



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Hodgson keeps his cool

Ruff pulls center aside after practice to deliver a message

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

March 14, 2012

As the Sabres began heading off the ice at the conclusion of practice Tuesday, coach Lindy Ruff decided it was time for a chat with Cody Hodgson. The trade-deadline acquisition has been struggling, so Ruff called the center to the blue line for a one-on-one conference.

The message?

"Not to get frustrated," Ruff said.

Hodgson says he isn't discouraged, though it is easy to imagine he might be. He'll play his ninth game for Buffalo tonight when Colorado visits First Niagara Center, and Hodgson is still looking for his first point. The 22-year-old has been a consistent point gatherer everywhere else, but so far it's been bubkes in Buffalo.

"Not necessarily frustrating, but I think the chances are there," Hodgson said. "A couple of broken sticks, posts, stuff like that that just aren't going in, but I'm a pretty positive person and I like to stay pretty upbeat. I know you're this close to your next shot going in, so I know it's coming."

When it does, it might not be on a top line. The center practiced on the fourth line with left wing Brad Boyes and right wing Corey Tropp, the same duo he finished with during Monday's 3-2 overtime victory against Montreal.

"This team is so deep and so solid all the way through, there's great players on every line and it's a pleasure to be a part of it," Hodgson said. "We're winning games, and that's all that matters."

Hodgson is coming off his least-productive outing with Buffalo. He skated just 11:07, a decrease of more than 10 minutes from the career-high 21:48 he logged Saturday in Ottawa. He has just one shot in the last three games after taking 11 in his initial five in Blue and Gold.

"I'm still trying, and we're winning. That's the main thing," Hodgson said.

The center could be wearing down. Acquired from Vancouver in the final stage of a six-game road trip, Hodgson is on a run of 15 games in 26 days. He has traveled from one coast to the other five times during the span.

"He's gone through a real tough stretch," Ruff said. "I played him some real heavy minutes in Ottawa. I saw a little bit of fatigue there, and I don't even know if his fatigue is on the physical side for sure; I think there's some mental fatigue there of what he's gone through and the emotions of being traded and the circumstances around it.

"I just said, 'Don't get frustrated.' I said, 'You went from the most minutes maybe in Ottawa to lesser minutes last game. Part of that was how well [Tyler] Ennis, [Marcus] Foligno and [Drew] Stafford have played.' And I said, 'Just let it happen. Don't look for points or cheat for points. Just play your game.' "

Hodgson, who spent his post-practice time working in the Sabres' alternate uniform he'll wear for the first time tonight, refused to blame fatigue for his decline.

"You can't really make excuses as a professional athlete," he said. "I'm excited about playing here. There's still adrenaline going. Still excitement, and I'm playing with good players. There's nothing to complain about."

Alexander Sulzer will second that final thought. Acquired along with Hodgson in exchange for Zack Kassian and Marc-Andre Gragnani, Sulzer has gone from forgotten part to minute-hogging defenseman. Fresh off a season-high 23:59, Sulzer will play his fifth straight game for the Sabres and seventh overall.

"Obviously, it's great," said Sulzer, scratched for six weeks in Vancouver before the deal. "It's fun playing games instead of being scratched and doing workouts and bike rides. I'm just really excited to be in the lineup."

The swap of Sulzer for Gragnani was mostly an afterthought, but the change of scenery has benefited both and surprised many.

"I am surprised," Ruff said. "First of all, I didn't know a lot about him. It's one of those that I don't think anybody here knew a lot about him until we got him. You find out things from practice. You find out things from games. He's a good puck mover, passes the puck well, and positionally he's really sound. I've liked his reads on a lot of plays, and I like the way he defends."

Paired with fellow German blue-liner Christian Ehrhoff, Sulzer has made a much easier transition to the lineup than his more ballyhooed trade partner. He has little doubt Hodgson will join him in having personal success.

"It's only a matter of time until the points go on the board again," Sulzer said. "He's a great player. He works hard. He's playing well. It's just he hasn't had any luck yet converting those into points."

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Myers gets three-game suspension for boarding penalty

John Vogl

The Buffalo News

March 14, 2012

There's never a good time to lose a franchise defenseman for three games due to suspension. But with only 12 games left in the season and the Sabres desperate to climb into a playoff spot, the timing is really bad.

