



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres' margin for error nearly zero

Glum team needs to beat the Leafs

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 3, 2012

The Buffalo Sabres take the ice tonight in First Niagara Center needing to do what they couldn't Saturday -- beat the woebegone Toronto Maple Leafs.

But that's only one small piece of a nearly-broken puzzle that would get the Sabres into the playoffs.

For starters, there's almost no question the Sabres need to win all three of their remaining games if they want to pass either the Florida Panthers or the Washington Capitals.

Coach Lindy Ruff bluntly agreed with that notion Monday when he said, "I'd be stupid to think any other way."

The Sabres likely have to sweep and get some help. They got some Monday night when Washington gave up two goals in the final 63 seconds to Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos and lost a 4-2 decision to the Lightning. The Caps thus remain two points ahead of the Sabres while still holding the tiebreaker advantage.

The Sabres all said the right things Monday but the feeling in the locker room was decidedly downcast after practice.

"We kind of let it slip and we're kind of hoping other teams mess up and we have to take care of our business," said defenseman Mike Weber.

"We've put a lot of effort in but that first part of the season looms over us," said goaltender Ryan Miller. "The room for error was small and we made the error. Now we've got to make up for it."

The team had worked hard for over a month to climb from last place in the Eastern Conference into eighth and the driver's seat in the playoff race. Then in two days, the lead was gone thanks to back-to-back losses to Pittsburgh and Toronto.

"Disappointed. That would be kind of the mood," Ruff said.

The Sabres will continue to play tonight without injured defensemen Tyler Myers (foot) and Christian Ehrhoff (knee). Ruff said Ehrhoff would not play this week but could be available if the team somehow sneaks into the playoffs. The coach did not rule out Myers for Thursday's game in Philadelphia or Saturday's finale in Boston.

Without either of its power-play quarterbacks and its big-minutes men, the Buffalo defense had plenty of struggles in the two games. A huge mistake Saturday was Andrej Sekera's giveaway at

the Toronto blue line that led to Joey Crabb's short-handed goal and put the Sabres behind, 1-0. The Sabres, in fact, never led in either game.

"I just made a bad mistake at a bad time in a game," Sekera said Monday. "It's behind me, I don't really focus on it. I have to make sure it doesn't happen the next game. It's hard at the end of the season when everybody is looking for points and guys are battling even harder."

Injuries were such a huge story earlier in the season but had faded away the last several weeks, so it was difficult to take two big ones resurfacing so late in the playoff hunt.

"It's part of hockey. You don't pick when you get injured," Sekera said. "It just happens."

"We've never used it as an excuse or crutch but losing two big bodies on your back end certainly doesn't help your situation," added fellow blue-liner Jordan Leopold.

After some fabulous play led the team back into contention, Miller struggled over the weekend by giving up at least three soft goals among the eight he was surrendered. Still, he went 10-3-2 in March with a 2.17 goals-against average and .930 save percentage and was named the NHL's Third Star of the Month on Monday.

"It's not something to sit and celebrate but I think I'd probably approach it the same way [even if the last two games weren't losses]," Miller said. "That month's over, we're into this last month of our season."

The Leafs snapped their franchise-record, 11-game home losing streak and the timing couldn't have been worse.

"They've been taking a lot of criticism at home and they have a certain amount of pride trying to keep their jobs next year," Miller said. "You don't expect them to lay down at home and I don't expect them to lay down [tonight]."

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NHL honors Sabres' Foligno for role in surge

Mike Harrington

The Buffalo News

April 3, 2012

Just 24 days ago, Marcus Foligno had played one NHL game in his career and was still toiling in Rochester. Monday afternoon, he was named the NHL's Rookie of the Month for March.

Foligno joined the team March 10 in Ottawa as an emergency recall and has become part of the team's top offensive line with center Tyler Ennis and fellow winger Drew Stafford.

"It's an honor. It's amazing what has happened this month, not just for myself but with the run the team has gone on," Foligno said after practice Monday. "There's some great players in this league and for me to come in like I did and have success with the line has been huge. I have to give those guys a lot of credit for my success."

Foligno, 20, had six goals, five assists and a plus-10 rating in 11 March games. He admitted he didn't spend much time thinking about a call-up this season.

"I knew I was young and there were guys ahead of me that would get the call-up first," he said. "But I kept working hard and knew if I put in a good season in Rochester, things would get better for me down the road and look where I'm at right now. It took a lot of hard work to get here and it paid off, but it takes a lot of hard work to stay in this league, too."

* * *

Sabres President Ted Black said the team had discussions with the NHL during presidents meetings two weeks ago in Las Vegas about next season's schedule, specifically on reducing the number of back-to-back sets of games the club has dealt with.

The Sabres played a league-high 21 sets this season, comprising 42 of their 82 games. They went 13-8 in the first game -- but just 7-9-5 in the second. Black said he had hoped to have the number of sets cut this season.

"That was a failure on my part not to get that down," Black said. "We have reinforced it repeatedly that we're basically willing to play any day of the week. The main goal has to be to get the back-to-backs down. The consequence will be probably having fewer Friday night games."

Black said the team's record and the impact the schedule has on practice time are key factors.

"When you win, you think it's great because you have more days to practice," he said. "When you win, back-to-backs are no problem. When you lose, they're a big problem. I just think we would like to be around the league average."

Black said the Sabres are also looking for more balance in the schedule. They had just three home games in January, for instance, and finished the slate with seven of 11 on the road.

