



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

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TONIGHT'S GAME: Belleville vs. Rochester

Inside the Sabres: Amerks bracing for unpredictable trade deadline

Buffalo News

By: *Lance Lysowski*

Danny O'Regan had 24 hours to pack a bag, arrange for a car filled with his belongings to be shipped across the country and report to Rochester. O'Regan, a 25-year-old winger recalled Friday by the Buffalo Sabres, laughed Wednesday in Blue Cross Arena when recalling that unexpected, chaotic journey.

Yet, O'Regan knows his story — from being pulled off the ice at practice and told he was dealt to the Buffalo Sabres for Evander Kane to uprooting his life in San Jose — is like so many that occur leading up to the NHL's annual trade deadline. Some players choose to monitor every rumor and report. Others stay away from social media or TSN.

The former is a fruitless endeavor for most players in the AHL. After all, minor leaguers are rarely the subject of rumors during trade season, which officially ends Monday at 3 p.m. But Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill's ongoing roster overhaul, which began with Kane's move to California, has Amerks players aware that no one is safe.

"Anything can happen," winger Alexander Nylander told *The Buffalo News*. "Obviously, it's nothing we can control. You can't worry about it. Just focus on our games this weekend and whatever happens, happens."

Botterill did not sound eager to make a deadline splash when he spoke to reporters Wednesday in Tampa Bay, adding that his current focus was on internal improvement. He is also said to have no interest in acquiring a rental at the deadline, making any sort of trade less likely.

However, Botterill has the prospects and draft picks to make a significant move if he chooses, and has already shown he is not attached to players acquired by his predecessors.

In addition to moving Kane, Botterill traded Nicholas Baptiste, a former third-round draft pick, to Nashville in October and moved Justin Bailey, a former second-round pick, to Philadelphia last month.

His remaining trade chips could include three first-round picks in this year's draft — only one is currently tradable since the others are conditional — and a few Amerks. In theory, players such as defensemen Brendan Guhle and Will Borgen, both drafted by former GM Tim Murray in 2015, could be more likely to move than Botterill's draft picks or acquisitions.

That fact is not lost on Guhle after he saw Bailey and Baptiste depart.

"It happens in every organization," Guhle said. "Sometimes guys just need a fresh start. You saw it with Justin Bailey. Now he's in the NHL. Some guys need fresh starts, and I'm happy they're doing well. I just want to play the best I can. I want to be a Buffalo Sabre.

"You see it all the time. It's a business. Every guy is kind of playing for himself in that way, but you have to do everything you can to put yourself in position to succeed."

Guhle, a gifted skater chosen in the second round in 2015, is only 21 years old and in the midst of his third full professional season. He has appeared in 23 NHL games, including two this season, and had a negative-7 rating through 53 games with the Amerks entering Friday.

Borgen, a 22-year-old fourth-round draft choice in 2015, is in his first full season with the Amerks and has a plus-4 rating through 53 games. Both could be useful in the Sabres' quest to improve their defense now and in the future, yet their upside would surely be coveted if Botterill chooses to upgrade before the deadline.

There is also Nylander, the struggling prospect whom the Sabres drafted eighth overall in 2016. The 20-year-old had only eight goals among 24 points through 42 games before returning from a lower-body injury Friday. Though he has yet to perform up to expectations, Nylander is still held in high regard by scouts around the NHL.

He and his teammates did not plan to pay attention to the trade winds until after the Amerks' three-game weekend.

"I don't think you can get too wrapped up in it," said O'Regan, an unrestricted free agent this offseason. "It's coming up again. You can't be checking your phone every five minutes to see if trades are happening. You just have to focus on whatever games you have that week. You can't think about it because you have no idea what can happen."

The Sabres' fading playoff hopes make any sort of significant deal unrealistic, and Botterill is more likely to engage in meaningful trade talks this offseason. Regardless, the Amerks don't want a move to be made.

Entering Friday's game in Utica, Rochester was on a three-game winning streak and sitting first in a tight North Division race.

The Amerks have benefited from losing few players to the NHL — O'Regan and Scott Wilson were recalled Friday, while Lawrence Pilut was returned to Rochester — and not having to rely on call-ups from Cincinnati.

That sort of stability has allowed coach Chris Taylor to keep his dynamic second line of O'Regan, Victor Olofsson and Rasmus Asplund together. It has also helped players such as Guhle and Borgen develop. Constant roster moves between Buffalo and Rochester can stunt a player's progress.

Plus, the Amerks want the same group together once the Calder Cup playoffs begin in April.

"Everyone is watching TSN and all that kind of stuff," Taylor said of the upcoming deadline. "That's part of the process. It's part of it every year. As a hockey fan everyone is excited about it. Everyone wants to see where everyone is going and which team is going to make moves, what team isn't going to make moves. ... It's always exciting and nerve-racking for us because obviously we don't want to lose any players. They've become part of our family and it's tough to lose family members."

Most Amerks have already watched the deadline pass in previous seasons and some have even been traded. Goalie Scott Wedgewood was traded twice in four months last season, including his move from Arizona to Los Angeles before last season's deadline.

They have urged the younger Amerks to not worry about what could happen, but that's easier said than done in what can be a harsh business.

"You have to keep your head on straight," Wedgewood cautioned. "You have to play a hockey game no matter where it is. Obviously, you want to help the team that's paying you and you have to work for them in your time there. If you go somewhere else, then that's the way it goes."

Amerks pull off wild comeback, stun Utica in OT
C&C Worldwide
By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*

After falling behind the Utica Comets (29-19-4-2) 3-0 less than eight minutes into the second period, the first-place Rochester Americans (33-16-3-2) erased the deficit with three consecutive second-period goals before Zach Redmond completed the dramatic comeback victory just 38 seconds into overtime to give the Amerks a 4-3 win Friday at the Adirondack Bank Center. The Amerks have now won 4 straight heading into Saturday's weekend finale with the Belleville Senators.

With tonight's overtime win, the Amerks have collected 25 out of a possible 34 points in their last 17 games and have earned at least one point in 13 of the last 16 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 8-3-2-3 over that span. Rochester has also notched 33 points in its last 24 games dating back to a 4-0 shutout win in Cleveland on Dec. 26 and maintain a three-point lead atop the AHL's North Division standings heading into final weekend of February.

For the third straight contest and fifth time in his last 6 games, Redmond turned in a multi-point effort as he tallied three points (1+2), which included his league-leading ninth game-winning goal and team-leading 21st marker of the season to lead the Amerks. Wayne Simpson, who scored for the third straight game, and Victor Olofsson each recorded a goal and later set-up Redmond in overtime, while Rasmus Asplund had a 2-assist night. Remi Elie extended his point streak to 4 games as he booked his fourth goal in the last 6 games, while goaltender Scott Wedgewood earned his 12th win in the last 15 games and improved to 20-7-2 on the season as he stopped 16 shots on the night.

Tanner Kero, Reid Gardiner, and Guillaume Brisebois all scored for Utica, which pushed its point streak to 8 games, but saw its 3-game win-streak end, while netminder Ivan Kulbakov made 32 saves but suffered the overtime loss.

With the game tied at 3-3 and the third-period clocking dwindling down, the Amerks' shorthanded unit drew a high-sticking infraction with 1:06 left in regulation. Neither of the North Division foes scored on the ensuing 4-on-4 situation and with Rochester's penalty expiring prior to the final horn sounding, the Amerks began the overtime on the man-advantage for 46 seconds.

Controlling the puck in the Comets zone after the start of the extra frame, Simpson handed Redmond a perfect one-time feed from the left face-off dot. After the duo failed on the initial attempt, Redmond blasted a shot just inside the left post to give the Amerks a 4-3 win 38 seconds into frame.

The power-play goal was Rochester's third of the game with the man-advantage, and dating back to Dec. 26, the Amerks, who have the AHL's best road power-play percentage (27.8%), have gone 27-for-92 during that span.

Following a scoreless opening period, the two clubs erupted for six goals in the second stanza as each side scored three times in less than eight minutes of play. Utica tallied the game's first two markers 59 seconds apart before adding a third 7:09 into the frame before the Amerks countered with three straight goals of their own in a span of 5:56.

Nearly halfway into the Amerks third power-play of the contest, Asplund raced to keep the puck from exiting the Comets zone and sent a blind pass onto the stick of Olofsson. After gathering the pass, the Swedish forward rifled his 20th goal of the season behind Kulbakov to put Rochester on the board. It's the second straight year Olofsson reached the 20-goal mark after leading the Swedish Hockey League with 27 goals last season.

Five minutes later, Andrew MacWilliam collected a loose puck inside the Amerks end of the ice after a defensive zone face-off and sprung Simpson on a breakaway. Collecting the puck near center ice, Simpson raced in towards the netminder and backhanded a shot over the right pad to make it a one-goal affair with 2:55 to go in the stanza.

