutely crazy this time of year and as a player the best thing you can do for yourself is not read any of that stuff." The defenseman added, "You're talking to a guy with three kids and watching the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse all day long so it's pretty easy for me. I hardly watch hockey if ever at the house. I've kept that philosophy ever since I got out of Calgary as Canada's the hockey capital of the world. I'd turn on the TV and the first thing I'd see is how the local hockey team is doing and I really didn't like that as a player."

Leopold has one more year left at \$3-million. With that in mind, he's right where he wants to be, "I signed here with the intention of fulfilling my three years and try to do something that I've never done in my career and that's win a Stanley Cup. I'm cemented here in the community with two kids in elementary school, my little guy is the biggest Sabres fan there is. It's tough when you get older and start moving and I believe in what we're doing here."

Brad Boyes came to Buffalo from St. Louis last year at the deadline so he knows what players including himself are going through, "I've gone through it four times, so it's always a nervous week even when I didn't get traded. I know what to expect and I just go out and play hockey."

Boyes is another one that does not want to leave, "I do like it here. I'm close to home and I really like it here. The organization with the owner here is one of the tops in the league now, but you want to win and that's what we play the game for. You want to get the opportunity to win so we're playing well now and that's all I'm worried about."

Many names are being talked about in Sabreland. Boyes has been through it, but he doesn't say much to the kids, "To be honest, not really. I don't want to go and talk to them about it. If he does hear about it, you don't want to be constantly nervous about it, you want to forget about it and put it in the back of your mind if it's in your mind at all."

Lindy Ruff has a hard and fast rule when it comes to the deadline, "For me it's an automatic that you really have to avoid all the noise out there and in this situation, there's a lot of it which is understandable."

Amerks players share various talents

Kevin Oklobzija

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

February 24, 2012

Diehard fans of the Rochester Americans know that defenseman T.J. Brennan can uncork a wicked one-timer from the point, and that center Travis Turnbull can drop his gloves faster than a linesman drops the puck.

They may not know left winger captain Colin Stuart is preparing to ship his artwork for a gallery showing next month, that David Leggio likes to rap, or that Dennis Persson's first name isn't Dennis.

So we take this break from the Amerks playoff chase to provide a little non-hockey look into the lives of a few of the players who wear the Amerk sweater.

T.J. Brennan

While at Moorestown (N.J.) High School, he played hockey in the winter but also was a very good lacrosse player.

"A lot of colleges were offering little scholarships, like Syracuse, Duke and North Carolina," said Brennan, 22, a third-year pro in the Buffalo Sabres organization.

Obviously when the country's elite schools have interest, you can play. "I never took it seriously though," Brennan said of the sport, "and they knew I was going to play hockey."

One of his good friends from high school, Sean DeLaney, is a midfielder for the Denver Outlaws of Major League Lacrosse.

Colin Stuart

On Thanksgiving the Amerks captain cooked the holiday feast for teammates; he very much knows his way around the kitchen.

But the 28-year-old, eighth-year veteran is also a pretty good painter. He draws inspiration for a great deal of his artwork from another hobby: fishing.

"I paint a lot of outdoor scenes, a lot of fish scenes," said Stuart, a Rochester, Minn., native who fell in love with fishing while growing up. "I fished a lot of the New York tributaries this year for brown trout and steelhead."

Friends brought pictures of his work to a gallery in Hayward, Wis. The operators offered him space for an exhibit.

“My first shot at a gallery showing,” he said. “Hayward’s in cabin country. Being that I’m an outdoorsman, they’re the type of paintings that do well in people’s cabins.

“I never considered my work gallery-worthy. I usually give all my paintings to friends or people that ask so it’s not going to hurt my feelings if they don’t sell.

“I’m not going to quit my day job.”

Or, in the case of a hockey player, his night job.

Corey Fienhage

The rookie is working to become a full-time American Hockey League defenseman. If there was a Professional Gamer’s League, he might have a contract there, too.

“It started before high school,” the Apple Valley, Minn., native said. “In 2002 or 2003 I was ranked seventh in the world. My best friend was ranked second.

“It got to the point we’d come into a room (online) and people would see us and leave. There’d be 60 people in the room and you’d see 30 people click out.”

The video games allow him a mental break from hockey.

“Some guys like to play guitar or play lacrosse; I’m not any good at that so this is my get-away from the rink,” he said.

Jacob Lagace

The second-year right winger is a beatboxer. Beatboxing is essentially vocal percussion; the ability to create drum sounds and rhythms.

