



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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TODAY'S GAME: Binghamton vs Rochester

Amerks win 5th straight road game

C&C Worldwide

By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*

On the strength of a pair of goals from forwards Taylor Leier and Victor Olofsson, as well as a two-point (1+1) night from Alexander Nylander, the Rochester Americans (37-18-3-2) won their fifth straight road contest by a 5-3 score over the Binghamton Devils (24-33-5-0) Saturday at Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena. It was the seventh meeting between the intrastate rivals this season and the first of two on the weekend as the Amerks look to complete the sweep on Sunday afternoon when the home-and-home series shifts up to Rochester.

Along with the win, which keeps the Amerks within a point of the Syracuse Crunch for the first place in the AHL's North Division standings, the team has collected 33 out of a possible 46 points in its last 23 games. The victory also gave Rochester points in 12 of the last 16 games against the Devils dating back to the start of the 2017-18 slate. The Amerks show a 9-4-2-1 record during that span.

While Leier and Olofsson each tallied a pair of goals in the win, Rasmus Asplund, who had his first multi-goal of the season last night, added two assist tonight as did Danny O'Regan. Nylander extended his goal-scoring streak to four games as he scored his fourth during that span and 12th of the campaign to go with an assist while goaltender Adam Wilcox improved to 10-7-3 on the slate as he made 30 saves.

Despite a two-assist night from Ryan Murphy, and goals from Sam Kurker, Marian Studenic and Nikita Popugayev, Binghamton dropped its fifth straight game and 10th in its last 11 games. Netminder Cam Johnson made his fourth appearance in the last five games but suffered the loss while stopping 25 of the 29 shots he faced.

On the ensuing shift after Binghamton tied the game at two during the latter portion of the middle period, the line trio of Asplund, O'Regan and Olofsson were quick to reclaim the Amerks' lead as Asplund and O'Regan set-up Olofsson at the 15:55 mark.

Before the end of the second period and with a 3-2 cushion, O'Regan handed Olofsson a centering pass in-between the face-off dots in the Devils zone and Olofsson doubled the lead going into the intermission. The marker, which eventually held up as the game-winner, was his team-leading 23rd of the season 50th point overall. He became the first Amerk to reach the 50-point mark since Cole Schneider during the 2016-17 campaign.

It was also his eighth game-winner of the season, putting him one off the AHL lead behind only teammate Zach Redmond.

Despite facing a 4-2 deficit, Binghamton, which had 12 players on recalls to New Jersey coming into the matchup, made things interesting during the final 20 minutes of play as Kurker made it one-goal game at the 6:44 mark.

The scored remained the same until Leier, who appeared in his 300th professional game, sealed the 5-3 win as he scored into a vacant net with 36 seconds left in regulation from Kevin Porter. The assist was Porter's 200th of his AHL career.

Rochester, which has the second-best road record (19-6-3-1) in the AHL this season, has won 13 of its last 19 games away from the Blue Cross Arena dating back to Dec. 8.

The game appeared to remain scoreless heading into the first intermission, but Rochester struck twice late in the final minute of the opening period to go up 2-0 after the first 20 minutes of play. It marked the fifth time this season the Amerks had scored in the final minute of play of any period.

Binghamton responded with a pair of goals of its own to begin the second stanza, but Rochester countered back with another pair from Olofsson to take a 4-2 lead before adding an empty-netter in the third period.

After a quick turnaround, the Amerks and Devils close out the weekend on Sunday at 3:05 pm in Rochester as the home-and-home series shifts to the Blue Cross Arena.

Nylander extends goal streak in Amerks' win at Binghamton

Buffalo News

By: *Staff Report*

Alexander Nylander scored a goal for the fourth straight game and Victor Olofsson and Taylor Leier each scored a pair for the Rochester Americans Saturday night in a 5-3 victory over the Binghamton Devils before 4,318 at the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena in Binghamton.

Leier scored his first of the game and Nylander, the 21-year-old winger tallied on the power play to get the Amerks off in front in the opening period.

Binghamton tied it in the second on goals by Nikita Popugaev and Marian Studenic but Olofsson scored his 22nd and 23rd of the season to put the Amerks in front to stay before the middle period was over.

