



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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*TONIGHT'S GAME: Wilkes-Barre/Scranton @ Rochester*

## City, Pegula's agree in principle to 15-year management deal for Blue Cross Arena *Democrat and Chronicle*

By: Sarah Taddeo and Brian Sharp

On The city has agreed with owners of the Rochester Americans and Buffalo Sabres to key terms for management of Blue Cross Arena.

The "letter agreement" outlines basics of what will be a 15-year pact between the city and Rochester Arena LLC, an affiliate of Pegula Sports & Entertainment. Full contract terms should be hammered out by Jan. 1, or around that time, when the contract takes effect.

"Everything is done in shorthand," said city corporation counsel Tim Curtin, the city's corporation counsel. "We've gotten a lot of the work done in advance, but to finish in 30 days is probably a little optimistic."

City Council still must approve the framework of the deal, and will consider the matter next month.

The Pegulas stepped in back on Aug. 1, after the city ousted longtime manager SMG, claiming it failed to meet revenue benchmarks.

Terms of the long-term pact will mirror the previously released interim agreement, with some modifications.

According to the city:

Rochester Arena LLC, will continue paying the city \$5,000 monthly (or \$60,000 a year) to manage and operate Blue Cross Arena at the Community War Memorial, including concessions, ticketing and booking events, and retain revenues from advertising, suite sales and other funds generated from operations. And RA will pay all operating expenses, including half the Rochester Police Department's costs related to arena events.

SMG paid a set rate for police services equivalent to about 15 percent of actual costs.

There is a proposed increase in user fees assessed on tickets valued at \$6 or more, raising the added charge from \$1.25 to \$2.75. The city and RA will split the increase, resulting in an additional \$200,000 for city coffers.

The deal eliminates the city operating subsidy but not all city expense, as taxpayers remain on the hook for a projected \$250,000 annually to cover capital debt, insurance and related matters. Compare that to the \$2 million in combined bills taxpayers had to cover last year, however, and the \$1.2 million once projected in the current fiscal year, according to the city.

### Planned upgrades

The arena already is slated to receive more than \$18 million in major renovations largely funded by New York state. RA and the city also have agreed to contribute \$3 million each toward capital improvements.

Improvements already completed include a new scoreboard and LED ribbon board. There are plans for upgrades to restrooms, locker rooms, audio visual, and expanded office space that should be bid next year. While there is not a "bullet by bullet plan at

the moment," said Rob Minter, vice president of arena operations, the new operators are meeting almost weekly with the city on improvements and timing of work to be done.

"We are committed to acting on things as quick as we can," he said. "The first few months was to really analyze where everything was. ... We are getting past that stage. We know where our basis is, where we need to make improvements."

Rather than pinpoint one area of need, Minter spoke globally about improvements, saying the goal over the coming years is to have fans and visitors see continual improvement in all areas from "how the building is presented, to cleanliness, to how its operating from an efficiency standpoint. Things can always get better."

RA also will pay the city \$100,000 annually to manage the Court Street parking lot.

The city will be entitled to use of the lot at no cost for emergency personnel or other city employees. SMG previously handled those duties, paying a percentage of revenues that averaged \$117,000 over the past five years, according to the city.

"We're excited," Minter said. "This is a great day for us. It's a great day for Rochester. Being onsite at the arena, there is nothing but positivity."

Curtin said the city is not likely to demand a certain number of event nights or Amerks home games. But he said the contract would seek conditions to retain events such as the Section 5 high school basketball tournament.

AHL ironman Wayne Simpson becoming reliable force for Rochester Americans

*Buffalo News*

By: Bill Hoppe

On a team featuring some of the American Hockey League's leading scorers, high-priced veterans and a slew of talented youngsters, winger Wayne Simpson has quietly carved out an important role for the Rochester Americans.

Of course, it can be easy to overlook Simpson. The undrafted Union College product isn't a prospect. He has no NHL experience and is playing on an AHL contract.

But Simpson, 29, has become one of the Amerks' most reliable and versatile presences, earning ice time in all situations and scoring six goals during their fast 12-5-2 start.

"The expectation is I can create offense and lead by example a little bit," Simpson said.

The 5-foot-11, 194-pound Simpson stands out on perhaps the AHL's deepest team. He usually plays beside center Kevin Porter and a Sabres prospect — early on it was Alexander Nylander — on a scoring line. Simpson also skates on the top power-play unit and kills penalties.

"He goes into the hard areas and . . . he breaks up a lot of plays, he's good defensively, he sneaks up on guys and steals pucks away from that," coach Chris Taylor said. "He's always around the puck and the puck always follows him. That just tells you he's kind of a headsy player and he just quietly goes about his business."