The Amerks wiped out their 3-goal deficit and went into the intermission tied at 3-3 as Elie hammered home a cross-ice pass from Asplund and Redmond while on the man-advantage at the 18:20 mark.

Following a scoreless third period, the game went beyond regulation and overtime was needed to determine a winner. Redmond, who just 2 nights ago continued his record-setting campaign by becoming the first Amerks defenseman in the 63-year history of the franchise to reach the 20-goal mark, sealed the 4-3 come-from-behind win just 38 seconds into the frame with his team-leading 21st goal of the season.

The Amerks host the red-hot Belleville Senators on Saturday, Feb. 23 at 7:05 pm before bringing the month of February to a close with a return trip back to Utica on Wednesday, Feb. 27 to exchange pleasantries with the Comets for the second time in 6 days.

**NOTES* — The Buffalo Sabres called up forwards Scott Wilson and Danny O'Regan from the Amerks on Friday and sent defenseman Lawrence Pilut to Rochester. The Sabres also place Kyle Okposo on injured reserve with a concussion. . . Rochester has collected at least one point in 12 of the last 15 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 7-3-2-3 over that span. . . Ten of the last 15 games between the two teams have been decided by one goal. . . Vancouver recently signed former Amerk goaltender Michael Leighton to a NHL contract for the remainder of the 2018-19 season.

Amerks rally past Comets for OT win
Utica Observer-Dispatch
By: Ben Birnell

The Utica Comets have had trouble against the Rochester Americans' power play this season.

Those struggles continued in Friday night's North Division matchup at the Adirondack Bank Center at the Utica Memorial Auditorium.

With the Amerks on a 4-on-3 power play, Zach Redmond scored 38 seconds into overtime, capping a Rochester rally that handed the short-staffed Comets a 4-3 American Hockey League setback.

Redmond's one-timer — his 21st goal of the season and third point of the game -- from the left circle capped a 3-for-5 effort for the Rochester power play and gave the division-leading Amerks (33-16-3-2, 71 points) a fourth consecutive win. Rochester — ranked sixth on the power play in the AHL — has 12 goals on 33 opportunities against the Comets this season. The teams meet again Wednesday in Utica.

"I think they've got great shooters and move the puck well," said defenseman Guillaume Brisebois, playing in his first two NHL games with the Vancouver Canucks earlier this month. "But, we have to do a better job."

Comets coach Trent Cull was not happy with some of the penalties the Comets took, including a high-sticking infraction late in regulation.

"They've got a skilled group. There's some penalties there we'd like to (eliminate). A hand on the puck (on a faceoff), that's not very smart. And, dumping it over the glass is not very smart," Cull said. "You're putting a good team ... on the power play, so you're putting them in a position to succeed."

He also was disappointed with "poor decisions on the back end," especially in the second period when the Amerks struck twice on the power play and rallied.

"Playing against good teams, you have to rise to those challenges," Cull said. "Those are good players in our lineup ... they should be better."

While the setback snapped a three-game win streak for the Comets, it pushed a point-streak to a season-best eight consecutive games (6-0-2-0). The Comets (29-19-5-2, 63 points) remain in a tie for third-place with Toronto in the division.

"(The point-streak) is really important for the playoff push," said Brisebois, whose third goal of the season helped cap a three-goal cushion. "Guys have done a good job during the streak and I have to come back and help the team."

The loss snapped a four-game winning streak at home for the Comets.

The Comets, who added forwards Kyle Thomas and Mike Szmatala to roster over the last two days, were shorthanded due a combination of illness — Kole Lind, Jonathan Dahlen and Brendan Woods each were out — as well as injury (Dylan Blujus and Jonah Gadjovich) and recent call-ups.

Tanner Kero scored – his career-best 21st goal of the season – and Reid Gardiner added his first goal with the Comets in the second period. Utica goalie Ivan Kulbakov totaled 32 saves in his first start since Feb. 10.

Rochester had the edge in a scoreless first period, though the Amerks nearly took the lead on a booming shot by Brendan Guhle glanced off the crossbar and stayed out with 9:30 to play. A lengthy official review confirmed the puck stayed out.

Kulbakov made a few timely stops, especially late when he made a split-save on Matt Tennyson's shot from the right point with timing winding down in the period.

The teams combined for six goals as the momentum shifted in the second period.

Utica was opportunistic early in the second when Kero and Gardiner – his first with the Comets was unassisted – each scored 59 seconds apart. The goals each came as the result of the Comets forcing turnovers.

Brisebois – in his first game since making his NHL debut – put the Comets up three with 12:57 left after putting in a rebound for his third of the season on Thomas' shot. Vincent Arseneau helped make the goal happen by digging out a puck from along the boards.

"I thought we created some turnovers and created some offense and it was some good opportunities," Cull said. "I thought we kind of had the game in hand. ... I thought we were rolling the first half of the season period."

Rochester stormed back, though, with three goals over the last 7:36 of the period. The Amerks bookended power-play goals from Victor Olfosson – 10 points in eight games against Utica – and Remi Elie and a breakaway score from Wayne Simpson to tie it at 3-3 and force overtime.

"I didn't like our defense the second half of the period," Cull said. "Our D group as a whole needed to be better."

Amerks storm back to beat Comets in OT

CNY Homepage.com

By: *Lucas Frankel*

The Amerks mount a furious rally to take down the Comets.

Rochester stormed back from a 3-0 deficit to beat the Comets 4-3 on Friday night at the Adirondack Bank Center. Despite the loss, the Comets did extend their point streak to eight games.

Tanner Kero and Reid Gardiner scored 59 seconds apart in the second period to give the Comets a 2-0 lead. Guillaume Brisebois later made it 3-0.

However, Victor Olofsson, Wayne Simpson and Remi Elie all answered with goals for the Amerks to tie the game a three after two periods.

Following a scoreless third, Zach Redmond delivered the game-winner in overtime.

The Comets return to action tomorrow night to face the Devils in Binghamton. Puck drop is scheduled for 7pm.

Sabres goalie prospect Jonas Johansson out for season
Buffalo News
By: *Lance Lysowski*

The goaltending depth in the Buffalo Sabres' farm system took a hit Friday with the announcement that Jonas Johansson underwent successful season-ending surgery.

The nature of the surgery was not disclosed in a news release.

Johansson, 23, had a .908 save percentage with three shutouts and 18 wins in 27 games for the Cincinnati Cyclones this season. He also appeared in five games for the Rochester Americans, posting a .926 save percentage.

"We're pleased that Jonas' surgery was successful and he will start the rehab process tomorrow," Sabres assistant general manager Randy Sexton said in a news release Friday. "He is a talented young goalie that has developed nicely over the past two seasons and we have every expectation this slight setback will in no way derail his continued development."

Johansson, a third-round draft pick of the Sabres in 2014, has appeared in 54 games for the Cyclones over the past two seasons and made his professional debut with the Amerks in 2017. He has a combined .891 save percentage in 19 games with Rochester over three seasons.

Johansson was named the CCM/ECHL Goaltender of the Week for Nov. 12-18 and had a season-long five-game win streak from Nov. 4-23. He is a restricted free agent following next season and will likely be surpassed by Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen on the organizational depth chart.

Luukkonen, a 19-year-old drafted in the second round by Buffalo in 2017, has a .919 save percentage in 42 games with Sudbury of the Ontario Hockey League and won a Gold Medal with Finland at the World Junior Championships. He told The Buffalo News last month that he intends to begin his professional career following the completion of Sudbury's season.

Sabres call up O'Regan, Wilson; assign Pilut to Rochester
WGR550

By: *Brayton Wilson*

The Buffalo Sabres made a couple of roster moves on Friday just before Saturday's matchup with the Washington Capitals on Saturday afternoon at KeyBank Center.

The team has called up forwards Danny O'Regan and Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans in the American Hockey League. In a corresponding move, the Sabres have placed forward Kyle Okposo on injured reserve, while also sending defenseman Lawrence Pilut back to the Amerks.

O'Regan has had a pretty good season with the Amerks this season with 18 goals and 34 points in all 53 games played. The 25-year-old is fourth in overall team scoring this season, and tied for third on the team in goals. He was also on pace to set a career-high in goals through 76 games this season.

O'Regan was acquired by the Sabres at the 2018 NHL Trade Deadline as part of the Evander Kane trade with the San Jose Sharks. He went pointless with a plus-1 rating in two games with the Sabres last season.

As for Wilson, he returned to action on January 11 after missing the first three months of the season with a fractured ankle. In 17 games this season with the Amerks, the 26-year-old winger has three goals and four assists.

Wilson was acquired from the Detroit Red Wings in December of 2017, and appeared in 49 games last season, scoring six goals and registering 14 points.

The Amerks get Pilut back after losing him to his second recall to the Sabres back on November 27. At the time of his call up, Pilut led the Amerks with 22 points (3+19) in just 16 games, and was leading the AHL in scoring among defensemen.