Sam Kurker made it 4-3 with a goal for the Devils at 6:44 of the third, but that was it for Binghamton.

Leier, who has scored seven goals for Rochester after coming from the Philadelphia Flyers organization in a trade last month for Justin Bailey, got an empty-net score with 36 seconds left.

The Amerks will be home against Binghamton at 3:05 p.m. Sunday to complete their three-games-in-three-days weekend.

Rochester (37-18-5, 79 points) remains in second place in the North Division of the American Hockey League one point behind Syracuse (37-17-6). The Crunch lost to the Wilkes-Barre Scranton, 4-3, in overtime on Saturday night to maintain their edge over the Amerks.

The Amerks are 1-5 against Binghamton on the season with three more games remaining between the teams in the AHL regular season. Rochester will be home to Utica on Wednesday night before a two-game road series on Friday and Saturday at Charlotte.

Olofsson, Leier power Amerks to fifth straight road win
13 WHAM

By: *Staff Report/Amerks*

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Rochester Too Much To Handle For BDeviils

All About The Jersey

By: *Jeff Ulmer*

Binghamton Devils, with another strong effort similar to Friday night vs Springfield, couldn't quite pull it off against the third best team in the league as the Rochester Americans skated away with a 5-3 win on Saturday at The Floyds. The loss was the team's season-high fifth in a row.

The Amerks benefited with two late goals in the opening period 52 seconds apart as Taylor Leier scored on a shot, short side of the net past Cam Johnson. After a faceoff win by Rasmus Asplund that sent the puck to Alexander Nylander, he then skated towards the slot with a wrist shot that sailed past Johnson on the power play with 2.0 seconds left in the period. That would be a big deal as both teams headed to the locker room with motivation leaning towards the Americans.

In the second Binghamton had tied it at two, as Nikita Popugaev scored after receiving a short pass off the stick of Brett Seney and with a wrist shot past Adam Wilcox for his first AHL goal. Soon after, hard work by Brian Ward paid off in dividends as he was able to battle his way through several players in the corner for a loose puck that finally bounced out to Brandon Baddock.

His short pass found Marian Studenic for a one-timer to send the big crowd into a frenzy.

However, before the goal replays were completed Rochester was able to regain the lead 15 seconds later. Victor Olofsson delayed his opportunity at the right time before unloading a snapshot with Tariq Hammond and Rasmus Asplund tangled up through the crease that created too much havoc for Johnson in front that created a partial screen.

In his second game since signed to a PTO, Sam Kurker scored his first for the Devils with a one-timer from the blueline that made it a 4-3 contest with 13:16 remaining in the third period. Hope was there as the players fought hard to at least send it to overtime but an empty net goal in the final minutes by Taylor Leier would result as the final blow for Binghamton.

BDeviils with all sorts of pressure, fell short despite out-shooting the Amerks 33-30.

- Eric Tangradi and Brandon Gignac called up to NJ while another PTO was handed out to Nick Sorkin at forward. Gignac made his NHL debut on Saturday for the Devils.
- With 12 regulars out of the line-up either called up by New Jersey or out injured, the team has performed well with what they have.
- Seney with a 4-game point streak (1g, 3a) since being sent down and has played big minutes while centering the second line between Edwardh and Kurker.
- Pops has 2 points (1g, 1a) in his last 2 games and his adjustments to NA soil is beginning to show, as he looks more comfortable with better puck management. His goal celebration was a thing of beauty as he popped the water bottle set on the cage.
- We chug along in what has been a mind-blowing experience with all the injuries hit hard up top in NJ. At this point, it's a shot of looking who can be a player that is offered a contract for next season across the organization.

NHL Farm Report: March 9 Binghamton falls to Rochester

Times Herald-Record

By: *Staff Report*

The Devils were unable to come back from a two-goal third period deficit, falling 5-3 to the visiting Rochester Americans in an American Hockey League contest inside the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena on Saturday night.