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Coach Lindy Ruff said Matt Ellis (knee) has been cleared to play and would be available tonight. Nathan Gerbe (upper body) is close to returning.

Defenseman Mike Weber, who could return tonight, said he still has some stiffness in his neck after taking a hit Friday from Pittsburgh's Matt Cooke.

"I got pushed face-first, shoulder-down with my neck kind of turned in there," Weber said. "I tried [to return] a couple times and the training staff worked hard but I couldn't battle and you can't hurt the team out there."

* * *

Toronto goalie Ben Scrivens, who was called up Saturday and beat the Sabres for his first NHL win since November, was named the AHL goalie of the month for March on Monday.

Scrivens went 6-3 with a 1.40 goals-against average and a .957 save percentage for the Toronto Marlies. He made 29 saves against the Sabres.

News Sports Reporter Bucky Gleason contributed to this report.

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True character seen during Sabres' long dry spell

Bucky Gleason
The Buffalo News
April 3, 2012

The Sabres took the ice Monday with the percentages working against them and the probability that their second-half revival is wasting away after losses on consecutive nights to the Penguins and Maple Leafs. Toronto will be back in town tonight, having little reason to play other than to ruin Buffalo's season.

Buffalo remained two points and a tiebreaker behind Washington after the Capitals lost to Tampa Bay on Monday night. Florida was five points ahead. It meant the Sabres, with road games awaiting them in Philadelphia and Boston to complete the season, need to make up three points in their final three games.

The facts show the end is near.

Naturally, you look back now and wonder if the Sabres could have squeezed out three more measly points in their first 79 games. Two wins here and there does the trick. Heck, they didn't even need to win in regulation. They could have picked up three more points in overtimes and shootouts. They had three one-goal losses in regulation in their first 10 games.

Buffalo donated a point when Colorado tied the game with 1.9 seconds remaining March 14, the second time the Sabres allowed a late goal in two games. The Sabres had a 15-11-1 record against teams that were in 11th place or worse when the week began. They weren't expected to win them all, but two more victories isn't asking too much.

For the third time in five years, Buffalo will likely miss the playoffs. For the fifth straight year, the Sabres will likely fail to win a playoff series. At least it was a team effort.

The players could have performed better. Lindy Ruff could have coached better. Darcy Regier could have managed better. President Ted Black could have scheduled better, which was why he told the NHL two weeks ago that the Sabres need fewer back-to-back games next season. It means fewer games on Friday nights.

Buffalo has led the league in back-to-back series in each of the past two seasons. It was 7-9-5 this season in the second game, no loss more devastating than the last one. The Sabres had no excuse for losing Saturday to the Leafs, but they looked like a team that had played an up-tempo game the previous night.

Derek Roy praised his teammates for showing "character" during their 19-5-5 surge. Jason Pominville used the same word. So did Tyler Ennis. I'm not trying to split hairs. The Sabres deserve credit for coming together. But if they examine an 82-game season and find uninspired efforts in 25 or more -- and they can -- it reveals a lack of character.

Ruff is held in high regard across the league, but he made his share of mistakes, too. He had a one-line team that looked uninterested when the losses piled up in December and January. He's partly responsible for Brad Boyes and Ville Leino combining for 13 goals and not getting more from Roy and Drew Stafford.

Regier should have traded Paul Gaustad the day after Milan Lucic buried Ryan Miller. Regier wouldn't have received a first-round pick in return, as he did when Gaustad was shipped along with a sixth-rounder at the deadline, but the message would have been strong and clear. And it might have made a difference.

The Sabres needed rescue during their 12-game road losing streak. Any move in December and January might have changed the chemistry. It was certainly worth a try, but Regier once again waited to do his best work until it was too late.

Look, I agreed with Regier when he suggested Marcus Foligno would fill the role of power forward played by Zack Kassian. He didn't explain why Kassian played 27 games in the NHL while Foligno played one before the trade.

Kassian had one assist to show for his final 17 games here. Foligno had an immediate impact and was named rookie of the month. Anyone who watched them play beforehand could see Foligno was more polished.

And there were the injuries. Buffalo was 2-9-2 without Christian Ehrhoff and 7-10-6 without Tyler Myers. That's a fact.

Washington was without its top center, Nicklas Backstrom, for 40 games. Its top defenseman, Mike Green, missed 50. The Caps overcame and had the percentages working for them.

That's a fact, too.

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Sabres desperate for win in rematch with Maple Leafs

Brian Hunter

NHL.com

April 2, 2012

MAPLE LEAFS (34-36-9) at SABRES (38-31-10)

TV: SNET-O (HD), MSG-B (HD)

Last 10: Toronto 4-5-1; Buffalo 6-2-2

Season Series: Sixth and final meeting between these Northeast Division rivals, and the conclusion of a home-and-home that began Saturday in Toronto, where the Maple Leafs damaged the Sabres' postseason aspirations with a 4-3 victory. Buffalo will attempt to continue a trend in which the home team has won all five matchups this season.

Big Story: Games in Philadelphia on Thursday and Boston on Saturday still remain on Buffalo's schedule after Tuesday, but if the Sabres can't come up with two points against the Maple Leafs then it's likely this will be their last game at First Niagara Center until the fall.

Team Scope:

Maple Leafs: By winning its final three games against Buffalo, Tampa Bay and Montreal, the opportunity still exists for Toronto -- which will miss the playoffs for a seventh consecutive season -- to finish with a better than .500 points percentage. The Maple Leafs can also finish what they started on home ice against the Sabres, with [Joey Crabb](#)'s shorthanded goal and [Phil Kessel](#)'s power-play strike sparking the effort Saturday. In his first NHL appearance since Nov. 20, rookie Ben Scrivens stopped 29 shots for the victory.