That, however, is the Sabres' reality. The NHL and Brendan Shanahan, the vice president of player safety, handed Tyler Myers a three-game ban Tuesday night for his boarding of Montreal's Scott Gomez. The big defenseman will miss tonight's home game against Colorado, Saturday's visit to Florida and Monday's game in Tampa Bay.

The penalty on Myers, who also will forfeit \$14,189 in salary, equates to 25 percent of the Sabres' remaining schedule.

"It's tough. There's no doubt," coach Lindy Ruff said. "He's been a big part of our back end."

Myers hit Gomez during the third period of Monday's 3-2 victory over the Canadiens, a win cemented by Myers' overtime goal. The defenseman had a hearing with Shanahan on Tuesday afternoon, and he made his way toward the phone call feeling supplemental discipline was coming.

"[Tuesday] morning it looked a lot worse than a lot of guys thought it did [Monday] night when it happened," Myers said. "Especially with 12 games left in this tight race, it's not a good feeling to even be in this situation."

The suspension-earning sequence started when Myers collided with Montreal's Chris Campoli along the boards, with the Buffalo blue-liner taking Campoli's stick to the face. Myers then skated toward Gomez below the goal line and hit him in the back, the forward flying face-first into the boards.

"At no point during Myers' approach to the check does he see anything other than Gomez's back," Shanahan said during his video outlining the suspension. "The onus therefore is upon Myers to avoid this hit completely, or at the very least minimize it. He does neither. Rather, he drives into a defenseless player with force."

The Sabres will be without one-third of their regular defense corps tonight. Andrej Sekera is out with pneumonia. Buffalo will need a call-up from Rochester, with Brayden McNabb being the No. 1 candidate.

"Tyler did a good job staying low and not getting his arms or elbows or anything out, but he put himself in a bad spot," Ruff said. "Tyler had a split second to hold up and maybe could've done a little bit better job of holding up. ... It's careless, but at the same time I didn't think there was any intent."

"He's in a tough spot because he's such a big man [6-foot-7] that he's got to stay low in some cases. He knows that he's got a good foot on some players. A lot of that puts him in a situation where his elbows are head high, and he's got to keep those tucked. He's going to suffer some consequences at times, but he needs to play physical."

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The Sabres, who allowed the Canadiens to tie the game with 3.5 seconds left in regulation, spent much of Tuesday's practice working on six-on-five situations. Ruff wasn't impressed with the way his team defended while Montreal had its goalie pulled.

"It's something we have to take pride in," right wing Patrick Kaleta said. "It's a matter of learning where you have to be and what you have to do. Basically, being fearless to block shots and things like that. We felt that we gave up a little bit more than we wanted to chance-wise last game on the six-on-five, and we wanted to brush up on it."

...

The Sabres will sell St. Patrick's Day-themed pucks prior tonight's game, with proceeds going to the team's foundation. The pucks, signed by Sabres players, will be sold by the players' significant others for \$20 in the 100 Level concourse.

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Avs begin Eastern trip in Buffalo

John Kreiser

NHL.com

March 13, 2012

AVALANCHE (37-30-4) at SABRES (33-29-8)

TV: NBCSN (HD); TSN2

LAST 10: Colorado 7-3-0; Buffalo 7-2-1

Season Series: It's the only meeting of the season between two teams that rarely see each other. They haven't met since the Avs won 4-3 in overtime on Jan. 4, 2011. Colorado has won the four most recent meetings, though the last three wins came after regulation.

Team Scope: The Avs start a tough stretch of three games in four days on the road against Eastern Conference teams as they scramble for one of the last playoff spots in the West. The Sabres figure to be every bit as desperate as Colorado -- Buffalo begins the night four points behind eighth-place Washington. However, the Sabres will be without their best defenseman -- [Tyler Myers](#) was suspended by the NHL on Tuesday for three games.

Team Scope:

Avalanche: The Avs nearly let a win get away in their last home game before heading East. They blew a one-goal lead in the third period, but rookie [Gabriel Landeskog](#) got the overtime winner as Colorado won for the fourth time in five games.

"We're in playoff mode already, and we've been in playoff mode the last couple of weeks," Landeskog said. "We just have to keep it going."

Sabres: Buffalo has been on a roll, going 9-2-1 in its last 12 to climb into the race for eighth place in the East. But the Sabres will be without Myers, who scored the OT winner against the Canadiens on Monday, for a hit on Scott Gomez earlier in the game.

"It's tough. There's no doubt," coach Lindy Ruff said. "He's been a big part of our back end."