Despite carrying the play throughout the first period against Rochester, the Amerks showed the Devils just how dangerous they can be — scoring two goals in the final minute of the opening period. With 54 seconds remaining, Alexander Nylander threaded a cross-ice pass to Taylor Leier at the circle. Leier collected the pass and whipped a wrist shot over the shoulder of Cam Johnson.

The Amerks added their second goal of the period with only two seconds left. After a Brett Seney penalty, Nylander took a faceoff win and beat Johnson for his 12th of the year with the lone assist to Rasmus Asplund.

Binghamton cut into the 2-0 deficit 4:50 into the second period on the power play. Nikita Popugaev scored his first AHL goal, one night after recording his first point. Seney hit Popugaev with a pass through the slot, and the Russian winger put a puck under the cross bar — blowing up Rochester goalie Adam Wilcox's water bottle in the process. Ryan Murphy earned an assist as well.

The Devils tied the game at two with 4:20 remaining in the second period, courtesy of Marian Studenic. Brandon Baddock won a battle along the wall, fed a pass to Studenic in the high slot, who wired a one timer to the back of the net.

The tie was short lived. Victor Olofsson beat a screened Johnson on the rush 15 seconds after the Devils had evened the game.

Rochester then extended their lead to 4-2, scoring yet another goal in the final minute of the period. Olofsson recorded his second goal of the night, beating Johnson from the slot.

Once again, Binghamton cut another two-goal lead in half, scoring at 13:16 in the third. Sam Kurker blasted home a one-time shot on a pass from Desmond Bergin, making it a one goal game. Ryan Murphy earned his second assist of the night on Kurker's goal.

However, the Devils wouldn't be able to come back from the two-goal deficit this time. Taylor Leier iced the game with the empty-net goal with 36 seconds remaining — his second of the night.

The Devils will face the Amerks again Sunday, this time on the road in Rochester at 3:05 p.m.

Luck o' the Swedes? For the Amerks on Irish Night, yes
Pickin' Splinters
By: *Kevin Oklobzija*

The Rochester Americans billed Friday as Irish night, with a rendition of the Irish National Anthem, bagpipes and green uniforms providing a little Celtic flair.

Rasmus Asplund and Alex Nylander apparently didn't get the memo. They turned it into Swedish Night.

Asplund scored twice and Nylander once as the Amerks steamrolled the Bridgeport Sound Tigers 5-0 at Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

In playing one of their most complete games of the season, the Amerks halted Bridgeport's seven-game winning streak and improved to 36-18-3-2. The Sound Tigers had earned 19 of a possible 20 points in their past 10 games and gained a solid hold of second place in the AHL's Atlantic Division.

"That's a good team, they play really hard, and we wanted to make sure they turned pucks over and we didn't," said Amerks captain Kevin Porter, who converted a great give-and-go pass by C.J. Smith in to the game's first goal just 7:08 into the first period.

Here's your Friday Amerks Six Pack:

1. Asplund heating up

The first-year centerman from Sweden had little to show for solid play before Christmas. In his first 32 AHL games, he produced just 1 goal and 8 assists.

But over the past 26 games, he has scored 2-11-13.

"That's the way I want to play, that's the way I want to produce," he said.

His linemates almost all season have been Danny O'Regan and Victor Olofsson. They've played extremely well together, which is why Amerks coach Chris Taylor hasn't tinkered.

"Their chemistry all year has been remarkable," Taylor said.

2. Feel free to shoot ... please

Taylor said one reason for Asplund's increased productivity is a willingness to shoot the puck more often.

He became a little ineffective for a stretch because opponents knew he was usually looking to pass. They took away passing lanes and it often negated a scoring chance.

"He's got a great shot and we tell him all the time we wish he'd shoot more," Taylor said. "When he does, it opens up more for the whole line."

3. Shutout No. 4 for Wedgewood

Goalie Scott Wedgewood posted his fourth shutout of the season, making 29 saves while displaying an air of you're-not-beating-me-tonight confidence.

He said he's not all that infatuated with shutouts.

"It's a win," he said, emphasizing that wins are most important. "It's nice to see and it helps the numbers but I'm comfortable and happy with how I'm playing. The team knows what I'm going to give them."

Just once in the past 14 seasons has an Amerks goalie posted four shutouts: David Leggio in 2012-13. Before that, it was Ryan Miller, with eight in 2004-05.

