



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Friday, December 20, 2019

TONIGHT'S GAME: BINGHAMTON VS. ROCHESTER

Amerks Inducting Domenic Pittis Into Hall Of Fame

Amerks.com

By: Staff Report

Dec. 19, 2019

The Rochester Americans are pleased to announce today that the team will induct forward Domenic Pittis into the Amerks Hall of Fame as the Class of 2020. Pittis was unanimously selected for induction by the Amerks Hall of Fame Committee and will take his rightful place in the prestigious club on Friday, Jan. 31 when Rochester hosts the Syracuse Crunch at 7:05 p.m. at The Blue Cross Arena on Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino Legends Night.

Set to become the 65th member of the exclusive club, Pittis quickly evolved into one of the franchise's most prolific scorers during his three seasons in Rochester, reaching the 20-goal mark twice and recording at least 65 points on all three occasions. In 204 career games with the Amerks, Pittis produced 246 points, placing him among the top 20 forwards all-time in franchise history, and ranking 17th all-time with 171 assists. He also added 70 points (16+54) in 57 postseason appearances while leading the Amerks to the playoffs in each of his three seasons, including back-to-back trips to the Calder Cup Finals in 1999 and 2000.

"I'm extremely honored to have been inducted into the Rochester Americans Hall of Fame," said Pittis.

"I played with so many great players, but it really was the group and the Amerks culture that made my time in Rochester so memorable."

A year after breaking into the American Hockey League with the Syracuse Crunch, Pittis joined the Amerks for the 1998-99 campaign and assembled what would be his best season over his 19-year pro career. In 76 games with the Amerks, Pittis amassed an AHL-best 104 points on 38 goals and 66 assists, winning the John B. Sollenberger Trophy as the League's top point-getter during the regular season while helping the Amerks to a franchise record 52 wins during the regular season. Rochester also set an AHL record for the fewest goals allowed with 176.

Pittis became just the sixth different player in team history to earn the honors and first to lead the AHL in scoring since Paul Gardner put up 112 points during the 1985-86 season. It was also the last 100-point performance by an Amerk in recent years.

That same season also saw Pittis accomplish the rarest of feats as he appeared in two games in the same day. On March 28, 1999, Pittis helped the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-3 overtime win over the Pittsburgh Penguins, who drafted the Calgary, Alberta, native in the second round (52nd overall) of the 1993 NHL Draft, before returning to Rochester in time to notch two assists in the 3-2 loss to the Cincinnati Mighty Ducks later that same day. Since then, no other Amerks player has done it.

Pittis and the Amerks would advance to their first of two straight Calder Cup Finals later that Spring, ultimately falling in five games to the Providence Bruins.

The following season limited Pittis to just 53 games due to injuries but was equally as productive, nonetheless. Despite missing the first 22 games, Pittis would rediscover his scoring touch and finish the year leading the Amerks with 48 assists and 65 points while leading Rochester back to the Calder Cup Finals. Pittis delivered a memorable performance during the postseason, scoring four goals and tying an AHL record with 26 assists in 21 playoff contests as Rochester fell to the Hartford Wolf Pack in six games.

After three years away from the organization, including two full seasons in the NHL with the Edmonton Oilers, Pittis made a return trip back to Rochester in 2003-04 for what would be his final stint with the Amerks. Much like the previous two years,

Pittis averaged more than a point-per-game, leading the team in assists (57) and points (77) and ranking second in goals (20) while serving as team captain. The Amerks returned to the postseason for the third time under Pittis, who added 19 points (5+14) in 16 games as Rochester advanced to the Western Conference Finals.

Pittis departed the organization the following year, ending his tenure in Rochester as the franchise's all-time leader in playoff assists (54) and second in points (70). He also ranks sixth all-time among playoff leaders in games played (57) and seventh in goals (16).

He played the remaining nine seasons of his pro career in Switzerland, winning two league titles along the way as well as a Champions Hockey League championship. Pittis also excelled at the international level while abroad, helping Team Canada claim gold at the 2007 Spengler Cup.

Pittis announced his retirement following the 2012-13 campaign and is currently in his fifth season as an assistant coach with the Stockton Heat, the AHL affiliate of the Calgary Flames.