In 25 games with the Sabres this season, the 23-year-old blue liner scored one goal and registered six points.

This transaction could also mean that defenseman Marco Scandella is close to a return to the lineup from an upper-body injury.

Once Scandella returned to the lineup, the Sabres would have had nine defensemen on the roster with Pilut included. Pilut is one of only two defensemen on the roster (Dahlin is the other) who could be assigned to Rochester without having to clear waivers.

In another corresponding move to create a roster spot, forward Kyle Okposo has been placed on injured reserve. The 30-year-old forward is battling a concussion that he suffered last Friday in a matchup with the New York Rangers at KeyBank Center.

Okposo was not originally diagnosed with a concussion as a result from a fight with Rangers defenseman Anthony DeAngelo, but he was later diagnosed on Tuesday after some further evaluation.

Okposo has struggled a bit to produce offensively this season, scoring just 10 goals and 22 points in 57 games played.

The Sabres did not practice on Friday. Faceoff against the Capitals on Saturday is at 1 p.m. with pre-game coverage on WGR starting at 12 p.m.

Sabres recall Danny O'Regan, Scott Wilson, send Lawrence Pilut down
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: *Bill Hoppe*

The Sabres added two forwards this afternoon, recalling Danny O'Regan and Scott Wilson from the Rochester Americans.

They also sent defenseman Lawrence Pilut back to the AHL and placed winger Kyle Okposo, who has a concussion, on injured reserve.

The Sabres host the Washington Capitals on Saturday, their last game before Monday's trade deadline.

O'Regan, 25, has enjoyed a strong season, scoring 18 goals and 34 points in 53 games with the Amerks. The former AHL Rookie of the Year, part of the Evander Kane trade with the San Jose Sharks last season, has made 24 NHL appearances, compiling one goal and five points.

The Boston University product, a former linemate of Sabres captain Jack Eichel and forward Evan Rodrigues in college, played two games with Buffalo last season.

Meanwhile, Wilson, 26, has scored three goals and seven points in 17 AHL outings this season. The Sabres sent Wilson down in January so he could receive game action after recovering from a broken ankle that sidelined him three months.

Pilut, 23, had been with the Sabres since late November, scoring one goal and six points in 25 games. The Swede started his first North American season in Rochester, compiling three goals and 22 points in 16 contests.

Despite his short time with the Amerks, Pilut earned AHL All-Star honors.

Sabres recall Danny O'Regan, Scott Wilson, send Lawrence Pilut to Rochester
WGRZ

By: *Stu Boyar*

Friday the Buffalo Sabres announced that they have placed forward Kyle Okposo on injured reserve. Okposo suffered a concussion in a fight with New York Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo in last Friday's game against the Rangers.

Okposo traveled with the team to New Jersey but didn't play. He was sent home before the Sabres played the Panthers in Florida.

It's the third concussion for Okposo in the last three years. After suffering a concussion in March of 2017 Okposo spent time in the Neuro ICU of Buffalo General Medical Center.

The Sabres also sent defenseman Lawrence Pilut to Rochester of the American Hockey League. While Pilut heads down the thruway two others are coming up to join the Sabres. The team has recalled forwards Danny O'Regan and Scott Wilson from the Amerks.

Sabres recall Danny O'Regan, Scott Wilson, send Lawrence Pilut to Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski

General Manager Jason Botterill has finally reshuffled the Buffalo Sabres' roster ahead of Monday's trade deadline, sending defenseman Lawrence Pilut to Rochester and placing winger Kyle Okposo on injured reserve.

In corresponding moves, the Sabres have recalled forwards Danny O'Regan and Scott Wilson from the Amerks ahead of a Saturday matinee against the Washington Capitals in KeyBank Center. The roster moves bolster the Sabres' forward depth while also giving Pilut an opportunity for more playing time.

O'Regan, 25, had 18 goals among 34 points in 53 AHL games, while Wilson, 26, had three goals among seven points in 17 games since clearing waivers and being sent to Rochester last month.

Pilut, a 23-year-old rookie, was a healthy scratch for Thursday's 2-1 shootout loss in Tampa Bay and would likely have a difficult time cracking the lineup since the Sabres had nine healthy defensemen with Casey Nelson's return last week.

Pilut had one goal among six points and a minus-3 rating in 25 games with the Sabres. He began the season in Rochester, where he had 22 points in 19 games.

Okposo was diagnosed with a concussion stemming from a fight against the New York Rangers' Anthony DeAngelo last Friday night. He joined the Sabres on their trip to Newark, N.J. last Saturday, only to return to Buffalo to undergo further testing. The 30-year-old has been diagnosed with at least three concussions since 2016.

A severe reaction to medication after a concussion suffered in practice in March 2017 landed him in the Neuro ICU unit of Buffalo General Medical Center. The Sabres have not released any additional updates on Okposo's status, but the injured reserve designation clears a spot on the roster.

O'Regan was acquired from San Jose as part of the Evander Kane trade last February and appeared in two games for the Sabres last season. He has one goal and four assists in 24 career NHL games.

Wilson, meanwhile, has yet to appear in an NHL game this season because he broke his ankle during a September practice. He had six goals and eight assists in 49 games for the Sabres last season.

Alexander Nylander to return to Amerks' lineup Friday in Utica

Buffalo News

By: *Lance Lysowski*

Alexander Nylander is expected to return to Rochester's lineup Friday night in Utica, coach Chris Taylor told The Buffalo News following Thursday's practice in Blue Cross Arena.

Nylander, a 20-year-old Buffalo Sabres prospect, has missed the past eight games after he suffered a lower-body injury suffered during practice. Additionally, winger Sean Malone will also rejoin the Amerks, who have won three games in a row.

"It's tough," Taylor said of his suddenly crowded roster. "We have a lot of healthy players and need to make tough decisions right now. We've got Malone and Nylander coming back into the lineup Friday, which means two guys have to come out. It's nice to have those two guys back in, but it's tough decisions for me."

Nylander, drafted eighth overall by the Sabres in 2016, has eight goals among 24 points in 42 games this season. He suffered the lower-body injury during a practice in which he was hit by defenseman Will Borgen and later got tangled up with Matt Tennyson.

Nylander had zero goals in his previous 10 games and only two in 23 games, yet he expressed frustration with the timing of the injury since he felt his play was beginning to improve.

"It was really unfortunate," Nylander said. "I'm just happy I'm back now. I did feel really good before the injury, so it's annoying it had to happen. I just have to bounce back now and be even better."

While Sabres struggle, veteran presence leads to winning ways in Rochester

The Athletic

By: *Joe Yerdon*

It's been a bit noticeable that things in Buffalo aren't going so great with the Sabres lately. Eastward down I-90 in Rochester, things are transpiring a bit differently in the American Hockey League.

The Americans lead the North Division and are one of the best teams in the AHL. The Sabres' farm team is in a battle with the likes of Syracuse, Utica, and Toronto but they currently hold a three-point margin over the Crunch with 69 points and a 32-16-3-2 record through 53 games.

With Sabres GM Jason Botterill and assistant GM/Americans GM Randy Sexton in charge of assembling the farm club, it's brought back memories of their time in the Penguins organization. While the parent club stumbles, the farm team is thriving, even though the message and the direction at both levels is the same.

"I just think the culture change in the dressing room, caring about each other, how we practice is big to transform into games and I think Jason and Randy started that off when they got hired and with who they hired around them and what type of players they wanted to bring in here," Americans coach Chris Taylor said. "Our veteran leadership has done a tremendous job in helping us to be a coach's extension and what we want to do and how we want to do it and how we want to practice; just the daily habits. I think that's changed the whole culture around."

The NHL might be increasingly becoming a young man's game, but in the AHL, where many of them start out, it's the older players who are helping to show them the ropes. In the case of the Americans, their mix of green youth and not-so-elder statesmen have created an environment conducive to success.

"I think we have a bit of an old team (in Rochester), a lot of vets and I think that helps for the young guys that came in this year," forward Remi Elie said. "When I came in just a couple weeks ago, the team was really welcoming; the vets talk a lot in the room, it's not quiet all the time so I think that helps the team going forward."

Elie is a new arrival to Rochester after he cleared waivers from the Sabres on Feb. 3. He played 16 games with the Sabres after he was claimed off waivers from the Dallas Stars on Oct. 2. Although he spent plenty of time in Buffalo, he wasn't getting in a lot of games and had no goals and one assist. In Rochester, he's thriving with six points (three goals, three assists) in eight games.

"It's all mental, I think, sitting out is just... you've got to stay positive, you've got to work on your game," Elie said. "You keep working hard and wait for your next opportunity and that's what I was doing, but it's hard to play a game and sit out for two weeks then get back for just one game. It's hard to produce that way so I was just trying to do my job and work hard to earn my chance to get back in the lineup. Here it's just different; I have a bigger role, the team's winning, I have the puck more on my stick and feeling the puck again, it's nice. Getting on the board's nice too."

