



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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TONIGHT GAME: Cleveland vs. Rochester

Luukkonen To Start Friday Against Cleveland

Amerks.com

By: Suzie Cool

Jan. 14, 2020

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen is in the midst of his first full professional season at just the ripe young age of 20-years-old and what an impression he's making while working his way through Buffalo Sabres organization.

After being named the OHL's MVP and top goaltender last season, Luukkonen joined the Amerks for their regular season finale in Belleville back on Apr. 14. His professional debut turned about to be a memorable one, as Luukkonen finished with 34 saves and a .941 save percentage to close out the 2018-19 campaign with his first career win.

Since that night in mid-April last year, Luukkonen underwent double hip surgery, began his first full pro season with the ECHL's Cincinnati Cyclones and finally got recalled to rejoin the Amerks roster again this past week.

"I spent a little bit of time here before the season and the end of last year. It was nice to know the guys before coming here and I'm excited to come here and get to play in the AHL and see where I'm at," stated Luukkonen earlier this week upon his recall back to the Flower City.

Serving as the Cyclones primary backstop to begin 2019-20, Luukkonen already has a number of accolades under his belt. Not only has the 6-foot-5 netminder started off the season with a 12-5-3-0 record, but he also ranks third in the ECHL with a 2.12 goals-against average and was named as Cincinnati's lone representative for the upcoming 2020 ECHL All-Star Classic.

November faired to be Luukkonen's best month to date as he was awarded the ECHL Goaltender of the Month. After compiling a 6-2-1-0 record with a 1.88 goals-against average, Luukkonen went on to sport a .925 save percentage and accumulated two shutouts in his second full month of professional play.

There is no question as to how excited the team and fans are to see Luukkonen back in Rochester getting repetition at a more advanced level. Heading into this weekend, the Amerks are set for their second and final three-in-three action of the season, which seems to present the perfect opportunity for Luukkonen to make a start.

"We're going to start him on Friday night," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. "We think it's a good idea to get him starting here at home and get him acclimated here. It's nice and he's definitely deserved this opportunity," said Taylor when asked if Luukkonen was expected to see time in the crease.

For now, though, Luukkonen is going about his every day at The Blue Cross Arena like it were any other day. He's taking in whatever he can from fellow goaltenders Andrew Hammond and Jonas Johansson while spending extra time out on the ice after practice to make sure that he's able to adjust to the speed and shots at the next level preparing for the games that lie ahead.

When asked about how excited he was to get things going tomorrow night, Luukkonen's answer was simple and showed that he's ready to take on the game at the next level.

"Well of course every game there's nerves and you're a little nervous about the game, but I think that's a good thing to have that excitement. For me to get to play here in the AHL, it's a really nice achievement for me."

Curtis Lazar earning keep with Sabres: 'I am an NHL player'
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Jan. 16, 2020

In the waning minutes of Tuesday's 4-2 win over the Vegas Golden Knights, Sabres center Curtis Lazar couldn't get off the ice.

Lazar's marathon shift began with 2:18 left in the third period and the Sabres clinging to a one-goal lead. Following an icing and a timeout, the play kept going and going as the Golden Knights pressed with the extra attacker.

"We knew what we had to do," Lazar said following Wednesday's practice, "and I think it's kind of hang on."

As the clock ticked down, Lazar's linemates, Kyle Okposo and Evan Rodrigues, managed to change. Lazar, however, was stuck.

So when the puck squirted to a gassed Lazar in the slot above Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark, he quickly backhanded it out of the zone.

"I honestly was just trying to flip it out to the far blue (line) and got a little more on it," Lazar said. "Thankfully it went in."

"That's kind of how my year's going. I've worked hard for those chances. It's good to have luck on your side, too."

After staying on the ice for 1:54, Lazar could celebrate his fourth goal this season and the Sabres' second straight win.

"I was just praying it wasn't icing, because I would've had to hold for another 30 seconds or so there," said Lazar, who scored with 24.3 seconds left.

Lazar's presence on the ice late in a tight game is significant.

Since the Sabres recalled Lazar on Dec. 21, he has enjoyed regular duty, playing 11 straight games entering tonight's road contest against the Dallas Stars.

Lazar, 24, has quietly become one of Sabres coach Ralph Krueger's trusted forwards. On Tuesday, he played just over 18 minutes, his highest total since Nov. 25, 2015.

"I know all along in my head that I am an NHL player," Lazar said. "But it's a matter of showing that but also getting the opportunity and being utilized in the right place."

Krueger has utilized Lazar all over the ice, including the faceoff dot, where he won seven of the 12 draws he took Tuesday. Only Sabres captain Jack Eichel took more faceoffs.

