



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Friday, February 23, 2018

Tonight's Game: Toronto @ Rochester

The wraparound: Syracuse 2, Amerks 1

Buffalo News

By: Amy Moritz

A fast start turned into a sluggish loss for the Rochester Americans.

Playing in the home of their parent club, the Buffalo Sabres, the Amerks scored the first goal of the game — a shorthanded tally from West Seneca native Sean Malone at that. But the Amerks failed to generate much after that as the Syracuse Crunch controlled the pace of play and puck possession for much of the game in a 2-1 win in KeyBank Center Wednesday night.

The Amerks had nice looks on three power plays in the third period, but couldn't find a way to tie the game.

It was the sixth straight season the Amerks have played a home game in Buffalo. They are now 4-2-0-0 in Buffalo.

Hometown shortie: Malone tallied his first career shorthanded goal. He worked a two-on-one with Eric Cornel, took the shot and beat Syracuse goalie Connor Ingram. It gave the Amerks a 1-0 lead just 5:01 into the game. Taylor Fedun picked up the secondary assist.

A bad second period start: Syracuse scored twice in a 10-second span to take a 2-1 lead early in the second period. Mitchell Stephens scored just 1:26 into the period while Matthew Peca scored at 1:36. It was an overall sluggish period for the Amerks as the Crunch held a 14-3 advantage in shots.

The deal with Justin Bailey: The Buffalo native scored twice in the Amerks season opener, but hasn't tallied since. Part of that time included a stint with the Sabres and part of that included missing 20 games with the Amerks with an ankle injury he suffered back on Nov. 2.

Rochester coach Chris Taylor said he does not feel Bailey has his confidence right now.

"The biggest thing for me is that he's just got to go out there and play. Stop the thinking," Taylor said. "Continue the process of what you need to do. The process for him is first and foremost, his forechecking and skating. It's a weapon so let's use it. He's got to take pucks wide and he's got to drive pucks to the net. I believe that he hasn't been doing that. I don't know if he's been tentative with his ankle because of his injury or not but we've got to push him through that to get better and get in those areas where you're going to score goals. Once he does that, he's a great player. I'm not worried about him. We're still pushing him though."

The deal with Alexander Nylander: Another Sabres prospect without fancy numbers, Nylander has four goals and 13 points in 31 games. He had another impressive performance with Sweden in the World Juniors, winning silver, which Taylor thinks was good for the 19-year-old. And remember, Taylor said, that Nylander had a lower body injury in the summer that kept him off the ice for a good three months.

"We always forget how young he is. And he went through a major injury this year, too," Taylor said. "He's young. He's learning how to play hard every night, every shift. You can't take five seconds off and he's learning that. And I'm demanding because I know he has a lot more and I want more from him and I think that will bring the best out of him, too. I think we can't lay off him. I think he's the type of guy who can be a game changer and that's what we want out of him. We don't want him just to fit into our team. We want him to be a game-changer on our team."

Counting the house: There were about 3,000 fans in KeyBank Center Wednesday night.

And while being able to play in any facility is the goal of both player and coach, there indeed is something special for the Amerks about the opportunity to play in their parent-club's NHL arena.

"It's great because it's different fans first and foremost," Taylor said before the game. "These fans, they're passionate about all the prospects coming up to Buffalo and they want to see how well they're doing and what they're doing. They can read about it but to actually see them live in their building, it's great. For our guys to see how the fans are passionate about them is great, too."

Scratches: The Amerks scratched forwards Adam Krause, Garrett Ross and Colin Blackwell and defensemen Nathan Paetsch, Arvin Atwal and Barry Goers. Syracuse scratched forward and former Canisius College standout Shane Conacher along with Kevin Lynch, Matthew Spencer, Alex Gallant and Oliver Archambault.

Up next: The Amerks have a home-and-home with the Toronto Marlies. They play in BlueCross Arena at 7:05 p.m. Friday night, then play in Toronto at 4 p.m. on Saturday.

For Amerks, life in Rochester is about learning, finding game

Buffalo News

By: Amy Moritz

It wasn't so much the goal that Sean Malone scored that impressed Rochester Americans coach Chris Taylor.

