



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

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Tonight's Game: Hershey vs. Rochester

HOCKEY A FAMILY AFFAIR FOR THE FITZGERALD BROTHERS

Amerks.com

By: Suzie Cool

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One look across the ice and there they are.

It's a familiar face you've seen time and time again and you know almost everything about them. From their favorite food, to their most embarrassing moments, you know this human all too well and now they're standing on the opposite side of the playing field. Both of you sporting different colors, but with the same name across your back.

We've all seen this before, families playing one another in a sport that seems to run in their bloodline.

In the National Football League, the notorious Watt brothers represent three different organizations between the Houston Texans, Los Angeles Chargers and Pittsburgh Steelers. The first pitcher-batter matchup in Major League Baseball happened just over a month ago between Brian and Colin Moran, where Brian tallied his first big league strikeout against none other than his younger brother in his MLB debut just days after an emotional call-up. Or how about the iconic sisterhood of Venus and Serena Williams, the only two women during the open era to play against one another in four consecutive Grand Slam finals.

Or, you could come from an elite hockey family like that of current Amerks interim head coach Gord Dineen, one of five sons of legendary AHL coach Bill Dineen. A band of brothers who all spent time in the National Hockey League and who are now all currently coaching at the professional level. The only matchup that could possibly even happen between the trio now, though, would be if middle brother Gord and youngest brother Kevin saw one another in the American Hockey League finals, but it's still entirely too early in the season to tell.

The playing days, though, are what Dineen can reminisce on the most for now, as he remembered them all too well when asked about brotherly matchups earlier this week.

"Playing against your brothers, it's always, you know, you look across the ice and you see a different uniform and your brother that you've been sitting across the table from for a lot of years."

And that's just it.

Sometimes it's easy to forget that these athletes, these coaches, these teams – they're just humans. Humans who have a favorite food, an embarrassing moment or two, and most importantly, families that they've grown with on and off the field of play. And sometimes two siblings that are cut from the same cloth have the chance to face-off on the professional stage.

With more than 8,000 sports in the entire world, what makes these sibling matchups seem unique is the rarity in which they occur, like the one that happened this past Saturday night when the Rochester Americans visited the Providence Bruins.

Casey and Ryan Fitzgerald are two years apart in age and come from a family that has had hockey injected into their veins since birth. Their dad, Tom Fitzgerald, played over 1,000 NHL games in his professional career and remains heavily involved in the game to this day. As the current assistant general manager and assistant coach of the New Jersey Devils, there's no question as to why Tom's oldest two kids dove into hockey the way that they did.

Growing up, early mornings consisted of dad's 6:00 a.m. practices that turned into long days at the rink. Time spent at the rink soon turned into watching their father's skillset, applying it to their own and falling in love with the game that they seemed destined to grow up and play.

After so many years of watching their father on the ice, it's no surprise Ryan wanting to emulate his dad's path starting at a very young age.

"I think for our situation growing up, most kids probably look at their dad and their family members and that's kind of the path that they want to emulate. For us, it was hockey and that's because that was pretty much all we had growing up."

Luckily for both boys, they were able to carve out their own path to professional hockey, like that of their father.

Now at the age of 22, Casey Fitzgerald finds himself as an up-and-coming prospect in the Buffalo Sabres organization. Casey landed himself a spot on the Amerks roster to begin the 2019-20 season, his first in pro hockey, and has seen time in most of the games for Rochester. One of those games included a face-off between he and Ryan just last weekend, the first between the pair in their entire lifetime.

When the puck dropped, it was an all-out competition, but Casey admitted just how fun it can be when facing off against your own family.

"We take it seriously, obviously. We're trying to win, both of us. But yeah, we're very competitive as well. We were kind of matched up against each other a little bit all night. I was right D and he was left wing, so I saw him a lot. He was giving me a couple of shots and we were going back and forth there a little. It was all fun, but we're both competitive and we both were trying to win."

Prior to competing at the pro level, Casey spent the last four years at Boston College and just last year he served as team captain while being honored with the William J. Coaches Award as Hockey East's Best Defensive Defenseman. In his first two years at the collegiate level, Casey and Ryan got to team up while assisting one another on game-winning-goals and sharing championship moments.

Ryan Fitzgerald was originally drafted right out of high school by the Boston Bruins in the fourth round of the 2013 NHL draft. Currently in his third full season with the Boston organization, the 24-year-old has seen ample time at the AHL level, partaking in 124 games in just the last two years. Bringing a strong forward presence to the Providence roster, Ryan has added two points to this season with a goal and an assist, the latter of which came in the game against his younger brother.

Although at the end of the day it's just another game to add to the record books, the older of the pair made sure that Casey knew he wasn't going to take it easy on him before their face-off at Dunkin' Donuts Center a little over a week ago. Ryan said, "I told him before we played that you got to get the puck off of your stick quick, because I'm coming for it."

Some playful banter beforehand, but most importantly, it was the moments that happened after the game that meant the most to the two boys. Despite their extremely busy schedules, their parents, along with a couple of others, came out to watch the competition. Coming from such a heavy hockey family, these Fitzgerald family is no stranger to taking in a game and watching their kids play. But after at least four years of the boys playing together, this game was a little different considering the circumstances.

Tom Fitzgerald talked about the experience watching his boys battle it out against each other at the professional level.

“It was weird because you just want your kids to do well and not get hurt. I thought both boys played extremely well it was cool to watch the boys battle at this level.”

On the ice, the Fitzgerald brothers may be sporting different colors, but the name across their back was what brought them and their family together following the matchup. Both boys noted on how nice it was to have the level of support that they did, but the fact that they could come together as a family and put the competition aside is what was most impressive. Again, another weird concept when your own sibling, someone you often go to for advice, becomes your opponent on the ice.

Being the younger of the two, Casey admitted to going to Ryan time and time again while transitioning into his first professional season.

“In my pro career I’ve learned a lot from my brother. I’ve called him and stuff like that and tried to get the ins and outs of pro hockey to see what his experience was like three years ago when he was starting his first season. Just seeing how he handles everything in terms of the long season, this and that, and practice.”

The season matchup between the two isn’t quite over just yet, as the Amerks and Providence Bruins are set to have one more puck-drop at The Blue Cross Arena later this month. Ryan may have got to go home with the bragging rights after the first go-around, but Casey looks to settle the score.

Jokingly, the younger of the two, Casey alluded to the bad blood after the first face-off and how he’s looking to get his older brother back here soon.

