

# SPORTS

## Penguins and Sabres push to earn playoff spot down regular season stretch

By Nick Blake  
sports editor  
nph5041@psu.edu

With just over 20 games left to play in the regular season, things are heating up in the NHL's eastern conference in the race for the playoffs.

Hockey works off of a points system. When a team wins a game, they get two points, a loss earns a team zero points and if the game goes to overtime, the winner gets two points and the loser gets one point.

The top eight teams in each conference get a spot in the playoffs and it looks like it's going to go right down to the wire in the eastern conference.

Spots fourth through eighth are currently separated by three points or less. One win could move you up two spots, but one loss could move down two spots.

The Buffalo Sabres are currently sitting in the eighth spot with 66 points. Their record is (30-22-6), and they are third in their division, but only one point out of second.

The Sabres are (5-4-1) in their last 10 games, and it is important that they keep winning games to stay on the inside of the playoff picture.

The Sabres played the Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday Feb. 17, and got the win 4-1.

It was a big win for the Sabres, who were playing without star forward Thomas Vanek. Vanek, who has 32 goals and 54 assists on the season, will be out of the lineup at least until early March with a broken jaw.

Right Wing Drew Stafford had a big game against the Maple Leafs in the absence of Vanek. He scored twice in the game taking his season total to 17, and he has scored eight goals in his last 11 games.

"As long as I'm contributing, especially now with Thomas (Vanek) out, we're going to need all the goals we can get and if that's what I'm going to be contributing, then so be it," Vanek said.

Stafford is in his third season with the Sabres, and he is aware of his role on the team.

"I know it's not going to happen every night, but we have a lot of guys here who can contribute in the goal-scoring department, so I'm just trying to do my part in that aspect as well as trying to be solid everywhere else."

The Sabres had a big game against on Thursday Feb. 19 against the Philadelphia Flyers. The Flyers have four 20-goal scorers in their lineup, so the Sabres would have to play tough defense. The game was in Philadelphia where the Sabres have won five of their last six games against Philadelphia.

Unfortunately, the Sabres fell to the Flyers by a final score of 6-3.

The Pittsburgh Penguins, on the other hand, find themselves on the outside of the playoff picture, looking in.

In their last 10 games, the Pens are (4-4-1) and playing a win one.

lose one style. They are currently in tenth place in the eastern conference and are five points out of the last playoff spot.

Perhaps the biggest event for the Penguins this season was the firing of head coach Michel Therrien. Therrien was let go by the Penguins on Sunday Feb. 15. He was replaced by Dan Bylsma, the former head coach of the Pens' AHL affiliate in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

General Manager Ray Shero decided that, with the situation that the team was in, it was time to make a change.

"We believe we need a change in direction and, with 25 games remaining in the regular season, our goal remains to finish strong and qualify for the Stanley Cup playoffs," Shero said.

This season, under Bylsma, the Baby Penguins were (35-16-1-2) and Shero felt that he was a good fit in the big leagues.

"Dan Bylsma is one of the

bright young coaches in the game and has done an exceptional job as the head coach in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton this season."

The magic number to get into the playoffs is 92. That is how many points are needed to realistically get into the playoffs. The Penguins currently have 60 points, so in their last 24 games they need to get at least 32 points if they want a playoff birth.

Bylsma is introducing a more aggressive style of play that will hopefully spring the Pens up the ranks.

"We want to have the puck and make plays," team captain Sidney Crosby said. "Look at a lot of good teams, they're puck-possession teams. In order to maintain possession you have to win your battles and do a lot of different things that aren't X's and O's either. It's up to us to make sure our work ethic is there to make sure that we do those things."

The Penguins will have to be

aggressive and will have to get to work if they want to make the playoffs.

They played the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday Feb. 19. The Canadiens are in somewhat of a slump, so the Penguins would have to try and take advantage of that. The Pens would have to steal this one in order to keep their playoff hopes alive.

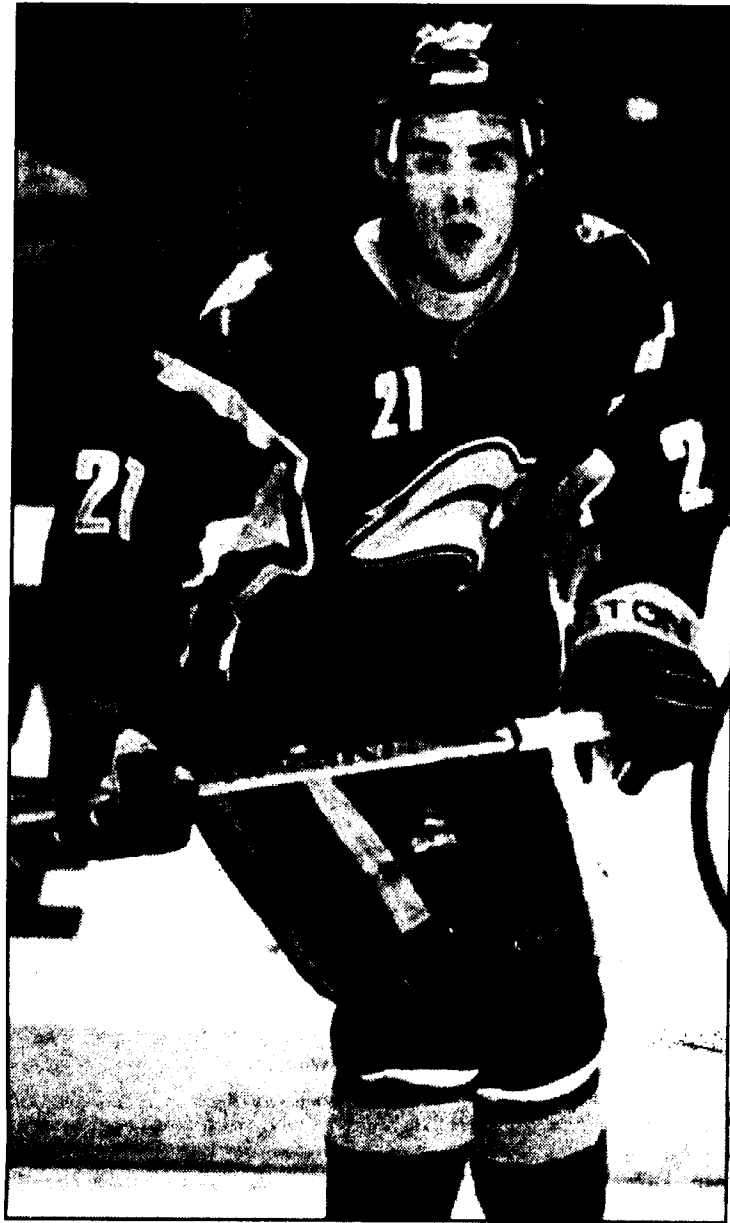
The Pens got the big win they needed for by a score of 5-4.

