



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Wednesday, December 20, 2017

TONIGHT'S GAME: Belleville @ Rochester

Fasching assigned to the Amerks

WGR 550

By: Brayton Wilson

With forward Jacob Josefson nearing a return to the lineup from an ankle injury, the Buffalo Sabres assigned forward Hudson Fasching to the Rochester Americans on Monday afternoon.

The 22-year old got into five games since his call-up on December 2nd, but did not register a point in any of those games. Fasching finished his latest stint in Buffalo with a minus-1 rating, two penalty minutes and just one shot on goal.

Fasching was skating as one of the extra skaters at Monday's practice along with Scott Wilson.

In 21 games with the Amerks this season, Fasching has six goals and three assists while playing in a top-six role in Rochester.

Sabres prospect C.J. Smith piling up points with Amerks

Buffalo Hockey Beat/Olean Times Herald

By: Bill Hoppe

It's early, just 26 tilts into a 76-game season. Still, Buffalo Sabres prospect C.J. Smith hasn't let up yet, compiling nine goals and a gaudy 27 points to start his AHL career.

So keep an eye on Smith, an undrafted winger the Sabres signed out of UMass Lowell late last season. The Americans' leading scorer is on a 25-goal, 79-point pace over a full season.

How rare is a campaign like that?

The Amerks haven't had a 70-point scorer under Buffalo's affiliation since Chris Taylor, their current coach, scored 79 in 2004-05. No one has hit the 80-point mark since Domenic Pittis and Craig Fisher both surpassed it in 1998-99.

A slew of things have contributed to the Amerks' 15-5-3-3 start. They've received balanced scoring, terrific goaltending and possess a strong mix of veterans and youngsters. Right now, they have a 10-game point streak.

Nine weeks into the season, Smith, 23, has morphed into perhaps their most valuable skater, exceeding expectations. While 12 Amerks already have at least 10 points, Smith has nine more than their second-leading scorer, forward Sahir Gill.

"It's been a lot of fun," Smith said after scoring a goal and two points in Wednesday's 3-1 win against the Utica Comets. "Winning always trumps a lot of things. I think having the start we've had has been really good for my development and the team. We're having a lot of fun in this locker room."

What has helped Smith, who played two NHL games last season, acclimate to pro hockey so quickly?

Since the Amerks weren't relying on Smith early on, Taylor said, he could simply concentrate on filling his role. Smith has also been playing with some established AHL scorers.

"But he's also taken care of himself and what he needs to do and how he's doing it, and it's just snowballing from there," Taylor said. "He's getting a lot of confidence and the team's got a lot of confidence."

Taylor said the 5-foot-11, 185-pound Smith has "got it all."

"What I like about him is he's not scared to go touch the puck first in the corners," Taylor said. "(Even with) skill, vision (and) smarts, you actually have to go in there, be dirty, be one of those guys that's not afraid to get hit, take a big hit to make a play and he's one of those guys."

“He’ll get in front of the net, he’ll go touch the puck first even though he knows he’s going to get hit hard. That’s why he’s being successful.”

Smith’s vision created the Amerks’ second goal Wednesday inside Blue Cross Arena. After grabbing the puck at the right point, he slickly found a streaking Stuart Percy as the defenseman zoomed to the net. Smith’s late power-play goal then sealed the game.

Despite Smith’s scorching start, the Sabres have bypassed him for recalls so far, summoning Justin Bailey, Nick Baptiste, Kyle Criscuolo and Evan Rodrigues from Rochester ahead of him.

“I know eventually I’ll get my opportunity,” said Smith, who ranks fifth in AHL scoring. “I think having a good attitude down here, being consistent, eventually it’ll come. I just know it’s a process, especially with this new coaching staff.”

Smith said he’s used to being overshadowed.

“That’s kind of always how I’ve been,” Smith said. “I’ve kind of been, not ‘overstarred,’ but I think I’ve always played with some higher-end names, which doesn’t bother me.”

If Smith keeps producing, he might become a higher-end name. Points, however, aren’t his main focus.