“There was a little bad blood at first that night, but you know we’ll play them again and we will get them then.”

All jokes aside, the relationship between the Fitzgerald family and their humble ability to make you see them as humans is incredible. You have Casey, who looks to his older brother for advice on how to handle his first professional season and Ryan, who was both participating in the game against Rochester and paying attention to his younger brother’s shifts in order to see if he was doing things right. And Tom, who simply at the end of the day goes to the rink to watch his kids play hockey in what just so happens to be at the professional level.

After so many years of being involved in the game himself, Tom knows the struggles and the triumphs all too well. He’s familiar with the dedication it takes to get to this level in the sport and he’s familiar with the sacrifices that come along with the territory. When Tom retired, he was most excited about being able to ‘be a dad’ and be around his boys, because in all honesty, the game can take away even the simplest of moments for some. Luckily for Tom he’s gotten to pass on his love for the game to his own kids who are now living what was once his own dream.

When asked about how he can guide Casey and Ryan throughout their hockey careers and whatever may come afterwards, Tom put it into terms of their overall goals.

“This is a giant step to their goal, and their goal is to play in the NHL. The American Hockey League is the second-best league in the world and that’s where they’re at to find their way to the NHL. Whether it’s one game, a hundred games or a thousand games like me, it doesn’t matter, you get to the NHL and you should be very proud of achieving your goals.”

A younger brother who looks up to his father and best friend for advice on the professional game. An older brother who always wanted to emulate his dad and his career path at a young age. And a father who is just as proud for his kids, as he was for himself, while watching them take every step towards achieving their dreams.

Forget the colors of their jerseys, the positions that they play and their overall statistics. The Fitzgerald family is more than that. They're a family who has memories of back yard whiffle ball games, early mornings at the rink and now a matchup that can get added to the hundreds and thousands of other sibling rivalries that we have seen in so many other places when it comes to the world of sports.

It's a completely different life than we're all used to seeing professional athletes live. Think about it, we genuinely get surprised when a family is stocked with innate athletic ability. But maybe for some, like the Fitzgerald brothers who went family to foe, it was simply meant to be.

One look across the ice and there they are.

This person who knows all about you and they're more than ready. So, you better get the puck off your stick quick because they're coming for it – game on.

Sabres assign goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Buffalo News
Oct. 20, 2019

Sabres prospect Rasmus Asplund practiced with the Rochester Americans on Monday after an upper-body injury sidelined him one game.

"He was feeling good, so we're looking forward to having him back," interim Amerks coach Gord Dineen said.

Asplund, 21, was killing a penalty and crouched down when the puck hit him about 2:15 into Friday's 4-3 shootout loss to the Cleveland Monsters. The Swedish center quickly skated off the ice and did not return.

Dineen said the X-rays came back negative. Still, the Amerks held him out of Saturday's 7-1 loss to the Utica Comets.

Asplund centered Remi Elie and Tage Thompson during Monday's session.

In other injury news, top Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, 20, practiced with the Amerks on Monday for the first time since undergoing hip surgery in late April.

The Sabres assigned Luukkonen to the American Hockey League on Sunday. The Finn had been rehabbing in Buffalo.

"He was really excited to be here," Dineen said. "He's been working really hard in his rehab and rehab skates with (goalie development coach) Seamus Kotyk and the rehab staff there in Buffalo. To be able to be out with the team and to face a few games situations was really good for him."

Dineen would not reveal a time frame for Luukkonen's return.

"I would venture the performance staff has a timeline for him and the medical staff does, but being patient is definitely the priority right now," Dineen said.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said in September he could start playing games in early November.

Luukkonen played one AHL game last season following a standout junior campaign with the Sudbury Wolves in which he was named the Ontario Hockey League's MVP and top goalie.

Sabres assign goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Buffalo News
Oct. 20, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres assigned top goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to the Rochester Americans today, another step in his recovery from offseason hip surgery.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said last month he hopes Luukkonen can start playing games in early November. The Finn spent the early part of the season rehabbing in Buffalo.

When Luukkonen underwent surgery in April, the Sabres said he would need six months to recover.

The 6-foot-4, 220-pound Luukkonen is expected to be the Amerks' No. 1 goalie. Veteran Andrew Hammond has started five of the AHL club's first six games this season.

Luukkonen briefly joined the Amerks late last season after a stellar junior campaign with the Sudbury Wolves in which he was named the Ontario Hockey League's MVP and top goalie. He played one regular-season game with Rochester before having surgery.

The Sabres drafted Luukkonen in the second round in 2017, 54th overall. Last season was his first in North America

Sabres assign goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Buffalo News
Oct. 20, 2019

The Sabres have assigned goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to Rochester, a positive sign in his recovery from hip surgery.

Luukkonen, 20, underwent surgery in April and was given a six-month estimated timeline for recovery. He spent much of the offseason in Buffalo, where he worked with Sabres goalie development coach Seamus Kotyk and Dennis Miller, the team's head of rehab and development. Luukkonen has continued to work with both.

Luukkonen made his professional debut in Rochester's season finale, making 32 saves against Belleville to earn his first win. He was unable to practice with the Amerks during their short playoff run and later revealed that he had been playing through hip discomfort.

Ex-Sabre Gerbe beats Amerks with shootout winner
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Oct. 19, 2019

Former Sabre Nathan Gerbe had the lone shootout goal as Cleveland defeated Rochester, 4-3, Friday night at the Blue Cross Arena.

Rochester had maintained a 3-2 lead through the second period before Stefan Matteau tied the game with less than six minutes to play on his second score of the night.

Dalton Smith, Jean-Sebastien Dea and Scott Wilson each scored for the Americans. It was the first goal of the season for both Smith and Wilson.

Kevin Stenlund had the other goal for the visiting Monsters.

Andrew Hammond made 16 saves in net but earned the loss. On the other side, Matiss Kivlenieks made 28 saves for Cleveland. Rochester outshot the visitors, 31-20.

Rochester went 0-for-6 on the power play. The Monsters went 1-for-5, but that one goal was the game-tying shot.

Tage Thompson, Sebastien-Dea and C.J. Smith each came up empty for the Amerks in the shootout.

Gerbe shot first and was the only player to score. Zac Dalpe also missed for Cleveland.

Rasmus Asplund left the game in the third period after being tripped up and taking a shot off his arm. He did not return.