For players like Elie and forward Scott Wilson, the time in Rochester puts them in a situation that's been more upbeat thanks to winning, it's allowed them to get back into things. In Wilson's situation, he's still getting back to normal after returning from a broken ankle he suffered late in training camp. Being part of a winning culture in the AHL isn't new to him after his time in the Penguins organization playing for Wilkes-Barre/Scranton as well as winning back-to-back Stanley Cups in Pittsburgh.

"I think there's a good group of guys here," Wilson said. "You meet a lot of the guys from getting called up in previous years and stuff like that. I'm just trying to make the most of it and have some fun playing hockey again. I think that's a big thing. You get down on yourself and you don't feel right or you don't feel like you're 100 percent back to normal. I'm having fun with it again and I think getting back into that rhythm is the biggest thing."

Part of the job for NHL-level guys like Wilson and Elie, as well as veterans on AHL contracts like defenseman Zach Redmond and forward Wayne Simpson, is to be role models for younger players like Victor Olofsson, Rasmus Asplund, Alexander Nylander, Brendan Guhle, and Will Borgen.

"I think on the ice, everyone just enjoys everyone else's company and that's kind of how (management) set things up last year and they did it again this year," Redmond said. "They treat us better than, I've got to imagine, most places. They set us up with everything we need to succeed and, on top of that, when you're having fun it makes coming to the rink easy and doing your job you want to play for each other. So I think from the top down they've set us up to win and we realize what we have in here and it'd be a shame not to take advantage of it."

Players in positions like Redmond and Simpson, who are likely to remain in Rochester, are in a position to be leaders at that level and have embraced the challenge.

"I've been on other good teams, too, but I think just the numbers we have is one thing and we have a lot of guys with a ton of experience, that's another thing," Simpson said. "It's a nice mix of young guys that seem to not miss a step and are stepping up big in these games. It's a really good group but it's getting to that time of season where we've got the divisional lead, but teams are going to be coming for us."

Redmond scored his 20th goal of the season on Wednesday. He broke an Americans team record that stood for 46 years for goals by a defenseman when he scored his 19th goal in late January and is 10 away from the AHL record for goals by a defenseman.

"I kind of just focus on what I have here and the guys here," Wilson said. "The guys here want to win and that goes a long way to being in Buffalo one day whether it's sooner or later. So I think just having that winning culture here with the young guys is going to help Buffalo in the long run."

It's likely not much solace to Sabres fans eager to see the big club get back to the postseason for the first time since 2011 to see the AHL team doing so well. As John Vogl shared, Botterill said on Wednesday they're focused on doing things the right way. It's what he's said from the beginning and in Rochester the signals of improvement down the road are there.

"I think the vets have been in situations like this before, probably, all over the league, really. It's just a matter of doing the things we do well," Simpson said. "It's not as if the recipe changes, you've just got to keep doing the stuff that got us into this position. But we've got a lot of divisional games coming up so it's an important time right now and down the stretch to the playoffs."

Amerks celebrate 'Hometown Heroes'

Fox Rochester

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Amerks will host their annual Hometown Heroes Night this weekend, honoring first responders in our area.

Members of the Rochester Police Department will face off against the Monroe County Sheriff's Office in an exhibition hockey game at 4 p.m. Saturday, before the Amerks take on the Belleville Senators at 7:05 inside the Blue Cross Arena.

All first responders can get a free ticket to the event and will be honored before the Amerks game. Some proceeds from the event will go to the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Association of Retirees (SOAR).

Capt. James McGowan from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Deputy Chief Scott Peters of the Rochester Police Department and Amerks team reporter Erica Whyte joined us on Good Day Rochester this morning.

Redmond returns, gets No. 20 for Amerks

Buffalo News

By: *Staff Report*

Defenseman Zach Redmond scored his 20th goal of the season and the Rochester Americans produced the final three scores of the game for a 4-2 victory over the Cleveland Monsters Wednesday night at Blue Cross Arena.

Redmond playing his first game for the Amerks since Jan. 23 needed only 2:45 of the opening period to add to his team record for goals in a season by a defenseman.

Yannick Veilleux and Brendan Guhle assisted.

However, Cleveland scored the next two goals in a tough game that included 34 minutes in penalties in the second period alone.

Trailing, 2-1, the Amerks began their comeback on a power-play goal by Danny O'Regan, his 18th, at 18:18 of the second. Redmond picked up his 21st assist and Victor Olofsson his 25th on the goal.

Taylor Leier's goal with 6:15 of the third put Rochester in front to stay. Remi Elie and Andrew Oglevie assisted.

Sabres' prospect Vasily Glotov's amazing goal goes viral

Buffalo News

By: *Bill Hoppe*

Earlier this season, Buffalo Sabres prospect Vasily Glotov informed his coaches he planned to utilize his slick talents to score a tricky lacrosse-style goal.

Having successfully pulled it off once last season in junior hockey, the affable Glotov, 21, possessed the confidence he could do it again as an ECHL rookie with the Cincinnati Cyclones.

"I'm like, 'Hey, I'm going to do this one day,'" said Glotov, who lived up to his words Friday, lifting the puck behind the net and quickly whipping his stick around to score the winner with 50 seconds left in regulation against the Toledo Walleye.

With the game tied 1-1 — "I don't know the clock, I don't know the score," he said of his mindset as the play started — the Russian winger pounced on his opportunity.

"I got confidence at this point," Glotov said. "Sometimes in a game you're feeling it, and I was like, 'OK, I'm doing this right now.' I knew I'm going to do this and I knew it was going to go in somehow."

After Glotov grabbed defenseman Arvin Atwal's pass in the right corner, none of the Walleye defenders pursued him behind the net, giving him precious time and space.

"So I lifted my stick, which is probably the hardest part," Glotov said. "Sometimes there's snow or your tape is not well conditioned."

Then one quick, fluid motion, Glotov picked up the puck off the ice and stuffed it over goalie Pat Nagle's right shoulder.

"Totally high risk," Cyclones coach Matt Thomas said of Glotov's nifty move. "Fifty seconds left . . . and you're going to have the presence of mind to think that might be something that will work, really shows how confident somebody has to be in themselves to do that."

When the puck went in, Glotov said he "absolutely freaked out."

Not only had he scored a highlight-reel goal, it put the Cyclones up late over their fiercest rival.

"I was like crazy excited," Glotov said. "I didn't know what to do. I was like blacked out, basically.

"My (celebration) was more wild because of (scoring the winner), not because of the goal."

On the bench, Thomas' jaw dropped.

"It was one of those ones, 'Did that just really happen?'" said Thomas, who added that the Cyclones devote the first 30 minutes of practices to skill development.

The excitement overwhelmed Glotov so much he zoomed by teammate Eric Knodel and took off down the ice.

Lacrosse-style hockey goals, of course, are incredibly rare. The most famous one, Mike Legg's goal for Michigan in 1996, inspired Glotov. He has practiced the fundamental parts of the move for years, trying to emulate Legg, but quicker.

The 5-foot-11, 174-pound Glotov said he had made a few attempts to lift the puck behind the net during games earlier this year.

Last season, his second and final in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, Glotov tried it a few times with the Shawinigan Cataractes.

"Every time I tried it, the puck didn't lift or (I) lifted the puck and lost it halfway through," he said.

Finally, Glotov scored one in Baie-Comeau. He figured the video of the goal would go viral.

"I was like, 'Oh my God, this is going to go wild,' " he said.

Then Glotov texted his father, who watches every game, and found out there was no video feed that day. One of Shawinigan's coaches sent Glotov a high angle shot of the goal.

Video of Friday's goal quickly spread on the internet.

"I just wanted to try it out," Glotov said of the move. "It worked out perfectly."

His dynamic skill has wowed crowds at development camps since the Sabres drafted him in 2016. Despite being a seventh-round pick from a past regime, the Sabres awarded him an AHL contract.

Glotov has earned ECHL All-Star honors and scored 11 goals and 33 points in 47 games as a rookie.

So what's holding Glotov back from playing in the American Hockey League on a regular basis?

Thomas said Glotov, who has played two games with the Rochester Americans, must get stronger.

"You can tell he's a late bloomer in terms of physically maturing," Thomas said. "I think ... in our league as well, if he gets stronger, it could be scary how good good he will be."

Redmond's return powers the Amerks over Cleveland

C&C Worldwide

By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*

With three straight unanswered goals over the final 22 minutes of regulation, the first-place Rochester Americans (32-16-3-2) flipped a 2-1 deficit into a 4-2 victory over the Cleveland Monsters (24-23-6-1) Wednesday night at the Blue Cross Arena.

With the two-goal win, the Amerks have collected 23 out of a possible 32 points in their last 16 games and have improved to 25-6-2-3 against Cleveland since the start of the 2011-12 campaign, which includes a 5-1-0-0 mark this season.