Oh, and that 2004-05 season was also the last time the franchise won a playoff series.

4. Dominant from start to finish

The Amerks led 2-0 after the first period and 4-0 only 68 seconds into the second period. With nine minutes left in the second period, they were outshooting the Sound Tigers 25-9 and Bridgeport starting goalie Jeremy Smith was watching from the bench.

"We played a full 60 minutes at home and we didn't let up at all, which is great," Porter said.

5. A little D-pair experimentation

The coaching staff broke up the pairing of Zach Redmond and Lawrence Pilut, instead putting Pilut with Will Borgen while Redmond skated alongside Matt Tennyson. The third pairing had Andrew MacWilliam with Jack Dougherty.

Taylor said it's not necessarily permanent, and it might not even how they use the defensemen the rest of the weekend.

But he said they were experimenting a little, allowing Dougherty to play on the right side, for which they believe he is better suited, and also having Tennyson on the left.

And because Borgen, another of the Amerks dynamic rookies, is thinking defense first, Pilut can be more creative.

"It gives him a chance to get up in the play a little bit more," Taylor said.

6. A pair with Binghamton closes the weekend

The Amerks play at Binghamton Saturday and the teams come to Rochester for 3 p.m. Sunday rematch.

The Devils are an AHL-worst 24-32-5-0. Taylor said it's not easy to play a team out of contention, that Binghamton players are playing for next year's contract.

But when you're 24 points better in the standings, and the Syracuse Crunch have taken over first place in the North Division, there can be no excuses. Which the players know.

"We're chasing to clinch a playoff spot and we need four points," Asplund said.

Amerks blank the Bridgeport Sound Tigers

C&C Worldwide

By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*

With a pair of goals in each of the first and second periods, the Rochester Americans (36-18-3-2) grabbed a 4-0 lead 1:08 into the middle frame and never looked back on their way to a dominating 5-0 win over the visiting Bridgeport Sound Tigers (35-19-5-2) Friday night at The Blue Cross Arena. The flawless performance was the fourth this season by Amerks goaltender Scott Wedgewood, who tied a career-high by stopping all 27 shots he faced to keep the Amerks within two points of the Syracuse Crunch for first place in the AHL's North Division standings.

Along with the victory, the Amerks have collected 31 out of a possible 44 points in their last 22 games and have notched 39 points in their last 29 dating back to the day after Christmas. The win also gave Rochester the season-sweep over Bridgeport as they went a perfect 4-0-0-0 this season against the Sound Tigers.

Forward Kevin Porter, who returned to the Amerks lineup after missing the last three games, collected his fourth multi-point effort of the season as he opened the scoring to go with a helper, while Rasmus Asplund headlined a night of firsts with his first multi-goal outing of the season. Will Borgen also chipped in his first pro multi-point game with a two-assist night and Andrew Oglevie also posted a pair of points (1+1), bringing his recent offensive outburst to eight points (4+4) over his last eight games. Alexander Nylander completed the scoring as he recorded his career-best 11th goal of the season.

Wedgewood drew the nod in the Rochester crease for the third straight game and seventh time in the last eight tilts. The sixth-year goaltender improved to 23-10-2 on the season and boasts a 14-4-1 record in his last 19 appearances dating back to Dec. 26. His four shutouts, which are third-most in the league, are the most for him since the 2013-14 season.

The Sound Tigers, who entered the matchup riding a season-long seven-game win streak and had points in 10 straight, were held off the scoreboard for just the second time this season while Mitchell Vande Sompel and Kieffer Bellows each had a team-high three shots. Goaltender Jeremy Smith made 17 saves in 21 minutes but was given the loss before being replaced by Mitch Gillam, who made his American Hockey League debut early in the middle period. Gillam stopped 17 shots in 39 minutes of relief action.

Less than nine minutes into the opening frame, C.J. Smith, who has 30 points (14+16) over his last 25 games dating back to Dec. 5, intercepted an outlet pass in the neutral zone. The Amerks reigning Rookie of the Year entered the Bridgeport end of the ice and exchanged passes with Porter before Rochester's team captain tucked a shot inside the right leg of netminder to give the home club a 1-0 lead.