Lazar began the season in the AHL and shuttled back and forth between Rochester and Buffalo for nearly three months, playing 17 games with the Americans.

But Lazar, a veteran of 263 NHL games, might've secured a regular spot with the Sabres.

The 6-foot, 211-pound Lazar impressed from the Sabres get-go, nearly making the team out of training camp. He has been the first forward they've recalled all season.

Then in December, the Amerks shifted Lazar back to center, his natural position.

"I feel so comfortable down the middle," said Lazar, who signed a one-year, one-way contract worth \$700,000 on July 1. "I think that's a big part of it, actually playing my natural position. And Ralph put me in spots where I'm able to succeed. I feel comfortable. I really just control the game."

While Lazar, the 17th overall pick by the Ottawa Senators in 2013, possesses skill, he loves playing heavy hockey.

"The game (Tuesday), that's my type of hockey, too, right?" Lazar said. "Just (a) hard-nosed battle. I take a lot of pride in that and especially my defensive play. To have the coach's trust, it means a lot."

Krueger wants Lazar's line to match up against some of the opposition's best.

"He has that opportunity to be the leader of a line that is hard to play against but can also defend against top lines of the other team," Krueger said. "So that can release some of the ice time of our top lines, especially here at home, to free them up, to play against possibly weaker lines of the opposition.

"And Curtis is giving us that. He's working hard on his faceoffs. He gives us a powerful right-handed draw opportunity, and he's learning every day better to play within our defensive structure we want and our principles and concepts we need." Lazar broke into the NHL in 2014-15 and played regularly for three seasons with Ottawa and the Calgary Flames.

When the Flames sent Lazar to the Stockton Heat last season, he embraced the opportunity.

"Last year was big kind of taking that step back and playing in the American League," said Lazar, who scored 20 goals in 57 games. "But the game's starting to slow down for me. I understand the game. . . .

"I'm still young, I'm 24, I still got a long ways to go. It's good to see some results."

Lazar has scored at every level except the NHL. Two seasons ago, he mustered only two goals and 12 points in 62 games with the Flames.

But Lazar believes he can develop into a 15- or 20-goal scorer someday. Having scored three goals in his last eight outings, he has shown signs of breaking out offensively. He also registered two assists in Sunday's 5-1 road win over the Detroit Red Wings.

"I've always established that defensive game first to build that trust and get that ice time and then build on the offense," said Lazar, who has compiled seven points in 17 NHL appearances this season. "It's nice to (be) put in there and be relied upon in all situations."

Sabres' Tage Thompson undergoes shoulder surgery, out five to six months
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Jan. 14, 2020

Sabres winger Tage Thompson's season is over.

The Sabres announced this afternoon Thompson, 22, has undergone successful surgery on his right shoulder and will be sidelined five to six months.

The 6-foot-7, 215-pound Thompson, one of the Sabres' top forward prospects, was injured in the waning minutes of his season debut Nov. 17, a 4-1 road loss to the Chicago Blackhawks.

The Sabres originally said Thompson would miss three to five weeks. Late last month, however, Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said the youngster was "still a ways away."

Following further evaluation, team doctors decided surgery was appropriate next step for Thompson, according to the Sabres.

Thompson enjoyed a stellar start with the Rochester Americans this season, scoring six goals and 12 points in 16 games.

The UConn product spent most of last season with the Sabres, compiling seven goals and 12 points in 65 contests. After they assigned him to the Amerks in late March, he went on a tear, scoring eight goals and 11 points in 11 games, playoffs included.

The St. Louis Blues drafted Thompson 26th overall in 2016. The Sabres acquired him in the Ryan O'Reilly trade July 1, 2018.

Sabres announce Tage Thompson undergoes season-ending shoulder surgery

Buffalo News

By: Mike Harrington

Jan. 14, 2020

After one game and just under seven minutes of ice time in the NHL, Tage Thompson's season is over.

The Buffalo Sabres winger, who has been out since a Nov. 17 loss in Chicago, had season-ending surgery on his right shoulder Tuesday. The team made the announcement a few hours before faceoff against the Vegas Golden Knights in KeyBank Center.

Thompson, 22, was injured in the final two minutes of the game against the Blackhawks when he was checked into the corner glass by Chicago defenseman Olli Maatta. He left the ice immediately with his arm limp and went to the dressing room. He played 11 shifts in the 4-1 loss, totaling 6:59 of ice time.

The Sabres tried rest and rehab for several weeks hoping to avoid surgery, but the decision was finally made to have the 6-foot-6 Thompson undergo the procedure so he would be ready for training camp in the fall. The team did not specify the nature of Thompson's injury and is listing his recovery time as five to six months.

