



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Friday, November 15, 2019*

*Tonight's Game: Cleveland vs. Rochester*

Amerks hosting Military Appreciation Night this Friday  
Fox Rochester  
By: Staff Report  
*Nov. 14, 2019*

The Rochester Americans are gearing up for their Military Appreciation Night!

The event will be held Friday as the Amerks go against the Cleveland Monsters. Both teams will be wearing military-themed jerseys and matching socks. Jerseys will later be auctioned off, with proceeds going to the Veterans Outreach Center.

Blue Star Mothers will also be collecting items that will be donated to U.S. military care packages. Fans will also be able to purchase packages which help provide families of veterans with tickets.

Veterans attending the game will be offered a free complementary ticket.

The game starts at 7:05 p.m. Friday at the Blue Cross Arena.

Laura Stradley of the Veterans Outreach Center and In-Arena Host Suzie Cool join us on Good Day Rochester to talk about the game.

Amerks pay tribute to veterans with Military Appreciation Night

Rochester First  
By: Mark Gruba  
Nov. 14, 2019

The Rochester Americans and Veterans Outreach Center will once again collaborate for Military Appreciation Night this Friday, November 15 at the Blue Cross Arena.

The Amerks will host Cleveland that night in a 7:05 face off.

Amerks in-game host Suzie Cool and VOC Executive Director Laura Stradley discussed the event Wednesday on News 8.

"The Amerks Military Appreciation Night presented by the Veterans Outreach Center is one of our biggest nights that we have every single year and it's just to honor those who have served and are still serving," said Cool. "We're extremely excited to have it again this season. Of course, we have a lot planned for this year as we always do — one of them being our specialty themed jerseys that both ourselves and Cleveland will be repping. The best part about these is they're being auctioned off during the game, both Cleveland and Rochester's. And if you are lucky enough to receive one of Rochester's, then you are invited down onto the ice after the game and you actually get the jersey off the players back. So a very cool experience for some of our fans!"

All active, reserve, National Guard, and retired military personnel are eligible to receive one complimentary ticket for the game. "All they have to do is go on over to the Blue Cross Arena or the VOC and they can get those tickets," noted Cool. "We also have some special packages available this year and it's actually a brand new thing that we have — Red, White, and Blue Packages. They are all different ticket numbers available in these packages. They're available for fans or for businesses to purchase. You can go to [amerks.com/military](http://amerks.com/military) to check out what those packages are exactly, and essentially all of those tickets go to the VOC for families to go to the Military Appreciation Night."

Stradley said the collaboration is an important one for the VOC. "We've done it for the last five years I think. It's definitely a very exciting night for us and just an exciting season. I love that they do this right around Veterans Day every year. They're such strong supporters of our organization and it's community partnerships like this that really help us support our programs all year long."

Proceeds from the jersey auction will benefit the programs at the VOC. "We do offer so many things to veterans," said Stradley. "We offer assistance for veterans experiencing homelessness or joblessness, but also newer this year, we're offering chiropractic therapy, onsite massage therapy. We have a lot of peer support programs. I mean, the list is pretty long of the things that we offer at VOC. And of course, we're renovating our residential facilities right now. So support from the Amerks and fans coming out is huge to be able to continue doing all those things."

For more information visit the Amerks website and the Veterans Outreach Center website.

Cornel, Murray, Malone lead Amerks past Syracuse  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklobzija  
Nov. 14, 2019

Two things happened on Wednesday that haven't happened very often this season for the Rochester Americans.

They scored a power-play goal on home ice and they squandered a lead but then recovered to win.

Eric Cornel's power-play goal 1:13 into the third period snapped a 3-3 tie and the Amerks held on to win 4-3 behind the clutch-save goaltending of Jonas Johansson.

Here's your Wednesday Amerks Six Pack:

### 1. Cornel's high-quality tip-in

Eric Cornel hasn't been given a lot of power-play time in his four seasons with the Amerks but every now and then he gets his chance.

On Wednesday he took advantage, finding free space near the left hash marks as defenseman Jacob Bryson was shooting from the right point. As the waist-high slap shot sailed in, Cornel reached up and redirected it just inside the left post.

"I just try to come up with loose pucks and go to the net and I got a good bounce," he said.

### 2. Murray making contributions

Rookie winger Brett Murray enjoyed the first two-point game of his career. He assisted on the game's first goal, a rebound put-back by Kevin Porter, and then set up Bryson at the point on the game-winner.

In nine games, he has 2 goals, five assists and 7 points. Considering he sat out the first five games as an extra forward, he has fit in nicely of late, thanks first to hard work in practice and then to production in games.

"That's what you want a young guy to do, punch a hole in the lineup," Amerks interim coach Gord Dineen said.

Murray has points in four of his past five games and has fit in nicely on the left wing with Porter and Andrew Oglevie. "I feel pretty confident," he said. "We're playing well as a team."

The assists provide tangible proof of contributions.

"It's nice to put anything on the scoresheet — other than a minus," Murray said.