Just 1:32 after Porter's eighth marker of the year, Nylander ripped a shot under the crossbar to double Rochester's lead at the 8:40 mark. The tally, the Swedish forward's 11th of the season and third in the last three games, established a new career-high in both points (29) and goals. Oglevie and Borgen were given the assists on the goal that gave Rochester a 2-0 cushion going into the first intermission.

"It was a good start, obviously," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. "We had a good chance right off the opening face-off and when you get off to a good start, it just keeps building from there."

The Amerks, who carried a 16-6 shot-advantage in the second period, drew their first penalty of the night with 1:02 left to play in the opening frame. Rochester was unable to capitalize with the extra skater in the first half of the man-advantage but scored 19 seconds into the middle frame as a result of the carryover.

"It was a great start for us," Porter said. "We got pucks deep and they were turning over pucks. We got pucks to the net and got a couple of early goals. To have a great start, especially at home where we haven't had the greatest starts, it was really good for us."

After collecting a pass in the middle of the ice to enter the Sound Tigers zone, Asplund quickly snapped a shot from atop the left face-off dot and beat Smith overtop the glove hand to push the Amerks' cushion to 3-0. Wayne Simpson, who also returned to the lineup after missing the previous three games, and Lawrence Pilut recorded the assists on Oglevie's fourth goal of the season.

Rochester used its quick-strike offense for the second time of the night as Oglevie split the Bridgeport defensive pair and flipped shot overtop a sprawling Smith 1:08 into the frame. The marker, which put an early end to the Sound Tigers goaltender, was Oglevie's fourth of the campaign. Porter and Andrew MacWilliam picked up the helpers.

The Amerks took the four-goal advantage into the final period of regulation and finished off the scoring as Asplund was awarded his second tally of the night at the 11:54 mark from Danny O'Regan and Borgen.

"It was a huge win for us," Asplund said after his first-career two-goal game. "Bridgeport is one of the best teams in the league and we knew we had to play our best game. We really did play a good game."

Bridgeport posted a game-high 11 shots on Wedgewood over the final 20 minutes of play but the netminder turned aside all the rubber he faced to record the 5-0 shutout victory.

"Bridgeport is a great team," Wedgewood explained. "To get the lead early and then play a full 60-minute game, it was a good win. We wanted to do that and make this a difficult place for opponents to play."

Rochester's weekend continues on Saturday, Mar. 9 with the first of back-to-back meetings against the intrastate rival Binghamton Devils at the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena. Following the 7:05 p.m. matchup, the same two teams are slated to meet again in Rochester as the home-and-home series shifts to The Blue Cross Arena for a 3:05 p.m. matinee.

**NOTES* — Bridgeport's lineup featured Chris and Ryan Bourque, both sons of Stanley Cup champion and Hockey Hall of Famer Ray Bourque, as well as Greece native Stephen Gionta. . . Tonight's contest was just the 16th all-time meeting between the two clubs. With 3 wins earlier this season, the Amerks have improved to 6-1-1-0 in their last 8 meetings against the Sound Tigers, after going just 1-3-0-0 in the 4 meetings during the 2016-17 season. . . The Syracuse Crunch (77 points) maintained a 2-point lead over the Amerks (75 points) for first place in the North Division with a 4-0 win over the Utica Comets Friday night. Both teams have played 58 games.

Wedgewood, Amerks shutout Sound Tigers 5-0 to sweep season series

13 WHAM

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Sound Tigers win streak snapped by Americans

CT Post

By: *Staff Report*

The Bridgeport Sound Tigers saw their seven-game win streak come to an end on Friday in a 5-0 loss to the Rochester Americans at Blue Cross Arena.

Americans goaltender Scott Wedgewood made 27 saves for his fourth shutout this season (third in the AHL), while the Sound Tigers were blanked for just the second time all year. It was Bridgeport's (35-19-5-2) first regulation loss since Feb. 8 against Providence and ended its season series with Rochester winless (0-2-1-1).

