



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

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TONIGHT'S GAME: Hartford vs. Rochester

Malone Finding Consistency In An Inconsistent Way

Amerks.com

By: Suzie Cool

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Consistency is a major key on the road to becoming successful. But how does an athlete obtain this success, when consistency seems to be out of their own control?

It's time to introduce to you Sean Malone.

Originally drafted by the Buffalo Sabres in the sixth round of the 2013 NHL Draft, Malone has been a mainstay on the Rochester Americans roster for the last three seasons, including the 2019-20 campaign that has really just begun. Malone is just one of 15 forwards on the Amerks current roster and has seen time on multiple lines throughout the course of the season thus far.

Now, you're probably thinking, "What is so strange about a guy playing on multiple lines?" And the thing is, you're not wrong. There's nothing really out of character about a player seeing time on different lines until they find exactly where they are most compatible with their teammates. But, on top of Malone not seeing a consistent line game after game, he's also double-shifting half of the time, making him seem as one of the most versatile and valuable players on Rochester' roster at this moment.

"He's been really good. I don't like to use the term 'utility guy', but he's moved up and down our lineup," commented interim head coach Gord Dineen after the Amerks 4-3 win over the Syracuse Crunch on Nov. 13. "He started the game playing with Dalton Smith and Tyler Randell and ended up playing with Rasmus Asplund and Tage Thompson on the left side. It's great that he's got that versatility and that he is getting the opportunities offensively and he's converting on those and it's nice to see him get rewarded."

And that's the catch, Malone is now turning this inconsistency into consistency, a reward for not just himself but his teammates as well.

From Oct. 19 to Nov. 13, the third-year Amerk was on a career-high seven-game point streak, consisting of three goals and four assists, almost surpassing last year's point total just 14 games into the season. On top of his personal accolades, Malone helped push his team to a 3-2-1-1 record throughout those seven games, helping them post points in seven of the nine contests where he found himself on the scoresheet.

"My practice habits have been better this year and I think it translates to the games. I'm just finding myself in the right spots and I have to give credit to our team, too. We have a lot of really good offensive players and that sometimes helps to put up numbers. I'm just happy to be producing offensively and being put in roles that I'm relied on," said Malone when asked how he was accepting his role of versatility to start out the season.

Through his first two seasons in the Flower City, Malone appeared in 111 games with the Amerks while combining for 35 points. Prior to his first season in the red, white and blue in 2017-18, the Rochester rookie had already made his NHL debut the year before. What makes Malone's debut so unique is that it came right after finishing up his collegiate campaign at Harvard University and the young forward had the chance to tally just one shot over 12 minutes of ice time in a 3-0 loss for the Sabres against the Florida Panthers on Apr. 8, 2017 for his hometown team.

This year, Malone has seen more time on the ice through the first month of the season than he did through the first month of last year due to missing the first 12 games because of an injury. Unfortunately, that wasn't the only time the injury bug hit Malone last year as he found himself miss 20 more games throughout the course of the campaign, on top of all three North Division Semifinal games against the Toronto Marlies during the 2019 postseason.

After appearing in only 38 games last year, Malone discussed how playing more can help build confidence and how constantly being engaged in the game helps you stay on track in order to affect the team positively.

"I think playing more helps build confidence and being constantly engaged in the game is a huge thing. With double-shifting, you're always out there, even if you make a mistake you have a chance to quickly get back on track and affect the team positively. I think it's been going really well so far, and I've been enjoying the role I've been put in and I hope to continue to do that."

Now, similar to another story we've heard before, Malone is content with where he's at in his professional hockey career. First of all, he gets to wake up every single day and play the game that he fell in love with at a young age. Secondly, he gets to play for his hometown affiliate with the hopes that he'll get another opportunity to take on the NHL for a longer period of time.

So, it should come as no surprise that when asked about how to get back on the Buffalo roster, Malone was quick to focus on the situation he's been presented with as of right now.