Individual game tickets for the 2019-20 season start at just \$16. Amerks 2019-20 Season Ticket Memberships, which start as low as just \$14 per game, are on-sale now. For more information, visit www.amerks.com or call 1-855-GO-AMERKS.

Amerks donate to Pirate Toy Fund

13 Wham

By: Staff Report

Dec. 19, 2019

The Rochester Americans are getting into the holiday spirit.

Players Taylor Leier and Scott Wilson dropped off toys for the Pirate Toy Fund. Those toys had been donated this season by fans.

The Amerks also presented the Pirate Toy Fund with a donation of \$2,000.

“One of my greatest memories as a kid was opening toys on Christmas morning,” said Leier, “so, I think this is a good thing for kids to be able to have that experience themselves and, on Christmas, kids shouldn’t go without some toys to open up – so this is the least we could do.”

This marked the seventh straight year in which the Amerks hosted a toy drive in partnership with the Pirate Toy Fund.

Meet the Amerks: Will Borgen
Rochester First
By: Alexa Ross
Dec. 19, 2019

Will Borgen is no stranger to red, white, and blue uniforms. Before he wore the nation's colors for the Rochester Americans, he wore them on the biggest international stage.

The former St. Cloud State University defender was one of four college students selected to the US men's national hockey team during the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

"I wasn't expecting it," said Borgen. "I knew there was a chance, but they waited a while and I found out not too long before early December before they were gonna announce the teams."

There, Borgen had the opportunity to practice alongside the players he grew up watching, including Rochester native and Team USA captain Brian Gionta.

"Gio was awesome," said Borgen. "He was just a great guy around the rink."

They still see each other here in Rochester. Gionta helps the Amerks with skills in practice. He played one game at Blue Cross Arena before he flew to South Korea.

Mittelstadt goes scoreless in Amerks' debut, a loss to Devils
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Dec. 18, 2019

Brett Seney scored his 12th goal of the American Hockey League season in the second period to give the Binghamton Devils a 2-1 victory over the Rochester Americans at the Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena on Wednesday night.

The game marked Casey Mittelstadt's first game with Rochester after the 2018 first-round pick in the NHL Entry Draft was sent down by the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday.

Mittelstadt had no points and was on the ice when Seney scored the game winner, giving him a minus-1 rating. Mittelstadt had two shots on goal against Binghamton's Cory Schneider, who had 23 saves. Andrew Hammond also had 23 for Rochester.

All the scoring in the game came on even strength goals in the second period as the Amerks' win streak was ended at three games. The Amerks and Devils will meet again on Friday at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

Rochester's Brett Murray scored the game's first goal at 16:53 of the second period, his fourth of the season. Tyler Randell assisted.

Sixty-one seconds later Joey Anderson tied it for the Devils with his eighth at 17:54. Michael Pallotta and Ben Street assisted on the goal.

Street added his 20th assist of the season on Seney's goal. Julian Melchiori also had an assist on the winner.

After Friday's return game with Binghamton, the Amerks will be home again on Saturday to face the Utica Comets in the annual Home for the Holidays Christmas celebration at 7:05 p.m. on Saturday.

Saturday's game will include a visit by Santa Claus and feature prizes and giveaways throughout the night.

Krueger: We need to be a threat with more secondary scoring
ESPN Rochester
By: Staff Report
Dec. 18, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres got off to a slow start on Tuesday night at Scotiabank Arena, which resulted in the Toronto Maple Leafs scoring the game's first three goals. Buffalo made things interesting in the third period, closing the gap to 4-3 with less than three minutes remaining, but ended up falling short by a 5-3 score.

Buffalo has played much better hockey as of late, and Tuesday night was a bit of a surprise factoring in the recent success of the team. In the month of December, the Sabres have gone 4-2-2, earning 10 out of a possible 16 points, and currently sit alone in second place in the Atlantic Division with 39 points. Over the last 13 games, Buffalo has earned at least a point in 10 of those games, going 6-3-4.

One player who has been a huge contributor to Buffalo's recent success is captain Jack Eichel.

The 23-year-old center is on pace for a career-year in the NHL, currently sitting with 24 goals and 26 assists for 50 points in the team's first 35 games of the season. Eichel is on pace to double his career-high total in goals (56), and is also on pace to eclipse the 100-point mark (117) for the first time in his career.