The Amerks (36-18-3-2) took command early and carried a 2-0 lead into the first intermission. Kevin Porter struck first with the eventual game-winner at the 7:08 mark when he received a centering pass from C.J. Smith and rifled home a one-timer for his eighth goal of the season. Smith set it up by charging down the right wing and guiding a pass out front from the extended goal line.

Less than two minutes later, Alexander Nylander made it 2-0 with another one-time goal for his third tally in as many games. Andrew Oglevie forced a pass from the right wing to the slot, where Nylander zipped it past Jeremy Smith's blocker for his 11th of the season.

Rochester continued to pour it on in the middle frame with two goals 49 seconds apart to make it 4-0. Rasmus Asplund scored his first of two on the night with the game's only power-play goal just 19 seconds in, following a tripping penalty to John Stevens that carried over from the first. Wayne Simpson advanced a pass in the neutral zone and Asplund skated onto it before banking a shot off the far post and in.

Shortly thereafter, Oglevie swooped in behind Bridgeport's defense and elevated a shot over Smith from the doorstep following a pass from Porter. It ended Smith's night, as he was pulled from the crease and replaced by Mitch Gillam, who made his AHL debut after he was recalled from the Worcester Railers (ECHL) on Thursday.

Asplund capped the scoring at 11:54 of the third period when he forced home his fifth goal of the season following Danny O'Regan's end-to-end rush. It was the only tally Gillam allowed, finishing his debut with 17 saves on 18 shots in 38:52 of a no-decision.

Smith (16-10-4) made 17 saves on 21 shots in 21:08.

The Sound Tigers finished the game 0-fo-4 on the power play and 3-for-4 on the penalty kill, while Rochester led in shots, 39-27. It was a season-high in shots against for Bridgeport. Josh Ho-Sang did not play on Friday after he was returned on loan by the New York Islanders earlier in the afternoon.

The Sound Tigers continue their five-game road trip on Sunday with a 4 p.m. matchup against the Toronto Marlies at Coca-Cola Coliseum.

Will Borgen's physical style of play gives him puncher's chance with Amerks
Buffalo News
By: *Bill Hoppe*

C.J. Smith said he kept telling Rochester defenseman Will Borgen he should get into a fight.

After nearly a year in the AHL, Borgen had not yet been in a scrap. Smith knew his 6-foot-2, 187-pound teammate would hold his own.

"I kind of pushed him to get in one," joked Smith, Borgen's friend and roommate.

On Feb. 20 against the Cleveland Monsters, Borgen finally fought, dropping 6-3, 185 Ryan MacInnis by unleashing several wicked right swings as the crowd in Blue Cross Arena roared.

The frenzy of punches didn't disappoint Smith.

"I was pumped up watching that fight," said Smith, who was with the Sabres when Borgen fought MacInnis.

Smith added: "He was throwing some bombs."

Borgen looked like a seasoned fighting pro.

"It was wild, I guess," said Borgen, a fourth-round pick by Buffalo in 2015, 92nd overall. "I mean, I've never fought before, so I didn't know what to expect.

"It's not like you're going out there trying to fight someone. It was just the heat of the moment, it just happened."

While Borgen, 23, rarely fights, the prospect "loves the physical style of play," according to Amerks coach Chris Taylor.

"(He's) hard to play against and makes people pay a price," said one scout who has watched Borgen regularly this season.

Considering Borgen's penchant for contact, it's surprising it took him 58 AHL games to come to blows.

"He's definitely grown a lot of respect around the room in what he's been doing," Taylor said. "He's getting better every game."

Borgen left St. Cloud State following his junior year and was coached by Taylor for eight games last year. Still, Taylor said Borgen's physicality and conditioning during training camp surprised him.

"Ever since then, he's really defined himself as a good defenseman but also a person we can rely on in the offensive (zone)," Taylor said. "He's brought some offensive upside to him. He joins the rush, he makes really good plays at the blue line. His offensive side of the puck is really good as well."

Borgen possesses above-average speed, but so far, his offensive numbers — two goals and eight points in 57 contests — aren't eye-popping.

