



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Friday, January 24, 2020*

*TONIGHT'S GAME: Laval vs. Rochester*

Meet the Amerks: Nathan Paetsch  
Rochester First  
By: Alexa Ross  
*Jan. 22, 2020*

Amerks and Sabres veteran Nathan Paetsch had learned lots of hockey after nearly two decades in the pros. This year, he's passing it on to a lucky bunch of Rochester kids — including one who had been listening to Nathan all his life.

"The biggest thing is to enjoy what you're doing and work hard," said Paetsch.

This is the motto he learned from his coaches early on in his hockey career — and now he's giving the same advice to the Rochester Monarchs 9U AAA team as their head coach.

It is his second season coaching the Monarchs, his first as the head coach.

"The boys on my Monarchs team are the best kids, and to see the progression they've made means the world to me," said Paetsch. "It always makes me smile and take a lighter approach to professional hockey to see the love of the game these boys have."

One of those boys is his 9-year-old son, Kellen Paetsch.

"He gets to teach us different stuff than all the other coaches do and it's really fun. Sometimes he shows us skills he does at his practices," said Kellen.

Kellen has been playing defense, the same position as his father, for six years and has grown to love the game just as much.

"[I'm] just as competitive as he is. I just want him to be as proud of me as I am of him," said Kellen.

And it sounds like the feeling is mutual.

"There's nothing more exciting than to watch my own son play and coach him and have that opportunity," said Nathan. "I'm very grateful. This whole season has been a blast for me."

Sabres prospect Lawrence Pilut 'unavailable' for AHL All-Star Classic  
Buffalo News  
By: Bill Hoppe  
Jan. 22, 2020

Rochester Americans defenseman Lawrence Pilut will be "unavailable" for Sunday's AHL All-Star Classic, the league announced today, meaning the Buffalo Sabres likely plan to recall the Swede early next week.

Syracuse Crunch defenseman Cameron Gaunce will replace Pilut, who was sent to Rochester when the Sabres began their bye week Sunday.

Following eight days off – the NHL All Star break begins Thursday – the Sabres practice again Monday.

Pilut, 24, has compiled zero points in six games with the Sabres. He has scored five goals and 21 points in 29 contests for the Amerks.

The Amerks play tonight, Friday and Saturday.

Sabres' Rasmus Asplund tests his development in return to AHL  
Buffalo News  
By: Bill Hoppe  
Jan. 22, 2020

Sabres prospect Rasmus Asplund sounded upbeat, almost like he had just been promoted to the NHL, not sent back to the minors.

"It feels really, really good to be back," Asplund said after Tuesday's practice with the Americans in Blue Cross Arena. "I think I've developed a lot here in the last couple months."

Asplund, 22, spent two months in Buffalo, playing his first 28 NHL games.

The Swedish forward made a strong impression — "They were really satisfied with my game," he said — but the Sabres, who have eight days off, sent him back to the Amerks on Sunday.

Having accrued some big-league experience, Asplund wants to see what he can do back in the American Hockey League.

"It's a good challenge for me to be back here and really see the growth I've had the last couple of months," said Asplund, who centered C.J. Smith and Andrew Oglevie on the top line during Tuesday's session.

The reeling Amerks sorely needed reinforcements. They've been mired in a rut for more than a month, losing seven consecutive games (0-5-2) and 11 of the last 14 (3-9-2).

In Asplund, defenseman Lawrence Pilut and winger Scott Wilson, the Sabres returned three key contributors to the Amerks' early season success. They are all expected to play in Wednesday's road game at the Cleveland Monsters.

Asplund's stint with the Amerks could be short. The Sabres used him in a variety of roles as a center and winger. The former second-round pick killed penalties and even subbed beside captain Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart on the top line when Victor Olofsson suffered a lower-body injury.

The next time the Sabres recall Asplund, he could stick for good.

"He knows what it takes every day in and out, it's not easy — the pace of the game, the attention to details of the game," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said. "So he's got a good taste of it, and now he's got to bring that to our team and continue improving and getting better. Eventually he'll be back where he wants to be."

