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WILD

Marcus Foligno Finding His Sweet Spot With the Wild



Mandatory Credit: Brad Rempel-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - November 27, 2018

The game couldn't have ended in a more salt-in-the-wound way for the Minnesota Wild and their fans.

After clinging onto a 2-0 lead from the first period on a couple weeks ago against Buffalo, the Sabres tied the game with about seven minutes left in the third. Then with 1:30 left in regulation, Buffalo got the game-winning goal from – who else? – Jason Pominville.

The former Wild forward not only scored, but he put the puck in the net with a nifty backhanded shot with his back facing the net. It was no doubt frustrating for the Wild faithful for many reasons, maybe the toughest to take because of all the misses and whiffs he had as a member of the Wild from 2012-17. Pominville is tearing it up in Buffalo, with nine goals and nine assists in 24 games so far this season. The Sabres have won nine in a row; the game against the Wild was No. 5.

On the flip side, one of the players the Wild got in return for Pominville was Marcus Foligno, a 6-foot-3, 227-pound winger who's not afraid to drop the gloves. After eight goals and a career-high 15 assists with the Wild last season, Foligno has played well this season, making contributions on the ice that don't always show up on the scoresheet.

Though he has just a goal and three helpers this season, he leads the team in penalty minutes (23) and hits (69). For those looking for a physical presence on the ice and someone to defend teammates, he's it. Although, youngsters Jordan Greenway and Nick Seeler are stepping up into that category as well.

Foligno, 27, is a veteran presence on the Wild's third or fourth line. Last game against the Winnipeg Jets in St. Paul, he was partnered with Greenway and 21-year-old Joel Eriksson Ek at center. That line has the potential to be a rough-and-tough weapon for the Wild, and not to mention some offensive power as Greenway and Eriksson Ek continue to develop their games.

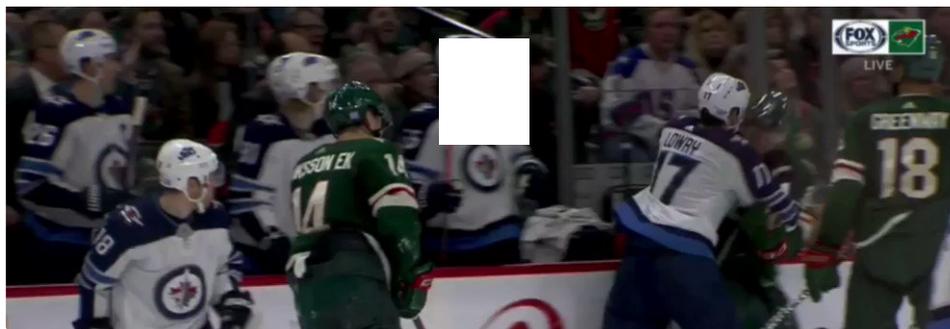
Against Winnipeg, Eriksson Ek took a high elbow from Adam Lowry. As Seeler came to his defense, Lowry pushed him right into the Jets bench. Foligno wasn't far behind and even ended up on the floor of the Jets bench area as it turned into a free-for-all of pushing and shoving with the Jets bench against Seeler, Foligno and Greenway.



Giles Ferrell

@gilesferrell

Nick Seeler goes into the Jets bench via Adam Lowry, Marcus Foligno comes to his rescue, pushing and shoving ensues. [#mnwild](#)
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Somehow, Foligno didn't even end up in the penalty box that time, even if it was a popular opinion that the Wild got the short of the end stick when it came to officiating.

That game continued to fuel the fire of this division rivalry between the neighboring Jets and Wild. It was the first time they had met since the Jets dispatched the Wild in five games of the first round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs last season. It's a rivalry that's akin to what it was like back in the day with Vancouver or Colorado (still a division rival).

Not only was there plenty of excitement on the ice in terms of full penalty boxes and goal scoring, but the building also turned into a playoff-like atmosphere, which is a fun sight at the end of November. The Wild came back in the third period with four scores, capped with Eric Staal's game-winner that he celebrated like he had just won the Cup. The Wild won 4-2 as the Jets blew a 2-0 lead.

Tom Wilson vs Marcus Foligno Nov 13, 2018



Plenty of other moments highlight Foligno's time with the Wild. Just a couple weeks ago he dropped the gloves off a faceoff with Washington's bad-boy (playing his first game back after a lengthy suspension) Tom Wilson. The fight came just after a Mikko Koivu goal made it a 3-1 Wild deficit in the second period. Wilson and Foligno were swinging away for a big-boy fight.

Then there was the time during the home opener against Vegas when he came to Greg Pateryn's defense after he took a hard hit. Foligno went right over to Ryan Reaves to spar with him. That's one thing the Wild haven't necessarily always had – that one player who will come to a teammate's defense no matter what. Foligno can be that guy.

It's not just about getting physical though.



Giles Ferrell

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Craig Anderson takes one away from Marcus Foligno. [#mnwild](#)
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His lone goal this season came on a breakaway in a home game against Tampa Bay. Foligno got the Wild within one early in the second period with a breakaway goal. He skated into the offensive zone, gloved the puck down out of midair, settled it on his stick and was in alone to make a slick backhanded move for the goal. The Wild won the game 5-4 in overtime.

He also nearly had a goal against Ottawa last week. If nothing else, it proved he isn't just a one-trick pony with the fights and hits. He's got some nice offensive moves to go along with his physical style of play.

Foligno is finding a place to make the trade seem at least somewhat fair. Tyler Ennis was the other active NHL player involved in the trade that sent Pominville and defenseman Marco Scandella to Buffalo in summer 2017. But Ennis had dealt with injury issues in the past and never seemed to take off as a member of the Wild; he finished with eight goals and 14 assists for the Wild last season before the team bought out the rest of his contract.

Ennis has three goals and two assists with Toronto this year.

Whether it's playing on the third or fourth line, Foligno has shown he can make plays happen, or at the very least shake things up. Though he may not put up bunches of goals like Pominville, Foligno is showing his own kind of value in that trade with Buffalo.

Marcus Foligno says the Wild have character to close games



TIDBITS

- The Wild's three goals in the third period against Winnipeg were the most Minnesota has scored in a single period this season. In keeping with their comeback-kids theme, the Wild have 30 third-period goals this season, tied for fourth in the NHL.
- Defenseman Matt Dumba added two more assists to his stat sheet in Friday's game. His career-high six-game point streak is one game away from tying the franchise record for the longest point streak by a Wild defenseman. Dumba has five goals and four assists during the current streak.
- Goaltender Alex Stalock earned his fifth win in his past six games after he stopped 26 shots on Friday.
- The Wild have scored a power-play goal in five of their last six games.

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