But Taylor said Borgen, who represented Team USA at the Pyeongchang Olympic Games last year, has continued to develop his offense. Taylor occasionally utilizes Borgen on the power play and he likes the way the rookie can get shots on net from the point during five-on-five action.

"You kind of don't think of that at the start," Taylor said of Borgen's offensive abilities. "Then over time, it's like, 'Wow, where did this come from?' It's like he keeps getting better and better right before your eyes."

Borgen showcased some of his offensive prowess Feb. 16 in Syracuse, moving into the slot and burying Yannick Veilleux's pass under the crossbar.

Ultimately, however, Borgen's grittiness and defensive abilities could help him reach the NHL.

"He'll finish hits," Smith said. "He just plays a hard game, really simple. He's just kind of a reliable D."

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Syracuse pushed past the Amerks and into first place with 75 points in the North Division on Wednesday when the Crunch beat Utica, 5-2.

The Amerks had been in sole possession of first place or tied since October. Both teams have played 58 games. They meet three more times this season.

Notes: The AHL suspended Amerks winger Remi Elie one game for an illegal check to the head of a Crunch player in Sunday's 4-1 home loss. Elie will sit out Friday's home game against the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. ... Smith, a winger, has compiled 14 goals and 28 points in his last 24 outings going back to Dec. 5. Overall, Smith has scored 20 goals and 46 points in 45 games. ... Amerks goalie Scott Wedgewood's 22nd win Saturday set a new career high. In his last 10 starts, Wedgewood is 5-3-2 with a 1.99 goals-against average and a .928 save percentage.

10 reasons why the Rochester Amerks are good again
Democrat & Chronicle
By: *Leo Roth*

From 2014-15 to 2016-17, the Rochester Americans missed the playoffs.

A three-year drought that was the longest in franchise history since the late 1960s.

A chaotic period of annual head coaching changes and player moves so numerous, pieces of tape sufficed for name plates.

Don't look now, but Rochester's storied AHL team has done an about-face and is streaking toward consecutive playoff berths under coach Chris Taylor.

With the regular season entering its final five-week push, the Amerks sport a 35-18-3-2 record, good for 75 points and a first-place tie with Syracuse in the North Division. After making a 24-point jump in the standings last season, Rochester is on a 46-win, 98-point pace, which would be its best since 2006-07.

Why the turnaround?

Captain Kevin Porter said there is a long list of reasons but said it begins with management. The parent Buffalo Sabres under general manager Jason Botterill and assistant Randy Sexton made rebuilding the organization's farm system a chief goal when assuming the reins in 2017.

They saw the system work in Pittsburgh, where player development in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton helped the Penguins capture back-to-back Stanley Cups. At the core was assembling a roster where prospects didn't have to carry the load and could prosper in a winning environment.

It's no surprise that Rochester's original roster this season consisted of 11 Sabres' draft picks and 11 veteran free agents.

"I've been on teams and it's all young guys and draft picks," said Porter, who was part of two Amerks playoff teams before a three-year stint in the Detroit Red Wings and Pittsburgh organizations. "The key is management. They want us to win here, they want these young guys to learn how to win and I think a big part of that is bringing in some older guys who have been there before."

With 18 games to play starting Friday at home against Bridgeport, here are 10 reasons why the Amerks are good again:

1. The Sabres care

Former Buffalo GM Tim Murray tried overseeing both the Sabres and Amerks, virtually an impossible job. Botterill assigning Sexton, former GM of Ottawa and Florida of the NHL, as GM in Rochester puts a dedicated set of eyes on the team so small problems don't become big ones.

2. A solid coaching staff

Taylor, the Amerks Hall of Famer and three-time MVP, has made a quick impact as a head coach. His rapport with players is behind the club's winning chemistry but he's quick to spread credit to his assistants, former Toronto Marlies head coach Gord

Dineen (defense) and Toby Petersen (offense). Together, Taylor, Dineen and Petersen played in 3,553 professional games. When they talk, players listen. "We understand what the players are going through and our doors are always open," Taylor said. "And we're not going to B.S. them."