Rochester will travel to Utica on Saturday to play one game with the Comets at 7:05 p.m.

Utica defeated defending AHL champion Charlotte, 8-2, on Friday night.

Rasmus Asplund injured, Lawrence Pilut debuts for Amerks
Buffalo News
By: Bill Hoppe
Oct. 19, 2019

Sabres prospect Rasmus Asplund suffered an upper body injury on a blocked shot in the opening minutes of Friday night for the Rochester Americans.

Asplund, 21, was killing a penalty and crouched down when the puck hit him about 2:15 into the game. He quickly skated off and did not return.

Interim Americans coach Gord Dineen said Asplund had X-rays, but he did not know the results.

"We'll just have to evaluate and see how it is tomorrow," Dineen said after the Amerks fell to the Cleveland Monsters, 4-3 in a shootout in Blue Cross Arena. "He's a gamer. He really wants to be out there. He would've been compromised probably being out there."

With Asplund sidelined, Dineen rotated a few centers between Remi Elie and Tage Thompson.

Asplund, one of the Sabres' top forward prospects, compiled two assists in the first four games this season.

Despite losing Asplund and the game Friday, the Amerks had some good news.

Defenseman Lawrence Pilut made his season debut after undergoing surgery on his left shoulder during the offseason.

The Amerks threw Pilut, 23, right into the fray, playing him in all situations.

"It felt all right," said Pilut, who injured his shoulder in the playoffs April 24. "I think I'm a little rusty. I feel like I did some good things out there but I still have some things to clean up.

"But that will come the more games I get in. I feel confident out there."

Pilut, an American Hockey League All-Star as a rookie last season, skated beside Will Borgen at even strength. The Swede also quarterbacked and killed penalties.

"His conditioning was excellent, pace that he played at was very good," Dineen said. "I think some of the completion of plays that he normally makes wasn't quite where he would want it and where we know that he's got the ability to execute."
"Overall, I was real happy with his game."

Pilut registered three shots on goal, including one through traffic in the second period. He also drew a roughing penalty late in regulation.

"He's got such elite vision out there," Dineen said. "It really shows up on the power play. I'd like to see him add a little bit more to our power play."

Pilut quickly morphed into one of the Sabres' top defense prospects last season, playing 33 NHL games.

Sabres prospect Tage Thompson using 'gritty ways' in hot start
Buffalo News
By: Bill Hoppe
Oct. 19, 2019

Buffalo Sabres prospect Tage Thompson has roared out of the gate for the Rochester Americans, scoring two goals and five points in the first four games.

After registering two assists in regulation Sunday afternoon in Hartford, Thompson, 21, scored the shootout's only goal to clinch a 3-2 win.

Interim coach Gord Dineen attributes Thompson's hot to start to playing a "complete game."

"He's been working hard on the walls and trying to play with a lot of structure," he said. "He's been killing some penalties, playing against the other team's top lines. So it's been pretty impressive so far."

Dineen said finding "gritty ways" to grab pucks along the wall and in front of the net has also helped the 6-7 Thompson.

"He's used his size and reach in different ways," he said. "He's got such a width of reach that he comes up with pucks you think he can never get. He's strong on his stick."

Amerks fall to Cleveland in shootout
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com
Oct. 19, 2019

Jean-Sebastian Dea and Scott Wilson led the Rochester Americans (3-1-0-1) to a shootout as they each scored a goal with an assist, but a three-goal second-period for the Amerks wasn't enough as the home team came away with a point in a 4-3 loss to the Cleveland Monsters (3-2-0-0) Friday at the Blue Cross Arena.

While Dea and Wilson each recorded their first multi-point outing of the campaign, Dalton Smith was credited with his first goal of the season in the second period for Rochester, which has earned seven out of a possible 10 points to start the season. Amerks netminder Andrew Hammond (3-0-1) made 16 saves in his fourth appearance of the campaign.

Cleveland forwards Nathan Gerbe (0+3) and Stefan Matteau (2+0) both contributed a multi-point game while Kevin Stenlund completed the scoring as he netted his first marker of the slate. Goaltender Matiss Kivlenieks stopped 28 of the 31 shots he faced in addition to denying all three Amerks shooters in the shootout.

With the game tied at 3-3 following regulation, the contest went into a five-minute, sudden-death overtime period. Both teams traded several scoring changes during the extra session, including a pair of grade-A looks from Rochester's skaters, but the goaltenders prevailed, forcing the shootout competition.

Unlike Sunday's skills competition in Hartford, Tage Thompson was denied by Kivlenieks as was Dea and C.J. Smith while Gerbe found the back of Hammond's net, giving Cleveland the extra point.

Following a scoreless first period, where Cleveland was held without a shot until the near the 4:00 mark of the frame, the two North Division rivals exploded for five goals in the middle stanza.

"While it was not the results we wanted tonight, it was a good night," said Dea. "We can take a lot of good things from the game and we can build off it."

Matteau opened the scoring just 2:11 into the second period but Rochester quickly tied the contest 25 seconds later as Dalton Smith redirected a Casey Nelson point-shot behind the Monsters' netminder for his initial tally of the season. Midway through the period, Cleveland again grabbed a one-goal lead, but Dea knotted the score at two goals apiece as he picked the top corner at the 10:17 mark from Zach Redmond and Wilson.

The Amerks rode the momentum from Dea's second goal of the season as he won a face-off back to Wilson, who wasted no time in wiring a shot past the unsuspecting Cleveland goaltender nearly two minutes later to give the home club a 3-2 lead going into the final period of regulation.

"It's one of those plays that even if I miss the net, the puck will still rim around the boards to our other D-man," explained Wilson on his goal off the face-off win by Dea. "Oglevie did a great job of boxing the other forward and I just tried to get the puck on net."

The game remained a one-goal affair until late in the third period as Matteau and Gerbe again teamed up to force overtime while on the power-play.

In the overtime frame, the two clubs, who combined for 16 penalties, exchanged scoring opportunities but the neither grabbed the extra point and the shootout soon followed.

Rochester elected to shoot first in the skills competition, but Kivlenieks stood tall as he made all three saves while Gerbe sealed the win for Cleveland as the lone goal-scorer in the opening round.

The Amerks close out the weekend with a 7 pm face-off against the Utica Comets on Saturday at the Adirondack Bank Center.

**NOTES* — The Buffalo Sabres assigned forward Curtis Lazar to the Rochester Americans while Amerks General Manager Randy Sexton announced on Friday that the team has assigned goaltender Michael Houser to the Cincinnati Cyclones.