What's even more impressive is that Eichel is currently riding a career-high 17-game point streak, which is one game shy of tying the franchise record set by Hall of Famer Gilbert Perreault back in the 1971-72 season. In that span, Eichel has scored 16 goals and amassed 15 assists for 31 points.

Eichel has a chance to match Perreault's record on Thursday night when the Sabres are in Philadelphia to take on the Flyers at the Wells Fargo Center.

Aside from Eichel's like with Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson, the Sabres have found themselves in a familiar problem that they faced for the past couple of seasons - the team is not getting enough secondary scoring. Of the 110 goals scored so far this season, 50 of them have come off the stick of either Eichel (24), Olofsson (14) or Reinhart (12). The next leading scorer after those three is Jeff Skinner, who has 11 goals.

Sabres head coach Ralph Krueger took the time on Wednesday to join Howard Simon and Jeremy White for his weekly appearance on WGR. Krueger talked about the team's secondary scoring problems, as well as what happened in Tuesday night's loss in Toronto, the Buffalo Bills, and more.

Here is some of what he had to say:

Krueger on Tuesday night's performance against the Maple Leafs:

"We dug ourselves a hole, for sure. It was disappointing because we were off our game last night from the get-go and had trouble finding the principles that make us the best possible team. We were frustrated with that. What I liked was the reaction within the room after two periods and the conversations we had, and the fight in the third where with the 6-on-4 with two-and-a-half minutes to go had an opportunity to at least get a point out of that game, even though we had two off periods. Now it's back to

the drawing board and getting the group regrouped for a better game tomorrow. We were disappointed with that loss last night, but let that adversity give us some lessons to take with us."

Krueger on his decision to pull the goalie on the power play late in Tuesday's loss in Toronto:

"It just depends on how much time is left in the game. We would be pulling our goalie irrelevant of a power play or not at about the 2:30 mark. In the old days, you'd used to wait until there was a minute to go, but that's just not enough time to get organized anymore with the way the pace of the game is. You take that risk if you have control, so on that situation last night we felt extremely comfortable. We ended up with an unfortunate turnover after actually getting set up in the zone, but you need to take risks down the stretch when you're down goals in the NHL today. That man advantage usually has been effective for us. We've scored a lot of goals with the goalies out, and yesterday we took it on the chin. But I would make that same decision again today looking at the circumstances that we had."

Krueger on the need to find secondary scoring in the lineup:

"The positive is you have a line like the Eichel line firing on all cylinders as it is. It is certainly one of, if not, the best line in the National Hockey League right now, but we need to get secondary scoring going here. It needs to alleviate some of the 5-on-5 pressure. The opposition is throwing their top [defenders] and top forward lines at Jack and Sam and [Victor Olofsson] here on every road game, and we need to have more pressure there. What we do is we're working with different combinations trying to find ones that will fire and ones that will go for us. We don't need another line scoring at that pace, but we definitely need there to be a threat."

Krueger on the lack of scoring from Jeff Skinner

"He's been in and out of playing on the first unit, so power play goals aren't really a good measurement. He's getting his opportunities. There's a lot of shots on net. He's getting three to five shots in multiple games here, and he is a streaky scorer. Let's hope in [Philadelphia] that it breaks and he runs a streak here again, but offensively there's a lot of things going right for him."

Krueger on the improved play of Rasmus Dahlin:

"We feel actually that the break did him good so far as watching some games from the outside and being able to see where his positional play without the puck needs to be, and we feel he's come back very strong. He's adding to our offense, our power play is definitely stronger now with Rasmus back into the lineup. With Dahlin, it's an age where the biggest growth with him is going to happen without the puck defensively, and we can see that he's seeing his position better all the time. He's reading the game better all the time, and we're really pleased with him since he came back from the injury."

Krueger on sending Casey Mittelstadt down to the Rochester Americans:

"It's all about him getting reps at a higher level. His ice time has been reduced here as of late, and then being a healthy scratch got everybody thinking about the need for Casey, at this point in his development, to get repetitions and to be able to quarterback a power play the way he can and to play hard minutes 5-on-5 to work on the habits he needs [to work on]."