"You want to come out and be confident, that's how I play the game," he said. "When I am with the (AHL) Marlies, I am trying to play that same game. It's not a matter of trying to do one thing or another for a specific situation. I play best when I am at the top of the crease when I am in a good ready stance and when I can play the puck and help the guys break the puck out. The intention was just to play my game."

Sabres: In a matter of days, Buffalo went from looking dominant during a win in Washington that allowed the Sabres to take over eighth in the Eastern Conference to dropping consecutive games against the Penguins and Maple Leafs to fall back into ninth while the Capitals subsequently went on a win streak. They never led in the game at Air Canada Centre and were forced to play without standout defenseman [Tyler Myers](#) after he suffered a foot injury against

Pittsburgh. [Ryan Miller](#) stopped 25 shots, but didn't play his best game.

"We scored some goals tonight, so I didn't need to be perfect," Miller said afterward. "But I needed to make another save or two."

Who's Hot: Crabb has 2 goals and 4 assists in his last five games for the Maple Leafs. ... [Drew Stafford](#) has 7 goals and 9 assists in his last 10 games for the Sabres. [Tyler Ennis](#) has 7 goals and 10 assists in his last 11 games.

Injury Report: Scrivens figures to get the call again Tuesday for Toronto with both [James Reimer](#) (upper body) and [Jonas Gustavsson](#) (lower body) ailing. Also sidelined are forwards [Joffrey Lupul](#) (shoulder) and [Nikolai Kulemin](#) (finger), while forwards [David Steckel](#) (lower body) and [Mikhail Grabovski](#) (leg) are day-to-day. ... Myers, fellow defenseman [Mike Weber](#) (upper body) and forward [Nathan Gerbe](#) (upper body) are all day-to-day for Buffalo, while defenseman [Christian Ehrhoff](#) (knee) and forward [Matt Ellis](#) (knee) are out indefinitely.

Stat Pack: Crabb leads Maple Leafs scorers in the series with 6 points, while [Jason Pominville](#) and [Thomas Vanek](#) each have 6 points to pace the Sabres. ... Miller has played every minute in the five previous games, posting a 3.04 goals-against average and .898 save percentage.

Puck Drop: Buffalo coach Lindy Ruff is not one to make excuses, but he knows what his team is up against when both Weber and Myers are out of the lineup -- particularly when the Sabres must play from behind as was the case Saturday.

"To try and chase a game with two of our more mobile defenseman out of the lineup that are on the offense side of [things], it's tough to chase," Ruff said. "You're gonna make some mistakes, you're going to give up some high-quality opportunities."

Toronto (34-36-9) at Buffalo (38-31-10)

Kate Hedlin

STATS

April 2, 2012

A loss to the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#) over the weekend damaged the [Buffalo Sabres](#)' chances of making the postseason, but they received some help on their off day.

The Sabres will try to stay afloat in the playoff race Tuesday night when they host the Maple Leafs to conclude a home-and-home set.

Buffalo trails Washington by two points for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, with three games remaining compared to two for the Capitals. The Sabres' prospects improved Monday night when the Capitals lost 4-2 at Tampa Bay.

Though Buffalo (38-31-10) has a game in hand, Washington - which is idle Tuesday - owns the tiebreaker.

"We've put ourselves in a tough spot," Buffalo right wing [Jason Pominville](#) said. "Instead of making it easy on ourselves, we're going to need some help and we're going to have to win our games. ... It might be the case where we have to win all three."

The Sabres didn't help themselves with back-to-back losses over the weekend, 5-3 at home to Pittsburgh on Friday and 4-3 at Toronto the following night. [Tyler Ennis](#), [Ville Leino](#) and [Drew Stafford](#) scored in the loss to the Maple Leafs, while [Ryan Miller](#) made 25 saves.

Defensemen [Christian Ehrhoff](#) and [Tyler Myers](#) both sat out Saturday. Ehrhoff, who has missed the last two games with a left knee injury, will miss the final three. Myers did not practice Monday, but could return for this contest after taking a shot off his foot against the Penguins.

Coach Lindy Ruff said the Sabres need to cut down on mistakes, particularly since they are playing undermanned.

"We've made it real tough on ourselves," Ruff said. "Obviously we know where we're at with a depleted defense. We've put ourselves in a real tough spot. We have to play a cleaner game than that. To try and chase the game with two of our more mobile defensemen out of the lineup that are on the offensive side of it, it's tough to chase. You're going to make some mistakes and give up some high-quality opportunities."

Toronto (34-36-9) will try to play spoiler again. It snapped a three-game losing streak with its win over Buffalo on Saturday.

The Maple Leafs, who were officially eliminated from playoff contention last week, are 6-17-3 since Feb. 7, hurt by poor goaltending.

AHL call-up [Ben Scrivens](#) gave Toronto a rare solid night in net Saturday. He made 29 saves in the win, two nights after the Maple Leafs had given up seven goals in a home loss to Philadelphia.

Toronto is preparing for a much tougher challenge Tuesday, particularly since it is 1-8-1 in its last 10 visits to Buffalo.

“We have to be prepared mentally more than anything for the start of the hockey game,” Leafs coach Randy Carlyle said. “We know they’ll be coming. They’re fighting for their playoff lives. It’s going to be a desperate Buffalo hockey club.”