It was the faceoff he took at the end of the game. With less than 30 seconds to play and the Amerks trailing by a goal, the rookie Malone was sent out to take the faceoff in the offensive zone. He won it and gave his team another scoring chance.

Rochester didn't cash in the opportunity, however, falling to the Syracuse Crunch, 2-1, in their annual game in KeyBank Center Wednesday night.

But so much of life in the American Hockey League is about learning, about putting players in difficult situations to see how they respond.

And lately, Malone has been finding his game. Case in point, that late-game faceoff.

"To me, that's growth," Taylor said. "For him to go out there and he was nervous, he was kind of surprised. That's what we want from our young guys. We put them in situations they're maybe not comfortable with but that they can do. It was good for him to see that. He has been playing well and has been rewarded with some ice time."

Malone, a West Seneca native who played four years at Harvard, is in his first pro season. The AHL rookie scored the lone goal for the Amerks on Wednesday, cashing in a shorthanded opportunity with the help of Eric Cornel at 5:01 of the first period. It was his sixth goal of the season.

"I'm a rookie so everything's new to me," Malone said. "I'm about 50 games in now and I'm starting to feel like myself. Individually I feel like I'm doing OK but at the same time I want to contribute as much as I can to help us start winning again."

Winning has been elusive for the Amerks lately. This was their third straight loss and Rochester has struggled to play complete games, close out wins, or get wins in overtime.

On Wednesday, they took the 1-0 lead into the first intermission but then spent the entire second on their heels. Syracuse scored twice in a 10-second span – a goal from Mitchell Stephens at 1:26 and another from Matthew Peca at 1:36. The Crunch dominated the period and outshot the Amerks, 14-3.

"We've got to be willing to chip pucks by and skate and use our legs and we weren't willing to do that in the second period and it showed," Taylor said.

It's the little things, the details that Taylor is trying to teach the prospects in Rochester. Consistency with those things will produce results.

It's a process that requires trust, something that Buffalo native Justin Bailey is learning.

Bailey scored twice in the Amerks season opener, but hasn't tallied since. Part of that time included a stint with the Sabres and part of that included missing 20 games with the Amerks with an ankle injury he suffered on Nov. 2.

He has five points in 22 games for the Amerks, but he is finding ways to work on his game without being constantly concerned with production.

"For me it's been tough with the injury," said Bailey, who had no shots in the game but charged hard at the net late in the first period providing a memorable crash into the goal post. "I thought I played some of my best hockey in the beginning of the season and to get hurt and miss time like that and come back and not have the success that I had in the beginning of the year is tough.

"The message has been it doesn't matter about points," Bailey said. "Just come out here and compete and work on those little things, the details I need to work on. As tough as it is for a guy like me who's used to scoring down in the minors, it's something I just have to trust coach with and trust myself that doing the little things will make me successful and the goals and the points will come."

The points will come particularly if Bailey starts playing to his strengths and stops overthinking the game.

"The biggest thing for me is that he's just got to go out there and play. Stop the thinking," Taylor said. "Continue the process of what you need to do. The process for him is first and foremost, his forechecking and skating. It's a weapon so let's use it. He's got to take pucks wide and he's got to drive pucks to the net. I believe that he hasn't been doing that. ... We've got to push him through that to get better and get in those areas where you're going to score goals. Once he does that, he's a great player. I'm not worried about him. We're still pushing him though."

Amerks fall to the Crunch at KeyBank Center

13 Wham

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans (26-14-8-5) saw their three-game win streak at KeyBank Center come an end as they made their annual trek down the New York State Thruway to play in the home of the Buffalo Sabres. Wednesday night's 2-1 loss to the intrastate rival Syracuse Crunch (31-18-2-3) drops the Amerks to fourth place in the American Hockey League's North Division standings.

Despite the loss, the Amerks have collected at least one point in 14 of their last 19 games since the turn of the New Year and 36 of their last 46 games dating back to Nov. 1.