Krueger on his relationship with Buffalo Bills head coach Sean McDermott:

"The goal that Sean and I have in common is to make the fan base in Buffalo, for sports, proud of what we're doing. We communicated about that this summer and he's written me that a few times, and all I can share is that it's a very natural friendship that's growing. I'm just really a big fan of the Bills and what they're doing there and how they're doing it, and it feels like vice versa. They like what we're doing. It's good to see some Bills players at games and our players love to go there. The relationship beginning with our owners' passion for sports in Buffalo and getting the sports scene back on track is carried by Sean and myself in the same way. We're just working hard every day to try to do that, and I'm just very, very excited for the Bills [since] they made the playoffs and we're going to be cheering loud for them."

B-Devils top Americans, Schneider earns first win
12-W BNG
By: Nicole Menner
Dec. 18, 2019

On Wednesday night, Cory Schneider earned his first win with the Binghamton Devils this season as the team topped the Rochester Americans, 2-1.

Schneider stopped 23 of 24 shots in the win. After a scoreless first period, the Americans scored the first goal of the game with three minutes to play in the second. In the final two minutes of the period, the B-Devils scored back-to-back goals.

Joey Anderson tied the game at one on a deflection from Ben Street's shot. Less than one minute later, Brett Seney took the feed from Julian Melchiori for the eventual game-winner.

Final score:

Binghamton Devils - 2 (9-15-4), Rochester Americans - 1 (18-5-2)

The B-Devils return home Saturday, December 28 to take on the Rochester Americans. Puck drop is set for 7:05 p.m.

Mittelstadt Excited For Opportunity With Amerks

Amerks.com

By: Suzie Cool

Dec. 16, 2019

On June 23, 2017, hundreds of lives changed during the first day of the National Hockey League Entry Draft. One of those lives being then 18-year-old Casey Mittelstadt getting selected in the first round as the eighth overall pick by the Buffalo Sabres.

Fast forward a couple of months down the road and the young forward began to embark on a collegiate career at the University of Minnesota. In his one and only season as a Gopher, Mittelstadt was named to the All-Big Ten Freshman Team while skating in 34 games and recording 30 points (11+19). Following this outstanding rookie campaign, Mittelstadt then made the decision to sign a three-year, entry-level contract with the Sabres on March 26, 2018.

Now let's fast forward to just three days after signing that three-year, entry-level contract.

Mittelstadt is now 19 years old and it hasn't even been a full calendar year since his initial draft date, but on March 29, 2018, he's now lacing up his skates and getting ready to make his NHL debut against the Detroit Red Wings.

In his first professional game, the young forward recorded 12:53 ice time while also notching his first pro point with an assist on a second-period goal by Evan Rodrigues. Immediately making an impact with his new club just 24 minutes and 51 seconds into his first game donning a Sabres uniform.

Eight days after that NHL debut, the Buffalo newcomer lit the lamp for his first pro goal against the Tampa Bay Lightning just 2:57 into the first frame. In total, he would finish with five points (1+4) over a brief six-game stint with the Sabres, making the most of his short time at the NHL level while proving his worth.

Now let's move on and hit pause to focus on Mittelstadt's first official season for a quick moment.

The 2018-19 season would be Mittelstadt's rookie campaign in the NHL, where he saw time in 77 games with the Sabres. In those 77 tilts, the rookie went on to combine for 12 goals and 13 assists while becoming an asset on the power-play with 10 of his 25 points coming while the team was on the man-advantage.

Through the first 10 games of this year, Mittelstadt seemed to be back on track, having a multi-point effort to kick off the year and combining for seven points (3+4) over that span. Somewhere, though, the points stopped coming and between Oct. 24 and Nov. 9, Mittelstadt wouldn't find his name on the scoresheet for anything other than a plus/minus on-ice rating and his collective time on ice.

Now, everyone please grab your remotes once again because we're going to take the time to fast forward just one more time.

It's a beautiful Sunday here in the Flower City and the Rochester Americans are making their community proud after a two-game sweep against the Laval Rocket this past weekend. The date is Dec. 15 and all Amerks fans are at peace knowing their team has sole possession of first place in the North Division. At 5:00 p.m., things were about to get even sweeter with the Sabres assigning Mittelstadt to the Amerks.

You're probably wondering, why did we need to know all of that for you to simply tell us something that we already know?

Well again, let me break it down for you.

