



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Friday, March 22, 2019

TONIGHT'S GAME: Cleveland vs. Rochester

Sabres prospect Rasmus Asplund gaining maturity w ith Amerks
Buffalo News
By: Bill Hoppe
March 20, 2019

Chris Taylor wasn't exactly sure what Rasmus Asplund meant by saying he has started playing more like a man.

"Maybe he's got more facial hair?" the Americans coach joked. "I don't know."

Well, actually, Asplund, 21, recently shaved his goatee. It's not that.

As Asplund has grown more comfortable throughout his first American Hockey League season, he has started showcasing more aggressiveness. Not surprisingly, that style has helped ignite the center's offensive production.

In the last month, Asplund has morphed into one of the Amerks' top scoring threats.

"I'm playing really well right now and I'm getting confident," Asplund said recently. "I think I'm getting (to be) more and more of a man out there, too, playing like a man and playing the way I really want to play."

Before a pointless outing Saturday, Asplund had scored four goals and nine points over a five-game streak. In his last 11 games, he has compiled four goals and 13 points.

The Swede's recent exploits have helped solidified his status as one of the Sabres' top forward prospects.

"He has adjusted to the North American game," said a scout who has watched Asplund regularly this season. "His pace and skating have improved. He is a smart player who is getting confidence and more opportunity to be an offensive player.

"The adjustment period is different for all players from Europe. He definitely is gaining traction offensively and has some upside."

The 5-foot-11, 176-pound Asplund mustered just one assist in the first 16 games and one goal in the first 33 contests. He produced only three goals and 15 points in his opening 53 games.

Meanwhile, his linemates, Victor Olofsson and Danny O'Regan piled up goals and points.

But Asplund, a second-round pick in 2016 (33rd overall), looked like he had a future in the NHL long before he started scoring.

Before the season, Taylor told Asplund he would be judged on his overall game, not points. Taylor's words helped him relax.

"It gets you confident in what you're doing and you just don't focus on the points," Asplund said. "Of course, I want to (score) points, but it calms you down a little bit knowing that they just want you to play well."

So following four seasons in the Swedish Hockey League — he started competing against men at just 17 — Asplund quietly began impressing Taylor with other parts of his game.

These days, Taylor said Asplund is “maturing right in front of us.”

“He’s been mature,” Taylor said. “But on the ice, he’s getting more mature. (It’s) the understanding of where to be, when to be there, wanting to be on the ice at certain times, even getting a little gritty out there and protecting himself and each other.”

In late February, Asplund started taking the puck to the net — “I didn’t do that in the beginning of the season,” he said — and utilizing his shot more often.

Earlier in the season, Asplund regularly registered zero shots on goal or just one. Now, some games he pumps three or four or net.

“It’s creating more and more space for his wingers,” Taylor said of Asplund’s penchant for shooting. “He was always looking to pass first.”

He added: “He’s got a terrific shot. He just needs to use it a lot more.”

Plans for Pekar

Taylor said Sabres forward prospect Matej Pekar, who was assigned to the Amerks on Tuesday, will continue his rehab from a broken collarbone in the AHL.

Pekar, 19, hasn’t played since Jan. 10. His Ontario Hockey League season with the Barrie Colts just ended.

Taylor said Pekar will start by doing off-ice work and joining the Amerks on the ice after practice for skills work. After that, the team will see how he’s feeling.

“Show him what pro hockey’s all about, the daily life of it,” Taylor said.

The Sabres drafted Pekar in the fourth round in 2018 (94th overall). The Czech scored 14 goals and 36 points in 33 games as an OHL rookie.

Check on the standings

The Amerks dropped two games over the weekend to the league-leading Checkers in Charlotte, falling 4-1 on Friday and 3-1 on Saturday.

The Checkers scored a power-play goal in both games.

“We had two really solid games there,” Taylor said. “We lost the special-teams matchup. That’s what it boiled down to. Their power play was better than our power play. Their PK was better than our PK.”

“Five-on-five, we outchanced them and had a lot of opportunities and didn’t execute. That’s the bottom line.”

The Checkers, who have earned 41 wins and 94 points through 64 contests, won all four meetings with the Amerks this season.

The second-place Amerks (83 points) trail the Syracuse Crunch by five points for first place in the North Division. Both teams have played 64 games.

Malone update

Taylor said Amerks center Sean Malone is practicing again and is day-to-day. A lower-body injury had sidelined the West Seneca native the last four games.