The regular season is quickly winding down and the playoffs approaching. Sabres and the Penguins will have to play their best hockey.

The schedule doesn't get any easier for either team down the stretch, and it will be a tough road to the playoffs.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left: Brooks Orpik lays a big hit on a New York Rangers player in the defensive zone.

Top: Buffalo Sabres' Drew Stafford looks to receive a pass from a teammate.

### THIS WEEK'S SPORTS SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

The Men's and Women's Indoor Track and Field team competes at Kenyon College.

The Behrend Men's Tennis team plays against Waynesburg at 3 p.m.

The Women's Basketball team (12-11) plays their last regular season game against Pitt-Bradford (11-13) at the Junker Center at 6 p.m.

Following the women's game, the Men's Basketball team (16-8) also play against Pitt-Bradford (15-9) at 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

The Behrend Men's and Women's basketball teams will begin post season play in the AMCC tournament. Time and location TBA.

### LAST WEEK'S SPORTS

All wins in italic text

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

M. and W. Swimming and Diving: AMCC CHAMPIONS

W. Basketball: Behrend 57 Franciscan 41

M. Basketball: Behrend 71 Franciscan 69

M. Tennis: Behrend 2 Baldwin-Wallace 7

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

W. Basketball: Behrend 68 La Roche 75

M. Basketball: Behrend 49 La Roche 56

All scores based from Sports Calendar and individual team page results. If your sport is not listed and you feel that it should be, contact cis5060@psu.edu

Rachel has taken the lead with a three game advantage over Nick. Connor follows closely behind Nick while Christine is one game ahead of Matt.

Want to play?

Email cen5056@psu.edu for a list of next week's games to see if you can "beat the experts".

## Beat The Experts

Connor Matt Rachel Christine Nick

### NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL

Penn State @ Ohio State	Penn. St.	Penn. St.	O.S.U.	O.S.U.	Penn. St.
DePaul @ #4 Pittsburgh	Pitt.	DePaul	Pitt.	Pitt.	Pitt.
Washington St. @ #20 UCLA	UCLA	Wash. St.	UCLA	UCLA	UCLA
#25 Dayton @ Saint Louis	Dayton	St. Louis	Dayton	Dayton	Dayton
#7 Louisville @ Cincinnati	Louis.	Cinci.	Louis.	Louis.	Louis.
Brigham Young @ UNLV	UNLV	B.Y.U.	UNLV	UNLV	UNLV
USC Upstate @ Campbell	USC Up.	Campbell	USC Up.	Campbell	USC Up.
East Carolina @ Tulsa	E. Car.	E. Car.	Tulsa	E. Car.	Tulsa
#13 Clemson @ Georgia Tech	Clemson	Georgia T.	Clemson	Clemson	Clemson

### NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Penn State @ Illinois	Penn. St.	Penn. St.	Illinois	Penn. St.	Illinois
#7 Duke @ #9 Maryland	Duke	Maryland	Duke	Maryland	Duke
#1 UConn. @ #24 Notre Dame	UConn.	Notre D.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.
#12 Texas @ #14 Texas A&M	Tex. A&M	Tex. A&M	Tex. A&M	Tex. A&M	Texas
#5 Baylor @ #2 Oklahoma	Oklah.	Baylor	Oklah.	Oklah.	Oklah.
#25 Arizona St. @ Arizona	A.S.U.	Arizona	A.S.U.	A.S.U.	A.S.U.
Morehead St. @ Eastern Kentucky	E. Kent.	More. St.	E. Kent.	E. Kent.	E. Kent.
Austin Peay @ Tennessee Tech	Tenn. Tech	Tenn. Tech	Tenn. Tech	Tenn. Tech	Austin P.
Drake @ Bradley	Drake	Drake	Drake	Drake	Bradley
<b>Season Totals:</b>	<b>54-35</b>	<b>49-40</b>	<b>58-31</b>	<b>50-39</b>	<b>55-34</b>