It's unclear how much of a role Thompson would have had in the NHL this year, but his loss rates as a major blow to the Rochester Amerks. He had six goals and six assists in 16 games for the Amerks before his call-up and was considered their top goal-scoring threat.

"[The injury] is a disappointment, a disappointing thing for our entire organization just because of what we challenged Tage in the offseason with," General Manager Jason Botterill said Tuesday night during a scheduled appearance on WGR Radio. "He went through with it. There were things for him to work on specifically in Rochester and I thought he did that.

"I thought he had a great start to the season in Rochester. He came up and obviously got the injury. It's just something we have to deal with. Tage has to deal with it and the good thing is he'll have the opportunity to have a strong summer and be ready to go next year."

Acquired from St. Louis in the 2018 Ryan O'Reilly trade, Thompson struggled last year in his rookie season with the Sabres. He had just seven goals, 12 points and a minus-22 rating in 65 games before the club finally sent him to the AHL in March.

Thompson flourished in Rochester, netting six goals and three assists in eight games and then two more goals in the Amerks' three-game playoff sweep at the hands of Toronto. He was one of Buffalo's last cuts in training camp, with the team hoping to get him on a top line in the AHL rather than a bottom-6 role in the NHL.

Meet the Amerks: Jonas Johansson
Rochester First
By: Alexa Ross
Jan. 12, 2020

Amerks goaltender Jonas Johansson is having a career season.

The 24-year-old has recorded two shutouts so far and has a 92.4 save percentage in 18 games. He earned himself a spot in the AHL All-Star Classic, representing the Rochester Americans for the North Division.

"I had not given it a single thought before they said I was going," said Johansson. "I guess it's one way to feel for yourself the work you put in pays off so I'm excited about it."

Johansson spent three seasons playing in the Swedish Hockey League before signing a three-year entry level contract with the Buffalo Sabres in 2017.

"The hockey itself is basically the same life," said Johansson. "You practice, you play games, you travel, but the biggest difference is not having my family and friends that close."

Blue Cross Arena is 3831 miles away from his hometown of Gävle, Sweden.

"We keep in touch almost every day," said Johansson. "I guess it's way easier now when you have FaceTime, Facebook, and Snapchat."

Amerks recall Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen from ECHL
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Jan. 12, 2020

The Rochester Americans, who have allowed 18 goals over a four-game losing streak, recalled top Buffalo Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen from the ECHL this morning.

Amerks general manager Randy Sexton recently said Luukkonen, 20, would play games with Rochester during the second half of the season. So despite the Amerks' struggles, this could be part of the Sabres' original plan for Luukkonen.

Update: Sexton told The Buffalo News that Luukkonen will spend a week with the Amerks before returning to the ECHL.

The Sabres sent Luukkonen to the Cincinnati Cyclones, their ECHL affiliate, in November after he recovered from hip surgery.

The Finnish rookie has been stellar for the Cyclones, compiling a 12-5-3 record with a 2.12 goals-against average, a .917 save percentage and three shutouts in 20 games.

Luukkonen was named an ECHL All-Star earlier this month.

The Sabres drafted Luukkonen, the Ontario Hockey League's MVP and top goalie last year, in the second round in 2017, 54th overall. He played one game for the Amerks late last season.

The Amerks, who have lost eight of their last 11 games (3-7-1), have dropped to second place in the North Division following a fast start. They don't play again until Friday, the start of a stretch of three games in three days.

Goalies Andrew Hammond and Jonas Johansson, an AHL All-Star, have played all 37 games for the Amerks this season.

Sabres plan to keep Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen in Rochester for one week
Buffalo News
By: Lance Lysowski
Jan. 12, 2020

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen is one step closer to the National Hockey League -- for now.

Luukkonen, a 20-year-old goalie, was recalled by the Rochester Americans from the Cincinnati Cyclones on Sunday morning. An ECHL All-Star selection, Luukkonen had a .917 save percentage and 12-5-3 record for the Cyclones after returning from hip surgery.

According to Buffalo Sabres assistant general manager Randy Sexton, Luukkonen will spend the next week with Rochester before returning to Cincinnati. The Sabres want Luukkonen to play approximately 40 games this season between the Americans and Cyclones.

Rochester will play three games in three days beginning Friday against Cleveland in Blue Cross Arena. Luukkonen is one of three goalies on the Americans' roster, joining Jonas Johansson and Andrew Hammond.