Sabres assign rehabbing Matej Pekar to Amerks

Buffalo News

By: Mike Harrington

March 19, 2019

Now that his season is over with Barrie of the Ontario Hockey League, the Sabres have reassigned 2018 fourth-round pick Matej Pekar to the Rochester Amerks.

But that doesn't necessarily mean Pekar is going to see any action the rest of the season or in the Calder Cup playoffs.

Pekar has not played for Barrie since Jan. 10 due to a broken collarbone and the trip to Rochester is likely just going to be a rehab assignment combined with a watch-and-learn mission.

"We're pleased that Matej will be joining us in Rochester as part of continuing his development process," Sabres assistant general manager/Amerks GM Randy Sexton said in a statement. "He is coming off a long-term injury, so whether he plays games remains to be seen. More importantly, he'll have the opportunity to immerse himself in the pro hockey environment, which we believe is a critical component of any young player's development."

Pekar, 19, has 36 points in 33 games for Barrie (14-22-36). He compiled five three-point games and nine multipoint games in his first season of junior hockey.

Alex Nylander helps Sabres snap skid in 4-3 win over Blues
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
March 19, 2019

Sabres winger Alexander Nylander mentioned it few times during his short chat with the media this afternoon.

"I'm ready for this," the rookie said following practice inside KeyBank Center.

So far, through four outings, it would be tough to argue with Nylander. The former eighth overall pick has been showcasing his slick skill and looking more comfortable each game beside center Evan Rodrigues and Conor Sheary.

In Sunday afternoon's 4-3 shootout win, the Swede played his best NHL contest, registering two assists.

The Sabres, of course, promoted Nylander, 21, from the Rochester Americans late in each of his first two AHL seasons.

This year, however, the enigmatic prospect appears to finally be seizing his chance.

"He's taking advantage of the opportunity," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "Each and every game he's seems to get better. His linemates are helping him out, they play a fast game. He's just getting more confident down low, in the corner. He's driving on cycles, he's making plays up ice and he's using his speed.

"I really like his shot mentality last game. Coming off the wing, he was thinking about shot entering the offensive zone. He's got to continue to shoot pucks."

While Nylander will likely return to the AHL for the playoffs, he might've played his last regular-season game. He could force the Sabres to keep him.

"I had a really good training camp this year," Nylander said. "I'm obviously here to prove that I can stay. I think I'm obviously ready for this."

He added: "I feel just really good. I'm just going to keep going the way I'm playing."

Nylander should face his brother, Toronto Maple Leafs forward William Nylander, on Wednesday in Buffalo.

Check back later for more on the brothers and the Leafs, who have beaten the Sabres four straight meetings for the first time since 1971-72.

In other news, Sabres forward prospect Matej Pekar, 19, has been assigned to the Amerks from the Ontario Hockey League's Barrie Colts.

Pekar, a fourth-round pick in 2018, 94th overall, hasn't played since breaking his collarbone Jan. 10. The Colts' season recently ended.

The Czech, whose agitating style stood out during development camp, might spend his time in Rochester practicing.

"We're pleased that Matej will be joining us in Rochester as part of continuing his development process," Amerks general manager Randy Sexton said in a statement. "He is coming off a long-term injury, so whether he plays games remains to be seen. More importantly, he'll have the opportunity to immerse himself in the pro hockey environment, which we believe is a critical component of any young player's development."

Pekar scored 14 goals and 36 points in 33 games in his first junior campaign.

Alex Nylander helps Sabres snap skid in 4-3 win over Blues

Buffalo News

By: Lance Lysowski

March 17, 2019

When another loss seemed inevitable, the Buffalo Sabres awakened the KeyBank Center crowd with five glass-wobbling hits in a span of 27 seconds late in the third period Sunday night. With the game slipping away again in the 3-on-3 overtime, Carter Hutton delivered six crucial saves.

And when their fate was determined in the shootout, Sam Reinhart scored in the third round to help snap a seven-game losing streak, secured in a 4-3 win over the St. Louis Blues. It was the type of result the Sabres (31-32-9) desperately needed — they had won only two of their previous 15 games — and bolstered the confidence of a roster starving for success.

While the aforementioned heroics prevented another game from slipping away, perhaps no individual performance was more important for the Sabres than that of 21-year-old winger Alex Nylander, who earned his first career multipoint NHL game with two assists.

Though Nylander did not score, the former top prospect is starting to show his teammates and coach Phil Housley that he can help this season and beyond.