Sabres D Ehrhoff expected to miss final 3 games

Associated Press

April 2, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—[Buffalo Sabres](#) defenseman [Christian Ehrhoff](#) is expected to miss the final week of the season, while blue-liner [Tyler Myers](#) has a chance to return.

Coach Lindy Ruff provided the update on his injured players after practice Monday.

Ehrhoff has missed two games since hurting his left knee against Washington last week. Ruff said Ehrhoff's injury doesn't require surgery, and added he could return if the Sabres make the postseason.

Myers did not practice Monday, and has missed one game since taking a shot off his foot in a loss to Pittsburgh on Friday.

The Sabres (38-31-10) have three games left, starting with their home finale against Toronto on Tuesday. Buffalo entered the day ninth in the Eastern Conference, two points behind Washington. The Capitals hold the tiebreaker.

MONDAY NOTEBOOK

Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

April 2, 2012

The Buffalo Sabres will be missing their top two defensemen again tomorrow when the Toronto Maple Leafs come to town, in the back end of the home-and-home series that started with a 4-3 Toronto win on Saturday at the Air Canada Centre.

[Tyler Myers](#) missed Saturday's game with a foot injury, after absorbing a shot to the boot against Pittsburgh on Friday. Myers didn't practice with the team today, but Lindy Ruff said he hasn't ruled out Myers returning this week for Buffalo's final two games in Philadelphia and Boston.

The news isn't so good on [Christian Ehrhoff](#), who was injured in Washington last Tuesday. Ruff did rule out Ehrhoff for the rest of the regular season, but said there's a chance he could return for the playoffs if the Sabres were to qualify.

The absence of both players creates a huge void on the Buffalo blueline, and that was evident in Saturday's loss to the Maple Leafs.

"If you take two of your top defensemen out of any team in the league, you're a different team. You can go to almost any team and that's the case," said Ruff. "I thought we did some good things in the game, but we made some mistakes. We had some players in situations maybe they hadn't been in, and it allowed Toronto to get the upper hand."

[Brayden McNabb](#) and [TJ Brennan](#) are still with the team after being recalled on an emergency basis Saturday, and they could both be in the lineup again on Tuesday. But [Mike Weber](#) went through a full practice today after also missing Saturday's game with an injury, and Ruff said he could also be available to play tomorrow.

In other injury news, [Matt Ellis](#) has been cleared to play and could be ready to go on Tuesday if needed. Ellis has missed the last 10 games since injuring his knee in Ottawa on March 10. [Nathan Gerbe](#) continues his recovery from an upper body muscle strain. Ruff classified him as a "maybe" for Tuesday, saying that he could be at the point where he's able to return to game action.

Buffalo's red-hot 10-4-2 run through March enable the team to get back into playoff contention, and it also contributed to a pair of Sabres receiving monthly individual honors from the NHL. [Ryan Miller](#) was named as the NHL's Third Star of the month, and [Marcus Foligno](#) was recognized as the league's Rookie of the Month.

Foligno was recalled for the second time this season on March 10, and scored his first career goal that night in Ottawa. He finished the month with 11 points (6+5) in 11 games, including two-

goal performances less than a week apart against Colorado (Mar. 14) and Tampa Bay (Mar. 19).

“It’s amazing what has happened this month, not just for myself, but the run the team has gone on,” said Foligno. “At the same time, it’s an honor to be Rookie of the Month. There are some great players in this league. For me to come in like I did and have success with Ennis and Stafford has been huge. I have to give those guys a lot of credit for my success.”

Miller compiled a 10-3-2 record with a 2.17 goals-against average, .930 save percentage and two shutouts while starting 15 of Buffalo’s 16 March games. He won five straight starts from March 19-27, and went 10 consecutive games without suffering a regulation defeat (March 7-27, 8-0-2). Miller has started 11 straight games; 21 of the last 22 games; and 31 of Buffalo's last 33.

Despite joining Ilya Bryzgalov and Evgeni Malkin as the league’s monthly award winners, Miller’s focus continues to be on one thing: winning the next game. That’s something they didn’t do in either game over the weekend.

“I guess it’s not something to sit and celebrate. I probably would approach it the same way: that month’s over, and we’re into the last month of our regular season. I just want to be good now.”

Buffalo’s two weekend losses, combined with Washington’s shootout win over Montreal on Saturday, leaves them two points back of the Capitals for eighth place in the Eastern Conference – with each team having three games left to play. However, Buffalo can’t finish the season in a tie with Washington because the Capitals own the tiebreaker. A win by Washington tonight in Tampa would almost force the Sabres to run the table with three straight wins to end the season in order to keep themselves in the postseason conversation.

“We just need to win and take care of our business,” Miller said today. “The focus becomes Tuesday. We had a tough weekend. We didn’t do what we needed to do. We didn’t play the way we probably needed to play. We’ve gotta do the job now and see how it falls.”

Win in home finale against Toronto critical to Sabres' playoff hopes

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

April 3, 2012

BUFFALO — In less than 24 hours, the Sabres morphed from a postseason frontrunner to a likely bystander. Consecutive regulations losses can do that. An incredible nine-week run up the Eastern Conference possibly fell apart with one bad weekend.

Nonetheless, the ninth-place Sabres haven't been eliminated yet. They still possess hope.

Three games remain, starting with tonight's huge home finale against the hapless Maple Leafs, who downed them 4-3 on Saturday in Toronto.

The Sabres must win all three, right?

"I'd be stupid to think any other way," Sabres coach Lindy Ruff said Monday following practice inside the First Niagara Center.