Asplund said he's "close" to cracking the Sabres.

"But I still think I have a couple more steps to take before I can play an 82-game season in the NHL," he said. "With being here now for I don't know how long, just take the opportunity to keep developing and being an elite player on this team. So it's going to be great for my development to be back here for a while."

Asplund tailed off at times with the Sabres. His ice time dipped to less than 10 minutes around Christmas. After his time jumped to around 14 minutes a game in early January, the Sabres scratched him three out of the last four games before sending him to Rochester.

"I got a big taste of how it's like with the travel, with everything," Asplund said of his growth in the NHL. "I've been playing against the best players in the world the last couple months, and I've learned how to treat myself off the ice. I think I just pushed my pace on the ice.

"You have to play to 100% every game, every night. When I didn't do that, I didn't (stay) in the lineup the next game."

Asplund tried to utilize every minute he spent in the NHL. So when the Sabres scratched him, he said he studied the game from the press box.

"You can learn a lot from it and just how the players act and how they're doing on the ice, because it's a lot easier to see the small things than being on the bench," he said. "So I think I learned a lot just being around 'Eichs' on a daily basis and then seeing him up top from a couple games."

Asplund said watching the action from up top also taught him "small things on the defensive side of the puck."

"You got to be in the right spot every time," said Asplund, who compiled one goal and three points with the Sabres. "You have to put yourself in a position where you can be good. That's, I think, a big difference from the American League to the NHL is if you're in the wrong spot, you're going to score a goal, which sometimes here in the American League you get away with."

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Despite their recent struggles, the Amerks looked and sounded upbeat throughout Tuesday's practice.

"That's the way we are," Taylor said. "We take things every day as it happens. Obviously, we're not happy about those points we've lost, but again, it's onward and upward. We have a team that mentally is strong.

"We're a good hockey team, we've got into a little rut right now, but we're capable of getting out of it."

Pilut said: "It was pretty loose. I think it was a positive vibe going on in the team. I think there's a lot of confidence out (there)."

Taylor said the Amerks aren't "hiding anything" right now.

"Everything's in the open, nothing's getting covered up by wins, by a big save here or a big goal here. Everything's getting uncovered, and it's good we're working on a lot of things," he said.

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Pilut, who compiled zero points in six games with the Sabres, said he "was more responsible with the puck" during his most recent NHL stint.

"I made smarter plays," he said. "I think also just D-zone work, I was on the right side of guys and made the right plays, just smart reads and stuff. I think my game was stable."

Pilot will not travel to Sunday's AHL All-Star Classic in Ontario, Calif., meaning goalie Jonas Johansson is the Amerks' lone player representative. Taylor will coach the North Division.

Pilot will be replaced by Syracuse defenseman Cameron Gauce.

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Taylor said Amerks captain Kevin Porter (undisclosed) and winger Taylor Leier (upper body) are sidelined until after the all-star break.

Leier took a shot off his neck and was taken off the ice on a stretcher Jan. 3. Taylor said Leier has been skating on his own.

Amerks snap winless streak at 7 games

C&C Worldwide

By: Staff Report

Jan. 22, 2020

The Rochester Americans (22-13-2-4) and Cleveland Monsters (18-20-2-2) each traded a pair of goals in regulation before Lawrence Pilut delivered the game-winner with 1:36 remaining in overtime as the Amerks snapped out of a seven-game skid with a 3-2 win over the Monsters Wednesday at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

The matchup was the second meeting in less than a week between the North Division rivals and the fourth of fifth meetings this season decided beyond regulation. Rochester has now won three of the last four.

Casey Mittelstadt (1+1) led the scoring for Rochester, providing the eventual tying goal and an assist on the game-winner. Remi Elie (1+0) scored his second goal in the last two games, marking his fifth of the season. Pilut (1+0), who was playing his first game back with the Amerks following a brief six-game stint with the parent Buffalo Sabres, notched the game-winner with just 96 seconds to spare in overtime action, with Mittelstadt collecting the lone assist. AHL All-Star Jonas Johansson (12-3-3) made the start in the net for Rochester, stopping 23 of the 25 shots that he faced in net to improve to 10-1-1 in his last 12 appearances.