"Touching the puck more, getting more comfortable," Nylander acknowledged. "I'm feeling a lot better from my first game already. I'm excited and happy for that. I just want to keep working hard every day here and, obviously, get better."

Nylander played only 11 minutes, 40 seconds and finished with two of the Sabres' 34 shots on goal, yet his 15 shifts were in stark contrast to his performance during a 3-0 loss against Dallas on Tuesday night — his first NHL game in almost one year and only the eighth of his career.

He did not look tentative in any of the three zones, and he did not hesitate when faced with the decision to either pass or shoot. His shot on Blues goalie Jake Allen early in the third period gave Conor Sheary a second-chance scoring opportunity, though Sheary was unable to dislodge the puck from Allen's leg pads.

With the score tied 1-1 in the first period, Nylander dug a puck out of the corner near his own blue line and quickly found Evan Rodrigues with a pass through the neutral zone. Rodrigues and Sheary skated down the ice for a 2-on-1, and the former broke an 18-game scoreless drought with a wrist shot from the slot at 14:48 into the first period for a 2-1 lead.

"I've been trying to talk to him a lot, making the game a bit easier for him," Rodrigues, who played with Nylander in Rochester, said of his linemate. "He has high-level skill, obviously. When you can let him know he has time or when he has to make a quick play it's definitely going to help out his game. I think he's starting to show off his skill."

The Sabres were outshot 6-1 during the first six minutes of the second period until Rasmus Dahlin made a breakout pass through the neutral zone to Nylander, who chose to pass to Sheary on the 2-on-1 because Blues defenseman Robert Bortuzzo slid toward him.

Sheary collected the tape-to-tape pass and shot over Allen's blocker for a 3-1 lead at 7:46 into the second period. It was the second time in as many nights Nylander created a scoring chance with a pass to Sheary, though neither connected on a goal during a 4-2 loss in Carolina on Saturday night.

"(Saturday) night, I probably owed him a couple with some of the passes he gave me and tonight we capitalized," Sheary said. "I think it's just a confidence thing. He was here for a couple games maybe getting his feet wet and these last couple he's been really good."

Nylander, drafted eighth overall by the Sabres in 2016, was recalled from Rochester on March 10, hours before Jack Eichel received a two-game suspension for a hit to the head on Colorado's Carl Soderberg. Nylander had only two career NHL points and had appeared in 165 games in Rochester, recording a career-high 31 points in 49 games this season.

Not only has Nylander remained with the team since Eichel's return, he was elevated to play with Rodrigues and Sheary on the second line.

Those three were among the Sabres' best players against the Blues (37-27-8), who erased the two-goal deficit with goals from David Perron and Brayden Schenn. Sheary had a team-high five shots on goal, while Rodrigues added four. Nylander, meanwhile, had a 64 percent 5-on-5 shot differential and a team-best plus-2 rating.

"He's gotten his step now," Housley said of Nylander. "He's moving with the puck and he makes plays. Really nice pass to Sheary there. He just seems to get more confidence as the games go on here, and it's good to see him contributing."

Johan Larsson broke the scoreless tie with a goal 6:42 into the first period. Hutton finished with 30 saves in regulation and overtime before stopping Ryan O'Reilly in the third shootout round to clinch the win. Eichel opened the shootout with a goal, and Reinhart scored his third shootout winner of the season, tying Nashville's Ryan Johansen and the New York Rangers' Kevin Shattenkirk for most in the NHL in 2018-19. Reinhart is one shy of the Sabres' single-season record set by Ales Kotalik in 2006-07.

Still, the Sabres will miss the playoffs for an eighth consecutive season and entered Sunday tied for the fewest points in the league since they won their 10th game in a row on Nov. 27. They have not won back-to-back games since Dec. 13. These final 10 games are as much about individual progress as they are about results.

General Manager Jason Botterill needs to see who can help the Sabres next season, and Nylander is hoping to be part of the solution.

"This was huge for my confidence," Nylander beamed. "It's awesome that I get to play with those two guys. This opportunity has been great. I'm trying to take it."

Checkers finish two-game sweep of Amerks
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report/*Amerks.com*
March 17, 2019

For just the second time this season, the Rochester Americans (39-20-3-2) dropped back-to-back regulation losses on the road as they come up short in a 3-1 penalty-filled matchup to the league-leading Charlotte Checkers (41-15-6-1) Saturday at Bojangles Coliseum. Tonight's game was the second in as many nights and the final meeting of the four-game season series between the two teams.

