



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

## DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Friday, March 9, 2018*

*Tonight's Game: Providence @ Rochester*

## **Sabres' Seth Griffith confident after stint with Amerks**

*Olean Times Herald*

By: Bill Hoppe

In the AHL, Seth Griffith morphs into a different player. Over the past three seasons, the Sabres winger has been one of the league's most lethal scorers, compiling 47 goals and 155 points in 131 outings.

During Griffith's early-season NHL run, he mustered only two goals and three points in 18 games. Then, not surprisingly, he went on a tear with the Rochester Americans, scoring 13 goals and 34 points in 36 contests.

"Some (AHL) games I can handle the puck the entire game it feels like," Griffith said prior to Wednesday's 5-1 loss to the Calgary Flames. "But my goal is to do stuff like that up here."

Griffith, 25, said three months in the AHL boosted his confidence. He impressed the Sabres enough they recalled him again last week. He played two games, his first NHL appearances since late November, before getting scratched for Monday's 5-3 win against Toronto.

Griffith, a restricted free agent following the season, returned Wednesday inside KeyBank Center, skating at left wing beside center Benoit Pouliot and Nick Baptiste.

How can Griffith keep earning NHL action?

"When you get back up here, you worry about making a mistake and going back down," he said. "I think ... you just got to focus on your game and be confident with the puck, especially now, everybody seems a lot looser now playing (than earlier in the season).

"It seems like guys are playing better, so I think you just got to have the mentality to know what your skill set is and just go out there and do it."

Not surprisingly, Sabres coach Phil Housley said he wants Griffith to produce more offense.

"Just using his speed, quickness, trying to create offensively, cutbacks and trying to create his own space," he said. "I think he did a really good job in the games that he's played."

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Nine days after the Sabres acquired Danny O'Regan from the San Jose Sharks, they recalled the forward from the Amerks on Wednesday morning.

So, O'Regan played against the Flames, right? Well, not exactly.

The Sabres also have a road game tonight against the Ottawa Senators, so O'Regan, the only player they received in the Evander Kane trade, could debut soon.

“I could see him getting some games in the future here,” Housley said. “I think he’s just a really good, solid prospect for us right now, and he’s going to get an opportunity.”

Whenever O’Regan, the AHL’s top rookie last season, makes his Buffalo debut, he understands he has something to prove.

“I try not to put that pressure on myself, but being a part of the Evander Kane trade – it’s not like it was a one-for-one deal, but I want to show the organization I can play hockey sometimes,” O’Regan said.

O’Regan, who will wear No. 65, skated in the pregame warm-up.

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In a poll of players conducted by the NHLPA, Sabres center Ryan O’Reilly was named the league’s fifth-most underrated player, earning 2.3 percent of the vote.

Washington’s Nicklas Backstrom (8.6), St. Louis’ Jaden Schwartz, Tampa Bay’s Nikita Kucherov (6.2) and Florida’s Aleksander Barkov (6.0) finished ahead of O’Reilly.

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Housley on slick Flames winger Johnny Gaudreau, who began Wednesday with 20 goals and 74 points in 67 games:

“He’s a world-class player. He uses his speed, whether it’s on the rush, his vision, his hockey sense is through the charts. He creates things by using his speed and his quickness to get away, he creates separation. He has a terrific shot, he knows where to put it.”

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The Sabres also scratched defensemen Justin Falk and Josh Gorges (both healthy) and centers Kyle Criscuolo and Evan Rodrigues (both upper body).

## **Sabres' Kyle Criscuolo out four to six weeks with upper-body injury**

*Olean Times Herald*

By: Bill Hoppe

Sabres center Kyle Criscuolo will miss four to six weeks after suffering an upper-body injury in Monday's 5-3 win against Toronto, the team announced today.

The injury, of course, is a blow to the entire organization. Criscuolo, who was recalled Sunday, is one of the Rochester Americans' leading scorers with 15 goals and 34 points in 50 games. The Harvard product certainly would've been returned to the Amerks for the AHL playoffs next month.

Criscuolo, 25, left his ninth NHL game when Maple Leafs winger Matt Martin hit him with 13:40 left in the second period.

"In the little time that he did play in the game, I thought he played a really solid game and brought his speed," Sabres coach Phil Housley said this afternoon inside KeyBank Center. "He's one of those guys that goes to the tough area. He took that hit. It's unfortunate for him, it's unfortunate for us moving forward."