Who's Hot: Deadline day acquisition [Jamie McGinn](#) has five goals and seven points in his last five games with the Avalanche. ... Colorado goaltender [Semyon Varlamov](#) made 38 saves in the win against Anaheim and is 7-2-0 with a 1.32 goals-against average and two shutouts over his last nine games. He has allowed more than two goals just once in that stretch. ... Varlamov's counterpart, [Ryan Miller](#), is 9-1-1 in his last 11 starts with a 1.78 goals-against average.

Injury Report: Colorado is without center [Matt Duchene](#) (ankle) and forward [Chuck Kobasew](#) (back). ... In addition to the suspension that will sideline Myers, Buffalo is minus forwards [Matt Ellis](#) (knee), [Cody McCormick](#) (concussion) and [Jochen Hecht](#) (concussion).

Stat Pack: Colorado leads the Western Conference with 14 victories in games decided after regulation. The Avs (14-4) and New Jersey Devils (14-5) share the League lead. ... The Avs are 21-9-4 in one-goal games this season, tying them with Philadelphia and Tampa Bay for the League lead in one-goal victories.

Puck Drop: Landeskog, the second player chosen in the Entry Draft last June, continues to make a strong case for the Calder Trophy as the NHL's top rookie. He's tied with Philadelphia's Matt Read for the lead in goals by a rookie with 19, including four game-winners, and is second with 44 points. He's also the only member of the Avs to suit up for all 71 games -- he played Monday despite battling an illness.

"I was fighting a little bit, fighting a lot out there," he said.

Sabres' Myers suspended three games

NHL.com

March 13, 2012

NEW YORK -- [Buffalo Sabres](#) defenseman [Tyler Myers](#) has been suspended, without pay, for three games for boarding [Montreal Canadiens](#) forward [Scott Gomez](#) during NHL Game #1033 in Buffalo on Monday, March 12, the National Hockey League's Department of Player Safety announced today.

Under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and based on his average annual salary, Myers will forfeit \$14,189.19. The money goes to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund.

The incident occurred at 13:11 of the third period. A minor penalty for boarding was assessed on the play.

For a full explanation of the decision, complete with video, please click on the following link: <http://video.nhl.com/videocenter/console?catid=60&id=164475>.

Colorado (37-30-4) at Buffalo (33-29-8)

Noey Kupchan

STATS

March 13, 2012

The surging [Buffalo Sabres](#) suddenly find themselves just outside the Eastern Conference playoff picture.

The [Colorado Avalanche](#) have used an impressive run of their own to climb into the mix in the West.

With both teams seeking a third consecutive win, the visiting Avalanche and Sabres meet for the only time this season Wednesday night.

Buffalo (33-29-8), which sat in a last-place tie in the conference Feb. 18, has since used a 9-2-1 run to climb into ninth. The Sabres picked up another two points and inched closer to the East's final postseason berth with Monday's 3-2 overtime win over Montreal.

Left wing [Tyler Ennis](#) scored twice, and after [Ryan Miller](#) allowed the tying goal with five seconds left in regulation, defenseman [Tyler Myers](#) found the back of the net 2:01 into OT.

"Two months ago, I would say it would've been very tough with our group," Myers said. "But I think we've come a very long, long way ... the way we responded was a big sign of life with our group.

"Definitely big in the sense that we got the two points. Every game here on out is gonna be a crucial game for us. It's so tight, it's gonna come right down to the end, we gotta battle for every two points."

Myers won't be around to face the Avalanche after being suspended Tuesday for three games for an illegal hit from behind Monday.

Miller finished with 26 saves and helped kill both of the Canadiens' power-play opportunities. Buffalo hasn't allowed a power-play goal in a season-high nine straight games.

"Right now we're looking for positives to build on and wins to build on," said Miller, who improved to 9-1-1 with a 1.78 goals-against average in his last 11 starts.

"(Monday) was a good win, we'll throw that scramble out the window, we got the two points we needed and we'll build for the next one."

Keeping things going, however, likely won't be easy against Colorado (37-30-4), which is one of a handful of teams vying for the last couple of postseason spots in the West.

The Avalanche improved to 4-1-0 over their last five with Monday's 3-2 overtime win over Anaheim. After blowing its second one-goal lead late in the third period, Colorado won on rookie forward [Gabriel Landeskog's](#) 19th goal of the season.

"We're in playoff mode already, and we've been in playoff mode the last couple of weeks," Landeskog said. "We just have to keep it going."