The defeat keeps the Amerks one point behind the Syracuse Crunch for the North Division lead despite having collected 37 out of a possible 54 points in their last 27 games. The regulation loss was just the eighth for the Amerks outside the Flower City, which are tied for fewest in the league this season.

Forward and team captain Kevin Porter put the Amerks on the scoreboard as he tallied his ninth of the season in the second period while goaltender Scott Wedgewood (25-12-2) was tagged with the loss, his second in as many nights, as he made 19 saves. Over his last 23 appearances, the sixth-year netminder shows an impressive 16-6-1 record dating back to Dec. 26.

The Checkers, who completed the 4-game sweep of the Amerks, were led by former forward Amerk Bobby Sanguinetti, Aleksi Saarela, and Julien Gauthier as the trio all scored. Netminder Dustin Tokarski made his second appearance of the campaign with Charlotte and improved to 12-6-2 overall as he stopped 27 of the 28 shots he faced.

After a series of events which culminated with Zach Redmond and C.J. Smith on a 2-on-1 odd-man rush to enter the zone, Smith centered a pass to Porter in-between the face-off dots and the veteran poked the puck past Tokarski to knot the score at 1-1 apiece. The goal at the 2:49 mark was Porter's ninth of the year. Smith, meanwhile, picked up his 34th point (16+18) over his last 30 games and Redmond moved to within one point from having his first 50-point season of his career.

Charlotte regained its lead nine minutes later to take a one-goal cushion into the final period, where they are a perfect 30-0-0 this season when ahead to start the third stanza. Collecting a loose puck just out of the reach of Wedgewood, Sanguinetti scored his first goal of the season with 8:20 to go in the second period.

The marker was the 3-time AHL All-Star's first goal in North America since March 4, 2016 as a member of the Amerks.

Saarela gave Charlotte an insurance goal on the power-play midway through the third, but the Amerks, who went 0-for-9 on the man-advantage throughout the game, were unable narrow the gap despite testing Tokarski 14 times over the course of the third period.

In the first period full of heavy hits, six penalties and a fight, the Checkers opened the scoring as Gauthier tallied his 19th goal of the season inside the final minute of play to give Charlotte a 1-0 lead.

The Amerks return to action for their second-to-last 3-in-3 of the season beginning on Friday at 7:05 pm when they host the Cleveland Monsters in a North Division showdown at the Blue Cross Arena.

Checkers finish two game-sweep of Amerks
Rochester First
By: Thad Brown/*Amerks.com*
March 17, 2019

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The Amerks return to action for their second-to-last three-in-three of the 2018-19 campaign beginning on Friday, March 22 when they host the Cleveland Monsters in a North Division showdown at The Blue Cross Arena. Game time is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start

Amerks suffer second straight loss in Charlotte

Pickin' Splinters

By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*

March 17, 2019

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Checkers Pick Up Season Sweep Of Rochester

WBTV

By: Staff Report

March 16, 2019

The Checkers battled through a hard-hitting rematch to pick up a season sweep of the Rochester Americans courtesy of a 3-1 victory.

After weathering a heavy push from the visitors early on, the Checkers opened the scoring in the frame's final minute with Julien Gauthier picking off a Rochester pass and launching a shot along the ice past Scott Wedgewood.

The physicality ramped up at the first buzzer, and Rochester carried that momentum into the second by evening the score less than three minutes in. Bobby Sanguinetti took back Charlotte's lead later in the frame, however, after following up his own shot and potting the rebound for his first goal since rejoining the Checkers earlier this season.

The Amerks would continue to push down the stretch, doubling up Charlotte in shots, but Dustin Tokarski would come through strong for the home side. Aleksii Saarela extended Charlotte's advantage with a snipe on the man advantage and that would prove to be the dagger, as the team rode out Tokarski's 33 saves to another win on home ice.

Big game from Nedeljkovic sinks Amerks, Rochester falls to second in North Division
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
March 16, 2019

A 28-save performance from Checkers' goalie Alex Nedeljkovic kept Rochester's offense at bay as Charlotte topped the visiting Americans, 4-1, at the Bojangles Coliseum on Friday Night.

The loss drops Rochester to 39-14-3-2 overall. With Syracuse's win over the Hartford Wolf Pack, the Crunch take over first place in the North Division.

Rasmus Asplund kept his five-game point streak alive with the Americans' only goal of the night.