“If you ask any forward, they want points,” Smith said. “I’ve kind of said before, sometimes in this league it’s not about the points, it’s about learning how to be consistent so if you make it to that next level, you know how to play, you’re more reliable.”

Taylor said he hopes Bailey, who hasn’t played since Oct. 28 with Buffalo, can return tonight at home against the Toronto Marlies. The winger suffered a lower-body injury during a recall.

Sabres could loan prospect Alexander Nylander to Sweden

Buffalo Hockey Beat/Olean Times Herald

By: Bill Hoppe

If the Sabres want to jumpstart prospect Alexander Nylander's season, they have a pretty strong option.

Nylander, 19, has endured a rough four months. After suffering a lower-body injury in rookie camp, the slick forward missed all of the main camp and didn't make his season debut until Nov. 17 with the Rochester Americans.

So far, Nylander has struggled in his second AHL season, compiling one goal, four points and a minus-8 rating in 12 games.

But the Sabres can send Nylander, the eighth overall pick in 2016, to Team Sweden for the upcoming World Junior Championship in Buffalo.

The Sabres' old regime assigned him to Sweden for last year's tournament.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said this morning he's continuing to have "discussions" with Sweden about Nylander's availability.

"They've been very accommodating with that situation there," said Botterill, who represented Team Canada in the tournament three times in the 1990s. "I've always been a big proponent of the world juniors. I think it is very good for their development."

Nylander dazzled at times during the last two tournaments, scoring nine goals and a whopping 21 points in 14 games.

Botterill spoke this morning outside KeyBank Center because the Winter Classic Ice Plant truck stopped on its way to New York. The Sabres and New York Rangers play in the New Year's Day tilt at Citi Field.

Tangible evidence that the plan to rebuild the Amerks is in full motion

Buffalo Star

By: Kevin Oklobzija

When he took over the hockey department for the Buffalo Sabres in the spring, Jason Botterill put into motion his list of must-dos.

Among the priorities: restore the pride and prominence of the Rochester Americans.

On Friday night, the Amerks provided tangible evidence that the plan is working, even in losing a game.

Ben Smith swatted an ankle high Jeremy Bracco centering pass into the net with 6:31 to play and the Toronto Marlies defeated the Amerks 3-2 in downtown Rochester.

The loss stung, because the Amerks (15-6-3-3) knew they had played well against the team with the best record in the American Hockey League (21-5-0-0).

But they also believed they were the better team on this particular night.

“I think we outplayed those guys the majority of the game,” said rookie defenseman Brendan Guhle, who scored his sixth goal and was on the ice when Alexander Nylander scored his second.

It’s been a long time since the Amerks played a game in mid-December where there was a feel of playoff hockey. The Marlies came out banging on the first shift, with Richard Clune, Frederik Gauthier and Colin Greening trying to set the tone.

The Amerks weren’t dissuaded, however. They came right back with the body.

“That’s probably one of the best teams we’ve played,” captain Kevin Porter said. “They came out hard and I thought we matched their intensity. We knew it was going to be a good test for us, and it was going to be a good test for them as well.”

Who knows the last time a quality opponent used the Amerks as a benchmark. It probably hasn’t happened since the 2009-10 season.

There was speed, there were crisp passes, there were heavy hits (far more than most games) and there were terrific saves by Amerks goalie Linus Ullmark and Marlies goalie Calvin Pickard. The Amerks defensemen, Guhle and Zach Redmond, were active in the rush and up in the play often.

What was really noticeable, however: the air about Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial that this game mattered a great deal.

“You could feel it on the bench,” Amerks coach Chris Taylor said. “It’s nice to see we’re having these games in December.”

Taylor is liking what he sees from his club right now. Friday's loss was just the third time in the past 22 games where the Amerks didn't earn at least a point. They had earned a point in the previous 10 (6-0-2-2), something an Amerks team hadn't done since 2009-10.

"They're becoming a family in there," Taylor said of the dressing room. "They want to win, they all want to succeed. "To me it's the care. I know once you care, you're going to win a lot of games."

