



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

## DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Wednesday, February 21, 2018*

*Tonight's Game: Syracuse @ Rochester*

## **Sabres Notebook: With team away, the Amerks come to play**

*Buffalo News*

By: Amy Moritz

While the Buffalo Sabres take a break from KeyBank Center with games in Detroit (Thursday) and Washington (Saturday), the Rochester Americans will make their way west on the New York State Thruway.

The Amerks will play the Syracuse Crunch at 7 p.m. Wednesday in KeyBank Center. It's the sixth straight year the Sabres' affiliate will play a game in the downtown Buffalo arena. And the trip has been kind to the Amerks. They have won their last three games in Buffalo with a 4-1-0-0 overall mark.

Additionally, Rochester has held its opponent to two or fewer goals in its last four wins in KeyBank Center.

Other tidbits to know about the Amerks:

They're coming off a three-games-in-three-days set that included a 12-3 win over the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in Blue Cross Arena Friday followed by two losses after regulation – a 1-0 overtime loss at Binghamton on Saturday and a 2-1 shootout loss to Binghamton on Sunday.

Settle in for extra hockey. Probably. Rochester leads the AHL in games decided after regulation with 23. The Amerks are 7-8 in overtime while going 2-6 in shootouts.

The Amerks are getting offense from the defensemen. Zach Redmond leads all Rochester blueliners with 32 points (10 goals, 22 assists) in 45 games, placing him fifth among defensemen in the league. Brendan Guhle is fourth in scoring among AHL rookie defensemen with 24 points (eight goals, 16 assists), with his eight goals ranking third in his class. Stuart Percy has tied career highs with four goals and 25 points.

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Jake McCabe is officially out for the season.

The Buffalo Sabres announced Tuesday afternoon that the defenseman is scheduled to undergo surgery to repair an injured shoulder. The estimated recovery time is four to six months.

"Jake has been progressing well in his recovery from his previous injury, but we decided that this was a good opportunity to take care of a problem that he has been dealing with for a while," Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said in a statement issued by the team. "Jake will have time to fully recover before the beginning of the 2018-19 season."

McCabe had three goals and nine assists in 53 games on the Sabres blue line this season. McCabe had been on the team's injured reserve list with a thumb injury since Feb. 8.

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With two days before their next game, the Buffalo Sabres did not practice on Tuesday, opting instead for a team stretch. They'll be back at practice on Wednesday to prepare for Thursday's game against the Red Wings in Detroit.

But two players did hit the ice. Forward Nick Baptiste took shots at goaltender Robin Lehner, who was back on the ice after not dressing for Monday's 3-2 loss to the Washington Capitals.

Lehner said he feels better and expects to be fully back for Wednesday's practice.

"I pulled my one hip earlier in the season," Lehner said, adding that he had an injection in his hip last week. "Been a little bit back and forth. Pulled it again against Colorado (in a 5-4 loss on Feb. 11). Just kept going through it."

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Lehner remains part of trade rumors with the approaching NHL trade deadline. Teams must have deals completed by 3 p.m. on Feb. 26.

"You follow it a little bit," Lehner said. "We play in a pretty great league. Whether I stay here or go someplace else, it's what it is but I'm definitely not looking at that. I feel like I'm putting in work and doing my best. We'll see what the future holds."

For his part, Lehner hopes his future remains in Buffalo.

"I think when we're clicking and we're all playing the way we can, I think it looks good," Lehner said. "We've just all got to be on the same page and get that consistency. I don't give up. I have full trust in the guys and I don't like to give up. I don't like to bail out."

Still, rumors are difficult to avoid and make players nervous.

"Rumors are flying around and it's tough to avoid them," Sabres forward Ryan O'Reilly said. "It's just part of our game.

"When we're having a season like we are, it's frustrating," O'Reilly said. "You don't know what's going to happen. It's a tough thing in the game of hockey. We'll take it one day at a time and just focus on our next day. We don't know what's going to happen but whatever is going on we have to stick together and get through it."

## **Inconsistency defines Nylander and the Amerks**

### ***Pickin' Splinters***

By: Kevin Oklobzija

Around 10 p.m. on Friday night, following a 12-3 shellacking of the best team in the AHL's Eastern Conference, the Rochester Americans could not have possibly been feeling better about themselves.

On Sunday evening, following a second consecutive past-regulation loss to the worst team in the conference, the Amerks were in a state of team depression.

"We know it's not good enough," defenseman Nathan Paetsch said after Sunday's 2-1 shootout loss to the Binghamton Devils.