Amerks trounced in Utica
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com
Oct. 19, 2019

After falling behind in a three-goal deficit to the Utica Comets (5-0-0-0) during the first period, the Rochester Americans (3-2-0-1) were never able to recover as they fell 7-1 Saturday night at the Adirondack Bank Center.

Tage Thompson provided the lone goal of the night for the Amerks with his third of the season from Sean Malone and Brett Murray, who made his pro debut tonight for Rochester. Netminder Andrew Hammond (3-1-1) made his fifth appearance of the campaign in the crease, making 24 saves before being replaced by Jonas Johansson with 6:43 remaining in the third period.

The Comets racked up their fifth straight win to start the season, joining the Toronto Marlies as the only two North Division teams to remain unbeaten. Reid Boucher (2+1) and Sven Baertschi (1+2) each had a game-high three points apiece, while Olli Juolevi (0+2) and Nikolay Goldobin (1+1) both had their own multi-point outings as well. Lukas Jasek, Zack MacEwen and Wacey Hamilton all rounded out the scoring for the Comets. Goaltender Zane McIntyre made a career-high 45 saves to improve to 2-0-0 on the campaign.

The Comets opened the scoring midway through the first stanza with two goals in a span of 20 seconds from Baertschi and Boucher. With less than five minutes to go in the opening frame, Hamilton tacked on one more marker to push the lead to a 3-0.

Despite Thompson breaking through with his third of the season at the 18:32 mark when he wristed a shot from in-between the face-off dots, Rochester faced a two-goal deficit going into the locker room after the first 20 minutes of play.

Utica carried over its first-period momentum into the second as MacEwen upped the lead 4-1 just 68 seconds into the stanza.

Not letting up easy, the Comets matched their first-period goal total in the final 20 minutes of the contest. Boucher knocked in his second tally of the night with 9:02 left in regulation while Goldobin and Jasek tallied a pair of goals just 10 seconds apart three minutes later to put to give Utica its largest lead of the night and put the game out of reach.

The oldest rivalry in the American Hockey League will be renewed in Rochester on Wednesday, Oct. 23 when the Amerks host the Hershey Bears at the Blue Cross Arena for the only time this season. The 7:05 p.m. contest will be the 457th all-time meeting between the league's two oldest teams and will be carried live on *The Sports Leader AM 950/95.7 FM ESPN Rochester* as well as AHLTV.

Lawrence Pilut continues to shake off rust in his first game action since April
The Athletic
By: Joe Yerdon
Oct. 19, 2019

Lawrence Pilut's return to the ice on Friday came early in the Rochester Americans' season, but the layoff has felt like forever for the 23-year-old defenseman.

In a first North American season that started by lighting up the American Hockey League and saw him play 33 games in Buffalo, Pilut ended the 2018-19 campaign back in Rochester, where he sustained a shoulder injury in a season-ending Game 3 Calder Cup semifinals loss against Toronto.

Having a playoff sweep to gnaw on amid a summer of surgery recovery and rehabilitation made the offseason seem endless.

"It's been a long summer with rehab and I've been doing well with my off-ice work and everything, I feel very, very powerful," Pilut said. "I feel like I'm ready to take it to the next step. I just have to get back into the game play and everything." The waiting was the hardest part, especially for someone with a motor like Pilut's.

"If it were up to Lawrence he would've been playing back in training camp. He's such a motivated individual," Americans interim coach Gord Dineen said. "With him you almost have to temper it and tell him to pull it back a little where he just wants to bust down the door."

Part of what's made Pilut such a fascinating prospect is his motivation. When the Sabres signed him out of HV71 in the Swedish Hockey League, he was coming off a season in which he was the league's defenseman of the year. His skating, puck handling, and offensive abilities showed on the ice, but it was off the ice that was the biggest adjustment for him. Following last season, he said what he had to learn to get better at was managing his time off the ice and understanding that sometimes taking a day off pays off in the long run. Even now, staying still isn't really something Pilut is wont to do.

"Even in practice in between sets and drills, he's working on his hands with the puck and he's stopping and starting and working on his feet. That's the coach's dream as far as having to pull the reins on him," Dineen said. "I think he probably learned a lot about himself last year coming over from Europe. I kind of laugh because I say these European guys aren't used to the schedule, but he played a lot of games over there and certainly international competitions too.

"I think it's a maturity thing with him, not *maturity* because he's a very mature individual, but just the learning curve for him. The learning part of it is a huge part of coming over here no matter what – off the ice, the culture – but the way we do things, whether it's practice or off-ice, everything's an adjustment so sometimes that takes a mental burden on you too."

If all those factors have taken a psychological toll on Pilut it doesn't show in his light and friendly demeanor. If there were moments in Buffalo last season where maybe there was an intimidation factor at being there, it's gone now. During his season debut, there was a bit of snarl apparent in Pilut's game.

He's still aggressive with the puck and willing to go at defenders, but he's not allowing others to push him around. Pilut's ever-present smile now shows signs of that added edge after his two front teeth were chipped in Friday's 4-3 shootout loss against Cleveland. If that's how it's going to be then he's ready for it.

"I just try to play my game and if that means guys get on me, that's how it is sometimes," Pilut said. "I don't think that's what I'm trying to do all the time... I'm not trying to do anything; I just play my game and help the team out as much as possible."

The team, be it the Americans or the Sabres, certainly loves having Pilut out there to assist.

"I think I speak for pretty much all the forwards — we don't want to be skating up and down the ice all the time, so having a guy like that back there to head-man the puck through all the zones makes it easier for us," forward Scott Wilson said.

Pilut's return to action against Cleveland saw him thrown immediately into all phases of the game. He was on the top pairing with Will Borgen, he ran the team's top power play unit, and killed penalties. Rochester isn't short on defensive talent, so that Pilut was given the keys right off the hop speaks to how much he's trusted there and what the direction is for him to get back to Buffalo.

"It's been six months since my last game, of course there's going to be some rust in there, some timing things and everything, but I think give it a little time and hopefully I get back to being me out there and start playing with that confidence and pace," Pilut said.

The AHL doesn't keep public numbers for time on-ice, but Pilut did have three shots on goal. He was on-ice for a goal against, but given the situation and how the goal was scored (a 2-on-1 in which he had to slide over to get in between attackers) it would have been somewhat forgivable even if it hadn't been his first game since April.