"Right now, I just want to focus on what I'm doing here, and I think that's the main thing. You don't want to be here and thinking you should be in the NHL all of the time. I think obviously there's a reason you're here and you want to develop yourself as best as you can and hopefully, someday, I'll get that opportunity again and also get to stay there."

Such a genuine and honest answer from someone who doesn't get nearly the credit he deserves for the caliber of play that he's bringing to the team as of late in a number of different roles.

Despite Malone's seven-game point streak coming to an end on Nov. 15, he's still a player that everyone needs to keep on their radar for the months to come.

And why may you ask? Because consistency is key and there's nothing more consistent than a player who has a plan to show the world just how great he can be no matter what shift he's on or situation he may find himself in.

Sabres' Ralph Krueger: Mike Babcock will 'grow and learn' from dismissal
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Nov. 21, 2019

Amid a difficult stretch in which the Buffalo Sabres had lost eight of their last nine games, Ralph Krueger took a few minutes Wednesday night to call his close friend, Mike Babcock.

Babcock had just been fired as coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs after amassing 173 regular-season wins across four-plus years. The two men have stayed in close contact since they worked together on Canada's staff for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and share some of the same hobbies.

The conversation included a suggestion from the Sabres' coach.

"We spoke pretty quick after the situation, and I'm happy to see him being a winner in the process," Krueger said Thursday morning in TD Garden ahead of a game against the Boston Bruins. "We had a fabulous year together on the way to Sochi and I've stayed in contact ever since. Have a lot of hobbies in the summer, like water skiing, together. I told him to go get a ski out and he said, 'Yeah, that's a good idea.' You don't expect to water ski this time of year. Mike will definitely grow and learn from this."

Babcock was dismissed Wednesday after a 9-10-4 start to the season. He led the Maple Leafs to three consecutive playoff appearances and took over a team that had won a combined 59 games over the previous two seasons.

Krueger credits Babcock for making a return to the National Hockey League possible. The two spoke routinely while Krueger served as chairman of English Premier League's Southampton F.C. for five years. Their relationship began in 2004, though, when Krueger coached against Babcock at the IIHF World Championship.

Canada defeated Switzerland, which was coached by Krueger, during its run toward the gold medal. They then worked together for roughly one year in preparation for the 2014 Winter Olympics. Krueger was tasked with scouting the European opponents in a consultant role.

That job came shortly after Krueger's three-year run in the NHL. He spent two seasons as an assistant in Edmonton under Tom Renney and was promoted to head coach for the 2012-13 season. Krueger was dismissed after only one year, despite having led the Oilers to a 19-22-7 record amid the lockout-shortened season.

Babcock, who won the Stanley Cup in Detroit, went a combined 173-133-45 during his time with Toronto, but his philosophies never seemed to align with General Manager Kyle Dubas. Additionally, the Leafs had three consecutive first-round exits in the playoffs.

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"I'm sure he'll be back in the game soon, and he's been an excellent partner for me in this process," Krueger said of Babcock. "He's one of the key people that have made it possible for me to return to the National Hockey League, so I'm grateful for that,

and I know Mike will make winning decisions here to find good solutions in the future. He's done excellent work in Toronto. He's taken that franchise to another level in his five years. It will be interesting to see where he goes, but I hope he goes hunting now first."

Minors update

Despite dealing with injuries and the absence of their head coach, the Rochester Americans enter this weekend second in the American Hockey League's Atlantic division with a 10-3-3 record. They could potentially benefit from the departure of Toronto Marlies coach Sheldon Keefe, who was named Babcock's replacement.

Keefe, 39, played 125 games in the NHL with Tampa Bay and spent his last season in 2004-05 on the AHL's Utah Grizzlies, where Amerks interim coach Gord Dineen was an assistant. Keefe played only four games that season because of a knee injury. Keefe's Marlies eliminated the Amerks in the first round of last season's Calder Cup playoffs.