From domination of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins to back-to-back losses to Binghamton in less than 48 hours. A Binghamton team that, heading into Saturday, had won just 13 of 51 games.

From comfortably in second place to soon to be in fourth place if they're not careful. A loss to the Syracuse Crunch on Wednesday night at the KeyBank Center in Buffalo and the Amerks (26-13-8-6, 66 points) will have fallen a month behind the Toronto Marlies, and points and/or percentage points behind the Utica Comets and Crunch.

"I'm not happy about how we're playing," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor, whose club has won just three of the past 15 games. "We have to be tougher, grittier, win our 50/50 battles, care more about each other."

Those are things Taylor never had to mention through Dec. 29, when the Amerks were 20-7-3-3 following a 2-0 victory at Toronto.

But since then they're not even an average team (winning just six of 19), which is why they've been tracked down in the standings by Utica and Syracuse.

A great deal of the problems start with how they're playing as a team. They could have used four fourth lines on Sunday and probably won, because as center Kyle Criscuolo pointed out, the line of Dalton Smith, Justin Danforth and Arvin Atwal probably did more things right than the other three lines combined.

Criscuolo's 15th goal gave the Amerks the lead at 8:50 of the second period but Jake Walman tied it with a rocket slap shot just two minutes later. Walman was then the shootout hero, scoring the only goal in the three-round skills competition.

Taylor had hoped Friday night would be a jump-start to consistent productivity for second-year winger Alex Nylander. The Sabres first-round pick in 2016, he has been far from effective again this year.

But against the Penguins he scored two goals and set up two others. Sure, pretty much everybody enjoyed an offensive feast on Friday. But Nylander did a lot of good things; he was on the wall, not reaching; he battled for the puck, he didn't do the fly-by; he went to the net and got inside position, he didn't zip through and escape to safety.

But Saturday and Sunday? Where'd he go? Which is why, through 31 games, he has just 4 goals and 9 assists. He had just one shot on goal Saturday at Binghamton. He didn't have a shot on Sunday, even as the Amerks' third shooter in the shootout.

"I'm not sure if he poke-checked it or if I lost control," Nylander said.

Regardless, he had a chance to be a hero and instead left with nothing.

"He has to get hungrier," Taylor said. "If you don't shine in this league, where else are you going to?"

## **Amerks score goal, earn point but lose again to Binghamton**

*C&C WorldWide*

By: Craig Potter

The Rochester Americans were frustrated at not getting all 6 points this weekend as they stumbled for the second straight night in extra time to the Binghamton Devils.

“I thought we played okay in the first period,” said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. “Just because Binghamton is where they are in the standings, does not necessarily mean a win. They’re a good team who has lost a lot of games by one goal, but I am disappointed with the outcome. We cannot be happy with just earning one point, and after Friday night’s game, I think we thought it was going to be an easier weekend, but every team plays hard.”

The Amerks did manage to score Sunday afternoon, by Kyle Criscuolo in the second period, but missed a chance to win the game in overtime when Criscuolo failed to connect on a penalty shot.

“I knew the ice wasn’t great,” said Criscuolo. “I wanted to try to make a move, but I was a little hesitant. I have to be able to control the puck better and find a way to score there.

“Getting the extra point in against teams in the Division is crucial for us as the season moves along.”

The Amerks were unable to score in the shootout as well.

“We know it’s not good enough,” said veteran defenseman Nathan Paetsch.

From dominating the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins (12-3 Friday night) to back-to-back losses to Binghamton in less than 48 hours was unacceptable for Amerks coach Chris Taylor.

“I’m not happy about how we’re playing,” said Taylor. The team has won just three time in the past 15 games. “We have to be tougher, grittier, win our 50/50 battles, care more about each other.”

One player who epitomizes the team’s struggles is second-year winger Alex Nylander. The Sabres first-round pick in 2016. Taylor had hoped Friday night (2 goals, 2 assists) would jump-start to a consistent production level. However, Nylander has been far from effective again this season with just 4 goals and 9 assists in 31 games.

He did a lot of good things against the Penguins, but Saturday he had just one shot on goal and Sunday he didn’t have a shot, even as the Amerks’ third shooter in the shootout.

“I’m not sure if he poke-checked it or if I lost control,” said Nylander.

Regardless, Nylander had a chance to be the hero, but left empty-handed instead.

“He has to get hungrier,” Taylor said. “If you don’t shine in this league, where else are you going to?”