Rochester has also notched 31 points in its last 23 games dating back to a 4-0 shutout win in Cleveland on Dec. 26 and maintain a three-point lead atop the AHL's North Division standings.

Zach Redmond, who returned to the lineup after missing the previous 11 games, became the first blueliner in team history to reach the 20-goal mark before adding an assist, while Wayne Simpson and Danny O'Regan each recorded their 18th goals of the season. Taylor Leier booked his 13th tally of campaign to complete the scoring for Rochester, which picked up its third straight win. Goaltender Scott Wedgewood earned his 11th win in the last 14 games and improved to 19-7-2 on the season as he stopped 29 shots on the night to pick up the 100th win of his pro career.

Forwards Dan DeSalvo and Mark Letestu each collected two-assist efforts for Cleveland, which is winless in its last three games, while Paul Bittner and Tommy Cross both lit the lamp in the defeat. Netminder Jean-Francois Berube, who appeared in his Eastern Conference-leading 37th game of the slate, made 29 saves but suffered the loss.

Just 51 seconds after the Monsters took a 2-1 lead late in the second period while on the man-advantage, the Amerks returned the favor as O'Regan was credited with the game-tying goal as he tipped a Redmond shot from the point with 1:42 left in the stanza.

With the tally, Rochester, which owns the seventh-best power-play percentage (20.9%) in the league, has gone 24-for-87 over the last 23 games.

While the teams went into the second intermission tied at 2-2, the Amerks regained the lead at the 6:15 mark of the final frame. Carrying the puck into the offensive zone down the right wing, Remi Elie powered his way towards Berube. As Elie attempted to stuff the puck past the goaltender, it would eventually be knocked into the net by Leier.

Elie was awarded the primary helper, his sixth point (3+3) in the last six games since joining the Amerks, while Andrew Oglevie also picked up an assist on the marker.

Cleveland nearly tied the contest and forced overtime with under six minutes left in regulation, but Wedgewood stoned Miles Koules on a breakaway to keep it a one-goal game. The Monsters pressed to find the equalizer and pulled Berube for the extra attacker during the final two minutes, but Simpson sealed the 4-2 win as he put the puck into the vacant net from Scott Wilson and Kevin Porter.

"We had a good start to the game," said Porter. "The first 10 minutes of the first, we played really well as we had a lot of shots, good chances and kept it simple."

While they tied the game, I thought we battled the whole 60 minutes and came out with two points.”

Early in the first period as the puck made its way around the boards, Redmond, who already set a new single-season franchise record for goals by a defenseman, wasted little time as turned and flung it to the net. The shot handcuffed Berube and it found the back of the net a mere 2:45 into the contest.

“Tonight’s game was a good game to get back into the lineup,” said Redmond, who had a his second eight-shot game of the season. “With all the power-plays, that makes it easy to get a feel for the puck and get going again. It was a good team win and the feeling in the room is pretty good right now.”

Later in the opening period, the Monsters drew a pair of penalties in succession and capitalized on the second infraction to even the game at 1-1 before the end of end of the first frame.

Much similar to the first period, Cleveland scored inside the final three minutes of stanza to take a 2-1 lead at the 17:29 mark while on the man-advantage. The Amerks, however, drew their own penalty and tied the game with 1:42 left in the stanza as O’Regan tipped a Redmond blast from atop the point. Victor Olofsson snapped a four-game scoring drought as he picked up the secondary helper.

After the clubs entered the second intermission knotted up at 2-2, Rochester tallied a pair during the final period to record the 4-2 victory.

“I liked our first period,” Amerks head coach Chris Taylor said. “After we got a little undisciplined and gave up a couple power-play goals, I liked how we had to fight our way back. I thought we did a good job even when we were not at our best to come away with two points.”

**NOTES* — The Amerks conclude the final full week of the month on Friday, Feb. 22 when they visit the Utica Comets at 7 pm before hosting the Belleville Senators at 7:05 pm on Saturday on home ice. . . Amerks assistant coach Toby Petersen spent the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons behind the bench with the Monsters. Petersen helped the team earn its first Calder Cup in 2016. Tonight is just the sixth game between the Amerks and Monsters since the 2015-16 season. Rochester holds a record of 24-6-2-3 over Cleveland since the start of the 2011-12 campaign. Monsters captain Nathan Gerbe spent 5 seasons in the Buffalo Sabres organization from 2008-12 and was named the AHL’s Rookie of the Year in 2008-09 after leading all first-year players with 56 points (30+26) in 57 games for the Portland Pirates. . . Several Amerks players will spend Thursday afternoon delivering coffee and donuts to Rochester area firehouses and police stations. The visits to local law enforcement agencies will be a prelude to the team’s annual “Hometown Heroes Night,” on Saturday, Feb. 23 when the Amerks host the Belleville Senators at 7:05 pm at the Blue Cross Arena.

Leier breaks 3rd period tie in Amerks win
Rochester First
By: *Thad Brown/Amerks.com*

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Many sides of a champion: How legendary hockey coach Joe Crozier put family first
Democratic & Chronicle
By: *Leo Roth*

On a recent midwinter's day, Joe Crozier sits comfortably in the cozy family room of a home he and his wife, Bonnie, have shared for 30 years.

The one with the sign on the front door that reads, "We interrupt this family for hockey season."

"What questions you got for me?" Crozier says after shaking hands with a sportswriter from his Rochester past. At 90 years old, his eyes still twinkle, his smile remains a magnet drawing people in.

Joe Crozier is among the most revered sports figures in Rochester history, a member of the storied Rochester Americans Hall of Fame as a player, coach, general manager and owner.

In the mid-1960s, he won three Calder Cups in a span of four seasons, returned 15 years later to take another Rochester team to the finals, and — after all that — mentored a young John Van Boxmeer to a championship in 1987.

As coach of the Buffalo Sabres during their formative years, he assembled the famed French Connection line and led them to their first playoff berth in 1972-73.

He was behind two Lester Patrick Cup champions in Vancouver.

From Manitoba to Quebec to British Columbia to Alberta to Ontario to a New York state of mind, the affable Crow has roosted in 16 cities (some more than once), rubbing elbows — and ruffling feathers — with the biggest names in the game.

Winning, grinning and helping grow professional hockey over the course of six decades into the multibillion-dollar industry it is today. A feisty, quick-witted mastermind whose motivational high jinks entertained generations of fans and put Rochester and Buffalo on the hockey map.

"I hate to say 'old-school' because the term is overused, but he's a true hockey original," says Larry Quinn, former Sabres president and managing partner, now with the Buffalo Board of Education. "You say the name 'Joe Crozier' and people pick up the phone right away. They don't make them like him anymore."

No, the beloved man in the chair is no ordinary Joe.

And as he celebrates another milestone birthday, parts of his colorful and complex life that are not so well known are being shared by a grateful and proud family.

Joe Crozier is the loving patriarch of five children and 10 grandchildren from two marriages.

He's also the showman who thrived in the public eye but privately struggled with depression.

Who, after a whirlwind period of eight jobs in 13 years, jumped off the coaching carousel so that Bonnie and their young sons, Richard and Gregory, could know the kind of normalcy his first family did not.

The guy who discovered what balance meant.

Who, by staying put, found a new kind of glory as a cherished behind-the-scenes ambassador for the Sabres organization for 25 years, advising owners, coaches, executives — even kids in the ticket office — until age 82.

Who never grew tired of going to the rink.

Rich Crozier, who has followed in his dad's skates as a successful travel and high school hockey coach, says that every single time he takes a team to Rochester, a referee or stranger will see his last name and ask, "Is Joe Crozier your dad?"

"And I say it with pride, 'Yeah, that's my dad,'" says Rich, 43, who has won five parochial school state titles with St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute. "And everybody's got a story."

Sadly, the one who can't tell those stories with the ease of a wrist shot is Joe Crozier.

He has fought back from many health challenges in recent years but is now dealing with an accelerating dementia that has made his mind like "file cabinets," his family said.

Thoughts are locked away, only for drawers to mysteriously open when prodded or when least expected.

But others remember Joe Crozier. Family, friends, colleagues, players who loved him like a father and never forgot his life lessons.

"He was a great father and still is to this day," says Shayne Crozier, 67, of Vancouver, Joe's oldest son from his first marriage. "He's not an easy book; there are a lot of layers there."

Joe Crozier points to the banners as he exits the War Memorial ice following a Calder Cup playoff game in 1984. Pointing to the banners became a ritual during the team's 1984 playoff run.

Three miniature replica Calder Cups rest on a shelf.

A photograph of the French Connection autographed by Gil Perreault, Rene Robert and the late Rick Martin with touching expressions of thanks is displayed on a table.

An artist's rendering of Joe and Punch Imlach, his mentor and tormentor from one of hockey's most celebrated relationships, hangs on a wall.