There is indeed a very human side to these athletes. That Mittelstadt, at only 21 years old, has probably had the spotlight on him since the day he was drafted eighth overall back in 2017. That maybe the pressure, the spotlight and the attention were just a little too overwhelming at times.

But now that he's here, he's focused and determined to work on the things that made him so successful last season while hoping to contribute to an Amerks team that is surging up the standings. For however long Mittelstadt may be here in Rochester, it's a time for him to grow and learn while alleviating some of the pressure that he may have been feeling at the NHL level while seeing the game from a different viewpoint.

"I think there's always pressure from myself and it's nice to come down here. It's a little bit different and I get to hang out with some of the guys my age that I know really well. Obviously, there's going to be some things that I'm going to need to get used to," stated Mittelstadt when asked if this move could help him get back to his best game.

There's not one particular thing that the second-year pro can pinpoint as to why the move may have happened, but he does admit that sometimes you just go in and out of the flow of the game. After his 16-game rut, Mittelstadt got on the scoresheet only twice with a lone goal and an assist through his last six games in Buffalo. And after an admittedly poor defensive effort against the Vancouver Canucks on Dec. 7, the forward found himself as a healthy scratch in three of his next four games while still on the Sabres roster.

"I think there's a lot of things I can still learn, but I think I'm just trying to find what made me good again. Like I said, just to have the puck on my stick, being able to play with the puck on my stick, use my skill and get back to that," the forward remarked when asked how he could take advantage of his playing time while in the American Hockey League.

Mittelstadt is joining the Amerks at a remarkable time, with the team having earned points in 15 of their last 16 games and holding a three-point lead for first place in the North Division over the Toronto Marlies. With all of the back and forth action between players and staff from Buffalo all the way to Cincinnati, Rochester's success can be attributed to the close-knit group that head coach Chris Taylor has at hand.

With each and every recall and new assignment, Taylor and his team have made a great adjustment of learning to play with one another on the fly while at times even learning new positions. It's in this unique strength that Taylor has no doubt Mittelstadt will get right back on track. From working on the power-play to defensive zone face-offs, Mittelstadt is going to be thrown into a number of different situations in order to restore his confidence with a great deal of playing time in his future.

"I believe that you need that confidence in what you're doing and how you're doing it. The confirmations of 'he can score goals' and the confirmation that 'he can make big passes' and be a key player on the team. I think this will be a great thing for his confidence, playing with us and getting that ice time and getting that responsibility," Taylor commented when asked how important Mittelstadt's confidence is when trying to get back to his game.

Again, there's no true timestamp as to how long Mittelstadt could stay right here in Rochester, but it serves as the perfect opportunity for him to experience true progression in his skills and abilities that he didn't know were possible.

By surpassing the minor leagues prior to his NHL debut, the forward still has many more benchmarks to uncover throughout his career and now he can mark Rochester off of his list. Kind of like the 'leveling up' concept in video games, Mittelstadt can use his time here on the Amerks roster to unlock new areas of his game and master the skills needed to 'level back up' when the time is right and his confidence is back to being fully restored.

Now, Amerks fans, go ahead and press play because come Wednesday night Mittelstadt is about to show everyone just what level he's on in his first ever AHL game against the Binghamton Devils – game on.

Casey Mittelstadt embracing opportunity for bigger role in Rochester
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Dec. 16, 2019

Casey Mittelstadt began to receive a steady stream of empathetic text messages shortly after the news of his assignment to the Rochester Americans was announced Sunday evening.

Mittelstadt appreciated the thoughtful gestures, but he didn't agree with the sentiment. The 21-year-old center was admittedly somewhat surprised when he was informed he was being sent to the American Hockey League after playing 114 games for the Buffalo Sabres.

Mittelstadt didn't feel sorry for himself, though. Watching three of the Sabres' previous four games from the press box left him wanting to make an impact, and he felt getting more ice time was the only way to rediscover the scoring touch that made him the eighth overall draft pick in 2017.

Mittelstadt will have that opportunity in Rochester, where the Amerks are in first place and coach Chris Taylor has a track record of injecting confidence into young players who have lost their way in the NHL.