Rookie Sean Malone tallied his first-career shorthanded goal and sixth of season for the Amerks in the opening frame while goaltender Linus Ullmark stopped 29 of 31 shots he faced in the contest but took the loss. The Swedish netminder shows a record of 18-10-8 in 37 appearances on the campaign.

Forward Carter Verhaeghe chipped in with a pair of helpers to help the Crunch secure the victory and move into third place of the Division, a point ahead of Rochester. First-year center Mitchell Stephens bagged his 18th marker of the season as Matthew Peca, who was reassigned to Syracuse earlier in the day from the Tampa Bay Lightning, notched his ninth of the slate. Connor Ingram improved to 14-9-2 on the year as the rookie netminder made 19 saves.

Early in the first period, the Amerks took the game's first penalty of contest but it was Rochester that capitalized on the situation as Malone picked the top corner of Ingram's cage.

"The puck squeezed up the right side," said the Buffalo native when describing his shorthanded tally. "Eric Cornel was able to get a stick on the puck and luckily it fell to mine. We were able to go down on a 2-on-1 and I was able to get the shot off near-side."

Cornel and Taylor Fedun each recorded the assists on the goal at the 5:01 mark of the first period.

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Defenseman Dominik Masin fired a shot from the point towards Ullmark but the rebound made its way to Verhaeghe. With bodies around him, he spotted Stephens to the right of the net and the AHL All-star buried his team-leading 18th goal of the season to knot the score at 1-1.

On the ensuing shift, Syracuse entered the Amerks zone on a 3-on-2 odd-man rush. Former Amerk Mat Bodie drove the center lane before sliding a pass to Verhaeghe to his right. After gathering the puck, Verhaeghe attempted a cross-crease pass to a waiting Peca and the winger made the puck change direction before slipping it into the net to give the Crunch a 2-1 advantage at the 18:24 mark of the stanza.

Syracuse took the lead into the intermission break and outshot Rochester 14-3 during the second period.

“We could not get the puck out and had a lot of turnovers in the neutral zone,” said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. “The second period was tough for us. We have to get back to the basics and we will work on that tomorrow in practice.”

The Amerks tried to even the score during the final frame but Ingram made timely saves despite Rochester drawing three penalties, including a double-minor infraction and having a two-man advantage for the last 27 seconds of regulation. With the 2-1 win, the Crunch have won four straight in the head-to-head series after Rochester claimed the first two contests.

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Sabres' Casey Nelson earning regular duty on blue line

Olean Times Herald

By: Bill Hoppe

Earlier this season, if you had asked Casey Nelson if he could play 20 minutes a night in the NHL, often against the opposition's top line, the Sabres defenseman would've given you a straightforward answer.

"I'd say there's no chance, there's no way," Nelson said Wednesday inside KeyBank Center.

But in tonight's tilt in Detroit, Nelson, 25, will likely play big minutes on the second defense pair, meaning he'll face some of the Red Wings' best players.

Not long ago, Nelson, a free agent from Minnesota State, seemed to be buried in the minors. As injuries ravaged the Sabres' blue line early on, he stayed in the AHL. When they finally recalled him for the first time, he just sat as a healthy scratch.

But tonight will be Nelson's 17th straight appearance. He has skated at least 19 minutes in seven straight games. When Sabres coach Phil Housley recently demoted No. 1 defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, he promoted Nelson to play with Marco Scandella.

"I'm probably playing at the highest level I ever have and as comfortable and as confident as I ever have," Nelson said.

In the dreariest of seasons, Nelson has emerged as the Sabres' biggest surprise and a rare bright spot.

How many youngsters in the last several years have exceeded expectations during a recall, forcing the Sabres to keep them? Nelson might be the only one.

Nelson became the 13th defender to play for the Sabres this season when he debuted Jan. 18. Just getting recalled from the Rochester Americans surprised him.

"It was a good surprise, I had no clue," he said. "Just taking the opportunity and really trying to capitalize on it, because you never know if you get another."

Nelson knows opportunities can vanish. After the Sabres signed him almost two years ago, he compiled four assists in seven late-season games.

"Those last seven games my first year ... I couldn't play this level of hockey that I am now," he said.