Lagace, a 22-year-old from Beloeil, Quebec, has been known to interrupt a little quiet time at home by breaking into a “drum” medley.

But other than passing the time or entertaining some teammates in the dressing room, what else is this talent good for?

“Not much,” Lagace admitted.

Dennis Persson

The third-year defenseman from Nykoping, Sweden, goes by Dennis, his middle name, rather than Karl, his given first name.

“My dad was Karl Peter but he goes by Peter,” said Persson, 23. “My parents call me Dennis 100 percent of the time.

He said he doesn’t really know why.

Another thing in common with his father: Both play guitar. Peter was in a band called Case back in Sweden and did some minor touring and recording.

Dennis, however, says he doesn’t like to play in front of people “unless I have a couple beers in me.”

David Leggio

The 27-year-old goalie from Williamsville used to rap with a high school buddy at the lunch table at St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute in Buffalo.

While he doesn’t rap much anymore — “not that many situations call for freestyle rap in hockey” — he did record a song last season while with the Portland Pirates.

“It was called the ‘Black and Red Remix.’ It was a remix of the famous Wiz Khalifa song ‘Black and Yellow,’ ” Leggio said. “It was talking about the Portland Pirates. I took the instrumental from Black and Yellow and laid down some bars.”

You’ll never hear it, though. The three- to four-minute song was never released anywhere outside the dressing room.

“It will not ever be available to the public,” Leggio said. “As a professional hockey player and role model, I feel some of the language is, let’s say, inappropriate for all ages.”

Being famous in hockey is fine. “I don’t want to be infamous,” he said.

Keep up the good work, Bruins

Steve Conroy
The Boston Herald
February 24, 2012

BUFFALO — The [Bruins](#) are coming off what could be their most important win of the season, a 4-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Wednesday.

But the B's have to remember one thing. Don't exhale just yet.

The Bruins get right back at it tonight at the First Niagara Center against the Buffalo Sabres. And if they play anything like they did in taking a 6-0 pummeling by the Sabres on Feb. 8, it would undo all the good karma they suddenly have going for them.

“That’s probably the most important message right now,” said coach **Claude Julien**. “If we want to get ourselves going in the right direction, we have to be able to follow up with another type of effort like we had (Wednesday). Hopefully it will give us a little bit of momentum and confidence moving forward. (Wednesday) was a great win, great effort. Now we’ve got to follow up with another one.

“Hopefully that feeling will be back there again in the dressing room.”

The B's have not won consecutive games since Jan. 10 and 12, which has created a race for the Northeast Division crown. Though with four games in hand, the B's see the Senators just two points behind. They play the Sens in a home-and-home series tomorrow in Ottawa and Tuesday in Boston.

And the coaching staff may have hit on something more tangible — a second scoring line. In the third period of the 2-0 loss to Minnesota on Sunday, Julien put **David Krejci** on the right wing with **Chris Kelly** at center and **Milan Lucic** on the left side.

The many fruitless opportunities the line created Sunday turned into goals in St. Louis, with Lucic and Kelly cashing in. Krejci didn't get a point, but was impressive. His hit on Blues defenseman **Kris Russell** that led to Lucic's goal just might have been the highlight of the night.

“That’s what we needed out of our players, guys to get out of their comfort zone a little bit and be willing to do whatever needed to be done to win the hockey game,” said Julien. “David threw a real good check behind the net, turned the puck over, before you knew it, the puck was in the net.”

Happy Camper

It was a tough night for rookie **Carter Camper** to make his NHL debut. While the 5-foot-9 Camper looked a little overmatched physically against the brawny Blues, he did win 5-of-8 faceoffs and some praise.

“He was good on draws,” said Julien, “and you’ve got to remember that we played one of the best teams in the Western Conference, so it was a tough start for him to be thrown in there. But I didn’t mind his game. He’s smart. I thought his hockey sense was good and his faceoffs were decent and he worked on it in the morning.”

Said Camper: “I felt good and I felt good in the faceoff circle. To be honest with you, it was just fun being out there and hopefully I get to build off the game and make some plays.”

Payback, please

With Lucic and Marchand each getting their 21st goals, **Tyler Seguin** lost the team lead in goals. But considering he sprung Marchand for the breakaway goal in the third period against the Blues, Seguin joked he’d like a little payback.

“I helped him get the monkey off his back. It’d be nice if he helped me get it off mine,” said Seguin who sits at 20 goals, and has gone seven games without a goal. . . .