A giant stuffed black crow stands watch in a corner.

"You have to know that my dad absolutely loved Rochester."

Joe Crozier is dressed in a dark sweater and dark slacks. His silver hair is neatly combed. And when asked about Rochester and the Amerks, one of those file cabinet drawers flies open.

"Rochester, when we won the Calder Cups, it was a helluva spot, just great, and I loved it there," Crozier says. "Pointing at the banners, I loved that. My town."

It's an expression Rich and Greg Crozier heard religiously as the mileage, Thruway tolls and years added up while they were living out their own hockey lives.

Rich, an elementary school principal in Buffalo, played college hockey at Hobart.

Gregory, 42, who works in medical technology sales in Rhode Island, played at the University of Michigan, winning two NCAA Division I titles, including 1996 when ex-Amerk and current Sabres GM Jason Botterill was a teammate. Greg had a long AHL career and played one NHL game for Pittsburgh.

"You have to know that my dad absolutely loved Rochester," Rich says. "When we were kids and playing youth hockey, we went to Rochester all the time for games. As we pulled in, or when we passed the sign reading 'Rochester,' he'd always say the same thing, 'Guys, this is my town.'"

He won other titles in Quebec, Vancouver and Kitchener. He gained more fame coaching NHL teams in Buffalo and Toronto. But it's a hockey love affair — between fans in Rochester and a coach who cared perhaps too much — that still burns.

Joe Crozier was born in Winnipeg, one of eight children. His father died when he was a teenager. Hockey, played on frozen roads with Sears catalogs for shin pads, became his way out.

He was a star defenseman for the Brandon Wheat Kings for two seasons, marrying — according to family lore — the first girl he met after stepping off the bus in Manitoba, Marjorie Robins.

He turned semi-pro in 1949-50 and soon landed with the Quebec Aces, a storied team in the Quebec Senior Hockey League. The legendary Jean Beliveau was a teammate for two seasons. Willie O'Ree, the NHL's first black player, played for Crozier after Crow became player/coach/part owner with Imlach.

"We were so good that NHL teams wouldn't play exhibition games against us."

As his playing days wound down, Crozier's acumen for coaching and the business side of hockey became evident. "I always wanted to be a coach," he says.

He arrived in Rochester in 1963-64 and the timing was perfect.

With Imlach's four-time Stanley Cup champion Maple Leafs funneling talent, and Crozier's motivational touches, the Amerks won titles in 1964-65, 1965-66 and 1967-68, with a trip to a fourth final in between.

Stars like Al Arbour, Red Armstrong, Don Cherry, Les Duff, Dick Gamble, Bronco Horvath, Daryl Sly, Jim Pappin, Gerry Cheevers and Bobby Perrault were Rochester sports royalty.

What made those teams so spectacular?

"The way we all liked each other," Crow says. "How we did things together and how we did things so well."

Cherry, 84, a colorful character in his own right who went on to coach the Amerks and Boston Bruins with distinction before his star soared as an analyst on Hockey Night in Canada, says getting picked by Crozier from Leafs camp to come to Rochester was the "biggest break of my life."

"We played in four championships in a row and won three," says Cherry, who stayed a decade in Rochester. "We were so good that NHL teams wouldn't play exhibition games against us."

Crozier's superstitious habits were legendary even by hockey standards. He kept lucky beads in his pocket. He wore the same tie or insisted on the same bubble bath if the team was winning.

One routine was coming into the locker room and kicking a plastic garbage can for good luck. One day, the trainer swapped in a garbage can made of steel.

"Joe comes in, kicks the can, and breaks his toe," Cherry says. "He wore a plaid slipper around and we went on a hot streak, 18 straight or something, and he wouldn't change that slipper."

When he won his first Calder Cup, Crozier, then 36, was just a year or two older than some of his stars. But his people skills were sharper than a skate blade. He could assess personalities better than a tarot card reader and became known as a "players coach" long before the term was popularized.

"Joe had everyone's number and knew how to motivate people," Cherry says. "We had great clubs, no mistake about it, but a lot of people have great clubs and can't get the best out of them. Joe, he got the best out of everybody. He was a winner." That was true almost everywhere he went.

After packaging himself and a dozen Rochester players in a 1968 business arrangement with the Vancouver Canucks, Crozier was behind two Western League championship clubs, giving him five titles in the span of six years.

There was no hotter coach in hockey.

Unfortunately for Crow, his dream of coaching the Canucks when they joined the NHL in 1970 never materialized after a falling out with owners. It was his first real sour taste of the vagaries of professional sports — contract squabbles, player injuries, entire leagues going belly up.

And yet he persevered.

"He was very disappointed that Vancouver didn't hire him for its NHL team," Cherry says. "How could you not want a guy who won five championships in two different leagues? When they went to the NHL, the Canucks looked silly. They paid the price for not keeping Joe Crozier."

Turns out Vancouver's loss was Buffalo's gain.

Being hired in 1971 by old friend Punch Imlach to coach the Cincinnati Swords, the Sabres' AHL affiliate, soothed Joe Crozier's Vancouver heartache. But it was a heart attack suffered by Imlach that handed him his first NHL job.

True to Crozier form, it would be memorable and historic.

In 1972-73, his first full season as Buffalo's coach, Crozier placed three French Canadian-born players on the same line. Perreault, Robert and Martin combined for 105 goals, leading the Sabres to a late-season surge that powered them into the playoffs for the first time.

"It popped, like bringing a puzzle together," says Bonnie Crozier as she flips through scrapbooks of newspaper articles she lovingly assembled. "All three were just good, good kids."

Perreault, the playmaker, could stick handle in a phone booth. Martin, the sniper, could turn startled goaltenders into statues as he blasted pucks past them. And Robert, the most complete player, had blazing speed, a lethal shot and worked hard in the corners.

But beyond their talents, the tarot card reader sensed something.

"Joe had played in Quebec City with Jean Beliveau and the Aces, so I'm sure he knew the French culture, and by putting three French guys together he knew what probably was going to happen," Perreault, 68, says from his home in Victoriaville, Quebec. "We just clicked."

Robert, acquired in a trade, was a center, but Crozier put him at right wing.

"I'd ask Joe, 'What do you want me to do?'" says Robert, 70, speaking from his Punta Gorda, Florida, home. "He said, 'Just hang back and be a garbage collector.' Well, the garbage collector got 40 goals."

Crozier also instructed Martin where to be, going so far as to spray paint blue dots on the ice in practice, knowing those were the areas Perreault would get him the puck. Martin, who died in 2011 of a heart attack, scored 37 goals that season and 52 each of the next two seasons.

"Joe was a very, very strict coach. He never believed in going easy on us; we never got any days off," Robert says. "When he was mad, he'd skate us two hours without pucks. But aside from that, he never got out-coached behind the bench. He was always aware of everything, and you always knew where you stood with him. One thing about Joe, he was very, very loyal to his players."

"After I scored, Joe charged across the ice and bit my ear so hard, I thought he chewed it off."

During those grueling no-puck skates, Crozier would sit in a chair at center ice and sip coffee. Message delivered.

"Joe could be demanding, no question, but I don't think you win championships and don't become demanding," Bonnie says. "But he was good to his players and he loved to teach."

In the playoffs, Buffalo was pitted against one of the greatest Montreal teams ever. The Canadiens, led by 11 future Hockey Hall of Famers, had lost just 10 games all year. When they raced to a 3-0 series lead, everyone assumed the Sabres' fate was sealed.

But Crozier, the NHL's coach of the year, willed them to a 5-1 win at home and a 3-2 victory in overtime in Montreal, with Robert netting the winner.

"After I scored, Joe charged across the ice and bit my ear so hard, I thought he chewed it off," says Robert, laughing. "He said, 'I knew you were going to do it, I just knew it, I knew it.'"

Two days later, on April 12, 1973, eventual Cup champion Montreal closed out the series with a 4-2 win in Buffalo. The players were heartbroken, but they were uplifted when grateful fans at the old Aud serenaded them with chants of "Thank you, Sabres."

When he's reminded of that seminal moment in western New York sports history, Joe Crozier's eyes light up. "Thank you, Sabres.' That was the best thing of my whole life to hear that," he says.

Crozier coached Buffalo just one more season (the team failed to make the playoffs after Perreault broke his leg and defenseman Tim Horton was killed in a car crash).

With his contract expiring and his relationship with Imlach strained yet again, Crozier jumped to the rival World Hockey Association. Things were never dull regarding Crozier and Imlach, who died in 1987 at age 69.

"They had been together so long, and we are talking two very strong-willed men and they certainly had their sparks," Bonnie Crozier says. "But truth is, they worked well together regardless, and knowing Joe back in those days, taking orders wasn't something he liked. Joe liked to be the big boss."

The Sabres advanced to their first Stanley Cup final in 1974-75 under Floyd Smith, losing to the Philadelphia Flyers in six games.