"He studies the game probably as much as anybody," Dineen said of Keefe. "He kind of eats, breathes and sleeps it. He's right on top of it. He's not afraid to be innovative. He's a pretty innovative coach. I'm sure in Toronto it seems like they were ready for a different voice in that dressing room."

The Amerks host Hartford on Friday night, followed by a road game Saturday at Binghamton. Rochester forward Scott Wilson returned to practice this week as he works his way back from a lower-body injury.

Cincinnati, meanwhile, enters the weekend first in the ECHL's Central division with a 10-5-1 record. The Cyclones have won seven of their last 10 games and host Kalamazoo on Friday night.

Quarterly update

There were a few notable statistical trends around the National Hockey League over the season's first seven weeks. The 87 overtime or shootout games are the most through the first quarter of a season in league history, and there were 32 percent fewer coaches' challenges.

The latter is the result of a significant rule change where an unsuccessful coaches' challenge results in a two-minute penalty. Additionally, the 6.2 total goals per game was the second-highest scoring output during the season's first quarter in the last 23 years.

Amerks hosting 'CSEA Union Night' Friday
Rochester First
By: Staff Report
Nov. 20, 2019

The high-flying Amerks will have a special deal for union members this week.

As part of Union Night, presented by CSEA, all union members can purchase discounted tickets to one of four designated seating areas for Friday night's game against the Wolf Pack. Tickets start at just \$16 and are available for purchase online.

If you're looking for pre-game activities, the Genesee Pregame Happy Hour runs from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Genesee Brew House Upper Atrium Bar, featuring live music from Dave McGrath and \$2 drafts of Genesee and Genesee Light for fans 21 and older.

It's a good time to catch the Amerks, who are tied for first in the North Division, and tied for third in the whole AHL with 23 points. The last time the Amerks lost in regulation, Rochester was preparing for a Halloween windstorm.

Amerks bounce back from 2-0 deficit to win third consecutive game
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Nov. 16, 2019

Rochester maintained its slim hold on first place in the American Hockey League's North Division with a 4-3 victory over the Utica Comets on Saturday night before 3,935 at the Adirondack Bank Center in Utica.

Zach Redmond, Andrew Oglevie, Sean Malone and Casey Nelson scored goals in that order in a 4-0 Americans' run after Utica had taken a 2-0 lead in the game's first 4:10. Those goals came on Vincent Arsenault's fourth of the season and a power-play score by Nikolov Goldobin.

Former Buffalo Sabres and Amerks winger Justin Bailey, a Williamsville native, picked up his fifth assist on the Goldobin goal.

Before the first period was over, however, Redmond scored his second of the season with Pascal Aquin and Lawrence Pilut getting the assists.

Oglevie had the only goal in the second period with Kevin Porter and Brett Murray assisting.

Malone's fourth of the season at 2:11 of the third put Rochester in front to stay. Nelson scored his third, the eventual game-winner on the power play at 9:47. Jacob Bryson and Murray had the assists.

Rochester has been getting good offensive production out of its corps of defensemen. Redmond, who had 21 goals and 50 points last season, has two goals and seven assists for nine points. Nelson had three goals and six assists and Pilut had two goals and seven assists. Bryson has six assists in his rookie season.

Nelson entered the game leading AHL defensemen in plus-minus. He now is a plus-12.

Brogan Rafferty drew the Comets within a goal when he scored with 35 seconds left with an extra attacker on the ice.

Andrew Hammond made 25 saves in goal for Rochester. Zane MacIntyre had 18 saves for Utica.

Rochester (10-3-1-2, 23 points) needed the win to stay in first place because its closest pursuers, Laval and Toronto won their games to stay one and two points behind, respectively. Utica (10-6-0-0, 20 points) fell to fourth place.

The Amerks, who have won their last three and gained at least a point in their last six, will host the Hartford Wolf Pack on Friday night.

Rasmus Asplund delivers 'outstanding' performance in emotional Sabres debut
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Nov. 15, 2019

Rasmus Asplund emerged from the tunnel adjacent to the Buffalo Sabres' bench and took one lap by himself before he was joined by his teammates for pregame warmup Saturday night.