Nelson made the big club out of training camp last season, but he only played sparingly before the Sabres sent him down.

In the span of a year, Nelson played three NHL games.

But Nelson embraced his time in the minors – he has played 95 games with the Amerks – and adjusted to pro hockey. By November, he was skating beside top prospect Brendan Guhle.

“They were a force, they were breaking down forechecks, they had a good chemistry,” Housley said. “That’s why he earned his way up here.”

Nelson likes earning everything. He has always flown under the radar and paid his dues. He believes any adversity has made him stronger.

He went undrafted and struggled as a 21-year-old college freshman in 2013-14. But he kept developing, and by 2015, NHL teams wanted to sign him badly.

“There should be bumps in the road,” Nelson said. “Success usually doesn’t come easy, there’s sacrifices you have to make. It’s like a road I’ve had almost on every level here.

“First year, kind of in the trenches and just digging myself and getting better. I think it helps in the end. Each level, you got to have some hard times. To have the ups, you got to have the downs.”

With defensemen Zach Bogosian (hip) and Jake McCabe (shoulder) out for the season, Nelson should stay up the rest of the season.

How has Nelson, a puck-mover with offensive upside, carved out a spot?

“He’s done a terrific job, pretty consistent in his game,” Housley said. “I ... like his stick detail, I like his gap, I like his first pass out of the zone and his angle to get out of the play.

“One of the things that really intrigues me about him is his ability to get shots through to the net, find a lane.”

Amerks coach Chris Taylor said they left Nelson off the power play earlier this season so he could focus on his defense.

“Once we started doing that, he was doing ... a lot of great things on the penalty kill, and then all of a sudden, his offense came from playing good defense,” he said. “He found his confidence.”

Seeing Nelson receive regular NHL duty has been special for Taylor.

“That’s what I strive for as a coach,” he said. “I want guys to be up in the NHL, that’s where they want to be.”

Sabres prospect Justin Bailey struggling to score after ankle injury

Olean Times Herald

By: Bill Hoppe

Chris Taylor knows winger Justin Bailey better than anyone in the Sabres organization.

Before the Americans coach left Rochester for a year, he was an assistant with the AHL club, helping the Williamsville native earn his first NHL recall as a rookie two seasons ago.

Taylor mentored Bailey, 22, watching him develop from a raw prospect into a youngster the Sabres have played 47 times over the last three seasons.

So when Taylor said he's "not worried" about Bailey, who's struggling to recover from an early-season ankle injury, it might be more than some standard coach-speak.

But right now, Bailey is enduring a career-worst slump. He last scored for the Amerks on opening night, a two-goal performance before beginning a 21-game goal drought.

"He's getting his feet underneath him, it's a tough ankle injury," Taylor said prior to Wednesday's 2-1 loss to the Syracuse Crunch inside KeyBank Center. "He just doesn't have his confidence right now."

There have been some bright spots this season. After the Sabres recalled Bailey, he sparked their first win Oct. 15, scoring minutes into his season debut.

"I thought I was playing some of my best hockey in the beginning of the season and to get hurt and miss time like that, and to come back and not have the success I've had in the beginning of the year, is tough," Bailey said.

Thanks to his ankle and a hand injury, Bailey played just twice over a 74-day stretch. Still, he has often dominated the AHL, scoring 43 goals in 122 games over his first two seasons.

"An injury of that nature, you don't think it's much, but it's not fun, for sure," Bailey said of his ankle. "I think it did take a little bit of time to get my confidence back. It's an injury where you kind of just have to play through it at certain points. I'm really starting to feel like myself again."

Bailey showed a glimpse of that late in the first period Wednesday, utilizing his speed outside and cutting to the net to create a scoring chance.

Taylor, of course, wants more of that aggressiveness and for Bailey to simply "go out there and play" and concentrate on the details in his game.

"Stop the thinking, stop everything, don't worry about who's going up or what or how your ankle (is) or injuries and stuff," Taylor said. "Continue the process, do what you need to do, and the process for him, first and foremost, is forechecking and skating. It's a weapon, so let's use it."

