



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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TONIGHT'S GAME: Syracuse @ Rochester

A six-pack of impressions from Amerks opening weekend
Pickin' Splinters
By: Kevin Oklobzija

Impressions from another loss by the Rochester Americans.

Two games, two losses, both to the Charlotte Checkers. A 6-2 embarrassment on Friday followed by a 4-2 marginally competitive setback on Saturday night.

An 0-2 start is the opposite of last year
That doesn't mean things are really all that different, believe it or not.

"Last year we won our first two and the lost our next three," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said. "We should have been 1-4 but Linus (Ullmark, the goalie) stole one in Syracuse for us.

"It's going to take some time and we know that."

The losses were to what appears to be a very good team
The Checkers went 46-21-1-3 last season and have key players back, including the goalie who won 31 games, Ohio native Alex Nedeljkovic, and the dynamite trio of Janne Kuokkanen, Nicolas Roy and Andrew Poturalski. They combined to produce six goals and seven assists in the weekend set in downtown Rochester.

"They move the puck well," defenseman Zack Redmond said of Charlotte. "They made little plays. They looked pretty much in in-season form to me."

The Checkers power play went 4-for-7 while their penalty killers were successful on six of seven attempts, including 63 seconds of five-on-three Amerks power play on Saturday.

"They move it once or twice and then get a shot," Taylor said of the Charlotte power play. "We hold onto it, try to make a play and then by then everybody knows where the puck is going."

Familiarity is still an issue for the Amerks
Six of the 12 forwards in the lineup on Saturday weren't here last year, nor were four of the six defensemen. There are growing pains.

It's evident on the power play, where Victor Olofsson and Redmond have played catch up top but seem to be expecting the other to shoot the one-timer, and also with the forwards down low who either aren't moving perhaps when or where the puck-carrier expects.

"It sucks to go through this right away — you like to start off hot," Redmond said, "but every game is a learning experience. It's two games; you don't want to get too down."

The Amerks couldn't reverse Charlotte's momentum

Saturday's game was decided in a 4-minute and 49-second stretch of the second period. Redmond lost an Olofsson pass in his skates during the two-man advantage and Roy stole it and raced away to score on a breakaway at 5:06, snapping a perfect shot in off the cross bar.

Then he scored again at 9:55, roofing the rebound on a power play with Jack Dougherty in the penalty box for roughing. Whether his actions were really deserving of a penalty could be debated — the four far-from-vicious shoves and/or pawing jabs after the whistle — but Taylor chose to chastise the lack of discipline.

"We have to control our emotions," he said. "We need to be grittier between the whistles. He did it three or four times; they're going to call that."

The five-minute stretch turned a 2-2 tie into a 4-2 Checkers lead.

"That's sports in general," Redmond said of momentum swings. "It's on us to kind respond quick and we didn't."

A strong third period, but ...

Taylor liked the third period when the Amerks outshot the Checkers 20-6.

"The third period is how we can play hockey," he said.

Said winger Wayne Simpson, who scored his first goal as an Amerk nine seconds into the second period. "We showed little glimpses of what we're capable of doing when we're playing well."

Of course, the Checkers led 4-2 entering the third period. They didn't any more goals, and while the Amerks had 20 shots, they didn't score.

The Amerks can like the territorial domination, but in reality, those swings happen all the time when a team has a comfortable lead and knows how to protect it.

Immediate lineup changes

Wingers Justin Bailey and Tyler Randell and defenseman Taylor Fedun were taken out of the lineup after playing Friday.

Tough-guy winger Yannick Veilleux, former RIT center Myles Powell and Dougherty on defense took their places.

Why? Performance, or a lack thereof, on Friday.

"I didn't like things from the other night," Taylor said. "We've got depth and we're going to use it."

"We have to make sure everybody's accountable."

That may be the most important lesson from the weekend.

Amerks fall to the Charlotte once again
C&C WorldWide
By: Craig Potter

Some poor penalties by the Rochester Americans and fine goaltending by Alex Nedeljkovic of the Charlotte Checkers propelled the visitors from North Carolina to complete a sweep of the 2-game series on Saturday night by a 4-2 count before 3,076 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

An 0-2 start does not necessarily mean a poor season lies ahead. As one of the off-ice officials noted that during the years of the really good Amerks teams, they didn't start playing well until after Christmas.

"Last year we won our first two and the lost our next three," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor. "We should have been 1-4 but Linus (Ullmark, the goalie) stole one in Syracuse for us.

"It's going to take some time, and we know that."

The Checkers converted on 2-of-4 power play opportunities, and also scored a shorthanded goal in establishing a 4-2 advantage heading into the third period.