Although it will take some games for him to get up to speed, there's still the logjam of defensemen in Buffalo to deal with once he does.

"I think my focus right now isn't on anything like that," Pilut said. "Right now it's on me having fun and playing hockey and getting back into games, but of course I think there's a chance (to get back to the NHL). I'm just going to play as best as I can and then take it from there. If I can raise my level of play and everything, I can just try and do a good job out there."

Although Pilut didn't get a chance to practice during training camp with Ralph Krueger and the Sabres staff, the way Rochester is being coached is very similar. Knowing that the NHL club is going to do things the same way as the AHL club makes the prospect of getting back to Buffalo all the more tantalizing.

"I like it a lot — It fits my playing style really well," Pilut said. "I want to be that puck possession kind of 'D' and just make plays in the defensive zone and follow up offensively. I like to have the puck a lot and I like to find lanes and get that puck to the net. I think the style of play we have fits my game a lot."

How Rochester's coaches are keeping those players on the cusp of the Sabres roster focused
The Athletic
By: Joe Yerdon
Oct. 18, 2019

John Vogl's State of the Americans showed that Rochester was going to have a good roster and a team capable of winning the Calder Cup. But icing the best team possible in the AHL and balancing those goals with the hopes the players have with getting to the NHL as soon as possible requires a strong organizational message and a buy-in from the players. A big part of that is communicating what the organization needs from them when they've been assigned to the minors.

That messaging has fallen largely on the coaching staff, which is currently being led by Gord Dineen while Amerks head coach Chris Taylor replaces Sabres assistant Don Granato during his recovery from pneumonia.

"It's easy to say 'don't worry about what they're doing up there' and I think it's a bit of a Pollyanna view if you're saying that. They're going to look and they're going to see it," Americans interim coach Gord Dineen said. "The one thing that we always try and stress is they're caretakers of their own career and we give them the means and the opportunity to be the best — and certainly the Pegulas and everything they provide allows that — but they're caretakers of their career so they have to focus on where they are at any given time.

"I hate to go cliché on it but it's one day at a time type thing, but they really have to focus on where they're at any given day, practice, coming into games, and just focus on that and help themselves as far as opportunity and be in the moment."

For players who just missed making the opening night roster in Buffalo, what can take the sting out of being sent down is both playing well and knowing that opportunity for promotion is there. But not every player's situation is the same. For some, further development is needed, while for others it's a matter of a roster numbers game.

Casey Nelson is back in Rochester after the Sabres loaded up on defensemen in the offseason. 20-year-old Henri Jokiharju steamrolled his way into the top-six and John Gilmour edged him out. Even with Brandon Montour's hand injury loosening the roster up a bit, it was tough to stick even with nearly 100 NHL games played (93 in Nelson's case).

"I just worry about where I'm at right now. I'm day to day," Nelson said. "I still keep in contact with some of the guys (in Buffalo) here and there, but I'm playing hockey here right now. That's all you can control."

Consider Tage Thompson's situation. Just 21, he's played over 100 NHL games and spent most of last season with the Sabres before he was sent to Rochester late in the year. For Thompson, preparing for his next chance in Buffalo means playing more minutes in a different role in Rochester.

"They thought this was the best for my development. It's something that's going to help round out my game and help me to be an NHL player for a long time," Thompson said. "They felt that this was the best to get a lot of playing time and continue to develop rather than maybe be in and out of the lineup or on fourth line minutes just sitting there on the bench."

Last season, Thompson beat out Alex Nylander for a spot on the Sabres but was used minimally and down in the lineup. For a young player, that's not always the optimal use as Thompson struggled to both put up points and defend. Even for the most

confident player that can be discouraging, but so can not making the NHL team. Instead, Thompson was given clear goals on what to work on so the call to go up can come sooner than later.

"They said by no means did they think I had a bad camp, they thought I had a really good camp," Thompson said. "It was no indication of how my camp went, how my summer went — they were really happy with how I put in a lot of work and gained weight and got stronger and they could see it — they could see it in my play, too. They said it's just a couple things we've got to clean up and that'll keep you in the NHL a long time. Just trying to do what I can to help round out that area and kind of get the whole package going.

"I think their thing is they see me as someone that can contribute offense, score a lot, hopefully (play) top-six, top-nine minutes, and be a guy they can go to in all situations. That's what I want too and in order for me to get that they think this is the best route for that."

What makes it easier for players to be able to ascend to the NHL again is how Rochester and Buffalo are on the same page both in how their games are designed and how practices are run. Many of the same drills are used for both teams and both the Sabres and Americans are playing a high-pressure style of hockey. While that comes from Ralph Krueger in Buffalo, the coaches in Rochester and Cincinnati are all on the same page and making things more enjoyable for everyone.

"It's easier, I wouldn't say it's more fun because hockey is always fun, it's just an easier style to play because they just want you to go out there and play but with some guidelines, but still go out there and play and show what you've got," center Rasmus Asplund said. "I think it's just easier to fall into it."

Asplund is the kind of player who can thrive in the sort of system the organization is implementing. He demonstrated last season in Rochester he can dig in defensively but he can also accelerate his offensive game as well. Although he hasn't made his NHL debut yet, the work to get there can't let up.

"I can't control if they want someone else or they want me, that's a decision they have to make," Asplund said. "The important thing for me is that I'm playing well and doing the things I'm good at and being a good player for the team down here. That's the only thing I can focus on right here and that's the only thing I'll focus on, too. A call-up or Buffalo is something I can't control, that's not a decision of mine or nothing like that."

Injuries will happen and spots will open in Buffalo at some point, but to be the next man up the players know they have to be the right player where they're at right now.

"I definitely extend the message that comes from up top. When we're doing our job well, we don't see these guys here for very long," Dineen said. "The one thing we really try to stress is coming from up top is what their habits are, how they want to see them develop as NHL players, and keep trying to stress at those habits at this level over here."

Amerks fall to Utica

Pickin' Splinters

By: Paul Gotham/Amerks.com

Oct. 19, 2019

After falling behind in a three-goal deficit to the Utica Comets (5-0-0-0) during the first period, the Rochester Americans (3-2-0-1) were never able to recover as they fell 7-1 Saturday night at the Adirondack Bank Center.

Tage Thompson provided the lone goal of the night for the Amerks with his third of the season from Sean Malone and Brett Murray, who made his pro debut tonight for Rochester. Netminder Andrew Hammond (3-1-1) made his fifth appearance of the campaign in the crease, making 24 saves before being replaced by Jonas Johansson with 6:43 remaining in the third period.