The Sabres summoned Criscuolo because Evan Rodrigues' upper-body injury left them with only three healthy centers. They might need to recall one before Wednesday's home tilt against the Calgary Flames.

"You never want to see anyone get hurt," Martin said Tuesday. "It's not what you are trying to do out there. You want to be physical and have an impact. I don't even know when I hit him, exactly. It's a physical game and rivalry games like this are always a little more physical."

In other news, Housley said goalie Chad Johnson will start against the Flames, his old team.

## **The Sabres and Amerks lose Criscuolo for weeks**

*ESPN Rochester*

By: Staff Report

With Jack Eichel and Evan Rodrigues injured, the Sabres needed a center. Against Florida, they tried Zemgus Girgensons and that didn't work so they called up Kyle Criscuolo from Rochester.

Criscuolo is a big part of why the Amerks have done so well this season, scoring 15 goals and 19 assists for 34 points in 50 games.

Early in the game against Toronto, Criscuolo went to check Matt Martin against the wall. The move backfired as Martin braced himself and the 5' 8", 165-pound center bounced off. He went straight to the room holding his shoulder and the Sabres have announced he's out 4-to-6 weeks. That's a big blow to a team in the Amerks that is already missing their leading scorer and rookie All-Star C.J. Smith.

Smith's lower-body injury must be coming along because he's now listed as week-to-week.

Rodrigues is no longer day-to-day and is listed as week-to-week with what is believed to be a rib injury.

The Sabres had an optional skate on Tuesday because they have four games in six days this week with the last game a 1:00 start on Saturday.

## **Sabres' Kyle Criscuolo ready for second NHL recall**

*Olean Times Herald*

By: Bill Hoppe

Kyle Criscuolo was about to leave for the rink Sunday morning when Rochester Americans coach Chris Taylor phoned him.

“He was giving me a little joke,” Criscuolo said this morning inside KeyBank Center. “He said, ‘You’re not playing tonight.’ I said, ‘OK.’ He said, ‘You’re suspended. No, I’m kidding, you’re going up.’”

With a dearth of centers, the Sabres summoned Criscuolo, 25, for the second time this season. He will play tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

This recall, Criscuolo said, felt different than his first one. When the Sabres brought up the Harvard product in November, he had never played in the NHL and was only six weeks into his first season in the organization.

The eight-game NHL look provided the 5-foot-8, 170-pound Criscuolo some much-needed familiarity.

“It’s huge being back here for a second time,” said Criscuolo, who has zero NHL points. “Having been up and been around the guys really I think is the biggest thing. You’re more familiar with the guys you’re going to be playing with and you’re more familiar with the coaching staff.”

He added: “When you’ve been somewhere before, you definitely feel more comfortable.”

Like Brendan Guhle, the defenseman recalled with Criscuolo, the Sabres want him to utilize his speed. Coach Phil Housley put Criscuolo between Benoit Pouliot and Nick Baptiste this morning, the Sabres’ third line.

“Crisco has had a terrific year down in Rochester,” Housley said. “(We) brought him up early in the year, he didn’t get any offensive production, sent him back down to work on his game. He’s provided that for Rochester. This is why he’s getting an opportunity.”

Criscuolo has compiled 15 goals and 34 points in 50 games with the Amerks. Among other things, he said he has spent the past few months working on his faceoffs.

## **Sabres want Brendan Guhle to utilize speed during recall**

*Olean Times Herald*

By: Bill Hoppe

For a chunk of the season, Sabres defensemen Brendan Guhle and Casey Nelson formed a strong AHL tandem, showcasing their speed and slick puck-moving skills together.

Then the Sabres recalled Guhle, 20, in early January for two games. A week later, the Sabres summoned Nelson, 25, and he quickly earned a regular spot.

So the two haven't played together for about two months. Tonight against the Toronto Maple Leafs, Guhle, who was brought up Sunday, and Nelson will skate again as a pair.

Nelson said he expects they will "pick up where we left off" with the Rochester Americans.

"Absolutely," Nelson said this morning inside KeyBank Center. "It might take a few shifts to get back into the swing of things but, yeah, I don't think that stuff goes away. It probably takes a long time for the chemistry we had in Roch to go away."

The Sabres recalled Guhle, their top defense prospect, because "he just earned his right to get back up here," Housley said. His speed will help against the Leafs, one of the NHL's quickest teams.