"I have high expectations for myself and I haven't exactly met those yet, but I've persevered my whole life," Mittelstadt said Monday following his first practice in Blue Cross Arena. "I've been through things somewhat similar to this and always came out on the better side. I'm not worried about myself. Just keep my confidence and work on my game and I should be fine."

As much as Mittelstadt didn't expect the call Sunday, he had a sense this could be coming. He was a healthy scratch in back-to-back games for the first time since joining the Sabres in March 2018 and didn't play well in 10:26 of ice time last Tuesday against the St. Louis Blues in KeyBank Center.

When he was scratched for the first time this season Dec. 7 in Vancouver, Mittelstadt reminded himself that he was in the NHL for a reason. He spoke of how watching from the press box could help his game, particularly without the puck, and emphasized the importance of not trying to do too much.

However, consistency eluded Mittelstadt. He had zero points with a minus-7 rating and only 12 shots on goal, five of which came Nov. 25 against Tampa Bay, during a 15-game span from Oct. 24 through Nov. 27.

"I might have been pressuring a little bit here and there, and I think that hurts you all over the ice," he said.

His scoring drought ended Nov. 29 with a deflection goal during a 6-4 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs. More defensive lapses, including a minus-2 rating during a 6-5 overtime loss to the Vancouver Canucks on Dec. 7, proved to be Mittelstadt's undoing.

He had four goals among nine points with a minus-5 rating in 31 games, and his 12:45 average ice time ranked ahead of only Kyle Okposo among Sabres to appear in at least 20 games this season. Two of Mittelstadt's goals occurred Oct. 17 at Los Angeles and two of his assists came in the season-opening win at Pittsburgh on Oct. 3.

Both were part of a 10-game span in which Mittelstadt had three goals among seven points and a plus-6 rating.

When Mittelstadt drifted into healthy-scratch territory, coach Ralph Krueger and General Manager Jason Botterill began to contemplate what was best for his development.

"We've seen his hockey sense and his skill level," Botterill told reporters in Buffalo. "We've seen glimpses of it. We just need to see it on a more consistent basis. He's a very motivated young player who has a lot of aspirations. As an organization we know he's going to be a big part of the future and hopefully part of our second half here, too.

"We need to get away from a discussion of should he be in the lineup or how many minutes. We want him to be an impact player. We think developing a few elements of his game in Rochester right now is going to be beneficial for him and our organization."

Mittelstadt centered a line with Taylor Leier and Amerks leading scorer Andrew Oglevie during practice Monday. Additionally, Mittelstadt will play on the power play and penalty kill beginning Wednesday night in Binghamton, while also receiving more defensive-zone faceoffs.

One mistake won't result in diminished ice time, Taylor said. The plan is to put Mittelstadt in as many challenging situations as possible and see how he responds, much like the Amerks did with Tage Thompson last March.

Thompson, a 22-year-old winger, flourished in Rochester after struggling for a chunk of his 65 games with the Sabres last season. That injected confidence into Thompson, who was among the final cuts in training camp this fall and was the Amerks' leading scorer before suffering an upper-body injury with the Sabres in Chicago on Nov. 17.

Mittelstadt will also be playing in the same systems used by Krueger in Buffalo and has familiarity with Taylor, who served as an interim assistant coach for the Sabres' first 22 games this season.

"I think sometimes that happens," Taylor said when asked about Mittelstadt's play wavering. "He did start out pretty good and lost his confidence. Some ice time was taken away and it keeps going. He couldn't find his way back, I guess. I talked to Casey many times throughout that process, and he's been very positive and keeps working hard. I think he just needs to play some big minutes and play important roles with us. That will be really good for him."

There is also a willing mentor in Rochester. Forward Curtis Lazar, a 24-year-old former first-round draft pick, played 143 games with the Ottawa Senators before he was assigned to Binghamton at the start of the 2016-17 season.

Lazar returned to the NHL and has since bounced back and forth between the two leagues. He played six games with the Sabres this season and has 14 points in 17 games with the Amerks. Mittelstadt's assignment "brought back some memories" for Lazar.

"I think the biggest thing is you're so used to playing in the NHL and you feel like you're losing your step," Lazar said. "Everyone is aware of it, nobody more than yourself. You're trying everything to maintain that level when ultimately the best thing is to get back to enjoying yourself. A demotion doesn't always feel like the best thing, but in the long run I think it's really going to help him out.