"He's gotten off to a good start," Sexton said of Luukkonen in a phone interview with The Buffalo News. "We were very cautious and careful after his surgery to make sure we didn't rush things. He's had a good first half and as far back as the summer we had planned to start to introduce him to some American League games provided he stayed healthy in the first half of the season and this is really the commencement of that process."

Luukkonen practiced in Rochester earlier this season while working his way back from hip surgery. He established himself as one of the top goaltenders in the ECHL since making his season debut with Cincinnati on Nov. 2.

Luukkonen, a second-round draft pick in 2017, won a gold medal with Finland at the IIHF World Junior Championship last January. He was named the Ontario Hockey League's most valuable player after winning a league-best 38 regular-season games with the Sudbury Wolves last season and made his professional debut with Rochester in April.

Luukkonen underwent surgery later that month and missed the Sabres' development camp, Prospects Challenge and training camp. The Sabres would prefer Luukkonen spend the bulk of his first professional season in Cincinnati since the Americans have Johansson and Hammond.

Johansson, 24, has a .924 save percentage in 18 games this season and was selected to the AHL All-Star Classic. Hammond, a 31-year-old with 56 games of NHL experience, has a .902 save percentage in 22 games with the Americans.

"Part of it is we think it's the right workload for a first-year pro," Sexton said of getting Luukkonen 40 starts this season. "Bear in mind, he does have some pro experience from his time in Finland, but first-year pro in North America. Also, if you looked at how other young goalies that have progressed to the National Hockey League, we think the right number is around 40 or a few more."

Pekar makes impact

Sabres prospect Matej Pekar has made a significant impact since joining Sudbury this week. The 20-year-old forward has six points in three games with the Wolves, including five assists in an 8-2 victory over North Bay on Saturday.

Pekar, who was drafted in the fourth round by Buffalo in 2017, was traded to Sudbury from Barrie last week. He represented Czech Republic in each of the past two IIHF World Junior Championships.

Sudbury is currently holding on to a playoff spot, and Pekar has been placed on a line with Quinton Byfield, a top prospect in the 2020 NHL draft.

"We really do believe that playoff series accelerate the development of younger players particularly," Sexton said. "Sudbury is in a good spot. They have a good team. They're well-coached with (head coach Cory Stillman) there, and we know him obviously from UPL's time there last year. We have a great working relationships with the guys in Barrie. (Barrie General Manager) Jason Ford was very honest and forthcoming with us about what his plans were. Would have been happy to see Matej there, but it looks now with some of the moves made around the league that Sudbury should be well-positioned for a good push and hopefully Matej can help them through that."

Mittelstadt update

Casey Mittelstadt's first 11 games in Rochester have been a mixed bag. The 21-year-old forward scored in three consecutive games and had points in four straight. However, he's a minus-3 with three shots on goal over his past two games. His stat line with the Amerks: three goals among six points with a minus-7 rating.

The Amerks have allowed 19 goals over their last four games and have lost six of their last seven. Entering Sunday, Rochester was tied with Belleville for second in the American Hockey League's North Division.

Amerks lose three-goal lead, fall to Crunch

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

Jan. 12, 2020

The Syracuse Crunch scored four times in the third period, and overcame a three-goal deficit to defeat the Rochester Americans, 5-4, on Saturday night at the Onondaga War Memorial in Syracuse.

After a short-handed goal by Jean-Sebastien Dea had given the Amerks a 4-2 lead at 4:14 of the third, the Crunch scored three straight even-strength goals against Rochester goalie Andrew Hammond to win it.

Boris Katchouk, Patrick Sieloff and Daniel Walcott scored for Syracuse. Walcott's game-winner came with 2:28 left in regulation. Former Canisius College forward Cory Conacher assisted on the last two Crunch goals.

Tyler Randell and John Gilmour scored in the first period to give Rochester a 2-0 lead. Ross Colton of the Crunch made it 2-1 at 9:25 of the second before Brett Murray scored for a 3-1 Rochester lead with Casey Mittelstadt assisting.

Taylor Raddysh made it 3-2 with a Syracuse goal at 2:47 of the third. Dea's goal appeared to stave off any Crunch comeback, but it didn't.

Syracuse put 16 shots at Hammond in the third period while Rochester managed only seven shots on Spencer Martin of the Crunch.

The Crunch outshot Rochester, 33-24 overall.

It was the fifth regulation loss and sixth defeat in the last seven games for Rochester. The Amerks' losing streak is at four including a shootout loss at home against Binghamton on Wednesday. Their lone win in 2020 was an overtime triumph at Belleville on Jan. 3.

The Amerks will be off until a home game against the Cleveland Monsters on Friday night.