\*NOTES – Amerks forward Colin Blackwell was suspended 2 games by the AHL for his check Friday night in the game against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. He missed today's game and will sit out Wednesday's game vs. Syracuse...The Amerks will journey on the Thruway Wednesday to the KeyBank Center in downtown Buffalo to take on the Crunch in a 7:05 pm start...The Amerks remain as one of the top AHL teams on the road this season with a 14-4-8-3 record in 29 games. Their 4 regulations losses are tied for the fewest in the league....Forwards Kevin Porter and Sean Malone each recorded a team-high 3 shots on goal for Rochester while goalie Adam Wilcox made his 20th start, allowing just 1 goal for his second straight appearance. The third-year netminder boasts an 8-4-6 record on the season but is winless in his last 3 starts.

## **Amerks earn another point, but fall to Devils 2-1 in a shootout**

*13Wham*

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans (26-13-8-6) extended their point streak against the Binghamton Devils (15-27-6-3) to six games Sunday afternoon as the North Division rivals met for the second time in as many days. The 2-1 shootout loss completed the back-end of a home-and-home series at The Blue Cross Arena and also concluded a three-in-three during which the Amerks took four of a possible six points.

Despite the shootout loss, the Amerks have collected at least one point in 36 of their last 45 games dating back to Nov. 1, including 14 of their last 18 games since the turn of the New Year. Additionally, the contest was the 10th game since Jan. 1 and league-most 23rd of the campaign game that went beyond regulation time.

Second-year forward Kyle Criscuolo scored his team-best 15th goal of the season and 10th point (5+5) in the last nine contests. Goaltender Linus Ullmark stopped 29 of 30 shots on the day, including two of three in the shootout, but took the overtime loss in the blue paint for Rochester.

In his third game with the Devils since being reassigned by the St. Louis Blues, defenseman Jake Walman scored his third goal of the season while being the only player to find the back of the net in the skills competition. Netminder Ken Appleby, who made his second straight start in as many games, made 22 saves, including all three in the shootout to earn the victory. On the season, Appleby shows an 8-10-2 record in 21 games, which also includes a 19-save shutout over the Amerks on Saturday.

After the Devils tied the game at 1-1 just past the midway point of the second period, the two teams traded chances for the remainder of the contest to setup the overtime period.

Criscuolo nearly sealed the win 12 seconds into the extra frame as he drew a penalty shot, but his attempt hit the outside of the cage, forcing a continuation of the session.

“I knew the ice wasn’t great,” said Criscuolo when discussing his penalty shot. “I wanted to try to make a move, but I was a little hesitant. I have to be able to control the puck better and find a way to score there. Getting the extra point in against teams in the Division is crucial for us as the season moves along.”

Both Ullmark and Appleby stood tall during the remainder of the period, forcing the shootout.

Rochester elected to shoot first during the skills event but Seth Griffith, Kevin Porter and Alexander Nylander’s attempts were turned aside by Appleby while Ullmark stopped Christoph Bertschy and Mario Lucia. Walman sealed Binghamton’s first-ever shootout win against the Amerks as he slipped at shot past the blocker of the Swedish netminder.

“I thought we played okay in the first period,” said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. “Just because Binghamton is where they are in the standings, does not necessarily mean a win. They’re a good

team who has lost a lot of games by one goal, but I am disappointed with the outcome. We cannot be happy with just earning one point, and after Friday night's game, I think we thought it was going to be an easier weekend, but every team plays hard.”

The Amerks and Devils combined for 19 shots and 16 penalty minutes during the first period but entered the break scoreless.

Criscuolo tallied the contest's first goal at the 8:50 mark of the second stanza as he redirected a Taylor Fedun shot from the right point. The tally was Criscuolo's team-leading 15th of the season and assisted by Fedun and Nathan Paetsch.

Binghamton, however, answered right back as Walman rifled a one-time set-up from Michael Kapla atop the zone to knot the score at 1-1 exactly two minutes following Criscuolo's marker.

The score remained unchanged until Walman beat Ullmark in the final-round of the shootout.

For the sixth straight year, the Amerks make the trek down the New York State Thruway to play in the home of the Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday, Feb. 21 when they host the intrastate rival Syracuse Crunch in a North Division showdown at the KeyBank Center in downtown Buffalo. The 7:05 p.m. contest will be the sixth of 10 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season and will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester.

## **Binghamton Devils Win Again Behind Jake Walman & Ken Appleby**

### *All About The Jersey*

By: Jeff Ullmer

For the second time in less than 24 hours the Devils and Amerks went past regulation to decide which team would earn a W along with the extra point and Binghamton came up on top once again, this time in a shootout. Rookie Defenseman Jake Walman scored both goals in his first game back from injury in the Devils 2-1 victory over Rochester (26-13-8-6) on Sunday afternoon at the Blue Cross Arena.