"Even though he wasn't coaching us anymore," Perreault says, "Joe was a big part of that."

"We were all sad to see Joe go because we thought with Joe behind the bench we surely were guaranteed to win a Stanley Cup with him," Robert says. "I guess it wasn't meant to be."

Unfortunately for Joe Crozier, neither was the WHA.

The renegade league was good for players, driving up salaries, and good for hockey, spreading the game into many more markets. But it folded by 1979, taking Crozier's Vancouver Blazers and Calgary Cowboys with it.

But hockey wasn't done with Crozier, and neither was Rochester.

The Croziers during Joe's head coaching stint with the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1980-81.

Winning isn't easy. There are sacrifices the public doesn't see.

Shayne Crozier, Joe's eldest son, confirmed that the demands of the job took a toll on his dad's first marriage.

His mom was 17 and his dad 18 when they wed, and Joe's playing and early coaching career saw them live in 13 cities during their 23-year union. They had three children. In addition to Shayne, there is Erin, 57, and Jamie, 56. They all live in Vancouver.

It was a challenging life, and Joe and Marjorie did their best to make it work.

"I didn't see fighting or anything like that. I think they just grew apart," Shayne says. "She complained a lot that he was away, but that was his job, making the money and supporting the family. I think that was maybe a big part of it."

The years spent in Rochester were happy ones.

Shayne, who attended Irondequoit High School, still remembers his address: 111 Oneta Road, the house with a hockey stick and puck etched into the shutters.

Don Cherry painted the house one summer.

"I think it peeled the next year," Shayne says.

He and his mom attended every Amerks game in those championship years. And while he was born in Quebec, Shayne says he feels he's an American and Rochester is his hometown.

"Rochester was the best place, pretty fantastic," he says. "Dad was so good at what he did and I was very proud of that. Being so young you don't realize how big of an impact he made, not until I got older. I guess I never said, 'How proud I am of you, Dad,' but I can say it now."

Marjorie Crozier, who died last year at age 87, never remarried. Joe supported the family financially and emotionally, Shayne says, doing "the best he possibly could to make everyone feel good about things."

Leaving Rochester at age 15 was difficult, Shayne Crozier says, so he applauded his dad for providing more stability for his stepmom and stepbrothers.

Joe Crozier met Veronica "Bonnie" Sheehan, a native of Quebec and daughter of a judge, when she worked behind the desk at Toronto's Royal York Hotel. In 1974, they eloped. They were married by a justice of the peace in Welland, Ontario.

Shayne Crozier says Bonnie has been a loving stepmom, making visits to Vancouver with Joe and maintaining regular contact.

"Honestly, she was the best thing that happened to my dad," says Shayne, who is retired from the food brokerage business. "She's the rock in the family. I truly believe most of his happiness is when he married Bonnie. I could tell a big change in him over the years."

Their age difference (17 years) and Joe's profession may have caused a bit of concern for Bonnie's family.

"My parents said, 'What do you mean he's a hockey coach? What kind of future is that?'" Bonnie says. "But when they got to know Joe, they loved him. I knew they would, and that's all that mattered."

Rochester celebrated the Amerks' victory in the 1983 Calder Cup finals with a parade down Main Street to City Hall.

After joining forces again with Imlach in Toronto (Crozier coached the Leafs for half of the 1980-81 season) followed by two rewarding years coaching junior players in Kitchener (his 1981-82 Memorial Cup champs were led by future first-round picks Brian Bellows, Scott Stevens, Al MacInnis and David Shaw), Crow's next break came from the unlikeliest source: Scotty Bowman.

As a giant underdog, Crozier had gotten under the more stoic Bowman's skin during that memorable '73 playoff, pulling out all the stops, such as having goalie Ken Dryden's pads successfully measured for a penalty during Game 5. But he earned a begrudging respect from the man who wound up winning nine Stanley Cups.

"As far as I'm concerned, Crozier is a great coach and did a great job of getting as much out of his team as possible," Bowman told the Canadian Press.

Now, as coach/GM in Buffalo, Bowman wanted Crozier on his side. After some thought — and Crozier's nudging — he tabbed him as Amerks coach for the 1983-84 season.

"I wanted to come back to Rochester so bad I could taste it," said Crozier at his reintroduction news conference where he wore a ring with three diamond chips, one for each of his Calder Cup titles from the 1960s.

Crozier was hardly intimidated replacing Mike Keenan, who had just guided Rochester to the championship. Meanwhile, a new generation of Amerks players warmed to his old-school ways.

Led by 55-goal scorer Mal Davis, veteran Yvon Lambert, Geordie Robertson, Claude Verret, Bob Mongrain and Randy Cunneyworth, Rochester advanced to the Calder Cup finals, where it fell to Maine in five games.

Crozier was crestfallen that he didn't deliver another title to Amerks fans as he promised. But three years later, he would make good, only in a different way.

After serving as associate coach and running scouting operations, Crozier was at another career crossroads when Bowman was fired early into the 1986-87 season and he wasn't named his successor.

Rather than fly the coop and chase other coaching opportunities as in the past, Crow accepted the role of Sabres liaison to Rochester, where he took up-and-comer John Van Boxmeer under his wing.

A former Sabres' defenseman, Boxie had spent two non-playoff years in Rochester learning by trial and error and fending off critics. He eagerly welcomed Crozier's experience. For his part, Crozier welcomed the chance to impart his knowledge, enthusiastically serving as Van Boxmeer's confidant, strategist, player psychologist, travel secretary and club comedian.

Dubbed "the old crow and the young bird" in a Rochester Times-Union headline, they formed a partnership that earned Rochester its fifth Calder Cup title.

"It was huge for me because at that time it's not like I had any assistants — it was me and the trainer," says Van Boxmeer, 66, who enjoyed a 25-year coaching career and today is a western scout for Buffalo based out of Los Angeles. "Joe was the only

person I had to bounce ideas off, and his experience was invaluable. He loved to be around the rink, around the guys, and tell stories."

There are no shortage of those.

Like how in 1983-84 Crozier conducted a fighting segment on his TV show Crow's Corner, instructing kids, "Be sure to get the first punch in." WHEC-TV was flooded with calls from angry parents.

How during one game against Binghamton, he turned his suit jacket inside out to protest the refereeing and change his team's luck. The Amerks won 6-3.

How during the playoffs, Crozier's teams always stayed in a Batavia hotel with players encouraged to go to the nearby harness track. "If they lose a little money, they'll be hungrier for that playoff bonus," he reasoned.

How one of his motivational ploys before a Game 7 was to deliver champagne to his own locker room, with the attendant instructed to say, "Oops, wrong room."

As for gamesmanship, Crozier wrote the manual.

A lack of hot water in the visitors' showers at the War Memorial? The elevator always out of order on game day, forcing opponents to walk up a long flight of stairs? Only the Crow knows.

He once instructed Boxie on how to hold a productive team meeting.

"Joe said, 'Get the guys in the locker room and put a couple cases of beer in the middle,'" Van Boxmeer says. "'Come back in an hour and they'll be ready to talk.'"

In those days, Crozier was never without a suitcase, the kind used by door-to-door salesman. It contained papers along with a horseshoe for good luck and a knife for making a point.

When Van Boxmeer said one day that only half the team was working and playing well, Crozier reached into his suitcase, took out the knife, placed it on his desk and said, "Cut 'er back." As in, shorten his bench to his two best lines and four best defensemen.

"I said, 'Joe, we're a development league here. We have to play the young kids,'" Boxie says. "He goes, 'Develop them in practice. Remember son, they can't fire you as long as you're winning.'"

And win they did that year, going 46-26-7, good for 101 points, matching Keenan's then-club record.

Led by the likes of Jody Gage, Gates Orlando, Don Lever, Richie Dunn, Jim Hofford and Daren Puppa in net, the Amerks beat Sherbrooke in a grueling seven-game final.

The series produced not just another title, but one of the great mysteries in Rochester hockey history when Puppa's jersey went missing before Game 7. Playing in a new sweater with makeshift numbers, Puppa, who had struggled in the series, made 31 stops in the 4-2 clinching win.

"The way I've been playing, it made me feel better that somebody still wanted my jersey," Puppa quipped.

But who took it? Nobody could say. But days later, Crozier showed up wearing Puppa's No. 31 road blue — or a facsimile — at a celebration party.

When he's asked about the caper after all these years, Crozier says, "I did it. I took the jersey."

Had another file drawer opened in his mind? Was the truth finally out?

"I don't think Joe did it to get anything going," Van Boxmeer says. "But I do think he enjoys the mystery of people thinking he planned that."

Van Boxmeer (337 wins) would become the winningest coach in franchise history before Cunneyworth (340) passed him. That two of his protégés leapfrogged him in the record books makes Crow (256) want to crow.

"I loved him," Crozier says of VanBoxmeer. "John did a helluva a job."