Amerks continue slide with 5-1 road loss
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Jan. 11, 2020

Rochester continued its losing skid Friday night with a 5-1 defeat at the hands of Belleville at The Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

It was the Americans' seventh loss in 10 games. At 21-10-2-3, they also drop out of first place in the North Division, losing the top spot to Utica (22-12-2-2).

Alex Formenton had a hat trick for the Senators (21-13-2-1). Vitaly Abramov and Jean-Christophe Beaudin had Belleville's remaining scores.

The Senators scored twice shorthanded, tying a franchise record.

The lone Rochester goal was scored by C.J. Smith, his sixth of the season, on a power play in the second period.

Jonas Johansson started in net but was pulled 15 minutes into the second period after Belleville's third goal. He made 13 saves on 16 shots.

Andrew Hammond stopped six out of seven shots. Belleville's last goal was on an empty net.

The Senators opened the scoring 4:55 into the game on Formenton's first goal, a wrist shot from the faceoff circle that got past Johansson.

He notched his second goal 10 minutes later when the team was shorthanded, taking a turnover to the net on a breakaway.

Smith cut the Senators' lead to one on the power play. He snuck a shot under Belleville goalie Filip Gustavsson's knee pads.

But there was no time to celebrate. Rochester quickly fell behind another goal after Johansson gave up a weak unassisted wrist shot to Abramov.

Beaudin's goal opened the third period, again shorthanded. He collected a pass of another Amerks turnover and screened Hammond before scoring.

Rochester will be on the road on Saturday challenging the Syracuse Crunch at the OnCenter War Memorial Arena at 7 p.m.

3rd period collapse costly to the Amerks
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report
Jan. 11, 2020

The Rochester Americans (21-11-2-3) took a two-goal advantage going into the second intermission Saturday night at Upstate Medical University Arena, but the Syracuse Crunch (18-16-2-1) scored four times during the third period, including three unanswered goals over the final 11:24 of regulation, to escape with a 5-4 win. The contest was the fourth between the two clubs this season and all four have been one-goal outcomes.

Despite the loss, the Amerks show a 16-8-1-2 record over their last 17 games dating back to Nov. 1, earning points in 19 games over that span.

Forward C.J. Smith chipped in a pair of assists for Rochester, which coming into tonight had prevailed in each of the first three meetings of the season against the Crunch. Tyler Randell, John Gilmour, Brett Murray and Jean-Sebastien Dea all found the back of the net while goaltender Andrew Hammond (10-8-2) suffered his sixth straight loss for the Amerks.

Taylor Raddysh helped Syracuse to its second win in the last seven games as he netted a goal to go with a pair of assists. Ross Colton (1+1) and former Amerk Cory Conacher (0+2) also had a multi-point outings while Boris Katchouk, Patrick Sieloff and Daniel Walcott all rounded out the scoring. Netminder Spencer Martin made 20 saves in the victory to push his record to 7-8-1 on the season.

Four minutes after Dea gave the Amerks a 4-2 lead 4:14 into the final period of play, Katchouk pounced on a loose puck to the left of Hammond to bring Syracuse within a goal. The hometown team continued to pressure in hopes of tying the game and they were successful as Conacher setup Sieloff atop the blueline for a one-time blast with 8:15 left in regulation.

As overtime was looming, and with the puck behind the Amerks net, Syracuse's Gemel Smith put the puck out in front of the goal crease at the 17:32 mark. Nearly all 10 players crashed the blue paint to locate the puck, but Walcott spotted it amid the scramble and jammed it behind Hammond, giving the Crunch their first lead of the evening.

In an attempt to even the score, Hammond was pulled for the extra attacker, but Martin held off the effort, including Zach Redmond's shot in the dying seconds of the contest to hand Rochester its sixth loss in the last seven games.

The Amerks carried a 2-0 cushion going into the first intermission thanks to Randell and Gilmour's fifth and fourth goals of the season, respectively, in addition to holding a 10-7 advantage in shots through the opening frame.

The score remained the same until Colton brought Syracuse within one with 10:35 left in the middle stanza before Murray countered back to restore the Amerks' two-goal advantage just 67 seconds later.

After serving a slashing penalty, C.J. Smith provided an outlet pass out of the Rochester zone to Casey Mittelstadt to send the club in transition. Pulling up along the half-wall to wait for help off the bench, Mittelstadt centered a pass to Murray in-between the face-off dots. Murray collected the puck and snapped it into the net to give the Amerks a 3-1 lead they carried going into the final 20 minutes of regulation.

The two clubs emerged from the break and Syracuse outscored Rochester 4-1 in the third period to earn a 5-4 victory.