[Semyon Varlamov](#) made 38 saves and has gone 7-2-0 with a 1.32 GAA and two shutouts over his last nine games, surrendering more than two goals once over that stretch.

"When he's on his game, he's tough to beat because he's so athletic," Anaheim coach Bruce Boudreau said. "He's good."

Varlamov went 2-0-0 while allowing one goal in his two most recent matchups against Buffalo while with Washington.

Miller is 0-1-2 with a 2.55 GAA in three career meetings with the Avalanche. He turned away 30 shots in a 4-3 overtime road loss Jan. 4, 2011.

Colorado has taken all four contests in the series since 2006-07, with each of the last three going past regulation. The Avalanche lead the West with a combined 14 overtime and shootout victories.

The Sabres, 11-2-4 over their last 17 games at First Niagara Center, are riding a season-best five-game home winning streak. Buffalo hasn't won six in a row on its own ice since Jan. 17-Feb. 15, 2007.

Sabres D Myers suspended 3 games by NHL

Associated Press

March 13, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—The [Buffalo Sabres](#) will have to continue their playoff push without top defenseman [Tyler Myers](#), who has been suspended without pay by the NHL for three games for an illegal hit from behind.

League disciplinarian [Brendan Shanahan](#) issued the ruling Tuesday, after holding a hearing with Myers over a minor boarding penalty he received in the third period of a 3-2 overtime win against Montreal a day earlier.

Shanahan ruled Canadiens forward [Scott Gomez](#) had his back turned and was defenseless when Myers struck him from behind and into the boards. Under league rules, Shanahan said the onus was on Myers to avoid the hit.

Myers scored the decisive goal 2:01 into overtime.

Myers forfeits \$14,189.19 in salary in serving a suspension that begins Wednesday, when the Sabres host Colorado.

AROUND THE NHL

Sabres TV's Brian Duff takes his weekly look at happenings in the NHL

Brian Duff

Sabres.com

March 13, 2012

One game at a time. An all too familiar, yet appropriate cliché at this time of year, for most players and coaches alike.

Too bad.

I'm breaking the rules and talking about Buffalo's next three games, with an emphasis on who and what you may be seeing in the form of their opposition.

The only drawback to this time of year, when your team is locked in a struggle for its playoff lives each and every night, is that you really don't have a chance, or take the chance, to appreciate the players on the other side. You're too busy focusing on every single play being made by each player wearing the blue and gold.

Well, far be it from me to change the way you watch the game right now, but do yourself a favor and pay close attention Wednesday night to Colorado's number 92, super rookie Gabriel Landeskog. I know what you're thinking: wrong use of the words "super rookie" when the guy is likely to score fewer than 60 points.

Super rookie should be reserved for the likes of Teemu Selanne, who scored 76 goals as a freshman in 1992-93. Or even Gilbert Perreault, who, with the weight of a new franchise upon him, tallied 38 goals for the Sabres and nearly a point per game en route to the Calder Trophy back in 1970-71.

But I digress.

Today's players, upon entry into the NHL, are asked to do so much more than just produce points. And in my opinion, aided in part by injuries to 2011 first overall pick Ryan Nugent-Hopkins in Edmonton, Landeskog (who went second overall behind RNH) has delivered more of everything than any other rookie season.

Allow me to rewind for a moment.

I first met Landeskog midway through last season when the NHL's Central Scouting department released its midterm rankings, and the Kitchener Rangers' captain was slotted number one among North American skaters. He dropped by the NHL Network studio in Toronto for a sit

down interview, and at age 18, could not have been more relaxed. Almost unlike any other prospect I'd met over the nearly 20 years I've been in this business. A huge handshake, unbelievable command of the English language (considering he'd grown up in Sweden) and simply put - a kid who looked like he was ready to be a star.

But, in what way?

Would he be a significant point producer for the Avalanche right away, or was he more likely to be a reliable two way player, who may never have quite the offensive upside as say...the first overall pick?

Here we are, with less than a month to go in the regular season, and Landeskog among rookies is: first in goals (19), second in points (44), first in plus/minus (+20), first by a landslide in shots on goal (235, 13th among all NHL'ers), second in game-winning goals (4), and first in time on ice per game among rookie forwards (18:27).

He's coming into Buffalo off a game winning goal in overtime versus Anaheim, on a day in which he was too ill to take part in the morning skate. Here's what he told NHL.com after the win.