The Sabres, who trail Washington by two points (88-86) with a game in hand, have little margin for error. It'll be an arduous task securing their third straight playoff appearance.

While the Sabres can technically tie Washington tonight, the Capitals have the tiebreaker. Four more points and they clinch. They blew a glorious chance for at least one Monday, allowing the go-ahead goal with 1:02 left in a 4-2 loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Sabres owned eighth place and controlled their fate until the Pittsburgh Penguins beat them 5-3 on Friday.

"We kind of let it slip," Sabres defenseman Mike Weber said. "Now we're kind of hoping on other teams to mess up. We've got to take care of our business. It's a big week of hockey."

Goalie Ryan Miller said the Sabres' awful start this season "looms over us."

"The room for error was small. We made the error," he said. "We got to make up for that and give us the best chance to get in the postseason here. That's win (tonight) and go from there."

It won't get any easier. The Sabres finish with road tilts against the Philadelphia Flyers and Boston Bruins, two conference heavyweights.

Ruff called the mood in the dressing room Monday "disappointed." The Sabres roared into the weekend winners of five straight and riding a 19-5-5 run. They ended it on the outside, falling in the Leafs' first home win in 54 days.

"When you're running that high for that period of time ... there's disappointment," Ruff said.

Playing without top defensemen Christian Ehrhoff and Tyler Myers certainly hurts the Sabres' slim chances.

Ehrhoff (knee) is out the rest of the regular season after colliding with Washington's Troy Brouwer on Tuesday, Ruff said. The German doesn't need surgery and could return if the Sabres make the playoffs.

Meanwhile, Myers, who hurt his foot blocking Paul Martin's shot late Friday, could play this week. Myers sat Saturday and didn't practice Monday.

Ehrhoff and Myers haven't quite met their lofty expectations this season. Still, they're often two dynamic, slick presences who eat up minutes.

"If you take two of your top defensemen out of any team in the league, you're a different team," Ruff said. "You can go to almost any team and that's the case."

They clearly missed them Saturday, when rookies T.J. Brennan and Brayden McNabb subbed.

"Losing two big bodies on our back end doesn't help the situation. ... You put the onus on other guys, especially guys that come up from the minors," Sabres defenseman Jordan Leopold said. "They come up, they play a different system, quickly they're thrown right into the mix, and sometimes it's a lot of fire."

Losing to one the NHL's worst teams Saturday stung the Sabres, who had dominated the Leafs for five seasons. The Sabres' closest rival has turned the tables recently, winning three of the six meetings last season and three in 2011-12.

Even with a current 5-18-3 skid, the Leafs possess a dangerous attack that relies on their rush and power play, Miller said.

"It's a risky game they tend to play," Miller said. "It kind of works in their favor. They get opportunities. You just have to be a little bit smarter against them, frustrate them. I think that's what other teams have been able to do. ... We definitely need to take a different approach."

The Sabres could be lamenting their missed opportunities and playing the "what-if" game soon.

What if they had beaten some of their tomato can opponents? In addition to their struggles against the Leafs, they fell twice to the New York Islanders, the conference's 14th team. They lost once to the Columbus Blue Jackets, the NHL's worst team.

What if they hadn't lost 12 consecutive road games in regulation earlier this season? A point or two for simply reaching overtime could've dramatically changed the landscape.

"It plays in everyone's mind," Weber said. "You can't change anything that's happened in the past."

Leopold's not ready to "point the finger in the rearview mirror all day long."

"We've battled to come back and put ourselves in a good position," he said. "There's no reason we can't get six points here and finish the season strong."

The Sabres could have some reinforcements tonight.

Weber, who was crunched against the boards by Matt Cooke on Friday, said he's questionable after sitting Saturday.

Matt Ellis (knee, 10 games) is available tonight. The forward hasn't played since catching his skate in a rut March 10 in Ottawa. Winger Nathan Gerbe (muscle pull, nine games) is close and will see how he feels after the morning skate.

Sabres' Foligno named NHL's top rookie for March

Miller also named third star of month

Bill Hoppe

Niagara Gazette

April 3, 2012

BUFFALO — Forget about rookies, few established stars could match Marcus Foligno's impact during a standout March.

The Sabres winger dazzled, compiling six goals, 11 points and gaudy plus-10 rating in 11 games beside Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford.

That dynamic output earned the 20-year-old the NHL's Rookie of the Month.

"It's amazing what has happened this month, not just for myself but the run the team's gone on," Foligno said Monday inside the First Niagara Center. "At the same time, it's an honor. ... For me to come in and have success with that line — Ennis and Stafford — has been huge. I have to give those guys a lot of credit for my success."

Foligno hasn't looked back following his March 9 recall. He scored his first NHL goal the next night in Ottawa and had two two-goal efforts already.

Making his big league debut in December helped Foligno come back relaxed.

"(I) got the nerves out and so it was back to normal for game two," Foligno said. "I just went right back at it."

In other news, Sabres goalie Ryan Miller has been named the NHL's Third Star of March.

Miller went 10-3-2 with a 2.17 goals-against average, .930 save percentage and two shutouts.

Philadelphia Flyers goalie Ilya Bryzgalov (10-2-1, 1.43, .947, four shutouts) and Pittsburgh Penguins star Evgeni Malkin (11 goals, 23 points) earned the first and second stars.

Miller will likely start his 12th straight game tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs. He's played in 32 of the last 33 games and started 31 of them.

The 31-year-old insists he's not tired. He's resting away from the rink, Other than grabbing some Thai food, he spent his off day Sunday lounging on the coach.