The Comets racked up their fifth straight win to start the season, joining the Toronto Marlies as the only two North Division teams to remain unbeaten. Reid Boucher (2+1) and Sven Baertschi (1+2) each had a game-high three points apiece, while Olli Juolevi (0+2) and Nikolay Goldobin (1+1) both had their own multi-point outings as well. Lukas Jasek, Zack MacEwen and Wacey Hamilton all rounded out the scoring for the Comets. Goaltender Zane McIntyre made a career-high 45 saves to improve to 2-0-0 on the campaign.

The Comets opened the scoring midway through the first stanza with two goals in a span of 20 seconds from Baertschi and Boucher. With less than five minutes to go in the opening frame, Hamilton tacked on one more marker to push the lead to a 3-0.

Despite Thompson breaking through with his third of the season at the 18:32 mark when he wristed a shot from in-between the face-off dots, Rochester faced a two-goal deficit going into the locker room after the first 20 minutes of play.

Utica carried over its first-period momentum into the second as MacEwen upped the lead 4-1 just 68 seconds into the stanza.

Not letting up easy, the Comets matched their first-period goal total in the final 20 minutes of the contest. Boucher knocked in his second tally of the night with 9:02 left in regulation while Goldobin and Jasek tallied a pair of goals just 10 seconds apart three minutes later to put to give Utica its largest lead of the night and put the game out of reach.

The oldest rivalry in the American Hockey League will be renewed in Rochester on Wednesday, Oct. 23 when the Amerks host the Hershey Bears at The Blue Cross Arena for the only time this season. The 7:05 p.m. contest will be the 457th all-time meeting between the league's two oldest teams and will be carried live on The Sports Leader AM 950/95.7 FM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Friday Amerks 6-pack: Pilut returns; Dea-Wilson chemistry; Asplund hurt
Pickin' Splinters
By: Kevin Oklobzija
Oct. 18, 2019

His teammates had a two-week head start on him, not to mention the preseason, so Lawrence Pilut was playing catch-up on Friday night.

Off-season shoulder surgery kept the second-year defenseman from participating in games of any sort through training camp and half of October.

Thus, when he was finally given the go-ahead to return to the lineup against the Cleveland Monsters, he wanted as much ice time as the coaching staff would give him.

While it was clear he hadn't played in six months, Pilut showed flashes of his talent with and without the puck in the 4-3 shootout loss at Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

"I felt all right but I think I'm a little rusty," Pilut said afterward. "I think I can clean up a few things."

The 23-year-old native of Tingsryd, Sweden, said he didn't know going into camp precisely when he would be given medical clearance to play.

"I felt good but just from a security standpoint (with the health of the shoulder) you want to be really ready," Pilut said.

Asplund injured

Second-year center Rasmus Asplund played just 2 minutes, 15 seconds on Friday before an injury forced him out of the game.

Asplund went down to block a shot in the slot and was apparently struck somewhere on upper body. He immediately left the ice and headed straight to the medical room. He did have X-rays but coach Gord Dineen did not have an update afterward.

Dineen said had Asplund returned, "he would have been compromised probably."

Dea-Wilson no strangers

Jean-Sebastien Dea centered a line with left winger Scott Wilson and right winger Andrew Oglevie, and there was some instant chemistry with Dea and Wilson.

Of course, there should have been. They were teammates with the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in 2014-15 and '15-16, their first two seasons in pro hockey.

While they weren't on the same line that often with the Penguins, there is definite familiarity.

They each assisted on the other's goal on Friday.

Dea plays sniper

With Victor Olofsson now with the Sabres, Taylor Leier still recovering from off-season surgery and Wayne Simpson and Danny O'Regan no longer in the organization, the Amerks need Dea to score goals.

He scored a dandy against Cleveland, playing the puck ahead to himself as he dashed in on the left wing before snapping a shot to the far side, over the glove of goalie Matiss Kivlenieks for his second goal of the season.

"I just saw the hole and I guess it's just natural instinct," Dea said. "I just rip it like I used to do in junior."

Dea scored 45 and 49 for Rouyn-Noranda his final two seasons in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. He scored 17 in 46 AHL games last season with Springfield and Wilkes-Barre, along with 4 in 23 NHL games for New Jersey and Pittsburgh.

Gerbe shines

Former Sabres winger Nathan Gerbe assisted on all three goals by the Monsters, including the tying goal by Stefan Matteau with 5:31 left in the third period.

Kivlenieks shuts the door

The Monsters goalie split last season between the ECHL and AHL but he looked like a No. 1 on Friday, making 28 saves.

Two of his best came in overtime, robbing Tage Thompson with the glove at 50 seconds before sprawling to stop a Dea shot with 57 seconds remaining.

He then denied Thompson, Dea and C.J. Smith in the shootout.

Amerks fall to Utica Comets
Rochester First
By: Staff Report
Oct. 19, 2019

After falling behind in a three-goal deficit to the Utica Comets (5-0-0-0) during the first period, the Rochester Americans (3-2-0-1) were never able to recover as they fell 7-1 Saturday night at the Adirondack Bank Center.

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Amerks gain one, fall in shootout to Cleveland
Rochester First
By: Staff Report
Oct. 19, 2019

Jean-Sebastian Dea and Scott Wilson led the Rochester Americans (3-1-0-1) to a shootout as they each scored a goal with an assist, but a three-goal second-period for the Amerks wasn't enough as the home team came away with a point in a 4-3 loss to the Cleveland Monsters (3-2-0-0) Friday at The Blue Cross Arena.

While Dea and Wilson each recorded their first multi-point outing of the campaign, Dalton Smith was credited with his first goal of the season in the second period for Rochester, which has earned seven out of a possible 10 points to start the season. Amerks netminder Andrew Hammond (3-0-1) made 16 saves in his fourth appearance of the campaign.

Cleveland forwards Nathan Gerbe (0+3) and Stefan Matteau (2+0) both contributed a multi-point game while Kevin Stenlund completed the scoring as he netted his first marker of the slate. Goaltender Matiss Kivlenieks stopped 28 of the 31 shots he faced in addition to denying all three Amerks shooters in the shootout.

With the game tied at 3-3 following regulation, the contest went into a five-minute, sudden-death overtime period. Both teams traded several scoring chances during the extra session, including a pair of grade-A looks from Rochester's skaters, but the goaltenders prevailed, forcing the shootout competition.