"It was one of those games where I didn't know if I was going to be able to contribute out there," he said. "I kind of hung in there. I thought I was holding our line down a little bit. I was struggling most of the game, but those are the kind of games where you have to take it one shift at a time, take short shifts and kind of let my teammates do the job. To get an opportunity in OT, I just wanted to get it on net for it to go in."

I love the part where he says "I thought I was holding our line down a little bit." He holds himself accountable no matter what the situation is and others can't help but follow. It's why he was a captain in the OHL and will undoubtedly wear a letter for the bulk of his NHL career. There are dozens of other subtle things he does well. Keep an eye out for them. He really is a player you build a franchise around.

Saturday night marks the start of the Sabres final Florida trip of the season, with the Panthers still hanging on to the Southeast division lead. If Ken Hitchcock hadn't done such a ridiculously good job of bringing it all together in St. Louis, we'd be hearing a lot more about Panthers bench boss Kevin Dineen and his chances of winning the Jack Adams Award as Coach of the Year.

But the player worth watching is someone who has burned the Sabres already this year (with 2-1-3 in 3 games played), defenseman Jason Garrison. A late bloomer to be sure, this 27-year-old trails only Erik Karlsson (18) in goals by defensemen, and is tied with Shea Weber and Nik

Kronwall (each with 14).

Garrison plied his trade in Rochester over parts of two seasons, and is now on the cusp of his first big payday. Barring a contract extension from the Panthers, Garrison has the chance to take some really nice offensive numbers -- and a cannon of a shot -- to unrestricted free agency on July 1, likely quadrupling his current salary of \$675,000.

On Monday, the Sabres and Lightning will close out their four-game season series, with Buffalo still seeking its first win.

The Bolts are in tough in goal after Mathieu Garon went down with a groin injury recently, leaving a struggling Dwayne Roloson and rookie Dustin Tokarski to man the pipes at this critical juncture.

Yet beyond the crease, and of course the high end skill of Steven Stamkos and Marty St. Louis, lies another of the NHL's great bargains in forward Teddy Purcell.

With another year to go on his deal that pays \$2.3 million annually, Purcell has already eclipsed last year's 51 points. He's continued to show that 17 points in 18 playoff games last spring was no fluke. And his just completed run of 22 points in 11 games was one of the five longest point streaks in the league this season. At age 26, and now a 20-goal scorer in the NHL for the first time, Purcell should be a key piece of the Lightning for years to come.

These are some of the players to watch, even if only for a moment, as we enter the final dozen games of the 2011-12 regular season.

Sabres newcomer Hodgson not taking line change as a demotion

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

March 14, 2012

BUFFALO — Sixteen days and eight games later, rookie Cody Hodgson, a centerpiece of the NHL trade deadline's most-talked about transaction, is pointless and skating with Brad Boyes and Corey Tropp on what could be considered the Sabres' fourth line.

Meanwhile, defenseman Alexander Sulzer, a throw-in to the deal with Vancouver, just played a tick under 24 minutes, a career high.

The German, a spare part a week ago, has possibly cemented a spot for the season. He's forming a strong duo beside \$10 million defender Christian Ehrhoff and has one more point than Hodgson.

Crazy, huh?

But what's going on with Hodgson, the No. 2 center the Sabres coveted? The 22-year-old started strongly and appeared on the verge of breaking out after the Sabres sent prospect Zack Kassian to the Canucks for him Feb. 27.

"It'll come. I'm not concerned," coach Lindy Ruff said Tuesday after the ninth-place Sabres, who fell four points behind Washington for the final playoff spot hours later, prepared for tonight's home tilt against the Colorado Avalanche. "I think you look at it and it's obviously disappointing, but it'll come."

Ruff used Pittsburgh's James Neal as an example. Neal scored once in 20 games last year after the Penguins acquired him from Dallas. The winger has 31 goals and 65 points in 68 contests this season.

"It's not working out, then all of a sudden it works out," Ruff said. "For the most part, I've been happy. (Hodgson's) been in on some great opportunities that he hasn't finished. But he'll finish."

Hodgson, who has 16 goals and 33 points, has only finished once in the last 16 games, however. His slump goes back to early February. In the past 21 games, he has two goals and three points.

"Not necessarily frustrating. But I think chances are there," Hodgson said. "A couple broken sticks, posts, stuff like that just aren't going in. I'm a pretty positive person. I like to stay pretty upbeat. I know I'm this close to the next shot going in. It's coming."