The Amerks embark on their final three-in-three of the season on Friday, Jan. 17 when they welcome the Cleveland Monsters back to Rochester for a North Division showdown at the Blue Cross Arena. Game time is slated for a 7:05 .m start.

**NOTES* — The Amerks missed an opportunity to retake first place in the North Division as first place Utica was shut out by the Belleville Senators, 4-0. The Comets lead the Amerks by 1 point, but Rochester still has 2 games in-hand over Utica.

Amerks out of rhythm against Belleville
C&C Worldwide
By: Craig Potter
Jan. 11, 2020

After outshooting the Belleville Senators 12-2 halfway through the first period, the Rochester Americans found themselves trailing 1-0 on Friday night before the largest crowd of the season (8,422) at the Blue Cross Arena.

The Amerks were burned twice on defensive turnovers for 2 shorthanded goals in the 5-1 loss to the B-Sens.

"I really liked our start," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. "The first 10 minutes of the game we had 12 or 13 shots on net, and even if Belleville scored one or two goals, we are still a good team. There is a reason why we are atop the standings. We know how to score, we know how to win, but for some reason tonight, I felt we panicked.

"I was disappointed how we reacted after giving up two goals. Even if they scored on or two goals, so what? We're a good team."

Belleville improved to 12-3-1 on the road this season while the Amerks' home record dropped to 11-4-1-3, including going 0-2-0-1 over their last 3 games.

The loss, combined with Utica's win over Lehigh Valley Friday night, propelled the Comets over the Amerks into first place by a point (48 to 47) in the North Division. Rochester, however, does have 2 games-in-hand over Utica.

Amerks' All-Star goalie Jonas Johansson had a tough as he yielded 3 goals on 16 shots before being pulled by Taylor with 4:31 to play in the second period and the Comets holding a 3-1 advantage.

"We had a lot of shots on net (36), a lot of opportunities, a lot of missed shots, but we just have to be better and find ways to finish around the net," said Taylor. "The mistakes we're making are uncharacteristic of a lot of different guys, especially with the experience that they have."

Andrew Hammond came on in relief and gave up the second shorthanded tally off a second turnover by veteran defenseman John Gilmour.

"Obviously hindsight is 20/20 if I have a chance to go back, but it happens," Gilmour said.

Taylor wasn't sure how it could happen, at least not a second time.

"That's the disappointing part," the coach said. "We've been doing it now for a while. Those are the mistakes we're making." The short-handed goals were back-breakers.

"Our power play's definitely got to be better, we can't give up two shorthanded goals, that just kills your momentum," said team captain Kevin Porter. "In the second period I thought we were playing well and getting some opportunities and again, that just kills it."

The Comets scored their final goal into the empty net as Taylor pulled the goalie with 5:57 to play in an effort to get back into the game. Utica finally capitalized when Alex Formenton completed his hat trick by finding the empty net with 2:35 remaining.

CJ Smith accounted for the lone Rochester goal midway through the second period that cut the score in half at 2-1.

"It has been a tough stretch for me personally, but it was nice to finally get a goal," said Smith after scoring his first goal since Dec. 14. "As much as the personal accomplishments, I would like to also get some team results."

**NOTES* — Over the past 10 games, the Amerks are 3-6-0-1, with 3 of those losses to Binghamton. For the season, Rochester is 21-10-2-3 but just 3-2-0-2 against the Devils (14-17-4-0), who were on a 5-game winning streak... The Amerks close out the weekend on Saturday as they face-off against the Syracuse Crunch at the War Memorial Arena. The 7 pm contest will be the fourth between the two North Division rivals this season after Rochester took the first 3 meetings all by one-goal margins and a combined score of 14-11... Rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson is third in the AHL for all first-year players with a plus-13 on-ice rating while being the only Amerk to appear in all 35 games this season... The Belleville lineup featured two former Amerk defensemen in Jack Dougherty and Stuart Percy... Andrew Oglevie returned to the Rochester lineup following an injury and assisted on CJ Smith's goal... Winger Taylor Leier, who suffered an upper body injury in the Jan. 3 game at Belleville, very likely will be kept out of the lineup until after the Jan. 26-27 All-Star break... Defenseman Casey Nelson missed Friday's game with an upper body injury. He was hurt in the second period of Wednesday's game against Binghamton but finished the game. Taylor said he gave it a test drive at Friday's morning skate and didn't feel right.

Amerks drop heartbreaker to Syracuse
Pickin' Splinters
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com
Jan. 11, 2020

The Rochester Americans (21-11-2-3) took a two-goal advantage going into the second intermission Saturday night at Upstate Medical University Arena, but the Syracuse Crunch (18-16-2-1) scored four times during the third period, including three unanswered goals over the final 11:24 of regulation, to escape with a 5-4 win. The contest was the fourth between the two clubs this season and all four have been one-goal outcomes.