They also host the Calgary Flames, another fast team, Wednesday.

"He's going to be a big part of our team moving forward, so we want to get him some games at the NHL level," Housley said. "But I really like the speed he brought last time he was up here, whether it was leading a rush or joining the rush, he has the ability in his first two or three strides to separate himself from people."

Housley, of course, knows how well Guhle and Nelson played together in Rochester.

"It's going to be interesting," Housley said. "I didn't get to see a lot of games in Rochester, but just hearing about what they brought to that team down there, breaking down forechecks. They had some good chemistry, so that's why they're put back together tonight."

Guhle, who has played five NHL games, said he wasn't expecting to be recalled.

"But it was obviously a happy surprise," he said. "I came to the rink (Sunday) and they told me I was going up."

With so many raucous Leafs fans, tonight's environment will be new for Guhle.

"It's great, all these little experiences you can get from moving forward are just going to help him in his development," Housley said.

Check back later for more on Guhle and center Kyle Criscuolo, who was also recalled Sunday for the Sabres' first meeting with the Leafs.

Housley used these other lines and pairs from left to right this morning:

- Zemgus Girgensons, Ryan O'Reilly and Sam Reinhart
- Scott Wilson, Johan Larsson and Jason Pominville
- Benoit Pouliot, Criscuolo and Nick Baptiste
- Jordan Nolan, Jacob Josefson and Kyle Okposo
- Marco Scandella and Rasmus Ristolainen
- Nathan Beaulieu and Victor Antipin

Winger Seth Griffith and defensemen Justin Falk and Josh Gorges will be scratched. Chad Johnson will start in goal.

Johnson is 5-1-1 with a 1.99 goals-against average, a .932 save percentage and one shutout in seven career games against the Leafs.



## **Amerks have first win streak since January**

### ***Rochester First***

By: Thad Brown

The Rochester Americans (29-15-9-6) closed out the first weekend of March with a 4-2 win over the Laval Rocket (22-28-6-2) at The Blue Cross Arena Sunday afternoon. The victory gives the Amerks back-to-back wins for the first time since the first weekend in January.

Rochester has also won three of its last four.

With the win, the Amerks, who have earned at least one point in 18 of their last 24 games since Jan. 1, have a 21-point lead on the fifth-place Rocket in the AHL's North Division standings.

Rookie Justin Danforth recorded his first-career AHL multi-point effort with a goal and assist while Daniel Muzito-Bagenda registered his first two-point outing of the campaign. Zach Redmond and Kevin Porter rounded out scoring for Rochester, which has taken five of the last six points. Goaltender Adam Wilcox made 21 saves to record back-to-back wins in his last two outings while improving to 10-4-6 in 22 appearances on the season.

Willie Corrin netted first-career AHL goal while Adam Cracknell plotted his 22nd of the campaign for the Rocket, who has dropped two of the last three games. First-year netminder Michael McNiven took the loss as he stopped 25 of 28.

With the game tied at 2-2 and less than five minutes remaining in the second period, Nathan Paetsch sprung Danforth all alone on McNiven with a quick outlet-pass through the neutral zone. Once the rookie caught up to the puck, he slipped a shot through the five-hole of the Laval netminder to give the Amerks a 3-2 lead with 4:45 showing on the clock.

Paetsch was awarded the primary helper while Muzito-Bagenda was credited with the secondary assist, giving him his first two-point (1+1) performance of the season.

Rochester held the Rocket without a shot for the first half the third period and protected its one-goal lead before Laval tried to find the equalizer late in regulation. Wilcox, however, held the Rocket off board before Kevin Porter sealed the 4-2 win as he added an empty-netter with 16 seconds left in the contest.

The goal was Porter's 15th marker of the slate. Sean Malone recorded the lone assist on the play, giving the rookie forward five points (3+2) over his last six outings.

Laval opened the scoring with a power-play goal before Redmond knotted the game at 1-1 with his 12th of the season, also on the man-advantage.

Alexander Nylander and Matt Tennyson each were given the assists, with Nylander extending his current point streak (1+4) to a career-long to five games.

Less than a minute later, Muzito-Bagenda tapped in his first of the goal of the season from Danforth and Dalton Smith, but the Rocket tied the game at 2-2 just before the end of the first period.

Danforth, though, gave the Amerks the lead for good as he scored his first of the season at the 15:15 mark of the second before Porter sealed the 4-2 win with his empty-netter late in the final period.