While Simpson plays aggressively, as Taylor said, he showcases his smarts. Simpson often avoids taking bad hits.

That has helped make Simpson so durable he has played 206 consecutive games, the AHL's current longest active ironman streak.

"He doesn't have to go into bad areas because he's always in a really good spot," Taylor said.

Simpson said he never figured he could have a pro hockey career until his junior season at Union, where he studied managerial economics.

"I was going to a good school, so it wasn't always hockey is my plan A and no plan B," said Simpson, who grew up in Boxborough, Mass. "But it just kind of worked out that way."

As Simpson's college career progressed, the Dutchmen rose to national prominence.

"We were kind of more in the national spotlight," Simpson said. "We played in the Frozen Four one year, played in the tournament both years, won (the) ECAC championship both years. That exposure obviously helps. I was fortunate to be on a team with a lot of good players. Statistically, it helped a lot of players out."

Simpson compiled 18 goals and 31 points in 41 games as a junior and 16 goals and 39 points in 41 contests as a senior.

Those strong seasons earned Simpson attention and an ECHL contract. In 2014-15, his second pro campaign, he enjoyed a monster postseason, scoring 13 goals and 38 points in 27 games as the South Carolina Stingrays roared to the Kelly Cup final.

Simpson parlayed that into an invitation to the AHL Portland Pirates' training camp the next season.

"I ended up grabbing one of the spots," Simpson said. "It was definitely a breaking point in my career."

Simpson spent 2016-17 with the Providence Bruins and last season with the Hershey Bears on a two-way contract, averaging 15 goals and 46 points.

Still, Simpson endured what he called a "long offseason" as he considered his options, including playing in Europe. He finally signed with the Sabres' affiliate on Aug. 15.

"They sold it as an opportunity to come in and play, first of all, with a team that's looking to win at the American Hockey League level, as opposed to sometimes there's other motivations," Simpson said. "They thought a guy in my position, a little older, could come in, they weren't going to penalize me because I wasn't a prospect."

"They're trying to build a winning culture, and I thought it was perfect for someone in the position who was trying to get another break and looking for an NHL contract."

#### Bailey on fire

Following a wretched start that included 11 goalless outings, Amerks winger Justin Bailey has caught fire, compiling five goals and eight points in his last seven games.

The Williamsville native has a three-game point streak entering Friday's game against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins at Blue Cross Arena.

What has changed for the Sabres prospect?

"He's doing things a little more simpler," Taylor said. "He's driving pucks wide, he's using his speed as an asset. That's a huge asset he has. He's using that (6-foot-4, 214-pound) body."

#### Pilot's position

Taylor said defenseman Lawrence Pilot's first trip to the Sabres should help him generate confidence.

The Sabres recalled the Swede, 22, last week but did not play him. They summoned him again for insurance Tuesday.

"Just being around there for a couple days, it energizes you," Taylor said. "It's the NHL, especially the way Buffalo's playing (10 consecutive wins), it's fun to be around and it's a great atmosphere for a guy like that to see that."

Pilot has three goals and 22 points in his first 16 games with the Amerks, putting him in a six-way tie for third in AHL scoring.

#### Notes

Taylor said Amerks center Kyle Criscuolo, out with a lower-body injury since Oct. 26, hasn't started practicing yet. ... The Amerks have pocketed 26 of a possible 32 points in the last 16 games.

Sabres recall defenseman Lawrence Pilut from Rochester

*Buffalo News*

By: Lance Lysowski

Defenseman Lawrence Pilut didn't remain in Rochester for long. Pilut, returned to the Rochester Americans on Friday, was recalled again by the Buffalo Sabres before puck drop Tuesday against the San Jose Sharks.

Pilut, 22, was tied for third in the AHL with 22 points and a plus-19 rating in 16 games for Rochester. Pilut was first recalled by the Sabres last Wednesday but did not appear in a game while Marco Scandella was recovering from a lower body injury.

General manager Jason Botterill said during his pregame show on WGR that Pilut was recalled in case of an emergency because Scandella won't play Tuesday. Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian missed practice Monday for what coach Phil Housley called a "maintenance day," and Housley said he expected Bogosian to play against the Sharks after rejoining the team for Tuesday's morning skate.

On the other hand, winger Conor Sheary will not play because of a lower body injury.

Pilut was signed by the Sabres to a two-year entry-level contract in May and did not make the team in training camp. He played four-plus seasons for HV71 of the Swedish Hockey League and was named the league's top defenseman for the 2017-18 season.