"Once he gets that confidence going he's a very skilled player and he can impact the game on any level when he's going. ... I look at this as an opportunity to mentor him because I've gone down this path before. I'm all on board on helping him get back to Buffalo."

Mittelstadt can't pinpoint why his offense and defense slipped with the Sabres. He theorized the former could be the product of not touching the puck enough. Krueger experimented with putting Mittelstadt at wing but less responsibility on defense did not result in success on offense.

Mittelstadt had similar struggles last season, when he scored 12 goals among 25 points with a minus-19 rating in 77 games. An offseason of building muscle mass was supposed to better prepare him for the grind of another professional season.

Now, it's likely up to Mittelstadt whether that will occur in Rochester or Buffalo.

"When I was out of the lineup for a couple games up there, you're watching and all you want to do is play. I just want to come down and play, have some fun," Mittelstadt said. "I'm playing hockey, so it's not too bad. If you come into it with a bad attitude it's not going to work out. Come down here, get used to playing with the puck again, find my confidence."

Sabres believe Casey Mittelstadt has right attitude to thrive with Amerks
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Dec. 16, 2019

On Sunday, a day off for the Buffalo Sabres, general manager Jason Botterill and coach Ralph Krueger summoned center Casey Mittelstadt to KeyBank Center to inform him he was being demoted to the Rochester Americans.

After Mittelstadt, 21, got over the initial shock and disappointment of getting sent to the minors – “It’s always an emotional conversation,” Botterill said Monday – he asked what he must do to return to the NHL.

“He is a mature guy, he is a realist,” Sabres winger Kyle Okposo said of Mittelstadt. “I think he’s able to look at the situation objectively and probably think that it might be best for his development to go down there. So I think that that definitely helps, his ability to step back and look at things in a bigger picture.”

Botterill said: “What I liked was his initial respect for the American Hockey League level and the excitement of going and playing.”

Having jumped from the University of Minnesota to the Sabres in March 2018 following his freshman season, Mittelstadt started a new adventure Monday. The former eighth overall pick has never played in the AHL.

“Once I was out for a couple games in a row I thought it could happen,” Mittelstadt told reporters Monday in Rochester. “I was obviously still surprised by the move.”

Mittelstadt said a lot of people have texted him and said they’re sorry he got sent down.

“I’m not upset about it,” he said of coming to Rochester. “I’m ready to be here.”

While Mittelstadt possesses loads of skill, he has endured a rough campaign, struggling to produce offense while looking raw defensively.

Mittelstadt has mustered just one goal and two points in his last 21 contests and endured a 16-game goal drought before scoring Nov. 29. Overall, he has compiled only four goals, nine points and a minus-5 rating in 31 games this season.

After sitting out three of the last four games as a healthy scratch, the Sabres decided Mittelstadt, who has made 114 NHL appearances, must play games.

“That’s the single most important thing here at that age is to get the reps and to get the minutes,” Krueger said. “As soon as he became a candidate for getting scratched, we needed to think about what was the best for him as an individual combined with that, which we need as a team long-term.”

Botterill said Mittelstadt has been “all-in.”

“His attitude in practice, after practice, with our coaching staff has certainly been good,” he said. “But after sitting out a few games, I wanted to make sure leading into the break that he was playing games and continuing his development from that standpoint.”

He added: "The fact that he can get his mind wrapped around what do I have to do to improve my individual game shows a lot of maturity on his part."

Botterill wouldn't put a timetable on how long Mittelstadt could stay in the AHL. He will almost certainly stay at least through the weekend.

As the Sabres prepare for Tuesday's game against the Maple Leafs, Mittelstadt will be riding a bus to Binghamton. The Amerks play a road game against the Devils on Wednesday before hosting Binghamton on Friday and the Utica Comets on Saturday.

Mittelstadt centered Taylor Leier and Andrew Oglevie during Monday's practice.

The Amerks offer Mittelstadt a unique opportunity. Considering he has significant NHL experience, he could be a dominant AHL player. His stint could certainly help him generate confidence.

"Casey has the opportunity now in Rochester with a little more time and space to work on these things (he must improve) and to get more reps, more minutes to continue to work on his habits," Krueger said. "He's a very young player, there's a lot we ask for somebody who's eventually going to be an important piece of our team as a centerman in the National Hockey League. We just all found for his development this is the right place to be."