On Friday night, Charlotte took a 3-2 lead into the final stanza and doubled their score for a 6-2 triumph.

The atmosphere changed drastically in the third period Saturday as the Amerks dominated by firing 20 shots on Nedeljkovic. "The third period is how we can play hockey," Taylor said.

However, the Charlotte goalie was equal to the task and turned aside all 20 shots to preserve the 4-2 victory.

The Checkers grabbed a 1-0 lead 3 minutes into the game, but Eric Cornel knotted the count 1-1 midway through the period off assists from Alex Nylander and Zach Redmond.

Redmond, who led the Amerks in scoring last season, also was not discouraged by the 0-2 start.

"I kind of go back to my first year with the Norfolk Admirals," Redmond said. "We started off super slow, even through the first 20, and by the end of the year nobody could touch them. I think they swept all the way through to the Calder Cup.

"It's two games. You don't want to get too down about it. There's definitely things we need to work on, and we'll start on Monday."

The Amerks took their first lead of the season 9 seconds into the second stanza as the Checkers turned the puck over inside their blue line. Nylander found Wayne Simpson as he netted his first goal as an Amerk for a 2-1 advantage.

"We showed little glimpses of what we're capable of doing when we're playing well," said Simpson.

However, things went south from there through the end of the period as the Checkers sandwiched power play tallies around a shorthanded goal for a 4-2 lead.

Scott Wedgewood played his second straight game for Rochester as he made 28 saves.

**NOTES* — There were 3 changes in the lineup for the game as forward Justin Bailey, who was a -3 on Friday, along with defenseman Taylor Fedun and forward Tyler Randell all were scratched in favor of tough-guy forward Yannick Veilleux, rookie and former RIT center Myles Powell, who was making his pro debut, and defenseman Jack Dougherty. "I didn't like things from the other night," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor said. "We've got depth and we're going to use it. We have to make sure everybody's accountable."...The Checkers do not make another regular season trip to Rochester now until the 2019-20 season...The Amerks conclude their 3-game homestand as they welcome North Division and intrastate rival Syracuse Crunch on Wednesday at 7:05 pm.

Amerks fall second straight night on home ice

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans' first lead of the season lasted less than 20 minutes Saturday night at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester. Then, Buffalo native Andrew Poturalski scored to tie the game in the second period, and the Charlotte Checkers added two more tallies in a 4-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres' American Hockey League affiliate.

The last two Checkers goals were by Nicolas Roy, his third and fourth of the two-game weekend series in Rochester.

Wayne Simpson gave the Amerks the lead, 2-1, just 9 seconds into the second period. However, Poturalski, the former Nichols School and Buffalo Jr. Sabres forward, scored at 2:35. Roy did the rest scoring short-handed at 5:06 and on the power play at 9:55. There was no scoring the rest of the way although Rochester threw 20 shots on Charlotte goalie Alex Nedeljkovic in the third period.

Overall, Rochester outshot the Checkers, 36-30. Scott Wedgewood of the Amerks had 28 saves. He faced 12 shots in the first period and 14 more in the second.

Morgan Geekie opened the scoring with a goal for Charlotte at 3:00 of the opening period. Eric Cornel tied it for Rochester with his first of the season at 9:15. Alexander Nylander had an assist on both Rochester goals. Rookie defenseman Lawrence Pilut, who had a goal and an assist in the 6-2 loss to Charlotte in Friday's series opener, was a plus-one on Saturday with one shot on goal. Simpson led the Amerks with five shots on goal and defenseman Brendan Guhle had four.

The Amerks have a Wednesday night home game against the Syracuse Crunch before a two-game road series next weekend at the Bridgeport Sound Tigers in Connecticut.

A season opener to forget for the Amerks
Pickin' Splinters
By: Kevin Oklobzija

They talked about how this would be the season they'd take the next step, and maybe a giant one at that.

They talked about the balance of experienced veterans and talented youth on defense. They talked about the depth of quality forwards. They talked about focus and pride and opportunity and potential.

This Rochester Americans team talked about how excited they were to start the new season.
It's too bad talk can't play.

After a build-up of excitement and promise through training camp and their abbreviated American Hockey League preseason, the Amerks played a dreadful season-opener on Friday night, losing 6-2 to the Charlotte Checkers.

"That's a good team over there," Amerks captain Kevin Porter said, "but we made them look like NHL All-Stars."

And they made Janne Kuokkanen look like Conner McDavid. The second-year center from Finland scored two goals and assisted on two others, setting up the tie-breaking goal in the final minute of the second period before scoring the back-breaking fourth goal 72 seconds into the third.