With 71 games under his belt, it looks like Hodgson's smashed into that freshman wall. He had never played more than 68 regular-season contests at any major level.

Factor in a dizzying acclimation to the Sabres, and you have a player struggling mightily.

Tuesday's practice marked his first regular session on First Niagara Center ice during an off day. He's played six road games and just two home tilts. In fact, including his Canucks tenure, he's played 15 of his last 21 games away.

Hodgson flew from Phoenix to Buffalo for a physical and then jetted back across to the country to meet the Sabres in Anaheim before he could play.

Then there's the mental and physical fatigue of playing. Hodgson's gone from a supporting member on a stacked Canucks club to top-line player counted on for production. The expectations have changed considerably.

"You can't really make excuses," Hodgson said. "I'm a professional athlete. I'm excited about playing. There's still adrenaline going. There's still excitement. I'm playing with good players."

Hodgson's minutes have shot up from about 12 or so a game to 16:38 a night with the Sabres. He skated a career-high 21:48 in Saturday's 4-3 shootout win in Ottawa.

With other lines performing well, most notably the trio of Tyler Ennis, Marcus Foligno and Drew Stafford, Hodgson's minutes dipped to 11:07 in Monday's 3-2 overtime win against Montreal.

"He's gone through a real tough stretch," Ruff said. "He was on the road with Vancouver, got traded to us, was on the road. I've played him some pretty heavy minutes. I played him real heavy minutes in Ottawa. I saw a little bit of fatigue there of what he's gone through and the emotions of being traded and the circumstances around it."

Ruff said he told Hodgson, "'Don't get frustrated. You went from the most minutes maybe in Ottawa to lesser minutes last game. Part of that was how well Ennis, Stafford and Foligno had played.' I said, 'Just let it happen. Don't look for points or cheat for points. Just play your game.'"

Of course, playing beside Tropp, an impressive rookie, and Boyes, a former 43-goal scorer, isn't necessarily a demotion. Hodgson first played between Ennis and Stafford.

"I would argue that in the first period (Monday) Corey Tropp might've been our best player," Ruff said. "So I don't think that was a demotion by any sense. Inside of every game there's guys that are going well.

"I think if you got a guy that's making the plays that even Corey Tropp is making and you got a guy that gets in there as quick as him, it should open up more stuff for you."

NHL bans Sabres' Myers three games for hit on Gomez

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

March 14, 2012

BUFFALO — Uh-oh. Starting tonight, the ninth-place Sabres will be missing star defenseman Tyler Myers for three straight games during their furious fight for the Eastern Conference's final playoff spot.

Early Tuesday night, the NHL suspended Myers for ramming Scott Gomez's head into the boards from behind Monday in the Sabres' 3-2 overtime win against the Montreal Canadiens.

“At no point during Myers' approach to the check does he see anything other than Gomez's back,” NHL discipline czar Brendan Shanahan said in video posted on NHL.com explaining the suspension. “The onus therefore is on Myers to avoid this hit completely, or at the very least minimize it. He does neither. Rather, he drives into a defenseless player with force.”

Myers was assessed a boarding minor at 13:11 of the third period, and then returned to score the overtime winner inside the First Niagara Center.

The excitement surrounding the Sabres' ninth win in 12 games was tempered a bit Tuesday afternoon when Myers, a first-time offender, learned he had a phone hearing with Shanahan.

“It's going to be tough, for sure, if there is some sort of suspension, especially with 12 games left and it's a tight race,” Myers said about possibly sitting. “It's not a good feeling to even be in this situation when I haven't even had the phone call yet. Whatever they decide ... I'll have to live with it.”

Myers will miss tonight's home game against Colorado and road tilts versus Florida and Tampa Bay. He'll lose \$14,189.19 in salary.

The Sabres, who are already without Andrej Sekera (pneumonia), will likely summon a defenseman from Rochester.

“He's been a big part of our back end,” Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said about Myers shortly after the phone hearing ended Tuesday afternoon. “With Sekera out, it would be another big blow for us.”

Shanahan said the boarding call, Gomez's injury and Myers' clean fine and suspension history also factored in his decision.

Ruff explained Myers' hit like this: “As Gomez was turning in the corner, Gomez's feet were going up the ice and he anticipated Gomez to keep on going. If you watch the video, Gomez turns his skates and goes perpendicular at the last second.

“That’s a tough read. I thought Tyler did a good job staying low, not getting his arms or elbows or anything out. He put himself in a bad spot, and Tyler had a split second to hold up, and maybe could’ve done a little bit better job holding up.”