3. The chemistry is real

Some teams put 35 guys in a room and hope for the best, but this roster was assembled with talent and personalities in mind. At the start of the year, 16 players were returnees while newcomers Scott Wedgewood, Victor Olofsson, Wayne Simpson, Lawrence Pilut, Rasmus Asplund, Jack Dougherty, Will Borgen, Yannick Veilleux, Andrew Oglevie, Tyler Randell and Brandon Hickey have helped bring the team to the next level. The thread that binds? "We all want to win," Porter said.

4. They've avoided slumps

The Amerks responded to an 0-2 start with a five-game win streak that did wonders for the club's confidence. They have lost back-to-back games only five times, their longest losing streak is three games, and they have collected 29 out of a possible 42 points since mid-January.

5. They can score

The Amerks didn't have a 20-goal scorer last season, just the second time in history that's occurred. They're on pace for five — Zach Redmond (21, record for a defenseman), Olofsson (20), Simpson (19), C.J. Smith (18) and Danny O'Regan (18). Taylor Leier has 13 goals.

6. They can defend

Veteran free agent goalies Adam Wilcox and Wedgewood have been solid in net, with Wedgewood becoming the workhorse. The former Albany Devils standout is a career-best 22-10-2 with a 2.70 GAA and .911 save percentage.

7. They're good in the clutch

In extra-session hockey, the Amerks don't flinch. They're 3-3 in overtime and 6-2 in shootouts. Redmond has nine game-winning goals and Olofsson has seven.

8. They are road warriors

The Amerks sport an 18-6-3-1 record (40 points) away from Blue Cross Arena. Only the Charlotte Checkers (20-8-2-1, 43 points) are better.

9. Special teams

Can't be a great team without them and the Amerks are very good on the power play (20.8 percent), which ranks fourth-best in the AHL, and penalty kill (82.0 percent), which ranks fifth.

10. They shook things up

Whether it's missing the playoffs three years in a row or getting swept in the first round of the playoffs by the Crunch last season, sometimes the drink just needs to be stirred. Over the past two years, Sabres trades have brought in Redmond (Nick Deslauriers), O'Regan (Evander Kane), Leier (Justin Bailey), Dougherty (Nick Baptiste) and Hickey (Hudson Fasching), along with Scott Wilson (2019 fifth-round pick) for a spell. Bailey and Baptiste, once promising Buffalo prospects, had a combined seven seasons in Rochester and needed a change of scenery. Losing defenseman Brendan Guhle (second round pick 2015) at the trade deadline was a blow for the Amerks but former Dallas Star Remi Elie, obtained on waivers last fall, is now in Rochester. Said Taylor of trades: "It can be OK, and it can be OK for both sides."

Rochester Amerks deliver Meals on Wheels

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By: *Staff Report*

Some Rochester Amerks stepped off the ice Tuesday – to provide meals to seniors.

Kyle Criscuolo and Nathan Paetsch brought meals to local senior citizens to help raise awareness for Meals on Wheels.

Their work also helped kick off the March for Meals campaign, a month-long national effort to celebrate the program and seniors who take part in it.

Rochester's Meals on Wheels, a UR Medicine Home Care program, is the third-oldest in the country and has distributed millions of meals.

If you're interested in learning more about the program or volunteering, or call 585-787-TEAM. To donate, call 585-787-8748.

Amerks deliver meals to seniors for 'Meals on Wheels'
Rochester First
By: *Staff Report*

The Rochester Amerks have once again teamed up with Meals on Wheels.

The annual March for Meals campaign is a month-long, nationwide celebration of Meals on Wheels and the seniors who rely on the vital service.

Amerks players Kyle Criscuolo and Nathan Paetsch showed their support by helping to deliver meals and visiting with local seniors on Tuesday.

"So it's really to bring awareness about the Older Americans Act and the importance of the Older Americans Act to help keep seniors healthy and independent in their homes," explains Margaret Schweizer, Meals on Wheels.

"They are always involved with the community and the Rochester Americans do our best to make sure we're engaging with everybody because we get a lot of support from the community so it's our duty we feel to give back," adds Kyle Criscuolo, Rochester Amerks.

The local Meals on Wheels program is part of UR Medicine Home Care. It ensures that more than 1,400 people receive safety checks throughout the day and delivers approximately 250,000 meals per year.