### 3. Seven and counting for Malone

Third-year forward Sean Malone ran his points streak to seven games when he helped set up Tyler Randell's first-period goal.

It's been slow and steady for the 24-year-old Buffalo native, with one point per game. That's after going without a point in the first four games he played.

More importantly, he's able to play several roles — even in the same game.

He started Wednesday as the center for Randell and Dalton Smith and ended up on the left wing with Rasmus Asplund and Tage Thompson after Scott Wilson was injured.

"I want to be that guy that's versatile and can fill in in different spots and contribute," Malone said.

Said Dineen: "I hate to say utility, but it's great that he has that versatility."

#### 4. It's more about when, not how many

Johansson made 28 saves in the game and at least five would be considered high-quality stops.

His best save may have come early in the third period, when he kicked out his left leg to rob Chris Mueller of what could have been the tying goal.

"J.J. was our best player in the third period," Dineen said.

#### 5. That needed snarl

Veteran defenseman Andrew MacWilliam was his usual ornery self against the Crunch.

He delivered big hits on Boris Katchouk and Alexander Volkov in the first period. He missed the first portion of the third period because of injury but returned to finish the game.

"He came back and really shored things up," Dineen said.

#### 6. Another injury

Wilson suffered a lower body injury and Dineen said he wouldn't have an accurate prognosis regarding his playing status until Thursday.

He joins C.J. Smith, Remi Elie and Jarrett Burton as forwards on the injured list, and that doesn't include Taylor Leier who is recovering from off-season surgery.

Amerks hold off Syracuse, 4-3  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com  
Nov. 14, 2019

The Rochester Americans (8-3-1-2) scored three goals in the first period and held off a late push from the Syracuse Crunch (7-5-2-0) to come away with a 4-3 win over their intrastate rivals Wednesday night at The Blue Cross Arena. The win was Rochester's third straight over the Crunch this season, sending the Amerks into the weekend in a three-way tie atop the AHL's North Division standings with Toronto and Laval.

Rochester has now earned 19 out of a possible 28 points through its first 14 games of the campaign and has picked up points in nine of the last 11 contests overall, going 6-2-1-2 over that span.

Rookie forward Brett Murray tallied his first pro multi-point game as he recorded a pair of assists while Kevin Porter, Jean-Sebastien Dea, Tyler Randell and Eric Cornel all scored for Rochester, which improved to 9-4-1-1 in the last 15 games against Syracuse. Goaltender Jonas Johansson (3-2-2) stopped 28 shots during his eighth appearance of the slate while earning the win.

Forwards Alex Barre-Boulet and Ross Colton both collected two helpers for Syracuse while Taylor Raddysh, Cameron Gaunce and Danick Martel tallied a goal in the defeat. Former Amerk netminder Scott Wedgewood (3-2-1) made 29 saves but was suffered the loss.

During the opening minute of the third period with the contest knotted at 3-3, Rochester drew its first power-play of the night. With the puck at the right point, Jacob Bryson fired a shot towards the cage searching for his pro goal, but Cornel provided a last-second redirection into the top-right corner to give the Amerks a 4-3 lead 1:13 into the frame.

"We have been struggling on special teams as of late, but we have been working hard in practice just trying to get better and better every day," Murray said. "Tonight, we just tried to get pucks on net and Bryson made a nice shot and Cornel was there for the tip in front."

Syracuse pressed to find the equalizer, but Johansson and company hung on for the one-goal victory, the third of its kind in the head-to-head matchup this season.

Rochester opened the scoring just 74 seconds into the first period as Porter banged in his fourth goal of the slate from Murray and Andrew Oglevie, however Raddysh tied the game 45 seconds later.

Near the midway point of the first period, the Amerks regained the lead as they tacked on a pair of goals 1:50 apart and took a 3-1 advantage into the dressing room as Dea and Randell scored their sixth and first markers of the slate, respectively.

"We had a really good start," explained Cornel, who has scored in each of his last two games. "We let them back in the game in the second period, but the leaders did a really job sending a message in the dressing room and what we needed to do and we did a job of doing that in the third."

During Dea's tally, Casey Nelson earned his sixth point (2+4) over his last four games while Pascal Aquin, who was recalled from the Cincinnati Cyclones (ECHL) earlier in the week, earned his first-career AHL point.

Amerks third-year winger Sean Malone earned a secondary helper on Randell's goal to push his point streak to a career-best seven games, where he shows three goals and four assists.

"Sean has been a really good utility guy," described interim head coach Gord Dineen when asked about Malone. "I don't like using that term, but if you look at tonight for example, he began the night on a line with Dalton Smith and Tyler Randell and ended the night on the left side with Rasmus Asplund and Tage Thompson."

Syracuse, which was outshot 15-6 in the first 20 minutes of play, responded in the second period as they netted a pair of goals to knot the game at three before Cornel's game-winning goal in the third.