"I've done this before. I know how to take care of myself," Miller said. "It's just basically been come to the rink, sit out on the couch, go to bed. Not much of an interesting hockey lifestyle. But that's kind of how I do things. My body's there. My brain's there. Just keep playing."

Sabres know they'll need a winning streak

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 2, 2012

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- If the Sabres want to celebrate and go to the Stanley Cup playoffs, chances are pretty good they'll have to win their final three games to pass Washington.

As far as Lindy Ruff's concerned, there's no question in his mind, "Yes I do, I'd be stupid to think any other way. We know where we're at. The frustration with working that hard and the last two games we were right there, even good opportunities late in the game in Pittsburgh to tie it up, we had a couple of good opportunities against Toronto and didn't get it done and that's the part that hurts the most, we put in a lot of work and there's been a lot of desperation and then not finish some of those plays."

Ryan Miller had a few goals go in during the weekend that he'd want back. As far as winning out he said, "That's a safe bet, just win and take care of our business because the focus becomes Tuesday. We had a tough weekend, we didn't do what we needed to do and didn't play the way we needed to play so we've got to do the job now and we'll see how it falls." Miller added, we've put a lot of effort in, but the first part of the season looms over us, the room for error was small and we made the error. We've got to make up for it and give us the best chance for the postseason and that's to win Tuesday night and go from there."

Drew Stafford hit the 20 goal mark thanks to seven goals in nine games. He said, "At this point we need some help, but at the same time we need to take care of business, we need to win our game and I said game because it's one game at a time, we need to start with that. That's all we're focusing on whatever happens with Washington, we're not even thinking about that, it's all about us and how we're going to play and get ready to lay it on the line."

The Caps play Monday in Tampa Bay. Buffalo waits until Tuesday to host Toronto.

Sabres Ehrhoff out for the rest of the regular season

Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 2, 2012

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres tend not to play well when Christian Ehrhoff and Tyler Myers are out of the line-up. Lindy Ruff does not expect his German defenseman back for the regular season. Myers on the other hand has a chance according to Ruff, "I can't rule Tyler out, but I can probably rule Christian out." Myers got hit in the foot with a shot during the Pittsburgh game.

Ehrhoff suffered a knee injury in Washington. Ruff said, "There was no surgery and it's not long term." If the Sabres do make the playoffs, he'd have a chance to play.

With Ehrhoff in the line-up the Sabres are 36-22-8 which is .606. Without him they're 2-9-2 which is .231. With Myers in the line-up Buffalo is 31-21-4 which is .589 while they're 7-10-6 without him for a .435 percentage.

With all that said the Sabres likely have to find a way because it's possible that they'll have to win each of their next three games. Lindy Ruff said, "If you take the top two defensemen away from any team in the league, you're a different team. We did some good things in the game, but we made some mistakes with players in situations that they hadn't been in that allowed Toronto to get the upper hand."

Mike Weber took part in practice and Ruff liked what he saw, "Mike had a pretty good day so there's an opportunity for him to play." Weber was driven into the board by the Penguins Matt Cooke. Weber said, "I just tried to put myself where he'd just ride me into the boards. I pushed and I went face first and shoulder down and I turned. I'm still a little sore, but tomorrow is a possibility."

Nathan Gerbe, Matt Ellis and Jochen Hecht all skated on a line together. As far as their status goes Ruff said, "Hecht no, Ellis is available and Gerbe is a maybe. He was better today and could be at the point where he could play."

The NHL named Ryan Miller the third star of the month. He went 10-3-2 with a 2.17 goals against and .930 save percentage. Philadelphia's Ilya Bryzgalov is #1 with Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin #2.

With what's happened lately, it's hard for Miller to celebrate, "It's not something to sit and celebrate, but I think I would've approached it the same way no matter what."

Sabres get help from Tampa Bay

Buffalo home vs. Toronto Tuesday

John Murphy

WIVB

April 2, 2012

Buffalo, NY - The Buffalo Sabres got what they wanted Monday night--a loss by the eighth place Washington Capitals.

Tampa Bay's Steve Stamkos scored two goals, including the go-ahead goal with 1:03 left in the third period, to lead the Lightning to a 4-2 win over Washington. So now, the Sabres are two points out of the eighth and final playoff spot, with three games left to play. The Caps have just two games left.

The Sabres are home Tuesday night against Toronto..the team that just beat them last Saturday. Lindy Ruff had his team on the ice for practice Monday at the First Niagara Center. Their long climb up the Eastern Conference Standings towards the eighth and final playoff spot stalled over the weekend with back to back losses. Now the Sabres know they just need to win.

"We know where we're at," says Sabres coach Lindy Ruff. "The frustration with working that hard and then these last two games where you're right there, where I thought we even had good opportunities against Pittsburgh late in the game and didn't tie it up. We had a couple of good opportunities against Toronto and didn't get it done. I think that's the part that hurts the most."

"At this point we need some help,' Sabres forward Drew Stafford says. "But at the same time we need to take care of business, we need to win our game. I said game, because its one game at a time. We need to start with that, that's all we're focusing on."

Making matters worse..the Sabres will be without defenseman Christian Ehrhoff for the rest of the regular season with his knee injury. And Tyler Myers will be out Tuesday against Toronto.

"I think if you take two of your top defenseman out of any team in the league, you're a different team," Ruff says. "You can go to almost any team and that's the case."

Defenseman Jordan Leopold will no doubt pick up the minutes with Ehrhoff and Myers out.