Meanwhile, approximately 3,825 miles away in Filipstad, Sweden, Asplund's parents, Stefan and Ramona, stayed awake for the 1:25 a.m. puck drop to watch their son make his National Hockey League debut. This was the realization of a dream that once seemed unattainable.

Fourteen months earlier, Asplund had yet to play a professional game in North America. Now, he's an important player in the Sabres' long-term plans, and he showed he belongs during their 4-2 win over the Ottawa Senators inside KeyBank Center.

The emotions that consumed Asplund during that first lap paled in comparison to what he felt during the pregame ceremony on Hockey Fights Cancer night, when 50 cancer patients and survivors were welcomed on the ice for the ceremonial puck drop. Asplund's grandparents, Sarah and Lars, lost their battles with the disease.

Lars passed one day after Asplund returned from Buffalo in 2016, when he was drafted 33rd overall by the Sabres. During their final visit together, Rasmus was able to show his grandfather the jersey in which he hoped to wear in the NHL. The family has since waited for him to receive this opportunity.

"They're always in the back of my mind, especially days like this," Asplund said of his grandparents. "Even looking at the people that were on the ice before the game there, I could see the pain my grandparents went through. I know how much pain it causes families."

Asplund, a 21-year-old center, was recalled from Rochester prior to practice Friday but was unsure when or if he would debut with the Sabres. Upon learning Saturday morning he would replace injured center Johan Larsson in Buffalo's lineup, Asplund delivered the news to his parents during an hour-long phone call.

The three spoke about Rasmus skating on the lake in the family's backyard, all the car rides to the local rink and how they never thought he would make the NHL. He intended to call his parents following his postgame interview Saturday night to see if they were still awake and hoped to remain on the Sabres' roster long enough to fly them to Buffalo for the game Tuesday night against the Minnesota Wild in KeyBank Center.

Asplund's performance Saturday night showed his stay may not be brief after all. He won 5 of 9 faceoffs during 12:13 of ice time, recorded two shots on goal and generated scoring opportunities for his linemates. Asplund made an immediate impact during his first shift, leveling Senators defenseman Erik Brannstrom with a body check.

Sabres coach Ralph Krueger and assistant Chris Taylor congratulated Asplund for a faceoff win during a successful first-period penalty kill. The rookie also nearly scored a shorthanded goal on a breakaway during the second period, but his attempt was stopped by goalie Craig Anderson.

"Outstanding," Krueger said of Asplund's performance. "He was moving his feet all the time, both sides of the puck, on the penalty kill. He was creating offensive chances. He played without fear and showed a lot of courage. It's what we saw in training camp and that was an exciting first game for anybody to come into the NHL and do what he did. To end it with a win, I'm sure he'll never forget this night."

His entire family won't. Asplund smiled when recalling the day he was drafted in the second round by the Sabres. The NHL seemed to be within reach, yet he quickly realized how much work was needed to attain that goal. He played two more seasons for Farjestad BK of the Swedish Hockey League before joining Rochester.

Former Sabres General Manager Tim Murray was criticized for trading defenseman Mark Pysyk to Florida for defenseman Dmitry Kulikov in June 2016, however, the purpose of the transaction was to move up five spots in the second round to select Asplund 33rd overall.

Though Kulikov struggled during his only season in Buffalo, Asplund has developed into a two-way center who pushed for a roster spot with the Sabres this past training camp. He showed gradual improvement last season in Rochester, finishing with 10 goals among 41 points in 75 regular-season games.

"The draft is a big thing, obviously, and when you get drafted you think it's pretty close, but then you realize it's far out to make the NHL," Asplund said. "When I signed my contract I knew I had three years to become a regular NHL player and this is just a step towards that."

Asplund was outstanding in his first camp under Krueger, showing the versatility to play the wing and contribute on the penalty kill or power play. Though Asplund had only one goal among eight points in 13 games with the Amerks to start the season, he continued to show maturity offensively and defensively.