"We had an excellent start, much like the last game, but we took our foot off the gas in the second and got away from the good habits that we did in the first," added Dineen. "It's a sign of a good team when you can take a breath and regroup after losing some players and come up with a big goal to win the game in the third."

*\*NOTES* — The Buffalo Sabres recalled forward Curtis Lazar earlier in the day... Rochester closes out its 3-game homestand on Friday as they play host to the Cleveland Monsters at the BCA for Military Appreciation Night, presented by Veterans Outreach Center. Both teams will wear special Military-themed jerseys and matching socks as a tribute to the U.S Armed Forces. Game time is slated for a 7:05 pm... Rochester's 4-3 shootout loss to Binghamton last Friday was the sixth game so far this season that went beyond regulation for the Amerks, the most behind only Hartford.

Sabres' Zach Bogosian set to practice; Vladimir Sobotka out four to six weeks  
Buffalo Hockey Beat  
By: Bill Hoppe  
Nov. 14, 2019

More than six months after undergoing hip surgery, defenseman Zach Bogosian will return to practice today, the Sabres announced this morning.

Bogosian, who's week-to-week, will be joined by defenseman Marco Scandella, who has missed the last six games with a lower-body injury.

That doesn't mean the Sabres are healthy.

They announced this morning a lower-body injury will sideline winger Vladimir Sobotka four to six weeks. Tampa Bay Lightning star Nikita Kucherov hit Sobotka low and late in Saturday's 5-3 loss in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Sabres also recalled forward Curtis Lazar from the Rochester Americans this morning.

Some other updates according the injury report:

- Scandella is day-to-day.
- Center Marcus Johansson (upper body) is day-to-day.

Sabres call up Lazar from the Amerks  
ESPN Rochester  
By: Joe Yerdon  
*Nov. 13, 2019*

In response to the injuries on the roster, the Buffalo Sabres have recalled forward Curtis Lazar from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

This will be Lazar's second call up to Buffalo this season, but he did not suit up for any games when he was called up back on October 13.

In 11 games this season with the Amerks, Lazar has four goals and five assists for nine points. That includes a five-point night back on October 26 in a game against the Syracuse Crunch, where he had two goals and also added three assists in a 7-6 overtime win.

The Sabres are dealing with injuries to forwards Marcus Johansson (day-to-day) and Vladimir Sobotka (out 4-to-6 weeks), and are about to play three games in four days, starting on Thursday night against the Carolina Hurricanes at KeyBank Center.

The Sabres are also expecting to get defensemen Marco Scandella (lower-body injury) and Zach Bogosian (hip) back to practice on Wednesday as they recover from injuries. Bogosian has yet to play this season and is ruled as week-to-week, while Scandella is day-to-day.

A former first round pick by the Ottawa Senators in the 2013 NHL Draft, Lazar has played in 246 NHL games in his career, scoring 15 goals and 36 assists for 51 points.

Sandler, snarples and smartphones: How Rochester Americans players pass the time on long bus trips  
The Athletic  
By: Joe Yerdon  
Nov. 13, 2019

Even though we're living in an era where NHL teams get around via chartered jets, life in the minor leagues maintains the storied hockey tradition of the long bus trip. In the American Hockey League, hitting the highways can certainly keep the ego in check, but it also gives teams an opportunity for bonding and camaraderie away from home.

While minor league hockey trips have evolved from Moe in *Slap Shot* cracking holes into the side of the team bus with a sledge hammer because he's "makin' it look mean," there is a classic sense of an old school pecking order, combined with a few new wrinkles. The transportation might be the same, but the technology and the generations are a bit different.

There were no streaming services or smartphones when 36-year-old defenseman Nathan Paetsch started his career in 2003-2004, but one thing remains the same. Rookies have a big responsibility to entertain the rest of the team.

"Rookies got movies — that's mandatory," Paetsch said. "It's an automatic fine if they don't have enough or they're no good... Usually we just put it on them, it's on their shoulders. If it's no good then usually we just give it to them."

With the threat of a kangaroo court being called or just being carved up with chirps, picking the right movies is a big deal, especially for those extra long road trips.

"Movies are big," 29-year-old defenseman Andrew MacWilliam said. "I think I've seen four or five Will Ferrell movies about 16 different times. The variety, I think, could be increased a little bit. It's not something you've really got to follow along with but it's good for a couple laughs, which is usually pretty ideal."

Comedies are always a staple on the hockey bus ride. Hang around hockey players long enough and you're probably going to hear any number of movie lines being used to taunt each other or even just break the silence. The goofier the movie is, the better it is for the ride.

"Between *Semi-Pro*, *The Other Guys*, and *Anchorman*, those are pretty much staples on any bus anywhere," MacWilliam said. "The one that was a huge hit last year — we were pretty upset that we didn't get to continue the rest of the series — was *Austin Powers*. We only got to watch one of them and the boys loved it, especially the older guys. And then I guess the young guys are bad on picking up on cues and they never got the other two."