"Any time you lose two veteran defenseman on your back end, it makes things tough," according to Leopold. "It puts the onus on more guys, and you got young guys in the lineup that have been playing different systems down in the minors as well. But you try to gel, and you try to play solid as simple as you can."

Goaltender Ryan Miller was named the NHL's third star of the month for his performance in the month of March and rookie Marcus Foligno was named the rookie of the month.

Sabres can't afford to stumble

Lance Hornby
Toronto Sun
April 2, 2012

On the verge of completing a death-defying playoff tightrope walk, the Buffalo Sabres don't want to stumble with the finish in sight.

After sitting 15th in the Eastern Conference on Jan. 24 and Feb. 18, the Sabres needed only to pass the hot-and-cold Washington Capitals at the start of the weekend to be the first team since conference play to leapfrog from last to eighth.

Then came a 4-3 loss to the Leafs, who had not won at home in 11 games.

That gave the hammer back to the Capitals, who lost 4-2 to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday. Washington has a two-point lead in the standings and would win any tiebreaker with Buffalo.

After playing host to the Leafs tonight, the Sabres end their season with road games in Philadelphia and Boston.

Until losing to Pittsburgh and the Leafs, the Sabres had been playing about 10 games over .500.

"That's the part that hurts the most," coach Lindy Ruff told reporters on Monday. "We've put a lot of work and there's been a lot of desperation to this point.

"When you're running that high for that period of time, getting points, you've played big games and you're right there in a couple of games you really feel you should win, there's disappointment."

Whereas the Leafs were looking good early and collapsed in February, Buffalo will look back on its awful start, made worse by the hype around the team after new ownership increased payroll.

"The first part of the season looms over us," netminder Ryan Miller told the *Olean Times Herald*.

"The room for error was small. We made the error. We got to make up for that and give us the best chance to get in the postseason here. That's a win Tuesday night and go from there."

Leafs have 'too much pride to throw games'

Lance Hornby

Toronto Sun

April 2, 2012

TORONTO - The Maple Leafs brought out the anti-tank guns again Monday, to fend off fans wanting them to surrender their final three games for draft purposes.

A second consecutive win against Buffalo on Tuesday, coupled with a good show in season-ending games against Tampa Bay and Montreal, could see the Leafs pass a couple of teams and move out of lottery pick territory. With seven non-playoff teams separated by seven points before Monday night, the subject of tanking was a sensitive one in the dressing room.

“We have way too much pride in this room to throw games for first-round picks,” declared goalie Ben Scrivens.

For all the good that losing three straight would do for Toronto’s draft positioning in June, the Washington Capitals are wildly cheering for a Leaf regulation win tomorrow to stop the Sabres’ attempt to pass the Caps for eighth.

“(The draft) is so far from everybody’s mind,” defenceman John-Michael Liles said. “When things don’t go well, every guy is fighting to make an impression for next season.

“It’s unfortunate we’re not in the playoffs, but you take some joy from the little things right now. If we can play well and get some wins, I think it affects the race. Sometimes, especially in the last little while, we’ve been squeezing our sticks too hard and you don’t have your best game. But nobody in this room is trying to lose on purpose and I’d be extremely surprised if anyone in the NHL was doing that.”

Coach Randy Carlyle understands how the fans feel, but that’s as far he goes.

“(Fans) are looking at the highest possible pick and think that would sit well with the organization,” Carlyle said. “But if you were to sell that to your hockey club, you would be going against everything you’re trying to preach about competing, earning your (job), the framework of your organization and the staples of honesty. You can’t ever bring that back. You’re pretty much admitting to yourself that you’re a fraud. That just won’t happen.”

Buffalo goaltender Ryan Miller, beaten 4-3 on Saturday, was preparing for the same Leaf effort.

“I don’t expect they’ll lay down,” Miller told the *Olean Times Herald* on Monday. “They get opportunities. You just have to be a little bit smarter against them, frustrate them. I think that’s what other teams have been able to do. We definitely need to take a different approach (than Saturday).”

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Scrivens hopes to be part of Leafs solution in goal

James Mirtle
The Globe and Mail
April 2, 2012

Logic would dictate the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#) goaltending situation is going to mean a veteran is added this summer.

Jonas Gustavsson, The Monster, is not expected back.

James Reimer, the struggling sophomore, has been fighting concussion and consistency issues all year and isn't likely to be counted on for more than a backup role.

And GM Brian Burke simply can't afford to be thin in goal heading into another season, as he has been far too often in Toronto.

Where does that leave Ben Scrivens? Well, probably as a No. 3 again, even after a very strong finish to his AHL season that has seen him go 14-7-0 with a 1.78 goals-against average and .937 save percentage since mid-January.

A lot of goaltenders who have the type of minor-league success Scrivens is currently having with the Toronto Marlies get a shot at the NHL sooner or later.

The problem in Toronto is they have Reimer under contract, and there's no way they can hand the reins to a duo as untested as Reimer-Scrivens in such an important year for the franchise.

Also of note: Scrivens is a restricted free agent this summer, so he's viewing his current time in the NHL as an audition for a contract. He'd like to get a one-way deal, but at this point a two-way with a larger AHL salary seems more realistic.

The only problem is, unless there's a change in the new CBA, he'll have to clear waivers to go up and down next season, complicating how the Leafs will be able to use him.

Even so, Scrivens says he's willing to come back as a No. 3 goalie, even if he'd like more of a chance at an NHL job.