The Amerks seem to understand that, too.

"Tonight shows what you need to do to beat the top teams in the league," Ullmark said. "They're a top-tier team and it's not a fluke that they are. It's not a fluke that we are."

That said, it's still only December. They still have 49 games to play. And Taylor will keep them grounded.

"We didn't use a measuring stick against Toronto tonight," Taylor said. "We use a measuring stick against ourselves every night."

Smith's OT winner completes Amerks comeback

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans overcame a 2-0 deficit late in the third period to earn a 3-2 overtime win at the Utica Comets Saturday night and pick up at least a point for the 17th time in the last 19 games dating back to Nov. 1.

C.J. Smith completed the comeback effort with his 10th goal of the season just 17 seconds into the extra period on a breakaway. The rookie also assisted on both Rochester goals during regulation, giving him 20 assists and 30 points through 28 games. He leads the Amerks in goals and assists and is the top rookie scorer in the AHL.

Utica's Michael Carcone opened the scoring 7:16 into second period with assists going to Cole Cassels and Patrick Wiercioch. Cassels made it 2-0 4:51 into the third on an unassisted goal.

Rochester's Sahir Gill tapped in a feed from Smith in front of the net while on the power play to put the Amerks on the board with 6:33 to go. Stuart Percy had the secondary helper on the play.

Nicholas Baptiste converted on a loose puck in front of the net to tie it up with 2:52 left on his fifth goal of the season. Assists went to Smith and Kyle Criscuolo.

Criscuolo and Brendan Guhle picked up the assists on Smith's overtime winner.

Backup goaltender Adam Wilcox made 31 saves to earn his fourth win in his 11th game played this season.

Rochester had 30 shots on goal and went 1-for-6 on the power play. The Comets didn't score during three attempts on the man advantage.

Gill is currently second on the team in points with seven goals and 12 assists.

Rochester improved to 3-2-1-1 against Utica this season.

A 10-game point streak by the Amerks was snapped on Friday with a 3-2 loss to the Toronto Marlies.

The Amerks (16-6-3-3) return home on Wednesday to host the Belleville Senators at 7:05 p.m.

They then head to Laval for back-to-back games against the Rocket on Dec. 22 and 23 before heading into the Christmas break.

Marlies end Amerks' 10-game point streak

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

Alex Nylander and Seth Griffith earned points on both Rochester goals, but wasn't enough as Toronto ended the Amerks' 10-game point streak with a 3-2 win Friday night.

Toronto's Kerby Rychel would open the scoring five minutes in, receiving a feed from Ben Smith in front of the net, putting a one-timer behind Rochester goaltender Linus Ullmark.

Brendan Guhle scored the first Amerks goal almost halfway through the second period, tying the game up. Guhle received a pass from Griffith, taking a wrist shot from the left faceoff circle putting it past Calvin Pickard's glove hand.

Nylander would score two minutes later, giving the Amerks the lead. The first-round draft pick from the 2016 draft, pounded home his own rebound after taking a wrist shot also from the left faceoff circle.

Miro Aaltonen would tie the game up, netting his fourth goal of the year with just 27 seconds left in the second period. The Marlies dumped the puck into their offensive zone with Rychel finding Aaltonen open on the left faceoff circle, blowing a snapshot through Ullmark's legs.

Smith would earn his third point of the night, scoring the game-winning goal for the Marlies off a cross-ice pass from Jeremy Bracco. Rychel also scored his third point of the night on the goal.

Pickard, acquired by the Maple Leafs in October from the Vegas Golden Knights, stopped 32 shots. Ullmark made 21 saves for the Amerks (15-6-3-3).

Rochester came into their game with the league's top team on a 10-game point streak, also having won four of their last five contests.

Friday's game marked the first of eight regular season meetings between the Amerks and Marlies. The teams will play again on Dec. 29.

The Amerks play Utica (11-11-3-1) tonight at the Adirondack Bank Center at 7 p.m. Meanwhile, the top two teams in the league will convene in Toronto as the Marlies (21-5-0-0) will host Manitoba (19-5-1-2) at 4 p.m.