This season's Americans team has four rookies to handle movie duties: Defensemen Jacob Bryson and Casey Fitzgerald, forward Brett Murray and goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen. It might be a group effort to keep the bus happy, but there's definitely pressure to get it right.

"We ordered a bunch on Amazon, got some suggestions from a few of the younger guys because we didn't want to ask the vets," Bryson said. "We send the case (of movies) back and they get to choose, but sometimes it is up to us. They'll say, 'Hey rookies, go choose.' Those are the times we're under pressure."

The bus ride starts with the collection of movies being passed to the back where the veterans call home.

"It's usually by years because a lot of the younger guys, the first couple of years you've got to sit two to a seat and then the longer you are (in the league) you've usually got your own seat," Paetsch said. "As you can imagine, I'm at the very back of the bus."

Watching a movie on the bus generally means good things. If Ferrell, Mike Myers, or Adam Sandler is on the screen after a game, it means the evening was a success.

"I like the old classics. *Step Brothers*, *Happy Gilmore* — like those old movies — that never gets old, you'll watch those a 100 times and still laugh," Americans forward Jean-Sebastien Dea said. "Usually when we watch movies it's when we win so it's a better mood."

Although movies make up the main form of entertainment, the classic stand-by — the card game — isn't quite what it used to be. Americans players said cards don't come out too often and a lot of that is because the kind of bus they ride in doesn't make it easy to make a game happen. Sometimes in the roomier back end of the bus, the veterans will get a game going.

"In my first few years (in the NHL), there were some big card games for a lot of money. That's definitely calmed down," Americans captain Kevin Porter said. "It's 50 cents a point or a dollar a point now. I think there was a couple grand on the line early on in my career, but yeah, we occasionally will pull the cooler out and throw the blanket over something and play on the cooler, especially on those longer (trips)."

Playing high-stakes games might be part of the old days or for their NHL counterparts, but if you're dealing out the deck these days, the games aren't really the kind that will make you lose your shirt. Instead you might just take a few "Ls" to your teammates and lose some pocket change.

"There are a few different games. Snarples is one of them. Guys did play poker," Porter said. "Euchre, we'd play euchre occasionally if we had a few guys who knew how to play it. That's kind of a Midwest game. Snarples is kind of the same game. There's a lot of trump games, but the big one was snarples."

Card games might not happen much with Rochester, but they're still alive elsewhere in the AHL and in college.

"The last couple years I remember I was playing cards all the time," Dea said. "Even in (Wilkes-Barre/Scranton) I was playing all the time. It was usually two tables — the vet table at the back and usually the rookies would play the front. It's probably still there on a few teams."

"I know a lot of guys in my second year and third year at Providence played cribbage, I never played that, but that was a big game for them," Bryson said.

It's hard to ask about the bus trip without the discussion turning to how the prevalence of technology has altered the way the social construct goes on the road. Whether it's smartphones or tablets, personal entertainment has cut down a bit on the action around movies or cards with teammates.

"If (bus trips) are over five hours it usually gets boring, but I usually play my music," Dea said. "I'm a big EDM music guy so sometimes I will watch festivals on my iPad. Sometimes if I want to have a quick laugh I'll watch the movies on the bus. But as you play music, you try to relax, sometimes I'll go for a sleep. I meditate sometimes too. It goes fairly quick."

Dea made it clear listening to Martin Garrix, Kygo, Marshmello or The Chainsmokers was for getting pumped up for games. When it was time to wind down, Spotify playlists were the way to go to meditate and relax.

Even though technology allows for personal methods of decompressing, phones and tablets give players a refuge from the forced unity of previous generations.

"Everyone's got their phones or iPads and all their different kinds of music they can listen to. I don't know, I think we try and bond a little bit," Porter said. "The first half-hour or so we just talk and BS for a little bit. On those longer trips it's a little bit easier to do that, but the shorter ones or the day-of trips you're kind of focused getting ready for the game." Movies and joking around are big after wins, but there's an unwritten rule in play after losses.

"No movies, lights are off. You put your light on to eat your meal and shut your light off and be quiet," Porter said. "(You) think about the game or watch your show. There isn't a lot of talking. There's not much going on in those bus rides — they're tough."

Not all rides home after the game are the same. A loss can feel like a relief and there are times when a win can still produce a dark mood among the players.

"If you lose 2-1 in a shootout and you outplayed the team, that's a little bit different," Porter said. "You kind of walk out of the rink with your head held high and you're not real disappointed — you got a point and you lost in a shootout. That's a little different than getting blown out 6-1 and you're embarrassed and everyone's pissed off and you're not in a good mood. It's kind of how the game goes I guess, even when you win those games 2-1 in a shootout and you were outplayed and outshot and you didn't play well, you probably still throw a movie on because you still have that good feeling but you're definitely not as talkative or as happy."

Sabres call up Lazar from the Amerks  
WGR 550  
By: Derek Kramer  
*Nov. 13, 2019*

In response to the injuries on the roster, the Buffalo Sabres have recalled forward Curtis Lazar from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

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A former first round pick by the Ottawa Senators in the 2013 NHL Draft, Lazar has played in 246 NHL games in his career, scoring 15 goals and 36 assists for 51 points.