Shawn Thornton, who battled a fever to play on Wednesday, did not skate in yesterday’s workout.

Goalie tutelage

Goalie coach **Bob Essensa** has been with the team to work with both [Tim Thomas](#) and **Tuukka Rask**.

“Like we said with everything else, we said our goaltending was good but not necessarily at the peak and Bob’s been working with those guys,” said Julien.

It will be an interesting choice for tonight’s game. Thomas has owned Ottawa the last couple of years, so you’d figure he gets the call tomorrow. But with Rask struggling and the B’s rather desperate for back-to-back wins tonight against the Sabres, chances are you could see Thomas on both nights.

Neither Rask nor Thomas has had a ton of luck in Buffalo. Rask is 4-4 with a .922 save percentage and 2.54 goals-against. Thomas is 10-9-4 with an .897 SP and 3.14 GA.

— sconroy@bostonherald.com

Lift provided by a new wing *Krejci adjusting nicely to switch*

Fluto Shinzawa
The Boston Globe
February 24, 2012

BUFFALO - As a right wing, one of **David Krejci's** new responsibilities is to be the first man in on the forecheck instead of the third guy high.

So in the first period of Wednesday's 4-2 win over St. Louis, when Krejci, a natural center, spotted **Kris Russell** fishing for the puck behind the Blues net, he did his job.

Krejci closed the gap on Russell. With a ferocity usually shown by **Nathan Horton**, the man whose position he is filling, Krejci leveled Russell. And even though he's better known as a skilled and shifty center, Krejci didn't mind being a thump-first wingman.

"It was fun," Krejci said after yesterday's practice at the First Niagara Center. "It was something different. I enjoyed it."

Because of the fierceness of Krejci's wallop, Russell turned the puck over to **Joe Corvo**. The defenseman hammered a shot on net, and **Milan Lucic** tipped the puck past Blues goalie **Brian Elliott** to give the Bruins a 2-0 lead.

Had Krejci not landed such a wicked hit, the goal wouldn't have come.

"That's what we needed - guys to get out of their comfort zone a little bit and be willing to do whatever needed to be done to win a hockey game," said coach **Claude Julien**.

"David threw a real good check behind the net. He turned the puck over. Before you knew it, the puck was in the net. He was probably a major contributor on that goal, in my mind."

Krejci has always been a center. But with the Bruins struggling to create scoring chances, Julien shifted him to the right side in the third period of Sunday's 2-0 loss to Minnesota. With **Chris Kelly** centering Lucic and Krejci, the line put together some good sniffs against the Wild.

In St. Louis, the three continued their up-tempo play, combining for seven of Boston's 19 shots. In the final minute of the first period, Lucic set up Kelly for a net-front strike that halted a St. Louis rally. Krejci (20:03 of action) trailed only **Patrice Bergeron** (20:04) among Bruins forwards in ice time.

Krejci's high-pace performance underscored how critical he is to the team. When he plays with passion and purpose, he makes opponents backtrack. Krejci helps give the Bruins two scoring lines instead of one.

And Julien was prompt to credit Kelly for reading off Krejci to keep the line responsible defensively.

"Just because he started on the wing doesn't mean he ended up there," Julien said. "There were times he was the low guy in our end or in the middle. Kells would take the wing. I thought those guys really did a

great job reading off each other. Looch played his side of the ice and played it well. That's why that line had success."

Naturally, **Carter Camper** was nervous when he hit the ice at 2:29 of Wednesday's first period. It was his first NHL shift. His first big-league faceoff. His parents, fiancée, and brother were watching from the Scottrade Center stands.

So it probably helped that nine seconds after winning his first-ever faceoff, teammate **Adam McQuaid** threw down with **B.J. Crombeen**.

"Kind of felt good to get that first shift out of the way," Camper said with a smile yesterday. "After that, my nerves kind of settled down. After that, it was just another hockey game."

Julien acknowledged the challenge of Camper's situation. The Bruins were in a two-game losing streak. They were without Horton and **Rich Peverley**. They were squaring off against a sturdy club that hadn't suffered a regulation home loss in 21 games.

Amid all of that, Julien thought Camper held his own.

"You've got to remember that we played one of the best teams in the Western Conference," said Julien. "It was a tough start for him to be thrown in. But I didn't mind his game. He's smart. I thought his hockey sense was good."