Amerks rally, beat Utica in OT

C&C WorldWide

By: Staff Report

Rochester Americans rookie C.J. Smith was involved on all 3 goals as the Amerks overcame a 2-0 deficit to beat the Utica Comets, 3-2, in overtime Saturday night before at the Adirondack Bank Center.

Trailing 2-0 midway through the third period, rookie Sahir Gill tallied his seventh goal of the season on a power play to get the Amerks on the scoreboard. Smith and Stuart Percy assisted on the play.

About 4 minutes later, Nick Baptiste tied the game off assists from Smith, his 20th, and Kyle Criscuolo.

Smith needed just 17 seconds of overtime to score the game-winner as Criscuolo and Brendan Guhle help set up the goal.

Rochester netminder Adam Wilcox earned the win as he made 31 saves.

The Amerks win, combined with the Toronto Marlies loss Saturday, moved Rochester back to within 4 points of the North Division leaders.

The Amerks next game is Wednesday at the Blue Cross Arena against the Belleville Senators at 7:05 pm. It is Rochester's final home game before Christmas.

Marlies end Amerks 10-game point streak

C&C World Wide

By: Craig Potter

The Rochester Americans saw their 10-game point streak come to an end Friday night before 4,731 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

The North Division leading Toronto Marlies scored late in the third period to pull out a 3-2 victory over the Amerks.

“I thought we played really well,” said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. “We had a lot of chances against a really good team. It was a really good game and a good fight but unfortunately they got a late goal in the third and it was the difference-maker.”

The Marlies broke on top first 5:06 into the first period against Rochester goalie Linus Ullmark.

The Amerks had two excellent scoring opportunities in the period when Steve Moses stole the puck inside the Toronto blue line, but goalie Calvin Pickard stopped his shot. Rookie C.J. Smith missed putting the puck home with an open right side of the cage in the final minute of the stanza.

Rochester scored twice in less than 3 minutes to take the lead in the second stanza. Defenseman Brendan Guhle blasted a shot from the blue line, off a pass from Seth Griffith, to tie the game.

Alex Nylander tallied his second goal of the season, on a rebound off a Griffith’s shot, to put the Amerks in front, 2-1.

Rochester racked up 19 shots in the period as Toronto managed just 9. However, the Marlies knotted the contest in the final minute of play.

“We were playing fast, getting pucks in deep and getting shots during the second period and were not turning the puck over and we did that for majority of the period,” said Guhle.

Ben Smith, who leads the Marlies in goals with 11, netted the game-winner with 6:31 to play.

Guhle led Rochester with 7 shots as fellow defenseman Zach Redmond fired 6 shots.

“It was a great game,” said Guhle. “I think we out-chanced and out-shot them, but in the end of they got the better of us scoring late in the game.”

Ullmark finished with 21 saves, including 2 breakaways, as Pickard ended the night with 32 saves.

“We’ve showed time and time again that we’re a team to be reckoned with this season,” Ullmark said. “We just hope we can keep the run going until post-season and through the post-season, too.”

Justin Bailey played his first game since Nov. 18, due to an injury.

“Justin did okay,” Taylor said. “It’s tough for him to come back but I thought he played okay...It’s coming. It’s his first game. Hopefully he’ll do a little bit better tomorrow.”

With the victory, Toronto (21-5-0-0) increased its lead over Rochester (15-6-3-3) to 6 points, 42-36, in the North Division.

The Amerks travel to Utica Saturday for a 7 pm faceoff against the Comets.

The FF will not return to the BCA until Wednesday, Dec. 20 versus the Belleville Senators.

*NOTES – Justin Bailey, a Williamsville native, was on a line with Sean Malone, who is a Buffalo native. Bailey last year played on a line with Cole Schneider, who also is from Williamsville...Former Amerk Jean Dupuy made his first appearance in the BCA with the Marlies after playing for Rochester the past two seasons...Amerks Seth Griffith and Start Percy were facing their former club (Toronto) for the first time this season as well...Amerks assistant coach Gord Dineen spent the last 8 seasons on the Marlies coaching staff, helping them to six 40-win seasons and 4 division titles.