"I've yet to hear anyone in management say they're going to go out and get a veteran goalie," Scrivens said Monday after practice. "Until that's said in the media, by someone in management, or someone tells me that, my job is to try and push for a job on this team next year.

"That's my mindset. I understand that there's reports on this and that, but you also see a lot of the reports that came out that never came to fruition."

(Which may or may not be a reference to all the Marty Turco talk there was in Toronto earlier this season.)

That was right about the time Scrivens had an eight-game audition with the Leafs, back when Reimer first went down with the head injury.

In four of his starts, he posted a save percentage of .927 or better and looked pretty good, but he was also blown out by the Boston Bruins in his home debut and appeared nervous at times.

Named first star in Toronto's win over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday, Scrivens is expected to get another start in the rematch on Tuesday and could play out the rest of the season with the Leafs.

After that point, he'll return to the Marlies and potentially take them on a playoff run, given Toronto's minor-league franchise is one of the best in its conference with their season winding down.

While there have been a lot of snide comments lately about Burke's strategy to bring in unsigned NCAA free agents, Scrivens may still become the best example of that paying off.

"I love this organization," Scrivens said. "They've given me a real opportunity here so I'm grateful and indebted to them. Obviously I'd like to be in Toronto.

"Every game it gets a little bit better [in the NHL]. It's so different any time you're coming up [to a different league]... You're just trying to keep your head above water and find your bearings. And there's a long road to travel [to stay with the Leafs]."

Notebook

- The ranks of the injured in Toronto are getting awfully large, with Mikhail Grabovski the latest to go down after being cut by a skate in Saturday's game. He's day-to-day, but coach Randy Carlyle expects him back by the end of the season.

- Joe Colborne was called up to replace Grabovski, which is a bit of an odd decision given how ice cold he's been in the minors. Colborne has only two points in his last 19 games and has fallen down the Marlies depth chart.

- The only other injured Leafs likely to get back into the lineup would be David Steckel, who skated before practice and then a little bit with his teammates as he tries to recover from a partially torn MCL. If it's still bothering him, however, the games don't mean much, so he could be shut down too.

- Don't expect to see Reimer, [Joffrey Lupul](#) or Nikolai Kulemin in action the rest of the year, however.

- The Leafs currently sit in sixth last in the NHL. In order to finish in the bottom five, they likely can only win one of their remaining three games. Just a thought for all you draft position watchers out there.

Down and out Maple Leafs pin hopes on youth

James Mirtle

The Globe and Mail

April 2, 2012

Another game, another injured veteran for the Toronto [Maple Leafs](#).

The casualty this time was Mikhail Grabovski, who suffered a deep cut to his leg late in Saturday's win and is day-to-day.

His replacement? Young Joe Colborne, he of only two points in his last 19 games in the minors, hardly the kind of production expected to earn a recall.

"Yeah, I was, actually," Colborne said when asked if he was surprised to get the call. "There are a lot of guys who are producing more on the scoresheet than me."

Maybe so. But with three games left, the Leafs are hardly worried about icing a veteran-laden roster.

This last week of playing out the string is more about evaluation than anything, even with coach Randy Carlyle making noise on Monday about how important wins will be.

It's also about selling some hope, as one of the few things that has gone right organizationally under Leafs GM Brian Burke has been a slow and steady improvement in the minors.

After three wins over the weekend, the American Hockey League Toronto Marlies have more points than all but two other AHL teams. Meanwhile, the Leafs are looking much like the Toronto Maple Marlies, with no fewer than six players in the lineup who will be heading back to the AHL in time for the playoffs.

While Toronto lacks much high-end talent – due in large part to the Phil Kessel trade that shipped out three high picks in 2010 and 2011 – there's some depth there.

That's a welcome change from former GM John Ferguson's reign, when the AHL team was an afterthought and the likes of Justin Pogge and Jiri Tlustý were considered the organization's top prospects.

Now, even with their team in the league basement yet again, Burke and Co. can point to their youngsters like Jake Gardiner, Ben Scrivens, Matt Frattin, Nazem Kadri and Carter Ashton as signs of some modest progress.

(Recent research by hockey analyst Jonathan Willis suggests that since the 2004-05 lockout there's been a correlation between having a strong AHL team and NHL success two or three years down the road.)

Part of the problem with selling hope in Toronto, however, is that it often gets oversold, even to the point of being a detriment to the player. Joe Colborne's a good example.

A 6-foot-5, 21-year-old centre, Colborne's been hyped as a potential answer to the Leafs' woes down the middle since coming over in the [Tomas Kaberle](#) trade from the Boston Bruins midway through last season.

The reality is that the former first-round pick has laboured in the minors after a strong start, dropping essentially to third-line duties as the Marlies have made their playoff push.

On the season, Colborne has only 37 points in 60 games, a far cry from what an NHL-ready prospect would produce in the AHL at his age.

At best, that type of production would put him in line for a third or fourth-line role down the road, but with expectations being what they are – and this plum assignment in Tuesday's game in Buffalo – Colborne will be hailed by some as a solution to some of the uncomfortable questions facing Burke this off-season.

That said, there's no harm in a late-season call-up and a quick look under a new coach, especially when a loss is more beneficial than a win. So they'll let the kids play – right now for the Leafs and then in a week for the only Toronto team headed to the playoffs this season.

"I'm going to take this opportunity and run with it," Colborne said. "I'm looking forward to showing everyone what I can do."

"Coming up at this time of year isn't really all that auspicious of a time to come up," Scrivens said, becoming the first NHLer to use auspicious in a sentence. "You've just got to give it your best effort."