Neither Camper nor **Jordan Caron** played in the third period, as Julien rolled three lines instead of four. In practice yesterday, Camper centered **Josh Hennessy** and **Benoit Pouliot**.

If there was anything that struck Camper about his debut, it was how calm and upbeat his teammates were on the bench and in the dressing room. The Bruins handed away a two-goal lead, but Camper didn't feel much negativity when things didn't break their way.

"I was really impressed with how positive guys are and how upbeat everyone is," Camper said. "Obviously I've been following them all year. It seems that things haven't been going the way they'd like them to. But I was extremely impressed with how confident guys still are."

Right back at it

The Bruins flew from St. Louis to Buffalo yesterday morning. Upon arrival, they traveled directly to the rink and ran through a 40-minute practice. "That's probably the most important message right now," Julien said of keeping his team focused after the road win. "If we want to get ourselves going in the right direction, it's to be able to follow up with another type of effort like we had last night. Hopefully it will give us a little bit of momentum and confidence." . . . **Shawn Thornton** didn't practice. He played against St. Louis despite being under the weather . . . **Brad Marchand** took some ribbing after practice from his teammates. Yesterday morning, during an interview with WEEI, Marchand called Buffalo the worst city in the league. "I didn't mean to offend anyone," Marchand explained later. "It's always cold and rainy when we come here, and I was just kind of playing around." One smiling teammate to Marchand: "Put your muzzle on." Another teammate: "And where will you be having dinner tonight?"

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Scoring first always their goal

Fluto Shinzawa
The Boston Globe
February 24, 2012

ST. LOUIS - Although Dennis Seidenberg struggles to find an accurate description, the Bruins defenseman defines scoring first as being in a happy place.

“You just settle into a comfort level once you score,” Seidenberg said. “You’re more comfortable. It’s tough to explain. It’s just a different feeling. Playing with a lead, you’re just more comfortable.”

The numbers prove Seidenberg correct. When the Bruins have scored first, they are the second-best team in the NHL. They have won 84.6 percent of the games in which they’ve gotten on the scoreboard first, trailing only the Rangers (90.3 percent).

Trouble is, those first goals have been elusive.

In 13 of their last 20 games, the Bruins have allowed their opponents to score first. Aside from a 5-3 win over Winnipeg Jan. 24 and a 4-1 victory over New Jersey Jan. 19, the Bruins have lost 11 of those 13 games. In 15 of their last 17 games, they have been either tied or behind after 40 minutes.

“It’s tough,” coach Claude Julien said. “That’s the one area where you certainly wish we could make better. Having to spot the other team the first goal night after night certainly makes it hard on us.

“We’ve proven in the past that we’re a pretty good team when we score that first goal. It makes a big difference in our game.”

Structurally, the Bruins are far stouter at protecting leads than trying to overcome them. When they’re clicking, they rely on their goaltending. Their defensemen are efficient at repelling opposing rushes. Their forwards collapse and help to defend net-front chances.

But having a lead has also led to a mental advantage. The Bruins play with swagger when they’re ahead. Conversely, when they’re chasing the game, they play with too much doubt and indecision.

“When you get that first goal and you start to feel better about yourself, you can build some momentum and work more to get that next one,” Milan Lucic said. “As of late, it’s been kind of tough getting that first one.

“As you saw in Montreal, we were able to get that first one and build off that. Other than that lately, we haven’t been able to get that first one.

“Even though we get down a goal or two goals, we shouldn’t let that deflate us. We should find a way to get ourselves back in the game and not get frustrated.”

Camper in tow

Rookie Carter Camper, recalled from Providence, participated in his first NHL practice yesterday at the Scottrade Center. Camper could make his big-league debut tonight against St. Louis.

“I see a guy capable of making plays,” Julien said. “Smart player. So we’ll see what goes on from here moving forward.”

Camper is Providence’s leading scorer (14-24-38 in 53 games). The 23-year-old center was most recently between Calle Ridderwall and Zach Hamill.

In yesterday’s practice, Camper alternated shifts with Josh Hennessy between Jordan Caron and Benoit Pouliot. The right-shot Camper could get the nod tonight if the coaches believe he brings more offensive touch than Hennessy.

“Earlier in the year, I was trying to figure out my game and figure out what I can and can’t do down there,” Camper said of adjusting from college hockey to the AHL. “We’re 50 games into the season. I’ve been able to transition to the pros with the help of some older guys and some good linemates. It’s the same game we’ve been playing our entire lives. It’s just playing with better players now.”

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