They were birds of a feather.

Joe Crozier paces quietly in the basement of a Baltimore parking garage following a loss in 1984.

For Joe Crozier, putting away his coaching whistle was like Picasso putting away his paint brush. The rewards, however, would hip-check the pain.

At 57, the famous hockey coach was now a hockey dad, available to cheer on his kids. His boys could form friendships without the fear of moving again.

"Thank you, Sabres" became "Thank you, dad."

"What I want to convey is that people who do suffer from depression can certainly be very successful, and Joe Crozier is one of them."

"It was a nice transition the Sabres allowed him to have, working with John Van Boxmeer," says Rich, a father of four with a homemade rink in his backyard. "My dad probably had more to give and continue behind the bench, but he made the decision to sacrifice personal aspirations for the betterment of his family."

With time, Rich, who delivered an emotional induction speech for his dad during AHL Hall of Fame ceremonies in 2012, has come to admire his father even more for his selfless life choices.

"It's really been the last 10 years, when reflecting on my own coaching, that I have the same passion as my dad does for hockey," he says. "But it's also understanding the importance of finding that balance with family."

When asked about stepping away from coaching, Joe Crozier says it wasn't heroic.

"I had enough really," he says.

As a hockey wife, Bonnie Crozier was and is very protective of her husband. But she talks openly now of how Joe struggled with bouts of depression and how he bravely sought treatment.

It was during coaching stints in Cincinnati, Calgary and Rochester the second time that Crozier was hospitalized. Newspaper articles cited the reasons for his absences as "exhaustion" or "illness" and did not elaborate.

In Rochester, Crozier was finally diagnosed properly with depression and treated by Dr. Leon Canapary, who died in 2017 at age 85.

"What I want to convey is that people who do suffer from depression can certainly be very successful, and Joe Crozier is one of them," says Bonnie, who lost a nephew to suicide and is passionate about mental health issues. "I don't think there are too many families not affected. Joe's not going behind the bench ever again and it's not going to affect anything regarding him now, but he did suffer bouts.

"There's a stigma about certain things, but it has nothing to do with who you are and what you are in life and what you do, and I want people to have hope that you can get help and you can get better."

Coaching didn't cause Crozier's depression. But the all-consuming lifestyle and Joe's fierce competitiveness may have been triggers, family members say.

Like many successful athletes and coaches, Joe loved to win but hated losing more. And the highs couldn't always assuage the lows. Photographers sometimes caught him alone with his thoughts after tough defeats.

"I didn't know of depression, but Joe did take things so serious," Cherry says. "Losses, he couldn't toss them off. Hockey was his whole life and he might have been semi-burned out at times. When you're the general manager and coach, you have to get the players, too.'"

Shayne Crozier remembers his dad being a "bear" whenever the Amerks lost.

"He'd come home and go 'Wow, that guy, why did I put him on the ice?' " he says. "We'd be like, 'Dad, the game's over, it's OK.' But he'd be very unhappy. He was a perfectionist and wanted to win, and he took losses hard and it affected him."

Depression wasn't spoken about in the Crozier home, Rich Crozier says. But as he looks back he can "connect the dots" on why his dad was less engaged some days.

"Hockey's an emotional game, especially when it's your livelihood," Rich says. "One-hundred percent everything contributed. The stresses just wore on him.'"

The 1983-84 season was Crozier's last as a coach, though he did work five games in 1987 while Van Boxmeer served a suspension. He hadn't lost his touch, either, going 4-1-0.

To this day, the balcony section of the arena is affectionately called by fans "The Crow's Nest."

"He was — and still is — revered, particularly in Rochester, where he won championships," Van Boxmeer says of his friend. "Joe was a big, big personality. He had all kinds of charisma — he was a showman, he loved that. I think he lived for that.

That's why he enjoyed coming back and being a mentor because he was still around and involved and we had good teams.

They were good memories and good times."

Like dancing across the War Memorial stage with Nik and the Nice Guys during the Calder Cup party in 1987 while wearing sunglasses.

Pure Crow. Soaring once more.

Visitors are welcomed to the Crozier household in Amherst, New York, with a hockey stick wreath on the front door.

Joe Crozier's family is grateful that the Sabres and four different owners saw a treasure in their midst. That Joe's vast experience and celebrity could help the organization in myriad ways.

Some years, Crozier wasn't sure he still had a job but he kept showing up for work. In 1996 he was let go, but Larry Quinn, newly named as Sabres president, immediately hired him back as a personal adviser and mentor to coach Ted Nolan.

"I thought Joe's knowledge was invaluable, so a lot of times I'd ask his opinion about things and we'd talk about players, the coaching, and so forth," says Quinn, who trusted Crozier's contacts, including Bobby Orr, to help put in place the long successful GM/coach tandem of Darcy Regier and Lindy Ruff.

In the cutthroat world of pro sports, Crozier was a gust of refreshing cold rink air in his approach, Quinn says. He put the organization first and his ego second. He genuinely enjoyed helping others get ahead, doing so with wit, wisdom and a wink.

"Here's a guy who knows the game so well yet he was never a guy who would undermine anyone, it was always 'I think I can help here,'" Quinn says. "Often in these cases, people try to undermine people but Joe was never that way. It was always positive."

Eventually sliding full time into the Sabres' ticket office, Crozier found no job too big or too small. He answered phones, sold to groups, signed autographs. He was first in the office each morning to put the coffee on. At weekly meetings, he gave pep talks to the young staffers.

"The young people just adored him," Quinn says.

And so did fans.

"He answered the phone, 'Joe Crozier, Calder Cup champion,'" says John Sinclair, Sabres vice president of tickets who has been with the team for 30 years.

"He was very dedicated. He liked being at the rink, and we didn't restrain him. He'd walk down to the locker room and tell Teddy Nolan, 'Hey, you gotta work on this.' And then he'd be back in the ticket office selling. People still to this day tell me, 'I remember when Joe Crozier sold me my seats.' He was a great ambassador for us, especially with renewals, because he'd make a call and Joe just had this great way about him."

A way that could get a player to run through a brick wall or a fan to reach for his credit card.

"I liked it," Crozier says of his ticket office days. "I met a lot of nice people."

For his years of dedicated service, Crozier was inducted into the Sabres Hall of Fame in 2010. A commemorative silver sword hangs above his fireplace. The ultimate honor for a man who stood behind the Sabres bench a mere 2½ years but who has stood behind the team and the city for almost 40.

"One thing we're very proud of are the halls of fame dad is in," Rich Crozier says. "The Sabres Hall, that's for his body of work, too, and it was really the people in the ticket office he worked with that pushed for that."

Though no longer on the Sabres' payroll, Crozier has never officially retired, stopping work around 2012 and only when his health gave out. A torn Achilles, a hip replacement, a heart attack.

"Do you think Joe Crozier ever thought he was too good to work in the ticket office?" Bonnie Crozier says. "He'd leave here at 5 o'clock in the morning. I'd try and hold him back and there was no holding him back. He's a person to this day that people want to talk to. I'll often go, 'You know, this guy used to coach the Buffalo Sabres?' And they'll go, 'What, are you crazy?' But they're all very, very nice."

Drawn to the man with the twinkle in his eye.

Hockey legend Joe Crozier in his Amherst home with his son, Rich. Joe Crozier coached the Rochester Americans to three Calder Cups and later coached the Sabres. He now suffers from accelerating dementia but still loves hockey.

The hospitals, the surgeries, the nursing homes are in Joe Crozier's past. He's home now. Watching Sabres games on television, enjoying visits from former players and old friends.

Until recently, he was a regular at Sabres' alumni events. Perreault drove 10 hours from Victoriaville last year to visit him in the hospital, and planned a return visit this month.

"Anything for a great man," Perreault says.

Crozier likes the look of this season's Sabres, who are much improved.

"I watch games all the time," says Crozier, who still has a GM's eye. "Jack Eichel, love him. And I really like (Jeff) Skinner. Good move."

As this visit winds down, Rich Crozier holds his dad's hand. Bonnie fixes his hair.

"We've dealt with a lot of transitions and this is the current stage," Rich says. "He's happy and comfortable, enjoys his routine, loves watching his hockey and likes to be surrounded by people he cares about, and he loves visits. My mom is very much the rock of the family in taking the lead."

Bonnie is Joe's chief caregiver, dressing him, fixing his meals, reassuring him he's safe. It's what a 45-year love story looks like.

"Listen, it's very simple, as simple as you can get in life," she says. "Here's a man who worked very hard for us, Richard, Gregory and me and everybody else. Now it's our turn."

What does Joe think of Bonnie?

"She's a good woman, the best in the world," he says. "I love her so much."

And the fans of Rochester? The file cabinet drawer flies open one more time.

"We won championships and I was happy about doing what I did for them and they were good to me," Joe Crozier says. "Tell them I love 'em."