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Taylor Raddysh helped Syracuse to its second win in the last seven games as he netted a goal to go with a pair of assists. Ross Colton (1+1) and former Amerk Cory Conacher (0+2) also had a multi-point outings while Boris Katchouk, Patrick Sieloff and Daniel Walcott all rounded out the scoring. Netminder Spencer Martin made 20 saves in the victory to push his record to 7-8-1 on the season.

Four minutes after Dea gave the Amerks a 4-2 lead 4:14 into the final period of play, Katchouk pounced on a loose puck to the left of Hammond to bring Syracuse within a goal. The hometown team continued to pressure in hopes of tying the game and they were successful as Conacher setup Sieloff atop the blueline for a one-time blast with 8:15 left in regulation.

As overtime was looming, and with the puck behind the Amerks net, Syracuse's Gemel Smith put the puck out in front of the goal crease at the 17:32 mark. Nearly all 10 players crashed the blue paint to locate the puck, but Walcott spotted it amid the scramble and jammed it behind Hammond, giving the Crunch their first lead of the evening.

In an attempt to even the score, Hammond was pulled for the extra attacker, but Martin held off the effort, including Zach Redmond's shot in the dying seconds of the contest to hand Rochester its sixth loss in the last seven games.

The Amerks carried a 2-0 cushion going into the first intermission thanks to Randell and Gilmour's fifth and fourth goals of the season, respectively, in addition to holding a 10-7 advantage in shots through the opening frame.

The score remained the same until Colton brought Syracuse within one with 10:35 left in the middle stanza before Murray countered back to restore the Amerks' two-goal advantage just 67 seconds later.

After serving a slashing penalty, C.J. Smith provided an outlet pass out of the Rochester zone to Casey Mittelstadt to send the club in transition. Pulling up along the half-wall to wait for help off the bench, Mittelstadt centered a pass to Murray in-between the face-off dots. Murray collected the puck and snapped it into the net to give the Amerks a 3-1 lead they carried going into the final 20 minutes of regulation.

The two clubs emerged from the break and Syracuse outscored Rochester 4-1 in the third period to earn a 5-4 victory.

The Amerks embark on their final three-in-three of the season on Friday, Jan. 17 when they welcome the Cleveland Monsters back to Rochester for a North Division showdown at The Blue Cross Arena.

Giveaways, and more giveaways doom slumping Amerks
Pickin' Splinters
By: Kevin Oklobzija
Jan. 10, 2020

At first, the Rochester Americans preferred to look at their recent struggles as merely a bit of a funk, the kind of not-good/not-horrible stretch that many teams go through over the course of a 76-game season.

Friday's 5-1 loss on home ice to the Belleville Senators, however, confirmed this is no mid-season blip. This is a bonafide slump.

A misplay by goalie Jonas Johansson on the first shot he faced — a fairly harmless wrist shot from the left circle by winger Alex Formenton at 4:55 — created a quick early hole.

Then defenseman John Gilmour gave the puck away at the Senators blue line during an Amerks power play and it turned into Formenton's second of three goals in the game. With 4:57 remaining in the first period the deficit was 2-0. You'd have thought it was 4-0.

"I was disappointed how we reacted after giving up two goals," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor, whose club has lost five of its past six and seven of the past 10. "Even if they scored on or two goals, so what? We're a good team." They're just not playing like one at the moment.

C.J. Smith's power-play goal 9:05 into the second period revived the Amerks, but two dreadful turnovers late in the period gave Belleville two more goals.

Casey Mittelstadt reversed the puck to no one from behind the Amerks net and it went directly to Senators winger Vitaly Abramov in the right wing corner. While still below the end line, Abramov flung the puck at the net and Johansson misplayed into a goal.

Andrew Hammond replaced Johansson (13 saves on 16 shots) and surrendered the second short-handed goal of the night, this one by Jean-Christophe Beaudin — and again after a Gilmour giveaway.

This time the veteran defenseman was in full control of the puck to the right of Hammond when Morgan Klimchuk sped around from behind the net, took the puck away and set up Beaudin in the high slot.

"Obviously hindsight is 20/20 if I have a chance to go back, but it happens," Gilmour said. Taylor isn't sure how it could happen, at least not a second time.

"That's the disappointing part," Taylor said. "We've been doing it now for a while. Those are the mistakes we're making.

"They're a young team, we have an experienced team and they looked like the experienced team."

The short-handed goals were back-breakers.