The 6-foot-8 Myers has been trying to showcase a greater physical edge recently. He hopes the suspension doesn’t soften his style.

“I definitely have tried to be more physical the last five to 10 games,” Myers said. “I want to carry that into future play. Whatever happens with this hearing, I want to continue to play that way. But at the same time, I have to be smarter. I don’t want to put myself in these positions.”

With Myers’ size, it’s easier for him to knock opponents in the head. He must be careful.

“He’s in a tough spot because he’s such a big man he’s got to stay low in some cases,” Ruff said. “He knows that he has a good foot on some players. A lot of that puts him in a situation where his elbows are head-high and you got to keep those tucked. He’s going to suffer some consequences at times. But he needs to play physical.”

When Myers hit New Jersey’s Dainius Zubrus in the head in November, Shanahan only spoke informally with him on the phone.

Avs' rookie Mark Olver plays with a fearless style

Avalanche newbie getting look subbing for injured Matt Duchene

Mike Chambers

The Denver Post

March 14, 2012

Mark Olver's name is often misspelled, dating to before he was born. There is no "I" in "Olver," just like the cliché — there is no "I" in "team."

The Avalanche rookie, the son of Colorado Rockies hockey draft pick John Olver — whose name is spelled "Oliver" in the former NHL team's 1979-80 media guide — is the epitome of a team-first player.

"He plays fearless," Avs coach Joe Sacco said of the 5-foot-10, 170-pound forward, who is playing a key role — replacing injured star Matt Duchene and centering a line with Peter Mueller and Milan Hejduk. "He's a smaller guy in stature, but he plays with some bite, with an edge, and goes into the hard areas of the ice.

"He does not shy away from physical play at all, and that's why a guy that size can have success. He's a smart player, and he's been a spark plug for us."

Olver, 24, is from Joe Sakic's hometown of Burnaby, British Columbia, and has overcome a concussion during training camp that knocked him out most of the season. After playing 18 games with the Avs last season but most of the time with Lake Erie of the American Hockey League, Olver began this season living a nightmare.

"Big scrum in the corner, I was on the ice and I think I got kicked in the head," Olver said of the incident in training camp. "Next thing I know I had a headache, and next day I had a headache. I knew there was something wrong. It was a painful headache. It wasn't like a mild 'I have to lay down' headache, and they lasted for a few months. I couldn't do anything. Couldn't raise my heart rate, couldn't do anything to raise my blood pressure."

He didn't resume skating until December. In early January, he returned to the Lake Erie lineup for a rehabilitation stint. The Avs called him up Feb. 16, and he has played all 13 games since, contributing three goals and three assists. Along with newcomers Steve Downie and Jamie McGinn, who were acquired via trades, Olver has increased

"How the season started, I didn't think I'd be up here," Olver said. "I'm making the most of the opportunity, and it helps out to have success. It's quite a luxury to be playing with Mueller and Hejduk, because those are two wingers you just give them the puck and get open."

Now, if Olver could only smile.

"He's a little serious," said Avs defenseman Shane O'Brien, the team's most outgoing and outspoken member. "To each his own. Whatever it takes to play at this level. Some guys are

serious, some guys are laid-back, some guys are in-between. But he brings it every night and he's a good guy, and he's young and is only going to get better."

Back to the concussion. Olver knew it was serious, and he was scared. He knew how Mueller and other players such as Sidney Crosby suffered continual problems from concussions.

"A lot of things go into it — taking your time and doing little things that help your brain ease back into working out," he said. "Getting proper sleep, eating the right food, staying positive. It was nice because I had family and the guys around."

Olver attended Northern Michigan, primarily because his father was a good friend of Wildcats coach Walt Kyle and the family was familiar with the area. Mark's older brother played for Kyle.

As a junior in 2008-09, Mark was a top-10 Hobey Baker Award finalist as national player of the year. The Avs selected him in the fifth round (140th overall) in the 2008 draft and signed him before his senior year.

Olver is the son of a coach. John Olver never signed with the Rockies and never played professional hockey, but he has coached junior, college or professional hockey since 1981. He is the head coach in Boise, Idaho, for a Western States Hockey League team (junior-A).

Olver plays like a coach's son. He is versatile and accepts any role.