Unlike Sunday's skills competition in Hartford, Tage Thompson was denied by Kivlenieks as was Dea and C.J. Smith while Gerbe found the back of Hammond's net, giving Cleveland the extra point.

Following a scoreless first period, where Cleveland was held without a shot until the near the 4:00 mark of the frame, the two North Division rivals exploded for five goals in the middle stanza.

"While it was not the results we wanted tonight, it was a good night," said Dea. "We can take a lot of good things from the game and we can build off it."

Matteau opened the scoring just 2:11 into the second period but Rochester quickly tied the contest 25 seconds later as Dalton Smith redirected a Casey Nelson point-shot behind the Monsters' netminder for his initial tally of the season.

Midway through the period, Cleveland again grabbed a one-goal lead, but Dea knotted the score at two goals apiece as he picked the top corner at the 10:17 mark from Zach Redmond and Wilson.

The Amerks rode the momentum from Dea's second goal of the season as he won a face-off back to Wilson, who wasted no time in wiring a shot past the unsuspecting Cleveland goaltender nearly two minutes later to give the home club a 3-2 lead going into the final period of regulation.

"It's one of those plays that even if I miss the net, the puck will still rim around the boards to our other D-man," explained Wilson on his goal off the face-off win by Dea. "Oglevie did a great job of boxing the other forward and I just tried to get the puck on net."

The game remained a one-goal affair until late in the third period as Matteau and Gerbe again teamed up to force overtime while on the power-play.

In the overtime frame, the two clubs, who combined for 16 penalties, exchanged scoring opportunities but the neither grabbed the extra point and the shootout soon followed.

Rochester elected to shoot first in the skills competition, but Kivlenieks stood tall as he made all three saves while Gerbe sealed the win for Cleveland as the lone goal-scorer in the opening round.

The Amerks close out the weekend with a 7:00 p.m. face-off against the Utica Comets on Saturday, Oct. 19 at the Adirondack Bank Center.

Pilut returns to the ice for the Amerks
WGR 550
By: Joe Dibiase
Oct. 19, 2019

Lawrence Pilut was back on the ice on Friday night as he played for the Rochester Americans against the Cleveland Monsters at Blue Cross Arena.

It was the defenseman's first game action since Game 3 of the Calder Cup Playoffs last season against the Toronto Marlies. In that game, Pilut ended up taking a hit that injured his shoulder and forced him to miss some action. He was able to finish the game, but the injury was enough to force Pilut into undergoing offseason surgery.

Pilut ended up playing on a defensive pair with fellow defensive prospect Will Borgen, and finished the night with three shots on goal and a minus-1 rating.

It makes total sense that Pilut starts the season in the American Hockey League as he gets back into the swing of things following offseason surgery. However, at some point, the Sabres should want to get him in their lineup in Buffalo.

Pilut was one of the Sabres' better defenseman last year, and Rasmus Ristolainen has never played better than when playing with the 23-year-old Swede.

Pilut was consistently a positive expected-goals-for player in the National Hockey League. He was one of the Sabres' most consistent breakout passers from his own end, and is exactly the type of modern NHL defenseman that the Sabres are trying to mold their blue line into.

The question becomes, will there be room in the lineup for Pilut?

There is no question that Pilut is one of the Sabres' best-six defenseman, but NHL teams often take the east route of scratching/sending down young, cheap players over veterans. With so many NHL caliber defenseman in the organization, and a young player like Henri Jokiharju already carving out his own spot on the Sabres roster, it seems unlikely that the Sabres will bring up Pilut, regardless of if he's earned it.

Adding Pilut to an already crowded blueline gives the Sabres all the more reason to swing a trade. There's no need to have roughly a dozen NHL defenseman in your organization. Depth is nice, but what the Sabres have now is overkill.

Despite Rasmus Ristolainen's marginally improved play this season, he is the player that still makes the most sense for a deal. It comes down to value, and the fact that Ristolainen seemingly wanted out in the offseason makes it more logical. Maybe trading Ristolainen could help open the door for a good young player like Pilut to get some minutes in the NHL.

However, what could make a trade like that complicated is the depth of players on the blue line that are right-handed shots and who can play on the right side. Luckily, Pilut is a defenseman who can play on his off-side, but he hasn't played much on the right side since coming to North America last year.

We still have yet to mention Zach Bogosian, who is still recovering from offseason hip surgery. The original recovery period was listed at 5-6 months when it was announced that he would have surgery in April. It has been nearly six months since his surgery, and head coach Ralph Krueger did say before the season that Bogosian did have a few setbacks in his recovery over the summer. At this point, who knows when he may come back.

One player who will be returning soon from injury is Brandon Montour, who is currently recovering from a hand injury suffered in the preseason. That's another body on the blue line that will make an upcoming roster decision for the Sabres that much more difficult.

We'll see how the Sabres decide to go about their defensive depth as more bodies return to the lineup in Buffalo and Rochester.

In a roster move made on Friday, the Sabres have sent forward Curtis Lazar back to Rochester. Lazar did not play for the Sabres while up from the AHL, but he was on the west coast trip while Conor Sheary recovered from his upper-body injury. With Sheary back, and again scoring, Evan Rodrigues is serving as the extra forward, freeing Lazar up to return to the Amerks.

Cleveland Monsters first line shone bright in shootout victory over the Rochester Americans
The Cannon
By: Elaine Shircliff
Oct. 19, 2019

After last Saturday's poor showing at home, the lines were shaken up a bit. Stefan Matteau was bumped up to the first line. While Marko Dano dropped to the second. Paul Bittner drew into the lineup on the fourth line.

In a pregame interview with Tony Brown, play by play announcer for the Monsters, Head Coach Mike Eaves slightly touched on the makeup of the lines and pairs. "I think from a defensive standpoint we haven't made any changes," Eaves explained to Brown, "Offensively we made some changes. We're still learning about chemistry. Who plays well with who. Who mixes and matches well."

Eaves even took the time to brace people for future line changes by telling Brown "I know over the course of this long season we're going to see many line combinations because that's just the nature of the beast".

For the most part, the line changes worked well as the Monsters were able to pull out a 4-3 win over the Americans in a shootout. All four goals came courtesy of the first line consisting of Nathan Gerbe, Kevin Stenlund, and Matteau.