Though Asplund does not possess Casey Mittelstadt's skill or Dylan Cozens' elite speed, he has proven to be a polished forward who could be a solution to the Sabres' lack of depth at center. His backhanded centering pass almost resulted in a goal for Jimmy Vesey in the third period, and Krueger trusted Asplund enough to use the rookie with 1:14 remaining in regulation.

"I felt good," Asplund said. "I tried to keep it pretty simple in the beginning and work my way into the game. I started to feel better, better and better. I'm happy with my game."

Krueger benefited from having continuity in his forward lines and defense pairings during the Sabres' remarkable start to this season. However, recent injuries to Larsson, Marcus Johansson and Vladimir Sobotka have tested the team's depth. Additionally, Kyle Okposo, who played on a line with Asplund, did not return to the game Saturday after suffering an injury during the second period.

Asplund and Curtis Lazar, who scored his first game with the Sabres on Thursday, have provided immediate spark to a lineup that was struggling to produce offensively during its six-game losing streak.

"A lot of emotions going through your body," Asplund said. "It's something you dream of a long, long time. It's finally happening."

Sabres recall center Rasmus Asplund from Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Nov. 15, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres, amid a six-game losing streak and dealing with at least two injuries in their forward group, recalled Rasmus Asplund from the Rochester Americans on Friday morning.

Asplund, a 21-year-old center, has one goal among eight points in 13 games with the Amerks this season. He practiced with the Sabres on Friday afternoon and could make his National Hockey League debut Saturday against the Ottawa Senators. Center Johan Larsson did not practice Friday and is day-to-day with an upper-body injury, according to coach Ralph Krueger.

Larsson will be re-evaluated Saturday morning and has not been ruled out for the game. The Sabres were already without Marcus Johansson (upper body), who is not available to play Saturday or Sunday in Chicago.

Additionally, forward Vladimir Sobotka (lower body) is out four-to-six weeks after suffering an injury during the Sabres' first game in Stockholm last Friday. Asplund can contribute on the penalty kill, an area in which the Sabres have struggled as of late. The former second-round draft pick had 10 goals among 41 points for Rochester last season, his first year in North America.

"We found that he worked really well early on in training camp, the Johansson-[Victor] Olofsson-Asplund line really, I think, impressed everybody," Krueger said of Asplund. "Then his ability to move to wing, center, his penalty-killing ability and overall what he's been doing since he's come here from Sweden and the work that he's doing in Rochester confirmed what we saw in training camp, that he's somebody that can help us in multiple roles. If we need him tomorrow, he would be ready to jump in."

Amerks continue dominance of Monsters as Oglevie picks up game-w inner
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Nov. 15, 2019

Andrew Oglevie notched the game-winning goal as Rochester downed Cleveland, 3-2, in overtime on Friday night at the Blue Cross Arena.

Oglevie tracked a rebound off the pads of Monsters goalie Matiss Kivlenieks and buried it into the back of the net for the win, his third goal of the season.

It was the seventh game of the Americans' season that went into extra time. They've won four of their last five games and taken nine of 10 possible points.

The victory also locks Rochester (9-3-1-2) in first place in the North Division, one point ahead of Utica.

Lawrence Pilut had a hand in all three of the Amerks' goals. He tied the game in the second period and had assists on Rochester's other two scores.

At the other end of the ice, Jonas Johansson made 25 saves in net for the Amerks.

Cleveland drew first blood 11:45 into the game. Zac Dalpe scored his seventh goal of the season to put the Monsters up, 1-0.

Pilut tied the game up at one goal apiece three minutes into the second period. Kevin Porter and Oglevie were credited with the assists.

Jean-Sebastien Dea put Rochester up 2-1 on the power play, shooting from the faceoff circle past Kivlenieks.

Rochester had the chance to do more damage on another man advantage at the end of the period, but Cleveland's penalty kill held.