Pilut had 38 points in 52 games for HV71 last season. Scandella suffered a lower body injury last Monday in Pittsburgh when he was hit in the foot by Penguins center Evgeni Malkin's slap shot.

Rookie Borgen finding his game with Amerks

*AHL.com*

By: Ryan J. Harr

Much of the talk this season when discussing the Rochester Americans' defensive corps has been surrounding Swedish sensation Lawrence Pilut and veteran Zach Redmond.

It seems only fitting as the duo is tied for Rochester's scoring lead and pace all American Hockey League defensemen with 22 points each as the Amerks remain in first place in the North Division.

But then there's rookie Will Borgen, who is in his first full pro season and who might not show up on the scoresheet as often as his two fellow blueliners. But much like Pilut and Redmond, however, he's contributing in other ways, and it's his continuous improvement that the Buffalo Sabres organization is noticing.

"Will is one of the few young prospects that understands exactly what his identity is," said Sabres assistant general manager and Amerks general manager Randy Sexton. "Oftentimes with younger players, it can take them a while to develop and really find their role."

"From not only last season to training camp but from camp to now, he has improved drastically," Amerks head coach Chris Taylor said of Borgen. "His defensive habits are night-and-day (better) than they were, but even his offensive game has taken some significant strides. I think the biggest thing for him, though, is his confidence is constantly growing, and that is most important as a young player."

"With Will, he knows he needs to be a good, defensive defenseman," added Sexton. "He understands that he also needs to be a tough, physical, hard-to-play-against player, and he is embracing that while improving in every aspect of his game."

And Borgen has done just that since arriving in Rochester for a brief stint at the tail end of last season following the completion of a three-year collegiate career at St. Cloud State University. He recorded eight shots in eight games with the Amerks while on an amateur tryout, just two days after inking a three-year, entry-level NHL contract with the Sabres on March 25, 2018.

That experience, albeit brief, paid dividends as the 21-year-old headed home for the off-season.

"Getting just a small taste of professional hockey helped a lot going into the summer months," said Borgen. "Meeting some of the players who were here and playing some games was really beneficial."

The 6-foot-2, 200-pound defenseman enjoyed his best collegiate season as a junior when he finished the year with 13 assists for a career-high 15 points in 36 games with the Huskies while helping the team to an NCHC conference championship as well as an appearance in the NCAA tournament.

"When I first arrived here at the end of the season last year, it wasn't exactly easy," said Borgen. "There was a lot going on in my life, but the guys immediately welcomed me and made me feel part of the team, which helped a lot."

"There were a lot of things that were going through my head at the time," recalled Borgen. "Being on a new team with a new organization in a new city, the unknown factor and unfamiliarity with everything, leaving college and turning pro. Once I was able to get on the ice and play some games, it was just a normal hockey game after that, which kind of put my mind at ease."

Prior to joining the Amerks, Borgen was named the National College Hockey Conference's Defensive Defenseman of the Year and was selected to the All-NCHC Honorable Mention team. He was also one of four collegiate players nationally to be named to the 2018 United States men's Olympic hockey team.

"I was a sponge last year," Borgen said. "I took in a lot in my time at each of the various settings. The older players and coaches at college and here helped me out a ton. At the Olympics, it was such a unique but really awesome experience as I was able to learn despite not playing in any games."

Much like the previous summers, the Moorhead, Minn., native went home at the end of the season, but this time he went home with some professional hockey experience.

"The training I did was pretty similar to years past, but I wanted to improve my overall game," Borgen said. "I had a trainer, who I worked pretty closely with, and skated with Chris VandeVelde, Matt Cullen and other college and high school players in the area."

In addition to his off-season training regimen, Borgen participated in both the Sabres' annual Development Camp and Prospects Challenge, which helped boost his confidence.

"Playing against his peers definitely helped him," said Amerks assistant coach Gord Dineen, who oversees the team's defensemen. "Attending both those events helped show him where he fits in with players his own age, and I believe it showed him he has a leg up on them as he also had a small taste of pro hockey."

Through nearly two months of his rookie campaign, Borgen has dressed for all 19 games and has added five points (one goal, four assists), which leads all the club's first-year players. Borgen tallied his first career point, an assist, on Oct. 19 before scoring his first pro goal at Belleville the next night.

"I don't score very often, but it was fun to find the back of the net."

For now, Borgen will continue doing what he does best: learning and growing his game every day.

Nylander's goal turns out a winner for the Amerks  
*Buffalo News*  
By: Staff Report

Alexander Nylander scored his sixth goal of the season with 1:59 left in the third period and it turned out to be the winner for the Rochester Americans in a 4-3 triumph over the Devils Saturday night in Binghamton.