Last weekend, the defense struggled. The exact words Coach Eaves used to describe their play was "sloppy". Last night was a completely different different story. In fact, they were a solid force in the first four minutes of the game.

Gabriel Carlsson and Adam Clendening had a passing system going that threw off the Amerks. They just kept passing the puck back and forth without looking at one another. Occasionally Carlsson and Clendening would stare at the Amerks and challenge them to steal the puck. When an Amerk would take the bait, Carlsson or Clendening would take off with the puck and try to get it out of the neutral zone. This tactic set up a few plays for Kole Sherwood.

Andrew Peeke set up multiple plays for Dillon Simpson. Unfortunately, the Amerks defense managed to throw their bodies into every single slapper from the blue line and point. Peeke also refused to get out of the way of anyone who had the puck. His unwillingness to move caused multiple Amerks to fumble the puck.

Also during the first, Stenlund and Gerbe took turns placing themselves in areas surrounding the net which would allow them to scoop up failed shot attempts.

Despite all the shot attempts that happened in the first, the Monsters first registered shot didn't come until there was 4:13 left in the period. This says more about the Amerks' defense than the Monsters ability to find openings.

The lack of shots on goal didn't keep the Monsters from scoring. A little over two minutes into the second period, Gerbe launched a shot from the top of the left faceoff circle that Matteau tipped in for the first goal of the game.

Casey Nelson fired off a rocket of a shot from the point 25 seconds later. Dalton Smith was in the right place at the right time and was able to knock the puck into the net for the tying goal, 1-1.

With 12:44 left in the second period, Sam Vigneault and Calvin Thurkauf pulled out all the stops during a Monsters' penalty kill. They created play after play but not a goal went into the net. Andrew Hammond was just too quick for both of them.

Around the halfway mark of the second, Stenlund went one-on-one with Hammond before popping the puck into the net to give the Monsters the 2-1 lead.

The lead didn't last long for the Monsters. Marko Dano missed his man, Jean-Sebastien Dea, with 9:27 left in the second period. The quick footed Dea powered towards the net before sniping the puck past Matiss Kivlenieks.

The Amerks took the 3-2 lead with a wild goal off the faceoff from Scott Wilson. The rest of the second period was a bit crazy.

Kivlenieks pulled out highlight reel save after highlight reel save. While, Dano got into the Monsters' first fight of the season. Yes, you read that correctly. Sweet, kind, Marko Dano got into a fight. It didn't end well for him as I don't think Dano was actually prepared to get pummeled by Will Borgen.

The third period was equal parts messy and clean.

A minute into the third Peeke took a stick to the face and headed towards the bench to get looked over. He made it back on the ice for his next shift a few minutes later but I was left scratching my head wondering why no call was made.

Four and a half minutes into the last stanza of play, Clendening turned the puck over but quickly stole it back and passed it off to Zac Dalpe. Despite a quick breakaway and heavy handed shot, Dalpe was stuffed by Hammond. For some reason, Dalpe has been on a scoring slump these past few games. He just can't seem to get the monkey off his back. Luckily, it hasn't taken a toll on Dalpe's game and confidence.

With five minutes left in the game, Matteau tied the game up at three to give the Monsters that extra push towards the finish line.

As time wound down on the third period, things heated up between both teams. There was a lot of aggressive shoving and both goalies dug deep into their bag of magic tricks to come up with saves.

Despite the plethora of shot attempts from the Amerks and Monsters, no goals were scored. Overtime was imminent.

Gerbe, Clendening, and Stenlund kicked overtime off with a beautiful sequence. Clendening set Gerbe up with a cross ice pass. Gerbe rushed the net with the puck but was quickly stuffed by Hammond. Hot on the trail, Stenlund scooped up the rebound and almost scored. Somehow Hammond managed to close up the gap in the net in time to prevent a goal from happening.

A few moments later, Dano dropped a pass back to Justin Scott who launched it towards the wide open net. Hammond used his super speed to get back into the net before the puck could cross the goal line.

On the other end of the ice, Kivlenieks was jumping on pucks and knocking them out of the air like a cat playing with a ball of yarn.

Neither goalie wanted to let the game winning goal get past them. Due to this fact, the game headed to a shootout.

The Amerks sent Tage Thompson onto the ice first. He skated left to right before going toe-to-toe with Kivlenieks. He tried to shoot from the top of the crease and was quickly stuffed.

Gerbe was the first shooter for the Monsters during the shootout. He got a little fancy with his stick handling before backhanding the shot into the net. It was a thing of beauty. Don't believe me? Feast your peepers on the shot below.

Both goalies stood tall during the second round of the shootout quickly stopping their opponent.

C.J. Smith was the Amerks last shot at possibly pushing the shootout to the 4th round. He powered towards the net in hopes of keeping hope alive. As Smith neared the net, he lost grip of his stick and fired a softie towards Kivlenieks which he quickly stuffed for the Monsters 4-3 win.

It was the easiest save Kivlenieks made last night and will probably be the easiest save he makes all season.

Comets Continue Flexing Offensive Muscle, Top Amerks 7-1 To Continue Franchise Best Start W KTV

By: Spencer Davidson

Oct. 20, 2019

For the first time in franchise history, the Utica Comets have started out at 5-0-0-0 as they dominate the Rochester Americans 7-1 at the Adirondack Bank Center, Saturday.

Reid Boucher continued his torrid start with another two goals on the night, for eight on the year through five games. He's also scored in every game thus far.

Sven Baertschi opened the scoring in the first with a takeaway behind the net with his centering feed hitting off an Amerks defenseman and deflecting into the net.

20 seconds later, Boucher tallied his first of the game off a tic-tac-toe play with Dylan Blujus and Kole Lind on the assists. Boucher then earned an assist himself, dishing a one-timer to Wacey Hamilton off a 2-on-1 for a shorthanded goal.

Tage Thompson got one back for the Amerks late in the period, bringing a 3-1 score into the first intermission.

Zack MacEwen finished a highlight-reel, toe-drag goal top shelf just 1:08 into the second to put the Comets back on three and they'd pour it on from there.

Boucher's second goal came midway through the third, with Nikolay Goldobin and Luka Jasek scoring 10 seconds apart to round out the scoring with seven minutes remaining.

Zane McIntyre made 45 saves in his first start at home as a Comet, winning his third game of the season.

The Comets also killed all eight penalties against.

Utica returns to action on Friday, October 25 at 7 p.m., when they host the Binghamton Devils at home.