Ryan MacInnis (1+1) notched his sixth goal of the season while tacking on an assist on the Monsters game-tying goal in the final frame. Marko Dano (1+0) netted his fourth that would force overtime. Veini Vehvilainen (9-11-4) got the loss in the contest, stopping 25 of the 28 shots on goal.

Rochester started off the contest on the right foot, ensuring an early lead right out of the gate.

After receiving a pass from Jean-Sebastian Dea, Elie carried the puck wide into the Cleveland zone along the right half-wall. He took a few strides before making a sharp cut at the near face-off dot before ripping a shot past Vehvilainen to put the Amerks on the board just 3:44 into the first stanza. Dea's helper marked his team-leading 29th point on the season.

Later in that same frame, Mittelstadt knocked in his fifth marker on the year with an unassisted goal to increased Rochester's lead by a pair.

In the second period, MacInnis scored an unassisted goal of his own to cut Cleveland's deficit in half. With Brett Gallant serving the first half off a double-minor high-sticking infraction, the Monsters forward pounced on a loose puck just outside the Rochester blueline and sped off on a 2-on-1 rush. MacInnis got to the hash marks and unleashed a shot that glanced off the blocker of Johansson and in for his sixth goal of the season.

Cleveland's game-tying goal came 6:27 into the third period thanks to Dano, whose wrap-around snuck through the legs of Johansson, sending the Amerks into their 12th overtime tilt of the year.

As the minutes began to dwindle down in the sudden death three-on-three action, Pilut's late-game heroics would prevent the contest from going to the shootout. Upon entering the Cleveland zone, Pilut left a pass for Mittelstadt just inside the Monsters blueline. Mittelstadt made a quick return pass to Pilut, who after sneaking behind the Cleveland defense, flipped the game-winner over the outstretched leg of Vehvilainen from atop the crease to secure Rochester's sixth overtime win of the season.

*\*NOTES* — The Amerks play host to the Laval Rocket at the Blue Cross Arena on Friday at 7:05 pm before closing out the weekend in Syracuse with a 7 pm faceoff against the Crunch from Upstate Medical University Arena on Saturday...The Sabres reassigned forwards Rasmus Asplund and Scott Wilson as well as defenseman Lawrence Pilut to the Amerks on Sunday. Asplund returns to Rochester after spending nearly 3 months during his first-career recall with Buffalo. The Swedish forward posted three points (1+2) in 28 contests since making his NHL debut for Buffalo back on Nov. 16 against Ottawa...Jean-Sebastien Dea continues to lead the team in both goals (12) and points (28) in 38 games this season. Coming into week, Dea, who is also second among all Amerks forwards with 74 shots on goal, has 10 points (2+8) in his last 13 games dating back to Dec. 20...Rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson is 18th in the AHL for all first-year players with a plus-6 on-ice rating while being the only Amerk to appear in all 40 games so far this season...Rochester holds a record of 28-7-3-4 over Cleveland since the start of the 2011-12 campaign.

Amerks end losing streak with OT win in Cleveland  
Rochester First  
By: Staff Report  
*Jan. 22, 2020*

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The Amerks return home to host the Laval Rocket on Friday, Jan. 24 at 7:05 p.m. at The Blue Cross Arena before closing out the weekend in Syracuse with a 7:00 p.m. face-off against the Crunch at Upstate Medical University Arena on Saturday, Jan. 25.

Rochester Americans deal heartbreaking overtime loss to the Cleveland Monsters  
SB Nation The Cannon  
By: Elaine Shircliff  
*Jan. 22, 2020*

The Cleveland Monsters returned home after playing six games over the course of nine days on the road. Their only win on the road came against tonight's opponent, the Rochester Americans, in a shootout. After a long road trip full of disappointing losses, the Monsters were looking forward to pulling out a win in front of the home crowd. Unfortunately, this was not the case for the Monsters who fell to the Amerks, 3-2, in overtime.

Head Coach Mike Eaves explained from a coaches perspective how rough it can be coming of a long road trip, "As a coaching staff, that first game back after a long road trip is kind of an anomaly in terms of what to do to get guys ready."