Patrick Brown scored twice for the league-leading Checkers (40-15-6-1). Alexsi Saarela and Martin Necas netted a goal apiece.

Rochester failed to capitalize on five power-play opportunities as the team's man-advantage woes continued. The Amerks went 1-for-8 on the power play on Wednesday against Utica.

The team started the second and third periods shorthanded, which led to a Checkers goal.

Charlotte did not fare much better on the man advantage, going 1-for-7 on their power-play chances.

That didn't matter as goals came quickly for the home icers. Charlotte scored nine minutes into the game on Necas' goal with Trevor Carrick and Tomas Jurco assisting.

Saarela made the game 2-0 just before the end of the first period with his 21st goal of the season, which leads the team.

Rochester goalie Scott Wedgewood never saw the goal coming, a common theme for the night. He finished with 18 saves on 21 shots.

The Checkers picked up where they had left off in the first when Brown netted his first goal a minute into the middle period to make the game 3-0.

From there, neither team found success until Asplund finally solved Nedeljkovic late in the third period.

Charlotte drove the nail into the coffin on an empty-netter with seven seconds left to play.

The two teams will meet again tonight at 6 p.m. in Charlotte.

A win would help Rochester keep pace for first in the league with Charlotte and Syracuse, which lurks close behind.

After that, Rochester will return home for a 7:05 p.m. game with Cleveland on March 22.

Amerks fall in first of two with the Checkers

Rochester First

By: *Dan Fetes/Amerks.com*

March 15, 2019

In a game that featured the top two teams in the American Hockey League, the Rochester Americans' (39-19-3-2) bid for a fifth straight win came up short as they fell 4-1 Friday night to the Charlotte Checkers (40-15-6-1) in the first of back-to-back meetings at Bojangles Coliseum.

The loss drops the Amerks a point behind the Syracuse Crunch for the North Division lead despite having collected 37 out of a possible 52 points in their last 26 games. The regulation loss was just the seventh for the Amerks outside the Flower City, which are fewest in the league this season.

Rookie Rasmus Asplund helped the Amerks avoid their third shutout of the season as scored his seventh goal of the campaign late in the third period to extend his point streak to a career-long five games while goaltender Scott Wedgewood (25-11-2) was tagged with the loss as he made 18 saves. Over his last 22 appearances, the sixth-year netminder shows an impressive 16-5-1 record dating back to Dec. 26.

The Checkers, who became the first team in the AHL this season to reach the 40-win mark, were led by three-point outings from both Trevor Carrick (0+3) and Martin Necas (1+2). Forwards Patrick Brown (2+0) and Tomas Jurco (0+2) also turned in a multi-point effort as they tallied a pair of goals and two assists, respectively. Aleksi Saarela completed the scoring while netminder Alex Nedeljkovic earned his league-leading 29th win of the season as he stopped 28 of the 29 shots he faced.

After Nedeljkovic made a pair of key glove saves to keep the Amerks off the board in the early portion of the first period, the Checkers opened the scoring in the first period at the 9:35 mark. Necas exchanged a give-and-go with Jurco to enter the Rochester zone before he tipped in a return pass for his 10th goal of the season.

Prior to the end of the opening stanza, the Amerks were called for a cross-checking penalty with 1:12 to play. The home squad made most of the opportunity as Saarela banged in back-door pass under the crossbar just 24 seconds into the infraction.

Charlotte, which took a two-goal cushion into the first intermission, added to its lead just 1:02 into the second period. Carrick fired a shot from the right corner of the Checkers zone, but Wedgewood was unable to collect the rebound before Brown stuffed it into the cage.

The Amerks had another pair of opportunities later in the frame, but both C.J. Smith and Victor Olofsson's scoring chances were turned aside by Nedeljkovic and Rochester went into the break facing a 3-0 deficit.

As the game was winding down, it appeared the Amerks were going to be held off the scoreboard despite killing off six of their seven penalties in the contest but Rochester drew its fifth infraction of the game with 2:43 left in regulation.

With the man-advantage, Wedgewood was pulled to give Rochester two extra skaters and the reward was worth the risk as Asplund spoiled Nedeljkovic's bid for his second straight shutout.

With Asplund's power-play marker from Danny O'Regan and Taylor Leier, Rochester has collected a goal in five straight games while on the man-advantage. It's the second time this season the Amerks have had such a stretch.

By collecting the assists, O'Regan reached the 40-point plateau for the second in his career, while Leier, who has 13 points (7+6) over his last 13 games, pushed his point streak to a season-long four-games.