Binghamton (15-27-6-3) received another strong performance from netminder Ken Appleby after his shutout performance on Saturday and earned the #1 Star of the Game with his 22 saves, including a rare penalty shot 00:12 into the overtime period by forward Kyle Criscuolo, as he was tripped up but his sliding leg save kept the action going.

Walman, who is here on loan from St. Louis and missed his previous five games, scored the lone goal for the BDevils midway through the middle frame with a monster of a one-timer past Rochester goaltender Linus Ullmark low, glove side that tied it at 1-1 for his third of the season and first as a BDevil.

He also was the only scorer in the SO as the crafty left-hander beat Ullmark high, short side that gave Binghamton it's second straight win both coming at the hands of the Amerks.

Criscuolo grabbed the lead at 8:50 in the second on his re-direct that trickled past Appleby, but it was short lived as Walman tied it two minutes later. That would end the scoring until the shootout as the Amerks and BDevils both finished up their three-in-three weekend.

Devils offense managed just 4 goals over the weekend and 8 in the last 6 games as the team ranks dead last in the AHL with a 2.34 average.

Bingo went 0/5 on the power play as the scoreless streak has now hit 6 games.

For the second game in a row Devils outshot Rochester, this time 31-23.

Christoph Bertschy, Mario Lucia and Walman were the shooters for Binghamton, Seth Griffith, Kevin Porter and Alexander Nylander for the Americans.

A fight broke out at center ice along the boards in the early part of the first period between Brandon Baddock and Dalton Smith as both were swinging wildly and missing.

## **Another Sabres' season slip-slides away, but there's hope, right?**

*Democrat & Chronicle*

By: Leo Roth

As the Buffalo Sabres got set to take on the Washington Capitals in a Presidents' Day matinee at KeyBank Center, the rallying cry was sobering.

“Let's go 23-0. Let's go 23-0.”

History tells us that a National Hockey League team needs at least 90 points to be in the playoff conversation come April.

I'm no MIT mathematician, but with 45 points and 23 games left and the fact teams earn two points for a win ...

It's obvious the Sabres have skated themselves into quite a corner. Like having their backs against the boards and a Zamboni being driven by a teenager texting on his cellphone is bearing down.

Buffalo missing the NHL playoffs for a seventh consecutive season is now as certain as heartburn after consuming a dozen hot wings from Anchor Bar washed down with a pitcher of beer.

Coach Phil Housley is looking like he's aged 20 years, general manager Jason Botterill is prepping for next Monday's trade deadline like a law school graduate facing his bar exam, and owner Terry Pegula — who fired four other coaches to get to Housley — is simply asking where is the nearest bar.

At 17-31-11 entering Monday, the Sabres were on pace to not even being as good as their last two versions, 81- and 78-point products that offered hope after the epic last-place collapses of 2013-14 and 2014-15 that delivered to the shores of Lake Erie two No. 2 overall draft picks.

Sam Reinhart and Jack Eichel haven't turned the franchise around. But then, “saviors” aren't what they used to be unless they're named Connor McDavid.

Curse those pingpong balls.

Even with an active off-season by Botterill, expectations for the Sabres were tempered by concerns over scoring (even with a healthy Eichel), depth when the inevitable injuries hit, goaltending and a defense that was better but not Top Five caliber.

But this?

Housley's bunch began the year 0-5 and later endured a seven-game losing streak. There was a stretch where the Sabres lost 25 out of 31 games.

Before the puck dropped Monday, they were 29 points behind Pittsburgh in the Eastern Conference, had scored a league-low 141 goals and their goal differential was negative 54.

Seventeen times Buffalo had scored one goal or no goals. An especially low point was being shut out three games in a row by Montreal, Tampa Bay and Pittsburgh in late November. The Sabres were 2-10 in overtime.

Hard as it is to believe for Blue and Gold Nation, it's one of those seasons again where just when you thought it couldn't get worse, it gets worse.

Eichel's high-ankle sprain? Really?

It's so bad, Housley goes to work making sure he doesn't step on a sidewalk crack, not that it's helping.

As the trade deadline nears, the hockey gods have ordained Botterill's to-do list: Move high-scoring, high-maintenance, unrestricted-free-agent-to-be winger Evander Kane for a batch of assets, perhaps even a first-round pick; make it clear no Sabre is untouchable other than Eichel and Housley's family pets; tidy up the salary cap for future moves; and keep looking out for Rochester.

When it's said and done and the golf clubs are coming out of storage, the 2017-18 season will be remembered for Botterill making good on his promise of making the organization's farm soil fertile again.