“The second thing is he’s got to take pucks wide and he’s got to drive pucks to the net. I believe that he hasn’t been doing that. I don’t know if he’s tentative with his ankle because of the injury or not. But we got to push him through that to get better and ... score goals.”

Bailey believes working on the little things will ignite his offense.

“As tough as that is for a guy like me who’s used to scoring down in the minors, it’s something I just have to trust (my) coach with and trust myself that doing the little things will make me successful and the goals and the points will come,” he said.

Bailey, who’s in the final season of his entry-level contract, said his ankle injury isn’t in the back of his head.

“I don’t think about it until I feel it,” he said. “I’ve been fortunate to have not felt it for the last couple of weeks, and it’s been a sigh of relief because when I came back, it definitely was there still.”

The reeling Amerks sorely need Bailey’s offensive contributions. Following a torrid start, they’ve won only two of their last 15 games, losing eight in overtime or a shootout. They’ve scored just one goal in each of their last three contests.

“We need to get him back into form, because he’s a big part of our team and a big part of this organization,” Taylor said.

2 quick goals by Syracuse beats the Amerks

C&C WorldWide

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans (26-14-8-5) saw their three-game win streak at KeyBank Center come an end as they made their annual trek down the New York State Thruway to play in the home of the Buffalo Sabres. Wednesday night's 2-1 loss to the intrastate rival Syracuse Crunch (31-18-2-3) drops the Amerks to fourth place in the American Hockey League's North Division standings.

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"The puck squeezed up the right side," said the Buffalo native when describing his shorthanded tally. "Eric Cornel was able to get a stick on the puck and luckily it fell to mine. We were able to go down on a 2-on-1 and I was able to get the shot off near-side."

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On the ensuing shift, Syracuse entered the Amerks zone on a 3-on-2 odd-man rush. Former Amerk Mat Bodie drove the center lane before sliding a pass to Verhaeghe to his right. After gathering the puck, Verhaeghe attempted a cross-crease pass to a waiting Peca and the winger made the puck change direction before slipping it into the net to give the Crunch a 2-1 advantage at the 18:24 mark of the stanza.

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“We could not get the puck out and had a lot of turnovers in the neutral zone,” said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. “The second period was tough for us. We have to get back to the basics and we will work on that tomorrow in practice.”

The Amerks tried to even the score during the final frame but Ingram made timely saves despite Rochester drawing three penalties, including a double-minor infraction and having a two-man advantage for the last 27 seconds of regulation. With the 2-1 win, the Crunch have won four straight in the head-to-head series after Rochester claimed the first two contests.

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Rochester Americans Fall to Syracuse Die By The Blade

By: Melissa Burgess

Generally, a hockey game is composed of - at the very least - 60 minutes of play.

When the AHL's Rochester Americans and Syracuse Crunch met in Buffalo on Wednesday night, ten seconds - just 10 of the 3,600 seconds that made up the game - made all the difference. That's all it took for Syracuse to strike twice in the 2-1 win.

Just over three minutes into the game, the Amerks found themselves on the disadvantage as Zach Redmond took a cross-checking penalty. Despite being a man down, Rochester found the back of the net; West Seneca native Sean Malone scored off a 2-on-1 to put his team up 1-0.

"It's special to score a goal here, in front of a lot of family and friends who came out to support," Malone said after the game.

Malone, playing in his first AHL season, called the transition from college hockey "an eye-opener," but noted the group of veteran players on the Amerks as a key group that has helped him.

Despite several more penalties, Rochester was able to maintain their lead through the opening 20 minutes, and even nearly went up 2-0 on a nifty play when Justin Bailey sped his way to the net, but shot the puck high.

Although it didn't result in a goal, the flash of speed was something Bailey can look to do more of in the future.

"I think I can really put the D [defense] on their heels and create chances like that more often," he said after Wednesday's game.

Syracuse came out to play in the middle frame, scoring twice in a span of just 10 seconds to tie the game and take the lead.

Less than 90 seconds into the period, Mitchell Stephens scored his team-leading 18th goal of the season to tie the game at one. Carter Verhaeghe and Dominik Masin assisted.