Lazar embracing opportunity with Amerks  
Amerks.com  
By: Suzie Cool  
Nov. 12, 2019

October is here, which means the season of hockey is upon us and the Ottawa Senators are about to begin their 23<sup>rd</sup> season in the National Hockey League.

This year they'll start their campaign on the road, making their way down to the Bridgestone Arena, where they'll face the rowdy crowd of the Nashville Predators on Opening Night.

The day is October 9<sup>th</sup>. The year is 2014.

And rookie Curtis Lazar is lacing up his skates to make his NHL debut at just the young age of 19 years old.

Take a second and imagine that.

At just 19 years old this kid is throwing on a jersey, marching through a tunnel with some of the best in the game and making his way onto the biggest stage in professional hockey.

And now Lazar can remember that same day, that same game and those same emotions as if they just happened yesterday.

"When that game hit, I remember the anthem was going on and I was a little short on breath," recalled Lazar. "That's when Paul MacLean, the coach, leaned in and patted me on the back and said, 'It's the same game you've always played, just go out there and have fun.' When that wrapped up, you kind of realize everything you've gone through to get to this point and then you actually get to experience it and live it."

After the National Anthem and some pregame jitters, it was game-on and Lazar was put into the game just a couple of shifts in. With a little stumble going out onto the ice for his first shift, the forward finally found his way into the offensive zone and got that "first one" out of the way, making him more than prepared to take to the ice for more action in the game that he had always grown up playing.

But it wasn't until a couple of shifts later that Lazar had his true "welcome to the NHL" moment.

"Two shifts later, I was cutting through the neutral zone and Anton Volchenkov stepped up and open-ice hit me pretty good. That was kind of my welcome to the NHL moment. From there on out, it was just playing. You're a young kid and facing-off against the best players in the world."

Now, think about that.

At just 19 years old this kid was going out and playing hockey with the best players in the world. In his rookie season alone, Lazar appeared in 67 games with the Senators and registered 15 points, while also skating in six Stanley Cup Playoff contests.

The best part, he didn't realize he was one of the best players in the world, too.

Fast forward to five years later and Lazar is now with a completely new organization and donning a brand-new color scheme at the American Hockey League level. And on Oct. 4, 2019, that same kid was now 24 years old, lacing up his skates to play the same game he has his entire life and getting ready to make his Rochester Americans debut at The Blue Cross Arena.

Why, though?

Undoubtedly, this will be the most impressive and humble fact that you will ever discover about the Amerks newcomer.

No, it's not that he has 246 games of NHL experience, more games at the highest level of play compared to his AHL total. No, it's not the fact that he made the jump from junior hockey with the Edmonton Oil Kings to the NHL without seeing a single second of the minor league circuit with the Senators organization before his NHL debut. Or maybe you think it's that five-point game he notched a few weeks back against the Syracuse Crunch where he lit the lamp twice and added three helpers in 7-6 come-from-behind overtime victory. But again, that's not it.

After 200-plus games at the NHL level between Ottawa and the Calgary Flames, Lazar decided to take a step back prior to the start of last season. For him, it was time to reassess his skillset, and in order to make himself better and the type of player that these teams expected him to be, that meant taking the time to work on these intricacies at a different level — the AHL.

Yeah, you read that right.

Lazar willingly asked to be sent down to Calgary's AHL affiliate, the Stockton Heat, to start off the 2018-19 campaign. After appearing in 65 games with the big club the year prior and tallying just 12 points, the forward decided it was time to focus on what was needed to be done in order to be successful with the fresh start he had at hand.

"As I moved over to Calgary and got a fresh start, I just couldn't seem to find my role and I knew I owed it to myself to kind of take that step back and go and develop in the American Hockey League. I did just go from the juniors to the NHL, and that is quite the jump, so I had the chance to go down to Stockton last year and to play 20-25 minutes a night and play on the power-play and handle the puck again. It felt good, I found that passion again, I was having fun and the results were showing up."

In 57 games with the Heat, Lazar captured career-highs in every offensive category, earned an AHL All-Star Classic nod and posted 10 multi-point efforts. It seemed like Lazar accomplished everything he set out to do last year while in Stockton.

Yet, this amazing hockey player lands right here in the Flower City to start the 2019-20 season with the Amerks thanks to signing a one-year contract with the Buffalo Sabres in July earlier this year.

The day is October 4<sup>th</sup>. The year is 2019.

And Lazar is lacing up his skates to make his Rochester Americans debut at the age of 24 years old.

Fast forward a month later and it's time to embrace the caliber of the player Lazar has shown he is capable of being through just his first month in Rochester.

A sixth-year pro, a first-round selection back in 2013, a player who has seen over 200 games in the NHL and one of the best players in the world who is still humble enough to take a step back and focus on the intricacies that will get him back to the big stage in no time while here in the AHL — exactly where he asked to be.