The two-goal deficit was as close the Amerks would get as Charlotte added an empty-netter to seal the 4-1 before the final horn sounded.

Rochester looks to avoid the season sweep as the Amerks and Checkers close out their weekend series with one final go-around on Saturday, March 16 at 6:00 p.m.

Amerks lose, drop out of first place
C&C Worldwide
By: *Staff Report/Amerks.com*
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The loss drops the Amerks a point behind the Syracuse Crunch for the North Division lead despite having collected 37 out of a possible 52 points in their last 26 games. The regulation loss was just the seventh for the Amerks outside the Flower City, which are fewest in the league this season.

Rookie Rasmus Asplund helped the Amerks avoid their third shutout of the season as scored his seventh goal of the campaign late in the third period to extend his point streak to a career-long five games while goaltender Scott Wedgewood (25-11-2) was tagged with the loss as he made 18 saves. Over his last 22 appearances, the sixth-year netminder shows an impressive 16-5-1 record dating back to Dec. 26.

The Checkers, who became the first team in the AHL this season to reach the 40-win mark, were led by three-point outings from both Trevor Carrick (0+3) and Martin Necas (1+2). Forwards Patrick Brown (2+0) and Tomas Jurco (0+2) also turned in a multi-point effort as they tallied a pair of goals and two assists, respectively. Aleksi Saarela completed the scoring while netminder Alex Nedeljkovic earned his league-leading 29th win of the season as he stopped 28 of the 29 shots he faced.

After Nedeljkovic made a pair of key glove saves to keep the Amerks off the board in the early portion of the first period, the Checkers opened the scoring in the first period at the 9:35 mark. Necas exchanged a give-and-go with Jurco to enter the Rochester zone before he tipped in a return pass for his 10th goal of the season.

Prior to the end of the opening stanza, the Amerks were called for a cross-checking penalty with 1:12 to play. The home squad made most of the opportunity as Saarela banged in back-door pass under the crossbar just 24 seconds into the infraction.

Charlotte, which took a two-goal cushion into the first intermission, added to its lead just 1:02 into the second period. Carrick fired a shot from the right corner of the Checkers zone, but Wedgewood was unable to collect the rebound before Brown stuffed it into the cage.

The Amerks had another pair of opportunities later in the frame, but both C.J. Smith and Victor Olofsson's scoring chances were turned aside by Nedeljkovic and Rochester went into the break facing a 3-0 deficit.

As the game was winding down, it appeared the Amerks were going to be held off the scoreboard despite killing off six of their seven penalties in the contest but Rochester drew its fifth infraction of the game with 2:43 left in regulation.

With the man-advantage, Wedgewood was pulled to give Rochester two extra skaters and the reward was worth the risk as Asplund spoiled Nedeljkovic's bid for his second straight shutout.

With Asplund's power-play marker from Danny O'Regan and Taylor Leier, Rochester has collected a goal in five straight games while on the man-advantage. It's the second time this season the Amerks have had such a stretch.

By collecting the assists, O'Regan reached the 40-point plateau for the second in his career, while Leier, who has 13 points (7+6) over his last 13 games, pushed his point streak to a season-long four-games.

The two-goal deficit was as close the Amerks would get as Charlotte added an empty-netter to seal the 4-1 before the final horn sounded.

Rochester looks to avoid the season sweep as the Amerks and Checkers close out their weekend series with one final go-around on Saturday, March 16 at 6 pm. All the action from the Bojangles' Coliseum in Charlotte will be carried live on The Sports Leader AM 950/95.7 FM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Amerks: February in review
ESPN Rochester
By: *Staff Report*
March 16, 2019

It was another outstanding month for the Rochester Americans as the team won eight of 13 games and continued to remain atop the tightly-contested North Division.

As of March 1, the Amerks were 34-17-3-2 with 73 points, and led the Syracuse Crunch by two points in the standings. However, the Crunch still had two games in hand on the Amerks, and put up a decent month of February themselves with an 8-3-2-0 record in 13 games.

Entering the month of February, the Amerks were riding a six-game point streak, but still unable to put together more than two wins in a row.