The Amerks, who last won a playoff game 13 years ago and who have missed the post-season three years running, can once again skate and chew gum at the same time.

Amerks goalie Linus Ullmark is among Sabres' prospects learning and playing well in a winning atmosphere in Rochester again. (Photo: JAMIE GERMANO, @jgermano1/Staff Photographer)

With 66 points, the Amerks (26-13-8-6) have the AHL's fifth-best record thanks to Botterill, assistant Randy Sexton and coach Chris Taylor re-establishing that time-honored formula for success, surrounding prospects with veterans with talent and a willingness to give back to the next generation.

In Buffalo, players still talk about "something missing" and "not being ready to play."

But in Rochester, players don't hope to win, they expect to, as evidenced by the Amerks playing a league-high 23 overtime games and clawing out an extra 16 points. They have picked up at least one point in 36 of their last 45 games dating to Nov. 1.

That's a team with character. That's how you build a winning culture that can be carried down the Thruway. To the rallying cry sports fans in western New York know so well: "Wait until next year."

## **Amerks, Ullmark suffering through midseason hiccup**

*Buffalo News*

By: John Vogl

The way Linus Ullmark sees it, it's better to have the slump now. If a team has wire-to-wire success, it's just setting itself up for failure in the playoffs. Every team needs a regular-season hiccup.

The Rochester Americans are having theirs.

The Amerks have won just three of their last 15 games, falling to 25-13-14 after holding a 23-8-7 record Jan. 12. Rochester is still comfortably in an American Hockey League playoff spot, but it is definitely having a hiccup.

"You could say that," Ullmark said Monday before serving as the Buffalo Sabres' backup against Washington. "If you go through a full season with just winning games, you're maybe not saving it for the playoffs. Hopefully, we can turn the board around and get rolling."

Injuries and call-ups have hurt the Amerks. Leading scorer C.J. Smith is out for at least a month, joining defenseman Barry Goers and forward Garret Ross on the sidelines. Defenseman Brendan Guhle returned recently. Forward Nick Baptiste and blue-liner Casey Nelson are in Buffalo.

"It's injuries to key players that really pulled our team to a good position," Ullmark said in KeyBank Center. "It's not just on the ice. It's off the ice, too, and on the bench."

The slump has hit Ullmark in the numbers and coincides with his highlight of the year. He stopped 44 of 45 shots in his only start for the Sabres on Jan. 11, earning First Star in a 3-1 victory over Columbus. He went back down as the Sabres took their bye week.

Since returning to the Amerks, he's gone 1-4-5 with a .915 save percentage. He's 18-9-8 with a .924 save percentage in 36 appearances overall.

He says there wasn't a letdown in returning to Rochester.

"There's a bye week. There's nothing to say about that," Ullmark said. "We had games in the minors, so I was happy to go down there. Unfortunately, I didn't really win those games that I wanted to win, but I think my game will turn around, too, with the team now."

"I can't be frustrated for not having the chance to play here. Every time I get the call-up, I'm very fortunate and very happy about it."

Buffalo summoned Ullmark because Robin Lehner is day to day with a lower-body injury. He complained he couldn't move his leg following the morning skate Tuesday against Tampa Bay. He never missed a game or practice until skipping Sunday's optional workout.

"It's just one of those things that's built up, and he's just taking a day off," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It's just a day-to-day thing, but we thought it was important he should rest."

## **Amerks lose on Devils' shootout goal**

*Buffalo News*

By: Amy Mortiz

Jake Walman, the third Binghamton shooter, scored in the shootout to give the Devils a 2-1 victory over the Rochester Americans Sunday afternoon at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

Walman beat Amerks goalie Linus Ullmark to give the Devils a sweep of their two weekend games against Rochester. Binghamton won, 1-0, in overtime on Saturday on its home ice.

Each team scored a regulation goal in the second period. Kyle Criscuolo's 15<sup>th</sup> of the season with assists by Taylor Fedun and Nathan Paetsch, put Rochester in front at 8:50. Walman tied it with his third of the season at 10:50 with Michael Kapla and Ben Thomson assisting.

Binghamton goalie Ken Appleby, who made 22 saves and stopped Rochester shootout attempts by Seth Griffin, Kevin Porter and Alexander Nylander was named the game's first star. Ullmark was the No. 2 star. Criscuolo was the third star.

It was the league-leading 23 overtime or shootout game for Rochester this season. It was the sixth shootout loss for the Amerks who are 26-13-8-6 overall. It was the 36th time in the last 45 games that Rochester has collected at least one point in a game.