"Our power play's definitely got to be better, we can't give up two shorthanded goals, that just kills your momentum," captain Kevin Porter said. "In the second period I thought we were playing well and getting some opportunities and again, that just kills it."

In Wednesday's 4-3 shootout loss to Binghamton, the Amerks didn't handle the Devils' hard-charging style well. On Friday, in front of 8,422 fans, they didn't handle the Belleville's speed or pressure.

"They play an aggressive style and sometimes it gets turned over in your face," Smith said.

Smith's goal was just his sixth in 24 games and ended an eight-game drought.

"Obviously it's been a tough stretch personally," Smith said, "but I would like to get some team results, too."

Notes: Winger Taylor Leier, who suffered an upper body injury in the Jan. 3 game at Belleville, very likely will be kept out of the lineup until after the Jan. 26-27 All-Star break. That means his next game probably won't be until at least Jan. 31. ... Defenseman Casey Nelson missed Friday's game with an upper body injury. He was hurt in the second period of Wednesday's game against Binghamton but finished the game. Taylor said he gave it a test drive at Friday's morning skate and didn't feel right.

Rochester calls up goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen from Cincinnati
WGR 550
By: Paul Hamilton
Jan. 12, 2020

Organizationally, the Sabres are in a goaltending crisis. Carter Hutton is 0-7-4 in his last 11 games and has a season save percentage of .892.

Rochester has lost six-of-seven games and has called up goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen from the Cincinnati Cyclones in the East Coast Hockey League. The rookie is 12-5-3 this season with the Cyclones with a .917 save percentage and 2.12 goals-against average. The 20-year-old was also recently named to the ECHL All-Star Game.

Jonas Johansson is an All-Star for the Amerks, going 11-3-3 with a 2.23 goals-against average and .924 save percentage, but after winning nine in a row, he's lost his last two starts.

Andrew Hammond is not playing well at all lately as the veteran goaltender has six straight losses. He's 10-8-2 with a 2.61 goals-against average and .902 save percentage.

Linus Ullmark has been the better of the two goalies in Buffalo, but he hasn't been all that good either. His 2.87 goals-against average and .910 save percentage are not impressive and he's only won three of his last 10 starts.

It needs to be said that Rochester general manager Randy Sexton is on record as saying that Luukkonen would play some games in Rochester this season, so it's not known if this will have any impact on the Sabres roster.

Walcott's goal caps Syracuse Crunch comeback win over Rochester
Syracuse.com
By: Staff Report
Jan. 11, 2020

The Syracuse Crunch rallied back from a two-goal deficit to top the Rochester Americans, 5-4, Saturday at Upstate Medical University Arena.

Taylor Raddysh paced the Crunch with a goal and two assists, while Ross Colton (1-1) and Cory Conacher (two assists) both had multi-point nights. The win halts a two-game skid and moves the Crunch to 1-1-2-0 in the 12-game season series against the Amerks.

Goaltender Martin Spencer stopped 20-of-24 between the pipes for the Crunch. Andrew Hammond turned aside 28-of-33 in net for the Amerks. Both Syracuse and Rochester went 0-for-4 on the power play.

The Amerks opened scoring when Tyler Randell forced a turnover and scored on the breakaway 5:55 into the game. Rochester doubled its lead halfway through the first period. C.J. Smith picked off a pass in the right circle and backhanded a feed across the slot for John Gilmour to chip in back door.

The Crunch got on the board during 4-on-4 play 9:25 into the second period. Colton rushed into the zone down the right wing and fired a wrister as he cut across the slot. Raddysh tallied a point on the play.

A minute later, the Amerks regained its two-goal lead. Smith centered the puck for Brett Murray to score from between the circles. Casey Mittelstadt earned the secondary helper.

Syracuse pulled back within one 2:47 into the third period. Colton chased the puck down behind the net and threw it back out front for Raddysh to redirect past Hammond. Mathieu Joseph tallied an assist on the goal.

Rochester was again quick to respond and answered with a shorthanded goal from Jean-Sebastien Dea less than two minutes later.

The Crunch kicked off a third-period rally at the 8:36 mark scoring three unanswered to steal the win. Katchouk started it when he found the rebound from Ben Thomas' shot and swept in the second-chance opportunity. Raddysh got the secondary assist.

At 11:25, Pat Sieloff ripped a slap shot from the point off a pass from Conacher for his first with the Crunch. Daniel Walcott then potted the game-winner with 2:28 remaining in the game during a scramble in front of the net. Gemel Smith and Conacher assisted on that tally.

The Crunch travels to face the Binghamton Devils for the final game of the weekend's three-in-three at 3:05 p.m. on Sunday.