Rochester started the month with a big, come from behind road win over the Binghamton Devils at the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena. After falling behind 2-0 just 20-seconds in the second period, Yannick Veilleux started the comeback with a shorthanded goal to cut the Binghamton lead to 2-1. Just 3:45 later, another fourth line depth player chipped in to tie the game as Tyler Randell tipped in a point shot from Brendan Guhle and in past goalie Cory Schneider. The game remained tied heading into the third period until the Devils got penalized for a high stick with 1:46 remaining. That set the stage for Victor Olofsson, who fired a wrist shot over the glove of Schneider for the game-winning goal with 1:01 remaining in regulation.

The win as a relief for goalie Adam Wilcox, who managed to grab his first win for the Amerks since December 15, snapping a skid of losses in five straight games.

The next night, the Amerks traveled to Hartford, Connecticut to take on the Wolf Pack and continued their success away from Blue Cross Arena. With two goals each from C.J. Smith and Eric Cornel, the Amerks grabbed a 4-1 win as Jonas Johansson stopped 34 of 35 shots faced to earn his fourth win of the season in his fifth game with the Amerks.

With a chance to win their third straight game, the Amerks returned home to face Syracuse in the first of three games against their division foes in February. Despite Taylor Leier scoring the game's first goal in the first period, a Cory Conacher goal in the third period tied the game at 1-1 and eventually forced overtime. After the five minutes of overtime passed, both teams went to a shootout, where the Crunch needed just two rounds to down the Amerks by a 2-1 score.

With the loss, however, the Amerks were able to pick up another point in the standings, earning themselves a point in nine consecutive games.

The Amerks looked to make it a 10-game point streak just two nights later as the Springfield Thunderbirds came to town on Hall of Fame night. On that night, the Amerks honored Steve Langdon and Doug Janik (current assistant coach with the Thunderbirds) as the newest members to the Amerks Hall of Fame. In addition, Rochester donned their 1996 throwback jerseys, worn when the team last won the Calder Cup.

The game ended up being all Rochester as Olofsson netted his first career hat-trick in North America in a 7-1 drubbing of the Thunderbirds. This came after Springfield throttled the Amerks by a 9-4 score back in November at the MassMutual Center in Springfield, Massachusetts.

In an effort to make it 11 straight games with a point, the Amerks went out on the road to face the Utica Comets at the Adirondack Bank Center in Utica. However, their point streak would be snapped as the Comets got a hat-trick from Reid Boucher in a 5-2 loss. The Amerks started out to a 2-0 lead in the first period with goals from Wayne Simpson and Olofsson, but things fell apart in the second period as Utica scored three goals in a 58-second span to take the lead. Boucher then added two more goals in the third period to complete his hat-trick and seal the fate of the Amerks in Utica.

Three nights after that in Cleveland, Ohio, the Amerks suffered another 5-2 loss to the Cleveland Monsters at Quicken Loans Arena. This time, the Amerks entered the third period tied at 1-1 after Remi Elie scored his first goal with the Amerks early in the second period. However, the Monsters went on to put up four goals on the Amerks in the third, with two goals from Vitaly Abramov, followed by Kole Sherwood's second goal of the game to make it 4-1. Simpson added another goal to cut the deficit to 4-2, but the effort was too little, too late.

Rochester returned home to host the Crunch in the first game of a home-and-home series, but ended up suffering a third straight loss in a low-scoring affair. The game's only goal came off the stick of Crunch forward Andy Andreoff in the first period, while goalie Connor Ingram earned his sixth shutout of the season with a 32-save effort.

However, the Amerks bounced back the next night at the War Memorial Arena in Syracuse with a 3-2 shootout win over the Crunch. Rochester got goals from Elie and Will Borgen, but the Amerks surrendered the lead twice as the Crunch ended up forcing overtime on home ice. In the shootout, neither team could find the back of the net until the sixth round of shooters. After Syracuse's Ross Colton failed to score in the top of the round, Leier scored in the bottom of the round to end the Amerks' three-game losing streak.

In addition to snapping the losing streak, the win helped put the Amerks back atop the North Division after the Crunch had tied things up in the standings in the game prior.

The Amerks closed out the three-day weekend back at the friendly confines of Blue Cross Arena with another matchup with the Devils. This time, the Amerks had nothing much to worry about as they cruised to a 5-1 win over the Devils for their fourth win over Binghamton this season. The Amerks took firm control early with goals in the first period from Simpson and Veilleux, followed by goals from Andrew Oglevie and Elie in the second period, and a third period goal from Andrew MacWilliam.

With a chance to finally earn three straight wins since early December, the Amerks hosted the Monsters once again on home ice.