The Amerks embark on another busy stretch of three games in three nights on Friday, Mar. 9 when they host the Providence Bruins for the only time this season at The Blue Cross Arena. The 7:05 p.m. contest will be the first of just two meetings between the two teams this season.

## **Buffalo News: Sabres call up Danny O'Regan, acquired in Kane trade**

John Vogl

A little more than a week after joining the organization, Danny O'Regan got the call to Buffalo. His Sabres debut will have to wait.

The team recalled O'Regan from Rochester on Wednesday morning, but he won't be in the lineup when they host Calgary on Wednesday night in KeyBank Center.

The Sabres acquired O'Regan from San Jose at the Feb. 26 trade deadline as part of the deal for Evander Kane. O'Regan reported to Rochester and has two goals in three games with the Amerks.

O'Regan has proved he can produce in the American Hockey League. The winger has 32 goals and 85 points in 97 games during his two professional seasons. He was the AHL Rookie of the Year last season.

The 24-year-old is looking to find his groove in the NHL. He appeared in 22 games for the Sharks, recording one goal and four assists. The goal came last season, and all four assists came during his 19 games this year.

O'Regan played collegiately at Boston University and was on the same line as Sabres forwards Jack Eichel and Evan Rodrigues in 2014-15. Injuries to both players helped prompt the recall.

Rodrigues suffered an upper-body injury last week, leading to the summoning of Kyle Criscuolo from Rochester. He also suffered an upper-body injury, leaving Monday's victory over Toronto, so Buffalo was in need of a forward.

O'Regan got the call, but Seth Griffith, scratched last game, will play instead.

## **Buffalo News: O'Regan happy to have BU teammates around, knows he'll be a focus in wake of Kane trade**

Mike Harrington

When the trade with the San Jose Sharks went down an hour before the NHL's Feb. 26 trade deadline, Danny O'Regan said the first people he heard from were some family members. The next two to text: Former Boston University linemates, and now current Buffalo Sabres teammates, Jack Eichel and Evan Rodrigues.

"They're both good friends and I knew they'd make me feel right at home since I got here," O'Regan said today after getting the call to join the Sabres from the Rochester Amerks. "They've been great so far. ... Jack called right away, too. So I talked to those guys and they were excited. And I was just as excited to be here."

The Sabres needed an extra forward after Kyle Criscuolo suffered a shoulder injury Monday against Toronto, and Rodrigues is still out with what's believed to be rib issues. Seth Griffith is returning to the lineup and O'Regan will be a healthy scratch for Wednesday night's game against the Calgary Flames in KeyBank Center.

"I could see him getting some games in the future here," coach Phil Housley said after the morning skate. "He's just a really good solid prospect for us and he's going to get an opportunity."

Asked if that opportunity might come Thursday in Ottawa, Housley said "could be."

O'Regan knows there will be a lot of attention focused on his game because he's the lone current player acquired for Kane, Buffalo's top rental at the deadline. The Sabres also received two conditional draft picks.

"I try not to put that pressure on myself but I know because I'm part of the Evander Kane trade – it's not like it was a 1-for-1 deal – I definitely want to show the organization I can play hockey," he said. "I'm going to try to do my best, work hard, compete, play fast and create some offense."

O'Regan was the AHL Rookie of the Year last season after collecting 23 goals and 58 points for the San Jose Barracuda. He scored twice in his three games in Rochester after not registering a goal in 19 games with the Sharks.

"I was definitely surprised at the time of the trade. I wasn't really expecting it," he said. "I loved playing in San Jose. They're a great organization but I was really excited to start here. This organization has been just great so far. Rochester was a great week for me to get settled and get used to some of the systems how they want to play around here."

"I thought it was a good team. I liked the way they play. They play hard, play fast. A lot of good guys in the room. It's hard hockey, creating a lot of offense so it's a fun system to be in."

**Buffalo News:** [Sabres' Criscuolo out 4-6 weeks, weakening Amerks](#)

John Vogl

Kyle Criscuolo was excited to return to the Sabres. The Amerks certainly won't like the result.

Criscuolo suffered an upper-body injury during a collision with Toronto's Matt Martin on Monday night, and the center will miss four to six weeks. Martin hit the center hard into the boards midway through the second period, and Criscuolo immediately retreated to the trainers' room.