The Amerks nearly closed out the visitors, but with 65 seconds to go, Ryan MacInnis found the back of the net over Johansson's right shoulder and tied the game at two goals each.

While Cleveland had applied a lot of pressure in the third period, it was Rochester that came out hot.

Pilut quickly got the puck to Dea, whose shot bounced away where Oglevie was able to shoot it into the top shelf for the victory.

Rochester is now 27-7-3-3 against Cleveland since 2011.

The Amerks will travel to Utica on Saturday for a 7 p.m. tilt with the second-place Comets.

Amerks edge Utica for 3rd straight win
C&C Worldwide
By: Craig Potter
Nov. 16, 2019

The Rochester Americans (10-3-1-2) fell behind 2-0 in the first five minutes of Saturday's contest with the Utica Comets (10-6-0-0) at the Adirondack Bank Center before countering with four straight goals to earn a 4-3 victory and push their point streak to a season-long six games. The matchup was the third in four weeks between the two teams after splitting the first two games of the season series.

The win capped a perfect week for the Amerks, whose three straight wins have them sitting one point ahead of the Laval Rocket for the top spot in the AHL's North Division standings. Additionally, Rochester has now earned 23 out of a possible 32 points through its first 16 games of the campaign and has picked up points in 11 of the last 13 contests overall, going 8-2-1-2 over that span.

Amerks rookie Brett Murray turned in his second two-assist game of the week to help the club to its third straight win while Andrew Oglevie, Sean Malone, Zach Redmond and Casey Nelson all found the back of the net. In his first appearance since shutting out the Comets back on Nov. 2, goaltender Andrew Hammond made 25 saves to improve to 6-1-1 on the season.

Reid Boucher, who netted a hat trick last night in Syracuse, registered a pair of helpers for Utica while Vincent Arseneau, Nikolay Goldobin and Brogan Rafferty all rounded out the scoring. Netminder Zane McIntyre (6-3-0) stopped 18 shots but was tagged with the loss.

As the Amerks trailed the Comets 2-0 in the first five minutes of the first period, Rochester responded just over nine minutes later as Redmond was fed a pass atop the right point at the 13:40 mark. After teeing up the shot, the reigning Eddie Shore Award winner and two-time AHL All-Star wasted little time as he wired a shot through traffic to make it a one-goal game from Pascal Aquin and Lawrence Pilut.

The visiting Amerks trailed 2-1 after the first period but needed just 37 seconds into the middle frame for Oglevie to knot the score with his fourth of the campaign from Kevin Porter and Murray.

Rochester carried the momentum as Eric Cornel circled from the half-wall and flung a shot from near the left point towards McIntyre. The netminder made the initial save with his left pad, but Malone scooped up the rebound and tucked it under the crossbar to give the Amerks their first lead of the contest 2:11 into the second stanza.

The game remained a one-goal affair until the 9:47 mark of the final frame as Nelson provided the Amerks the eventual game-winning-goal from Jacob Bryson and Murray while Rochester was in the first-half of a four-minute power-play situation.

Utica, who pulled McIntyre late in regulation, came inches away from watching Hammond score an empty-net goal before Rafferty slipped in his second of the season with 35 seconds left. Rochester was able to hold off the final push as they claimed the 4-3 victory.

The Amerks will take a temporary break from North Division opponents as they welcome the Hartford Wolf Pack back to the Blue Cross Arena on Friday, Nov. 22. Game time is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start.

***NOTES** — Rochester's 3-2 overtime win Friday night against Cleveland was the 7th game so far this season that went beyond regulation for Rochester, the most behind only Hartford. The Amerks, who tied an AHL record during the 2017-18 season with 29 overtime games, are 3-1 in the bonus period this season and show a 1-2 record in the shootout. . . Third-year forward Sean Malone saw his career-long seven-game point streak come to a halt last night, which was the third-longest in the AHL this season. After being held without a point in his first four games of the 2019-20 campaign, the West Seneca native responded by recording three goals and four assists dating back to Oct. 19.