But it was more than just the turnover that led to the Nicolas Roy goal with 47 seconds left in the second period that gave Charlotte a 3-2 lead. And it was more than the defensive lapse that allowed Kuokkanen to slip behind defensemen Brendan Guhle and Will Borgen for the early third-period goal that created a 4-2 deficit and left Amerks coach Chris Taylor bewildered.

It was the all-around level of uninspired, not-so-smart play.

"I've never seen anything like it," Taylor said. "The turnovers . . . we didn't want to hit anybody . . . our 'D' jumping up out of nowhere . . . our forwards wouldn't back up our 'D.'"

Like father, like son. The parent Buffalo Sabres were booed off the ice at KeyBank Center on Thursday night in a 3-0 loss to the Boston Bruins. The 5,203 fans at Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial weren't as ornery, but they were equally disgusted.

The players were too.

"I don't think our fans deserve that kind of showing on opening night," center Kyle Criscuolo said. "Top to bottom we need to be better."

The transformation must happen overnight, too, since the Amerks and Checkers play again at 7:05 p.m. Saturday in downtown Rochester.

Just what needs to change? Funny you should ask.

"Everything; everything," Taylor said. "Our compete, our will, our structure, finishing bodies. Everything."

Taylor talked on Thursday about how his team needed to be better from the opening faceoff in Friday night home games. That was a major problem a year ago.

Nothing has changed. The Amerks fell behind 2-0 in the first period, allowing goals to Kuokkanen and Roland McKeown 35 seconds apart in the 13th minute.

The Amerks did tie the score in the second period. C.J. Smith played sniper just 32 seconds in, then defenseman Larry Pilut scored a power-play goal at 14:59 on a perfectly spotted wrister from the center point.

The rookie defenseman from Sweden showed some true jubilation after his first goal in North America.

"It was nice to score but it would have been even nicer to get a win," Pilut said. "Now that goal means nothing."

Amerks thumped 6-2 by Charlotte in season opener

Rochester First

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans (0-1-0-0) opened their 63rd American Hockey League season and 37th as the primary affiliate of the Buffalo Sabres Friday night at The Blue Cross Arena, but it was the Charlotte Checkers (1-0-0-0) who earned a 6-2 victory in the first game of the 2018-19 campaign.

Rookie forward Lawrence Pilut made an immediate impact in his North American debut, leading led Rochester with a goal and an assist for a two-point night. Second-year forward and reigning Rookie of the Year C.J. Smith netted the other goal during the second period. Goaltender Scott Wedgewood, who also made his Rochester debut, made 33 saves.

Janne Kuokkanen had a game-high four points (2+2) for Charlotte, while Nicolas Roy (2+1), Andrew Poturalski (1+2) and Spencer Smallman (0+2) all turned in multi-point efforts. Roland McKeown rounded out the scoring while netminder Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 22 of 24 shots he faced to record his first win of the campaign.

The Checkers, who led the AHL in scoring last season, tallied a pair of goals 35 seconds apart during the first stanza and took a 2-0 lead into the intermission break.

Rochester, however, came out in the middle frame and Smith trimmed the lead to one as he ripped a shot over the glove just 32 seconds into the period. Pilut and Kyle Criscuolo teamed up to spring the Des Moines, Iowa, native into the offensive zone with Pilut recording his first AHL point on the marker.

Rochester drew its second power-play less than five minutes later and Pilut evened the game with his first AHL goal just 10 seconds into the infraction.

"Kevin Porter won the face-off back to me," said Pilut. "I waited it out to find a lane, then I saw one and shot the puck. Luckily for me, I had a screen in front and it when into the net."

Porter and Victor Olofsson, who also made his Amerk debut, each were awarded the helpers.

Charlotte, though, was quick to regain the lead with just 46 seconds left in the frame and took a 3-2 lead after 40 minutes of play.

"Any time you get scored on in the final minute of a period is tough," said Criscuolo. "No matter the game it's never easy, but we just have to look at the film and compete on every shift from top to bottom."

The Checkers silenced any thought of an Amerks comeback as they scored three goals during the first-half of the final frame and made it a 6-2 contest.

"We were not ready to play and it's on me and the leadership team," Porter said. "We dug ourselves a hole and we were able to battle back but credit them. They are a good team, but we made them look like NHL All-Stars tonight."

"It's disappointing," Amerks head coach Chris Taylor said. "It was disappointing how we started the game, but the only bright spot was Wedgewood all night."

Rochester had eight players make their Amerks debut, four of which made their AHL debuts.