"He's not the biggest guy out there, but he's quick and he plays the right way," O'Brien said. "He loves to get in on the forecheck and get under guys' skin. At this time of year, it's not about fighting everybody, but it's about getting under a guy's skin and making it hard on them. If he can throw off a couple of their guys and get them thinking about him instead of the game, it's better for our team."

When told that Sacco and O'Brien said he was fearless, Olver said: "I don't want to say I play with no fear, because I want to protect my head. But in order to play the role I play, you kind of have to have no fear. Which is really no big deal. It's just a mind-set. To go out there and play hard, it's just a mind-set that I can embrace."

As for the spelling of his name, he can embrace any spelling.

"No one really knows it's Olver — it's always Oliver. Doesn't bother me," he said.

To his appreciative teammates and good friends, he goes by "Oh-Lee."

COLORADO AT BUFFALO

5:30 p.m., NBCSP, 950 AM, 103.1 FM

Spotlight on Jordan Leopold: The former Avalanche defenseman is playing with his fifth NHL team, and having one of his better seasons in his second year with the Sabres. He is

averaging 22:03 in ice time and has missed just three games. He wasn't as durable when with Colorado (2006-09).

NOTEBOOK

Avalanche: Young goaltender Semyon Varlamov, who is 7-2 in his last nine starts with a 1.32 goals-against average and .955 save percentage, is scheduled to get his sixth consecutive start. ... The Avs didn't practice Tuesday after beating visiting Anaheim 3-2 in overtime Monday. The Avs have 25 players on the trip, including injured forwards Matt Duchene (ankle) and Chuck Kobasew (back). Kobasew has been skating with the team and might play tonight. Duchene, who is expected to miss another week or two, wasn't originally scheduled to be on the trip. ... Colorado is 4-1 in its last five games and 8-3 in its last 11. ... The Avs are 16-15-3 on the road.

Sabres: Like the Avs, Buffalo is in a fight for a playoff berth. Buffalo has won its last two games, in a shootout and overtime against Ottawa and Montreal, respectively. Tyler Myers scored 2:01 into OT against the Canadiens on Monday, putting the winning shot past former Avs goalie Peter Budaj. ... The Sabres are 7-2-1 in their last 10 games. ... The NBC Sports Network carried Monday's game in Denver and is in Buffalo tonight. ... Former Avs draft pick Robyn Regehr is minus-19 with just three points in 64 games. ... Former Colorado College standout Colin Stuart has played two games with the Sabres this season. *Mike Chambers, The Denver Post*

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Illness doesn't keep Landeskog down, but his energy lacking

Mike Chambers

The Denver Post

March 13, 2012

Avalanche rookie and overtime hero Gabriel Landeskog skipped the morning skate Monday because of illness but played in his 71st consecutive game against the Anaheim Ducks at the Pepsi Center.

Landeskog, who leads the Avs in goals (19), plus-minus (plus-20), shots (236) and hits (190), is Colorado's only player to have participate in every game this season.

He didn't quite look like the Calder Trophy candidate that he is until his final shift, when he scored 1:52 into overtime, but his first shot on net in the second period broke the single-season franchise record for shots by a rookie. He was tied with Hockey Hall of Famer Peter Stastny, who was a rookie with the Quebec Nordiques in 1980-81.

"His energy level wasn't where it usually is, and you could see that," Avs coach Joe Sacco said. "Up to his overtime goal, his game was average and I didn't expect much more, but the kid delivered at the right time. That's a big goal."

Power shortage. The Avs have the NHL's 10th-ranked power play but don't get to use it much. Colorado entered Monday last in the league in power plays per game (2.8) and overall time with the man-advantage (315:13).

The Avs have gone without a power play in five games, two more than any other team, and if it weren't for an obvious — and dangerous — interference infraction on Saku Koivu early in the third period, it would have been No. 6.

Koivu blindsided Paul Stastny with a hit while neither player had possession of the puck.

Koivu was playing in his 1,000th career NHL game.

Footnotes. Avs forward Kevin Porter, who was in the lineup for the second consecutive game on his 26th birthday, was scratched in nine of the previous 11 games. Rookie defensemen Stefan Elliott and Tyson Barrie were healthy scratches, along with rookie wing Mike Connolly, who skated in warm-ups and was prepared to replace Landeskog. Forwards Matt Duchene (ankle) and Chuck Kobasew (back) were unavailable because of injuries. The Avs are the NHL's only team with an average age younger than 26 (25 years, 358 days). The Toronto Maple Leafs are a distant second (26, 236).

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