Smith's goal completes Amerks comeback, 3-2 over Utica in overtime

13 Wham

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans (16-6-3-3) trailed 2-0 late in the third period Saturday night against Utica Comets (11-11-4-1) at the Adirondack Bank Center. However, the Amerks scored a pair of goals to force overtime before rookie C.J. Smith completed the come-from-behind win just 17 seconds into the extra frame to lift Rochester to a 3-2 win.

With the overtime victory, Rochester has notched points in 17 of its last 19 games and 30 points since Nov. 1 while improving to 8-1-3-2 in 14 games away from The Blue Cross Arena on the season. The Amerks remain the only AHL team on the campaign with one regulation loss on the road this season.

Ads by ZINC

After being held off the scoresheet last night, Smith led the Amerks with his team-leading 10th goal of the season and a pair of assists. The rookie is ranked third overall in the AHL with 30 points through 28 games and became the first Rochester skater this season to reach double digits in goals. Kyle Criscuolo also had two assists while Sahir Gill, who scored his career-high seventh goal of the season, and Nick Baptiste rounded out the scoring. Goaltender Adam Wilcox made 31 saves to earn his second straight win and third in his last four appearances dating back to Nov. 25.

Michael Carcone and Cole Cassels each notched their first multi-point outings of the season as they each recorded a goal and an assist while netminder Richard Bachman stopped 27 of 30 but took the loss in overtime.

Trailing 2-0 with under eight minutes left in regulation, the Amerks drew their sixth power-play of the night as the Comets were called for a slashing penalty.

Utica held Rochester without a shot during the first minute of the infraction, but with 59 seconds remaining on the penalty, Smith centered a pass to Gill from the left of the Comets cage. As he was parked in front of the blue paint, Gill converted on the man-advantage to make it a 2-1 game with 6:33 to play in regulation.

Rochester continued to ride its own momentum and was rewarded less than four minutes after Gill's seventh goal of the season. Similar to Gill's goal, Baptiste flicked in a loose puck past the blocker of Bachman to knot the game at 2-2 with 2:52 left to set up the overtime period.

On the opening shift of overtime, Smith received a long stretch pass from Criscuolo at center ice and snuck behind the pinching Comets defenseman. The rookie raced in towards Bachman from just beyond Utica's blueline all alone and slipped a backhanded shot between the leg and the left post of the goaltender to give the Amerks a 3-2 overtime-win.

The Amerks had erased a 2-0 Comets lead as Utica scored the first two goals of the game with Carcone's fourth goal of the season at the 7:16 mark of the middle frame and Cassels' first marker of the season 4:51 into the third period.

Rochester returns home on Wednesday, Dec. 20 when the Belleville Senators make their inaugural visit to The Blue Cross Arena. Following the 7:05 p.m. contest with the Senators, the Amerks will travel north of the border for back-to-back meetings with the Laval Rocket prior to heading into the Christmas break. All the action can be heard live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester.

Comets' third-period lead slips away in OT loss

Observer-Dispatch

By: Ben Birnell

The Utica Comets were headed to their best performance at home this season.

That effort was halted in mere minutes late Saturday night against the North Division rival Rochester Americans when the Comets surrendered another two-goal third-period lead.

The Amerks rallied with three goals over the final seven minutes of game time and edged the Comets 3-2 in overtime in an exciting and evenly matched contest at the Adirondack Bank Center at Utica Memorial Auditorium.

Standout rookie C.J. Smith ended the game 17 seconds into overtime after his breakaway attempt was initially stopped by Richard Bachman, but the goaltender's momentum helped carry the puck in for Smith's 10th of the season to give the second-place Amerks (16-6-3-3, 38 points) at least a point in 17 of their last 19 games. The Amerks won Wednesday's meeting 3-1 in Rochester.

"It is really tough. Any time you lose a lead like that in the last 10 minutes, it stings," Comets captain Carter Bancks said. "I thought we did a lot of good things tonight."