Amerks auctioning off specialty jerseys

Rochester First

By: Staff Report

*Nov. 12, 2019*

The Rochester Amerks are auctioning off their specialty jerseys throughout the 2019-2020 season.

The Amerks will have four different specialty jerseys available for purchase using the online platform — Dash.

The jerseys include military appreciation night this Friday, defend the ice night, Irish night and pink the rink night.

Fans can bid on the military-themed jerseys now through 3 p.m. on Thursday.

Sabres prospect Tage Thompson having fun but doesn't want to get too comfortable in AHL  
Buffalo News  
By: Bill Hoppe  
Nov. 12, 2019

With Friday's game tied at 2 in the third period, Rochester Americans winger Tage Thompson grabbed a pass from Scott Wilson at center ice and zoomed past a helpless defender into the Binghamton Devils zone.

"I had a couple of good chances earlier in the game from shooting and felt one was bound to go in if I kept testing him," the Buffalo Sabres prospect said.

So Thompson skated two long strides inside the blue line and unleashed the puck, beating goalie Gilles Senn.

The goal, Thompson's sixth in 13 games this season, showcased arguably his two greatest assets.

"It was a highlight-reel goal as far as using his speed and his shot," interim coach Gord Dineen said following the Amerks' 4-3 shootout loss. "You don't see that kind of shot, maybe Victor Olofsson a little bit last year. That was impressive on his part."

After Binghamton tied the game, Thompson nearly won it overtime, getting the puck past Senn before he recovered and stopped it.

Thompson, 22, has quickly morphed into the Amerks' top offensive threat, recording 12 points while pumping 56 shots on goal, the American Hockey League's second-highest total.

Counting his stint with the Amerks late last season and in the playoffs, Thompson has compiled 14 goals and 23 points in only 24 outings, making him one of the AHL's elite scorers.

His stay in the AHL could be short.

In addition to his offensive dominance this season, Thompson has evolved, displaying a heavier, more complete style.

"There's maturity and growth in his game," Dineen said.

So Dineen has been awarding Thompson opportunities to kill penalties and play against the opposition's top lines.

The Sabres, meanwhile, have a five-game winless streak. Other than Sam Reinhart, their right wingers haven't contributed much offense.

At some point, they might recall Thompson for a spark or simply to reward his hot start. He has played 106 NHL games, including 65 with the Sabres last season.

Thompson often looked overwhelmed in the NHL a year ago, when he compiled only six goals, 11 points and a ghastly minus-22 rating.

Packing on about 10 pounds of muscle over the summer has helped Thompson develop a body that can complement his skills. The Amerks list him at 6-foot-7 and 215 pounds.

"(He's) hard enough to contain as it is with that reach and ability, and when you put muscle on top of it, you're definitely going to see results," Dineen said. "So he's a real hard guy to play against, hard to contain. When he's moving his feet, he's a special player."

Thompson said he feels faster and stronger.

"The body's the best it's felt up to this point in my career," he said. "I think that goes to show I put in a lot of work in the summer and it's paid off."

Dineen also said Thompson's experience — he jumped from UConn to the AHL as a teenager late in 2016-17 — is starting to show.

"He's learned from his mistakes," he said. "He's not repeating them as often."

Having a linemate in center Rasmus Asplund who is so committed to the defensive side probably helps.

Thompson and Asplund, 21, enjoy strong chemistry. Asplund's checking helps generate offense for the duo.

"We've gotten a lot of our offense off of creating turnovers in the neutral zone with our forecheck or whoever it may be," Thompson said. "I think he's more of a pass-first kind of guy. For me, I just try to get open. He's got great vision, so he usually finds me."

Asplund said Thompson "can change the pattern of a game or a shift."

"He does the unexpected all the time," he said.

Thompson has also been utilizing his lethal shot more often.

"Trying not to stickhandle too much, trying to get pucks off quicker is something I've been focusing on and not passing up any Grade A, strong opportunities," he said.

Thompson's shot is so heavy it creates extra space and opportunities.

"Teams start cheating to take away that shot, so it opens up things for other players," Dineen said. "But when he is shooting the puck, it creates a lot of chaos around opposing teams' nets. There's rebounds there. Those are indefensible sometimes, when you're creating rebounds and guys don't know where they're going."

Thompson will likely be going to Buffalo this season. In the meantime, he has embraced another trip to Rochester.

"I love it down here," he said. "You want to play in the NHL, you don't want to get too comfortable where you're at, be hungry to get to the next level. But at the same time, it's an unbelievable group of guys. The staff down here is unbelievable. You have fun when you come to the rink."

## Burton injury

Amerks forward Jarrett Burton was helped off the ice Friday and did not return after suffering a lower-body injury.

Dineen did not have an update on Burton, although he sensed the injury could be long-term.

The Amerks recalled forward Pascal Aquin from the Cincinnati Cyclones on Monday.