It was Criscuolo's first game with Buffalo since December. He earned the recall with 15 goals and 34 points in 50 games with Rochester, which will obviously miss his production.

"Tough on him, too," Sabres coach Phil Housley said Tuesday. "In the little time that he did play in the game, I thought he played a really sound game and brought his speed. He's one of those guys that goes to the tough area. He took that hit, and it's unfortunate for him and it's unfortunate for us moving forward."

The Sabres recalled Criscuolo because an injury to Evan Rodrigues left the team short at the center position. Rodrigues is day-to-day, so it will be determined whether he can play Wednesday against Calgary or if Buffalo will need to recall another player.

**Buffalo News:** [Success with Amerks providing NHL opportunities for Criscuolo](#)

Amy Moritz

Kyle Criscuolo was getting ready to head to Blue Cross Arena on Sunday morning when he got a call from Rochester Americans coach Chris Taylor.

And for the first few moments of the conversation, Criscuolo was a bit worried.

"First he said I wasn't playing. Then he said 'you're suspended,' " Criscuolo said.

Nah. No suspensions or benching. Taylor was just kidding.

"Then he told me I was going up," Criscuolo said. "But he got me for a moment."

Criscuolo was scratched from the Amerks lineup after he was recalled by the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday to be inserted into the lineup for Monday night's game against the Toronto Maple Leafs. It's the second recall of the season for the forward after he made his NHL debut with the Sabres during an eight-game stint in November.

"He's had a terrific year down in Rochester," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "When we brought him up earlier in the year, he didn't get any offensive production. We sent him back down to work on his game. He's provided that for Rochester. This is why he's getting an opportunity."

In his eight games with the Sabres he failed to record a point and was a minus-4. But in his second full season of pro hockey, the 25-year-old Criscuolo was ready to work on his game. He listened to the message the Sabres staff gave him when he went back to Rochester. He worked on finding his niche and perfecting his strengths, so that he could carve out a valuable role for the Sabres.

"You're always trying to develop your game, but they told me to keep working on faceoffs," Criscuolo said. "Work on my play at both ends and to make sure that you sort of have a niche here that can be plugged into the team and help them win games. That's the message they sent me."

Message received. Criscuolo leads the Amerks in goals with 15, including three on the power play, one short-handed and four game-winners.

The American Hockey League doesn't keep stats on faceoffs, but Nicholas Baptiste has noticed Criscuolo's penchant in the circle. Baptiste got to play with Criscuolo when the two were in Rochester this season. They will be back together in Buffalo, as Criscuolo was centering a line with Benoit Pouliot and Baptiste.

"That was something in his game that I think he wanted to improve," Baptiste said. "He was good at faceoffs, but he wanted to be the guy that could go out there and win draws constantly and I saw him putting in the work in Rochester. That was something he was keyed up on and now that he's up here, he's going to show everyone how he improved in that area."

"He's so tenacious on the puck so he has the puck a lot. He's very good at both ends of the ice which is so fun for me to play with because he can play with my speed but he can also push the pace on guys. He's an all-around great player."

There's now a group of five players on the Sabres who spent significant time in Rochester this season. While the call-ups are for a variety of factors – injuries, a languishing Sabres team, reward for hard work in Rochester – there's a comfort level that can help with confidence when walking into a locker room with friendly faces.

"It's exciting because these guys for the most part are all my age," Baptiste said. "It's nice to come up and have guys you can relate with in many different areas off the ice as well as on the ice. It's nice for me. I've been up here for a little while so I can kind of help out. Not that they need much help, but it's just the familiarity that they have with me back in Rochester."

The Sabres also recalled Brendan Guhle from Rochester on Sunday, and the organization's No. 1 defense prospect played his third game of the season Monday night. He had one assist in two games in January.

After returning to the Amerks, he missed three weeks with a lower-body injury.

"He played terrific last time he was up here," Housley said. "We wanted to continue to have him up or bring him up again, but he got hurt, which set him back. But recently he's played terrific hockey, so I think it's an opportunity for him to get back to where he was in bringing some good speed and joining the rush."

Guhle was again paired with Casey Nelson, his defense partner earlier in the year with Rochester.

"We're expecting to pick up where we left off," Nelson said. "We both move our feet quite a bit up and down the ice. Defensively, we're aware and defensively sound. I just think we can move the puck out of the zone as quick as we can, get it in our forwards' hands and maybe join the rush now and then."