Rochester forced overtime with two goals in the final 6:33 after the Comets led 2-0 early in the third period. Rochester got it started with a power-play goal after Sahir Gill stuffed the puck in on the team's 26th shot of the game. Then, with 2:52 remaining Nicholas Baptiste cleaned up an odd-angle shot by Smith to force overtime. Adam Wilcox, who had several big stops throughout, finished with 31 saves for the Amerks, who are 9-1-3-2 on the road this season.

"I thought we played really good for 50 minutes tonight. I didn't think we were that terrible through the last 10. A couple funny bounces and it was the in the back our net," Bancks said. "We've got to find a way to win those games."

Comets coach Trent Cull said he thought there could have been more consistency on penalties called in the game. The Comets finished 5-of-6 on the penalty kill, while going 0-for-3 on the power play.

Up next

"It's frustrating. I thought we played a good game. Our guys played hard," said Cull, whose team also surrendered a pair of third-period leads last weekend in Providence. "I was disappointed with the consistency ... of some of the calls."

The result spoiled what was nearly two points for the Comets (11-11-4-1, 27 points), who are in fourth place in the North. Cole Cassels and Michael Carcone each had a goal and an assist for the Comets, who are winless in five of their last six games and have yet to win back-to-back games at home this season. Bachman took the tough loss, finishing with 27 stops in his third start in the last six games.

“I like where our game is going right now,” Bancks said. “I think you’re starting to see consistency in the way we play throughout our whole lineup. Everyone is playing hard. ... Moving forward, a lot of good things are happening for us right now.”

Both Bachman and Wilcox were sharp in an even first period when the Comets’ had an 11-9 advantage in shots.

Some of the best scoring opportunities happened a few minutes apart. First, Jalen Chatfield’s shot from the blue line through traffic was handled by Wilcox with about 11 minutes left. Then, Reid Boucher broke into the Amerks’ zone with a nifty move between two Amerks defenders, but was also denied by Wilcox.

The Amerks’ best chance in the first came on a funky bounce. After Bachman played the puck behind the net, it trickled out to the slot. That’s where Sean Malone had a wide-open look, but Cam Darcy got his stick in the way to keep it scoreless.

Utica broke through near the middle of the second period after extended pressure in the Amerks’ zone and some nice work from linemates Carcone, Cassels and Griffen Molino. Carcone made it 1-0 with nice hustle play after he skated down low, switched from his backhand to forehand as he cut in front and popped the puck over Wilcox for his fourth goal of the season. Cassels’ assist extended his point-streak to three games.

Bachman and Wilcox each made timely saves later in the period. That included Wilcox stopping back-to-back chances by Darcy and Woods with about four minutes remaining.

The Comets extended their lead to 2-0 less than five minutes into the third period and appeared to be in control. The Comets broke into the zone on a 2-on-1 and Molino sent a nice feed to Cassels, whose high shot into the net needed review to make sure it went in. Carcone also assisted on Cassels’ first of the season.

The Comets’ lead remained intact until the Amerks found some momentum and rallied.

“It’s hockey,” Cull said. “Our guys played really well. ... It’s a winnable game. Unfortunately, we didn’t win and (get) the consistency we needed. That’s how it goes sometimes.”

Marlies beat Americans, extend win streak to five

TSN

By: Staff Report

Ben Smith set up two goals, then scored the go-ahead marker at 13:29 of the third period as the Toronto Marlies beat the Rochester Americans 3-2 on Friday in American Hockey League action.

Kerby Rychel matched Smith with a goal and two helpers while Miro Aaltonen rounded out the offence for the Marlies (21-5-0), who won their fifth straight game.

Brendan Guhle and Alex Nylander found the back of the net for the Americans (15-6-6), who lost in regulation for the first time in 11 outings (6-0-4).

Calvin Pickard made 32 saves for the win as Linus Ullmark stopped 21-of-24 shots in a losing cause.

Toronto went 0 for 2 on the power play while Rochester failed to score on three chances with the man advantage.