The team plays three games in four days beginning with a home game Wednesday against Syracuse, followed by a home game Friday against Cleveland and a trip to Utica on Saturday.

Sabres send Lawrence Pilut back to Americans  
Buffalo Hockey Beat  
By: Bill Hoppe  
*Nov. 12, 2019*

The Buffalo Sabres sent defenseman Lawrence Pilut back to the Rochester Americans today.

The Sabres recalled Pilut, 23, last week to serve as a spare defenseman during their two-game trip to Sweden.

He was one of six Swedes on Buffalo's roster.

Pilut played 33 NHL games as a rookie in 2018-19. He has scored one goal and six points in eight AHL games this season.

The Sabres have today and Tuesday off before resuming practice Wednesday.

The Sabres send Lawrence Pilut back to Rochester

WGR 550

By: Paul Hamilton

*Nov. 12, 2019*

The Sabres got back from a week in Sweden on Sunday night. With the team off on Monday and being back in North America, they've sent defenseman Lawrence Pilut back to Rochester.

Pilut didn't play in either of the losses to Tampa Bay as he was called up in case of injury.

Buffalo doesn't play again until Thursday at home against Carolina.

## Why goaltenders like Sabres' Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen are having hip surgeries

Buffalo News

By: Lance Lysowski

Nov. 11, 2019

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen has learned to treasure even the slightest distractions since he underwent double-hip surgery in April.

There were dinners with Seamus Kotyk, the Sabres' goaltender development coach, in Buffalo during the early stages of physical rehabilitation; spending two summer months in Finland; joining the Rochester Americans for structured practices last month; a recent visit from his girlfriend; and even frantically having to piece together a routine to prepare for his first game in almost seven months. Anything to avoid thinking about his hips.

"There's always that 'what if' factor," the 20-year-old Sabres' prospect conceded.

No distraction was more rewarding than finally facing an opponent Nov. 2 in Brampton, where he stopped 25 of 28 shots for the Cincinnati Cyclones. He expressed joy afterward in CAA Centre, calling his return a "special moment."

Though the result was a 4-1 loss, Luukkonen's first game of the season was a victory for goaltenders across the globe, amateur and professional, who have fallen victim to a troubling trend in hockey. The butterfly style popularized by Patrick Roy in Montreal is wreaking havoc on young goalies' hips, causing an impingement that requires a surgical procedure and an arduous rehab.

"It puts a lot of stress on your hips because it's such an unnatural position for your body to be in," Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark, who underwent double-hip surgery in April 2015, said. "There are going to be a lot more goalies that have to do this kind of surgery. It's a bummer that we've gotten to this point."

Both goalies suffered from femoroacetabular impingement, a condition in which there is abnormal and wearing contact between the ball and socket of the hip joint. The problem typically begins when goalies in their early teens repeatedly drop to their knees to stop the puck. That causes a stress reaction and an extra bone forms along the head of the femur — which fits into the cup on the side of the pelvis to form the hip joint — and creates a square-peg-in-a-round-hole effect.

The head of the femur and pelvis start to rub together during movement, which leads to pain, loss of internal rotation, and in many cases, a tear of the labrum — a band of tissue that rings the hip joint, securing the head of the femur.

Ullmark, like many goalies, felt pain in his groin when he initially experienced symptoms as a 21-year-old. He was diagnosed with a muscle strain and received conservative treatment. However, the symptoms returned during his first game back and an X-ray revealed the impingement.

Conservative treatment is not an option since a surgical procedure is needed to remove the extra bone.

In baseball, Tommy John surgery used to be considered a last-resort attempt to save a valuable pitcher's career. Now more than half of the Tommy John surgeries performed are on teenagers, some of whom are not injured and undergo the procedure as a precautionary measure. Hockey has its hip impingement problem with goalies.

"I didn't think about it then, but when you start talking about goalies who are 14 years old having hip impingement, you start to realize it's a big problem in the hockey community," Ullmark said. "Sadly, it is what it is, but it's important to not just work

on butterfly with younger goalies. It would be better to keep them on their feet for a longer time and kind of playing it differently, not dropping down at all times."

Dr. Christopher Larson, a surgeon at Twin Cities Orthopedics in Minneapolis, estimated he has performed approximately 200 such surgeries in the past year with his patients ranging in age from 16 to 28, including goalies in high school, college, the American Hockey League and National Hockey League.

Oftentimes, the more abrupt a goalie's growth spurt, the more active they are, the more likely an impingement. Taller athletes such as Luukkonen and Ullmark, both listed at 6 feet, 4 inches, are more susceptible. Goalies also have a difficult time avoiding the wear and tear that can lead to the deformity.

After all, talented youth goaltenders often are asked to play every game for their teams and, in addition to practices and games, they participate in individual instruction or open skates with high-level players their age.