Just ten seconds later, the Amerks found themselves down as Matthew Peca put the Crunch up. Verhaeghe notched his second assist of the night, with Mat Bodie tallying the other helper.

The goals died down from that point, but the shots kept coming. The Crunch outshot the Amerks 14-3 in the second period, but Linus Ullmark kept Rochester in the game.

What happened in the second period?

"Nothing," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. "Obviously, we looked slow, couldn't get the puck out of the zone, a lot of turnovers in the neutral zone."

"The second period was really bad. I don't even know what to say about it," Taylor added.

After leaving the ice to a chorus of boos from the fans in the stands, the Amerks returned for a third period that didn't start off much better. It took nearly eight minutes of the period for Rochester to notch even one shot on goal.

The Amerks had a few good chances on a power play midway through the period, but couldn't hit the back of the net as Connor Ingram stayed strong in goal for the Crunch. Rochester even had a four-minute man advantage late in the period and put some shots on net, but to no avail.

"I thought our response was good in the third, but against a good team like that... they don't give you much," Bailey said. "You've got to make sure you bring it for a full 60."

Overall, the Amerks went 0-for-5 on the power play, but held the Crunch scoreless on four of their own power play chances, which is one positive to take away from the loss.

The Amerks have won just four of their last 17 contests.

"Any time you go through a winning streak or a losing streak, it's internally up to them [the players] to get guys back on track, or keep them on track," Taylor said. "A coach can only do so much. Internally, if guys are talking to them, helping each other out, that's what's going to turn this thing around."

"Can't start doing all the fancy stuff before you work hard, grind, get the puck deep and that's what we've been struggling with the last couple games," Ullmark said.

"We're in a funk right now, and you've got to stay positive," Taylor said.

One positive from Wednesday night's loss: Ullmark. Taylor had this to say about the 24-year-old:

"The leadership from him, to me, is just tremendous.

"I just said to everybody, this guy's going to be unbelievable in the NHL. It's great how far he's come, and tonight just showed how really good of a goaltender he is," Taylor said.

Next up, Rochester faces a home-and-home series with the Toronto Marlies on Friday and Saturday. The Marlies dropped a 3-1 decision to the Binghamton Senators on Wednesday morning.

"Teams go through stretches, even the best teams," said defenseman Brendan Guhle. "We've got to keep working, we've got to keep trying to enjoy coming to the rink every day, and we'll get out of it."

Amerks come up short in 2-1 loss to Syracuse Pickin' Splinters

By: Paul Gotham

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Crunch surge to top Amerks 2-1

WSYR

By: Staff Report

Carter Verhaeghe led the Crunch with a two-point performance, while Mitchell Stephens and Matthew Peca potted the team's goals. The win advances Syracuse to 31-18-2-3 on the season and moves the Crunch into third in the North Division, ahead of the Amerks.

Goaltender Connor Ingram turned aside 19-of-20 shots between the pipes for the Crunch. Amerks netminder Linus Ullmark gave up 2-of-31 in defeat. Syracuse was held scoreless on four power play opportunities and went a perfect 5-for-5 on the penalty kill.

The Amerks were first on the board with a shorthanded marker 5:01 into the first. Sean Malone sped through the neutral zone and down the left wing to beat Ingram from the circle. Eric Cornel and Taylor Fedun recorded the assists.

Syracuse stole the lead early in the second period with back-to-back goals. At the 1:26 mark, Verhaeghe grabbed the rebound from Dominik Masin's right side shot and sent it across the slot through a defender's legs for Stephens to chip in backdoor. Ten seconds later, Verhaeghe passed off for Peca to pot one from a sharp angle down low. Mat Bodie picked up the secondary helper on the eventual game-winner.

The Crunch return home to host the Lehigh Valley Phantoms on Friday at 7 p.m.

Crunchables: The Crunch allowed their first shorthanded goal since Dec. 15 tonight...Gabriel Dumont made his Crunch season debut tonight...Matthew Peca is tied for the team lead with four game-winning goals on the season.