Joining the Amerks reunites Mittelstadt with coach Chris Taylor, who subbed as an assistant in Buffalo earlier this season while Don Granato recovered from pneumonia.

Taylor, who often worked one-on-one with the youngster, saw some of Mittelstadt's best outings, including an early three-game stretch in which he scored three goals and five points.

"Just having (Taylor's) knowledge is certainly going to help him out in getting Casey back up to the National Hockey League," Botterill said.

Clearly, the Sabres did not want to make the same mistake two consecutive years. Last season, they kept winger Tage Thompson in Buffalo for 60 games as he struggled, occasionally scratching him. Mostly, however, the prospect skated short minutes.

When the Sabres finally sent him to Rochester in late March, Thompson started piling up points. After starting this season with the Amerks, Thompson played so well he earned a promotion last month.

Sabres send struggling Mittelstadt to Amerks
Rochester First
By: Nick Filipow ski
Dec. 15, 2019

Casey's Mittelstadt time with the big club is over — for now.

The Sabres announced on Sunday they've sent the struggling former first round pick down to Rochester.

Mittelstadt, who has one goal and one assist in his last 22 games, has tallied just four goals and a minus-five rating in 31 games this season.

Last season, following the trade of Ryan O'Reilly, Mittelstadt was thrust into the role as the Sabres' second line center.

The then 20-year-old had his share of ups and downs in his rookie year and finished with 12 goals and 25 total points.

Sabres' Botterill is confident that Mittelstadt will get the confidence he needs in Rochester
WGR 550
By: Paul Hamilton
Dec. 16, 2019

Casey Mittelstadt hadn't been playing lately and, to be honest, that's not a good way to develop a 21-year-old player.

With that in mind, the Sabres sent Mittelstadt down to Rochester. The forward was with his new team for practice on Monday.

Sabres general manager Jason Botterill said it was a decision that needed to be made, "With the holiday break coming up here and with the new coaching staff coming in here, we wanted to continue to work with Casey and his development and the one thing we've loved interacting with Casey is he's been all in.

"His attitude during practice and after practice with the coaching staff has been really good, and after sitting out a few games, I wanted to make sure that leading into the break that he was playing games and continuing his development."

Amerks coach Chris Taylor has been instrumental in the development of Victor Olofsson, Linus Ullmark, Tage Thompson, Rasmus Asplund and others. Botterill said it will only help Mittelstadt putting him in Taylor's hands, "To have Chris come up here and work beside Ralph, understand exactly what Ralph's looking for in players, and also too Chris has now seen some of Casey's best games and he's also seen when Casey struggled. Having that knowledge is just going to help him out in getting Casey back up to the National Hockey League."

Mittelstadt has many things to learn as he starts his journey in Rochester. Botterill said, "We see his hockey sense. We see his skill level and we've seen glimpses of it. We just need to on a more consistent basis.

"He's a very motivated young player and as an organization. We know he's going to be a big part of our future, and hopefully a part of our second half here too.

Botterill and Ralph Krueger called Mittelstadt in on Sunday morning to talk about this. Botterill said, "It's always an emotional conversation, but what I liked was his initial respect for the American Hockey League level and going and playing." Botterill added, "What I really enjoyed about the conversation is he immediately got over the frustration and disappointment and it was, 'What do I have to do to get back on track to the National Hockey League to help achieve things.'"

For the second straight week, and third time this season, Jack Eichel is the NHL's third star of the week. Eichel has complete faith in Mittelstadt that he's going to handle his situation in the right way, "Casey's going to be fine. It's a good chance for him to go down there and build some confidence. It's never easy being out of the lineup and not playing and with somebody like him, he comes in with a lot of expectations and it's a good chance for him to start building his game again and I don't think anybody's worried about him."

Krueger thinks that Mittelstadt needs to play and for right now, that wasn't happening in Buffalo. He said, "The most important thing is development and us always communicating with the players in a real clear way about what our expectations are, what they need to work on and Casey has the opportunity now in Rochester with a little more time and space to work on these things and to get more reps and more minutes and to continue to work on his habits."

The team practiced for about 40 minutes on Monday before leaving for Toronto to play the Leafs on Tuesday.