The Amerks continue their three-game homestand to begin the 2018-19 season with a rematch against the Checkers on Saturday, Oct. 6 at The Blue Cross Arena. Game time is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start.

Amerks lose home opener to Charlotte
C&C WorldWide
By: Craig Potter

For a team entering the season with the high expectations that the Rochester Americans have, i.e. General Manager Randy Sexton feels with the talent here the team can win the Calder Cup, the Amerks did not perform up to that expectation in the 6-2 loss to the Charlotte Checkers on Friday night before 5,203 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

"That's a good team over there," said Amerks captain Kevin Porter, "but we made them look like NHL All-Stars."

"I've never seen anything like it," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor. "The turnovers . . . we didn't want to hit anybody . . . our 'D' jumping up out of nowhere . . . our forwards wouldn't back up our 'D.'"

"It was totally out of character for our team and what kind of structure we teach them. Our defense was jumping into the play, but our forwards wouldn't back up our D. We had no one on our blue line and we were all trying to play offense. It wasn't a good night.

However, there was one ray of sunshine, goalie Scott Wedgewood made 33 saves.

"The disappointing part was how we came out and started the game. The one bright spot was Wedgewood," Taylor said.

Despite giving up the 6 goals, it was not all Wedgewood's fault which is why Taylor kept him in the game.

The Amerks battled back from a 2-0 deficit to knot the count 2-2 in the second on a power play tally from C.J. Smith, who was last season's Amerks' Rookie of the Year, and Swedish rookie Larry Pilut scored his first career AHL goal.

"It was nice to score but it would have been even nicer to get a win," said Pilut. "Now that goal means nothing."

However, Rochester turned the puck over in the final minute of the stanza for a 2-on-1 which the Checkers converted to take the lead for good. They doubled their output in the third period for the final score.

"Every time we chipped the puck behind their guys, I thought we did a good job," Taylor said. "We got the forecheck . . . We had a lot of good chances but a lot of time we had turnovers. We didn't want to hit anybody, we were weak in our own zone. We gave up a lot of 2-on-1s, 3-on-1s. It's just uncharacteristic for our team."

The Amerks fans, however, were not as disgusted as the fans in Buffalo who booed the Sabres off the rink following a 3-0 loss to the Boston Bruins Thursday night in Buffalo.

At least the Amerks fans did not boo, this night. The players were equally disappointed with their performance as well.

"I don't think our fans deserve that kind of showing on opening night," center Kyle Criscuolo said. "Top to bottom we need to be better."

When Taylor was asked, 'What needs to be change for (Saturday) night?' He responded, "Everything; everything. Our compete, our will, our structure, finishing bodies. Everything."

**NOTES* — The Amerks opened their 63rd AHL season, the 37th as the primary affiliate of the Buffalo Sabres...The loss dropped the Rochester's all-time home-opening record to 38-19-6, and season-opening record to 32-24-7 all-time...The Amerks return 3 of their Top 5 scorers from last season — Zach Redmond, Kevin Porter, and C.J. Smith...Larry Pilut, Rasmus Asplund, and Victor Olofsson all made their North American debut after playing professionally a year ago in Sweden. Pilut led the Swedish Hockey League defensemen in scoring with 38 points and was named the SHL Defenseman of the Year...The two teams go at it again Saturday night at the BCA with a 7:05 pm faceoff.

Smith, Pilut score as Americans fall in season opener

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans mimicked their parent club, dropping their season opener Friday night. The Amerks, playing in their 63rd season, fell 6-2 to the Charlotte Checkers at Blue Cross Arena.

Charlotte went up 2-0 after the first period, but C.J. Smith responded with the first goal for Rochester, a transition wrist shot from the left dot, to cut the Checkers' lead to 2-1 in the second.

Lawrence Pilut, playing in his first North American game, tied the score with just over five minutes remaining in the middle frame.

The tie didn't last long, as Nicolas Roy scored in the final minute of the second.

His tally kicked off a four-goal run for Charlotte, including scores by Jaane Kuokkanan, Williamsville native and Nichols grad Andrew Poturalski and two by Roy.

Familiar face: Friday was the Checkers debut of former Sabres prospect Cliff Pu, who was jettisoned to the Hurricanes organization as part of the Jeff Skinner trade. He didn't record a point or a shot on goal but did finish as a plus-one.

Breaking the mold: The loss pushes Rochester to 38-19-6 all-time in openers.

Up Next: These two teams will meet once again Saturday at 7:05 p.m., the second game of Rochester's season-opening three-game homestand. The stretch concludes on Wednesday against the Syracuse Crunch.