A crowd of 3,447 at Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Coliseum saw the home team close to 3-2 on a goal by Josh Jacobs with 10:31 left. But Nylander's goal gave Rochester some breathing room, a two-goal lead, which they needed.

Egor Sharangovich scored just 42 seconds after Nylander to bring the final difference back to one.

After a scoreless first period, Zach Redmond scored his 13th of the season for Rochester at 8:12. Victor Olofsson had his 12th assist and Justin Bailey his sixth on the goal.

Blake Pietila hit with a power-play goal at 10:39 of the second but Kevin Porter's fifth of the season put the Amerks back in front 31 seconds left in the period. Nylander (No. 11) and Dalton Smith (2) had the assists.

Wayne Simpson's sixth goal with assists from C.J. Smith (11) and Jack Daugherty (3) made it 3-1 at 7:41 of the second but back came the Devils on the goal by Jacobs.

Rochester had to deal with five Binghamton power plays while the Amerks were 0 for 1 with the man advantage.

Scott Wedgewood made 27 saves for the Amerks. MacKenzie Blackwood had 33 stops for the Devils.

Next for Rochester is a home game on Friday night against the Wilkes-Barre Scranton Penguins at Blue Cross Arena.

Rochester (12-5-2 for 26 points) owns a three-point lead over the Syracuse Crunch (11-5-1, 23 points) in the North Division standings of the AHL. The Amerks are second to Charlotte (31 points) in the Eastern Conference.

Amerks goalie Adam Wilcox trying to make every start count

*Buffalo News*

By: Bill Hoppe

The streak started late in March and ended Nov. 16. Over 11 appearances, backup goalie Adam Wilcox compiled a 6-0-2 record, earning points for the Rochester Americans in eight consecutive decisions.

After Wilcox, 25, took the loss in relief of Scott Wedgewood during a 9-4 shellacking from the Springfield Thunderbirds, he backstopped the Amerks to a come-from-behind victory against the Hartford Wolf Pack on Sunday.

"That was my favorite win, personally, for the year so far," Wilcox said of his 25-save effort in the 4-3 victory.

Wilcox was in net Friday night when the Amerks lost, 5-4, to the Utica Comets, but he has earned five of the Amerks' 11 wins this season. While Wedgewood has started 11 of the 18 games, Amerks coach Chris Taylor refuses to call Wilcox a backup. Taylor said his netminders are "still challenging each other" for the starting job.

"They're two guys that get along great," Taylor said.

Wilcox has transitioned well into a secondary role since leaving the University of Minnesota following his junior season in 2014-15. Still, he has occasionally handled the load. He played 48 times two seasons ago, winning 25 games between his stints with Springfield and the Syracuse Crunch.

Last season, his first with the Amerks, he backed up Linus Ullmark, playing 29 contests.

"It's kind of been two different feelings, obviously," Wilcox said of being a backup.

"As a competitor and a goalie, you want to play as many games as you can. Obviously, playing with Ullmark last year, he was playing a lot of games, so when I did play, I wanted to make sure I got points for our team."

Wilcox earned 31 points, going 12-7-7. He said his other numbers — a 2.79 goals-against average and a .903 save percentage — mean little to him.

"The biggest thing is not about goals-against or save percentage, it's more about can I get points for the team every week, can I give them a chance to win?" said Wilcox, who has an AHL contract this season. "That's kind of what I base my success off of, if I gained points for the team."

After the Sabres recalled Wilcox late last season, he made his NHL debut April 7, stopping all 14 shots he faced in relief of Chad Johnson.

"Just to get into the game and get into the locker room and pretend to brag that you got a shutout is pretty fun to say," joked Wilcox, who grew up in Minnesota rooting for the Sabres because he liked Hall of Fame goalie Dominik Hasek.

Wilcox's fun-loving personality — "(He) makes everybody laugh," Taylor said — has made him a popular teammate.

"I really enjoy him in the locker room, the guys enjoy him in the locker room," Taylor said. "He brings the team together. He's a huge part of our team."

Wilcox said: "Hopefully they enjoy my jokes. Sometimes they say, 'All right, that's enough, Coxy.'"

Wilcox believes the ups and downs that accompany a long season make it important to keep things light and be available outside the rink.

"I'll be the first one to say I'll join the guys for dinner or go do something," Wilcox said.

Many goalies, of course, are known for being a little different or quirky. Some are superstitious or like being left alone at times.

Taylor said Wilcox is "not a typical goalie." Before games, he's up for anything.

"He gets ready in a different way and the guys embrace that," Taylor said.