"If they play too much, which almost every good goalie does, suddenly they start to develop the extra bone and it pushes on the hip," Dr. Robert LaPrade, also of Twin Cities Orthopedics, said. "We think it happens during their growth spurts, so it's that peewee up through bantam age group and a lot of these high-level guys are the best on their team. The coaches want them to play all the time because it makes them look better, and, unfortunately, that leads to longer-term problems."

Larson said the surgery begins with two to three very small incisions and a camera is placed in the hip joint. Small instruments are used to reshape the head of the femur or modify the rim of the hip. The labrum and damaged cartilage also are repaired.

During the procedure, the surgeon moves the patient's hips into a number of positions — including the butterfly — to see where the head of the femur is making contact. Forming the femoral head into a light bulb shape improves mobility, range of motion and protects the labrum from future damage.

Luukkonen and Ullmark had the procedure on both hips, ensuring they won't have future issues. However, Eddie Lack took a different route after experiencing pain while playing for the AHL's Chicago Wolves in 2012-13.

Lack, then 23 years old, decided to have Dr. Marc Philippon, a surgeon at the Steadman Hawkins Clinic in Vail, Colo., perform surgery on his left hip. Six weeks post-op, Philippon jokingly suggested Lack have the procedure on the right hip.

Lack passed and continued with his rehab. The right hip started to bother him shortly after he returned to the ice, and he played through pain for five to six years. Lack, who has 143 games of NHL experience and most recently played for the AHL's Binghamton Devils, finally had surgery on his right hip last December, but the rehab is longer since there were complications from the chronic wear-and-tear.

Lack didn't want to put added pressure on himself to return from the second surgical procedure in time to play this season, so he ruled out playing and is working as a volunteer goaltender coach at Arizona State University while maintaining a strict rehab schedule. He plans to attempt to return to professional hockey at some point.

"I wish I did the right one right away," Lack admitted. "The first one was more panic from a mental standpoint, where I just wanted to get back as quick as possible and feel good, so I could finally reach the NHL. I wondered if I was going to play again. ... It's a frustrating rehab."

Luukkonen received help from the Sabres' performance staff, including Dr. Michael Adesso, head athletic trainer Rich Stinziano, strength and conditioning coaches Dr. Ed Gannon and J.T. Allaire, and Dennis Miller, the team's head of rehab and development.

The early portion of Luukkonen's rehab required him to stay in Buffalo, where his workouts were limited to repeating basic movements off ice. The process was also difficult for Luukkonen mentally. In addition to the angst of wondering whether the procedure would work, he spent many hours alone in his room at the LECOM Harborcenter Marriott.

Luukkonen's agency Titan Sports Management, connected him with goalies who shared how they dealt with the long recovery. He was able to return to Finland in June, where he worked off ice with two strength coaches and was cleared to begin basic on-ice workouts in July.

Kotyk, the Sabres' goaltender development coach, spoke to other coaches and goalies, including Ullmark, for additional perspective. Though there were clear timelines laid out by the medical staff, Kotyk asked Ullmark when he felt comfortable performing certain workouts on the ice.

Kotyk also spent four days in Helsinki, Finland, when Luukkonen was cleared to get on skates. The latter wasn't allowed to drop to the ice but worked on basic movements while standing and faced shots from NHLers working at the facility. Luukkonen worked with Kotyk and Miller upon returning to Buffalo in August, and finally was cleared to drop down to a butterfly shortly before Labor Day.

"A lot of what you're seeing on the ice is the results of the work done behind the scenes by the medical people and the performance staff and the strength department," Kotyk said. "Everything you do as a goalie, you had to reintroduce to him because you didn't want to put too much stress on his body."

Following Luukkonen's first game, he and Kotyk identified technical areas that need improvement, and Kotyk will decide how they work those into practices in Rochester. Luukkonen will continue to focus on his footwork, and he will perform off-ice workouts to build strength in both hips.

Luukkonen is considered one of the top drafted goaltender prospects in North America after his breakthrough season in 2018-19. In addition to winning gold at the IIHF World Junior Championship, Luukkonen was named the Ontario Hockey League's Most Valuable Player. He won a league-best 38 regular-season games, including six shutouts, for Sudbury. He started his professional career with Rochester in April and won his debut by making 32 of 34 saves. However, he underwent surgery less than two weeks later.

Many analysts have called him a future franchise goalie, yet the Sabres have no interest in rushing his rehab now that he's close to seven months post-op.

"You saw him play through the injury last year and he obviously had an amazing second half of the year and even went to Rochester and played well in his one game there," Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill said. "Just being a 20-year-old kid, this is something you don't want lingering through his entire career. We thought it was good to get this taken care of now so he could start his pro career on the right note and be healthy."

Though Ullmark suggested one way youth coaches could help goalies avoid hip issues, there does not seem to be an end in sight. The problem has plagued the position for more than a decade and NHL goalies who had the procedure include Semyon Varlamov, Thatcher Demko, Cory Schneider and Roberto Luongo. Sean Burke, who played 820 regular-season games, underwent surgery almost eight years following his retirement.

"That's the [terrible] part of the position, but it is what it is," Lack said.