After falling behind late in the second period by a 2-1 score, the game changed when Danny O'Regan scored a power play goal with 1:42 to go in the period. In the third, Rochester took the lead as Taylor Leier scored the go-ahead goal with 13:45 to go.

Wedgewood stayed solid to close the game, and ended up with 29 saves on 31 shots faced to earn his 100th career pro win.

Simpson added an empty net goal to put the game out of reach at 4-2.

The Amerks managed to string the win streak to four games as Rochester overcame a 3-0 deficit to the Utica Comets and force overtime. In overtime, it was Zach Redmond who fired a one-time slap shot on the power play to give the Amerks the win at the Adirondack Bank Center. Olofsson, Simpson and Elie all scored for the Amerks in the second period after Utica scored three second period goals of their own.

Rochester's four-game streak was snapped the following night back at Blue Cross Arena as the stingy Belleville Senators picked up their third win of the season over the Amerks. Sean Malone and Oglevie helped give the Amerks a 2-1 lead nearly halfway through the hockey game, but Belleville responded with four unanswered goals to grab the lead and run away with it heading into the late stages of the game.

However, the Amerks closed out the month of February with a with another big win over the Comets in Utica, this time by a 3-1 score. After the Amerks and Comets exchanged goals in the second period, Olofsson gave Rochester the lead for good just 21-seconds into the third period with a tap-in backhand off a nice feed from O'Regan. Elie also scored later in the period to put the game out of reach for Utica.

In case you missed it, here is how the schedule played out for the month:

- Friday, February 1 - at Binghamton (3-2 win)
- Saturday, February 2 - at Hartford (4-1 win)
- Wednesday, February 6 - vs. Syracuse (2-1 SO loss)
- Friday, February 8 - vs. Springfield (7-1 win)
- Saturday, February 9 - at Utica (5-2 loss)
- Tuesday, February 12 - at Cleveland (5-2 loss)
- Friday, February 15 - vs. Syracuse (1-0 loss)
- Saturday, February 16 - at Syracuse (3-2 SO win)
- Sunday, February 17 - vs. Binghamton (5-1 win)
- Wednesday, February 20 - vs. Cleveland (4-2 win)
- Friday, February 22 - at Utica (4-3 OT win)
- Saturday, February 23 - vs. Belleville (5-3 loss)
- Wednesday, February 27 - at Utica (3-1 win)

Game of the Month: February 8 vs. Springfield

It was a good start to the game for both teams with chances at each end of the ice, however neither team could find the back of the net. The second period saw just seven combined shots on goal, however the Amerks found themselves with a 2-0 lead through 40 minutes on just four shots on goal. Scott Wilson opened the scoring as he got a piece off a Matt Tennyson shot in front of the net that found its way behind goalie Chris Driedger. Later in the period, Olofsson scored his 16th goal of the season as he one-timed a pass from O'Regan in the slot to give Rochester a 2-0 lead. Then the Amerks really opened things up to start the third period as Olofsson scored his second of the night just 1:33 into the period on the power play with another one-time feed, this time from the edge of the faceoff circle to put Rochester up 3-0. After a Simpson goal just 1:17 to make it 4-0, the Amerks were forced to kill a 5-on-3 penalty at the 6:02 mark of the third. Still while on the 5-on-3 penalty kill, Rasmus Asplund and O'Regan found themselves in on a two-on-one chance on Driedger, and Asplund's pass across to O'Regan went off the leg of a defender and into the net. Just moments later, with one penalty killed off, Olofsson broke free in the neutral zone for a shorthanded breakaway and ended up backhanding in his third goal of the night for his first career hat-trick in North America.

Back handed whack from Wayne Simpson sends the puck down ice, Victor Olofsson completed the hat trick. Amerks up 6-0.

Olofsson ended the night with his hat-trick that featured an even strength goal, a power play goal and a shorthanded goal. He was just a penalty shot goal and an empty net goal away from completing the Mario Lemieux hat-trick. Olofsson also added an assist on Wilson's second period tally for a four-point night with six shots on goal.

Eric Cornel got in on the fun with a goal off his back and in to the net to make it a 7-1 score with 10:46 remaining in regulation. Wedgewood nearly completed the shutout until it was spoiled with 4:31 remaining when he was beat off a juicy rebound in the slot, but he still turned away 19 of 20 saves to help Rochester to the 7-1 win at Blue Cross Arena.

Here's an update on the list of injuries the Amerks have been dealing with as of March 16:

- Sean Malone - Lower-body injury (day-to-day)