#### Redmond still pushing

Eighteen games into the season, Amerks defenseman Zach Redmond hasn't shown any signs of slowing down.

Redmond, 30, scored the late game-winning goal last Sunday. Incredibly, six of his 12 goals this season are game-winners. Overall, he has 21 points.

"He's rolling with the confidence," Taylor said.

Taylor said Redmond's defense hasn't suffered at the expense of his offense.

"We don't talk about the defensive play as much as his offensive play because his offensive play is unbelievable," Redmond said. "But his defensive play is right there with it."

#### Olofsson returns

Sabres prospect Victor Olofsson returned to Rochester's lineup Sunday, registering an assist after a lower-body injury sidelined him three games. He did not register a point Friday against Utica but equaled a team-best six shots as the Amerks outshot Utica, 47-23. The 47 shots were a season high.

The Swedish winger, 23, has compiled six goals and 17 points in his first 15 AHL outings.

#### Asplund update

Sabres prospect Rasmus Asplund doubled his season point total with the Amerks in about a 35-minute span Sunday, scoring his first AHL goal and adding an assist.

"His numbers definitely don't reflect how he's playing," said Taylor, who has been impressed by the Swedish center's overall play.

#### Malone tallies

Sean Malone, the West Seneca native, scored his first goal of the season in Friday's loss.

Malone missed seven weeks and the Amerks' first 12 games after suffering a knee injury in the Sabres' exhibition opener Sept. 17.

Sabres' Lawrence Pilut excited about first NHL recall

*Buffalo Hockey Beat*

By: Bill Hoppe

Defense prospect Lawrence Pilut's first trip to the Sabres was more about experiencing the NHL life than receiving playing time.

The Sabres recalled Pilut, the AHL's leading scorer, for insurance before sending him back late Friday. With Marco Scandella battling a lower-body injury, they wanted to have an extra defenseman.

The Sabres have also been winning, so coach Phil Housley hasn't tinkered much with his lineup.

So Pilut, 22, sat out Friday afternoon's 3-2 overtime win against the Montreal Canadiens inside KeyBank Center as a healthy scratch, the second game the rookie watched after being summoned Wednesday.

"You can see how the guys approach practice, how they approach games . . . just the day-to-day routines," Housley said of what Pilut can learn.

Of course, fans wanted to see Pilut, perhaps the Sabres' biggest defense prospect, showcase his talents at hockey's highest level.

The slick Swede has performed dynamically in his first 15 AHL games, compiling 22 points with the Rochester Americans. His 19 assists also led the league as of Friday afternoon.

"Here is where I want to be," said Pilut, who signed a two-year, entry-level contract in May. "Here is where I want to play. I'm just happy right now to be up here. Now I just want to get into the action."

At his current pace, the 5-foot-11, 180-pound Pilut would score a whopping 107 points, the AHL's highest total ever by a defenseman.

"I felt good," said Pilut, who has been quarterbacking the Amerks' power play. "I had a good feeling coming into the season. It feels like I've been playing good down in Rochester. Everybody's been so good to me down there."

Housley said Pilut's "overall 200-foot game" with the Amerks has impressed him.

"He's making really good reads in the D-zone," Housley said. "He knows when to jump in the rush, his timing's really good and he's contributing offensively because of that. . . . He's getting power-play time, he's playing in all situations. He's in a good area where his development is now."

The undrafted Pilut took an interesting path to the NHL, playing five seasons in the Swedish Hockey League. Last year, he compiled eight goals and 38 points in 52 contests and earned SHL top defenseman honors.

That breakout campaign attracted the interest of the Sabres.

"My dream is to play in the NHL," Pilut said. "Hopefully one day it will come."

Scandella, who blocked a shot Monday, returned Friday. To make room, the Sabres scratched defenseman Casey Nelson.

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The Sabres, who have won eight straight games, now have points in eight consecutive contests for the first time since a nine-game run (7-0-2) from March 10 to 27, 2012. Friday's win secured their first five-game home winning streak since Nov. 28 to Dec. 15, 2014.

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Officials whistled Sabres winger Jason Pominville for a third-period holding call, his first penalty in 29 games going back to March 26 last season.

Pominville had eight penalty minutes in 2017-18 and four in 2016-17.

Notes: After scoring in the second period, Canadiens winger Brendan Gallagher has 12 goals in 25 games versus the Sabres. . . . Canadiens winger Nick Deslauriers has been playing with a full cage on his helmet since suffering a facial fracture from a fight in the preseason. Deslauriers spent four seasons with the Sabres. . . . The Sabres also scratched winger Remi Elie.