According to Coach Eaves "the first six minutes we looked like we had some jump." This is a spot on assessment of how the Monsters performed during the first few minutes of the game. Trey Fix-Wolansky was one of the guys who started the game with a spark. A little over a minute into the first period, Fix-Wolansky stole a puck and immediately tried to squeak it through Jonas Johansson's five-hole. Johansson quickly closed up shop and prevented a goal from happening.

The Amerks were the first on the board 3:44 into the game. Dillon Simpson saw Remi Elie speeding towards the net in pursuit of a goal. He dropped to the ground to prevent Elie's shot. Once Elie saw Simpson move, he changed the placement of his shot and it flew past both Simpson and Veini Vehvilainen into the net for the goal.

With 9:03 left in the first, it appeared the Amerks might extend their lead when Rasmus Asplund went one-on-one with Vehvilainen. As Asplund entered the crease, he fired off a shot which Vehvilainen kicked away with confidence.

Thirty seconds later, Anton Karlsson was collared for holding putting the Monsters on their first penalty kill of the night. The first minute of the Monsters kill was spent between the two zones. This was mostly due to the fact the Amerks were trying to set up plays. During the last half of the kill, Markus Hannikainen tied a puck up along the boards for 30 seconds allowing the Monsters to catch their breaths before the kill ended.

The Amerks extended their lead over the Monsters to 2-0 with 3:06 left in the first period. Casey Mittelsdtadt raced through the faceoff circle and fired one to the left of Simpson and past Vehvilainen. This goal came 40 seconds after the Amerks won a faceoff in the Monsters' defensive zone. They were able to maintain momentum until the goal was scored. Thus proving why faceoffs are an incredibly important part of the game.

Coach Eaves touched on how important faceoff wins are to a team's momentum by saying "Faceoffs mean possession. We track faceoffs carefully. We lost Justin Scott. He was one of our best faceoff guys. Getting Stenny (Kevin Stenlund) back will help." He even went on to explain how faceoff wins doesn't just fall on one guy, "It's not just the center icemen. It's the people around the flank that can help win those 50/50 pucks."

Steve Johnson kicked off the second period with a nice strong shot down the slot that Johansson managed to stuff. Things were starting to heat up for the Monsters. Even when they took two penalties in a row at 5:31 and 8:00 of the second the Monsters were able to keep things rolling. The ability to keep the burners on during the penalty kill led to the Monsters first goal of the night when Ryan MacInnis cut the Amerks lead in half, 2-1, with 10:49 left in the second while the Monsters were killing a double

minor penalty. It was quite the breakaway down the ice and through the faceoff circle before sniping the puck into the net from the faceoff dot.

Since his return, MacInnis has been a force to be reckoned with on special teams scoring two power play goals and a shortie. "Well the one thing you can tell by watching Mac is he's a good skater but you can tell he's been playing at a high pace," Coach Eaves explained, "He was noticeable on the ice tonight with his speed and the goal he scored was a result of that."

With 5:32 left in the second, it appeared the Monsters would tie the game due to Sam Vigneault stealing a pass from the Amerks and barreling down the ice towards Johansson. As Vigneault neared the net, he was hauled down and clipped the net before flying into the boards.

The Monsters carried their hunger for a goal over from the second period and used it to fuel them in the third. Marko Dano had the joy of scoring the equalizer, 2-2, 6:27 into the third period with a wraparound goal.

After Dano's equalizer, the Monsters kicked it into high gear and began attacking the net like angry bumble bees. From the way they played, it was clear they wanted to win this one in front of the hometown fans. Strong, crisp passes paired with high intensity play made the Monsters look like monsters on the ice. It just wasn't enough to get a third goal past Johansson. However, their intensity and ability to clog lanes didn't allow the Amerks to score either. Which could only mean one thing; overtime.

The Monsters maintained control of the puck for the first minute of overtime. They fired off shot after shot at the net and effectively hemmed the Amerks in the Monsters' offensive zone. After that, it was a battle between the two to see who could come out on top. In the end, it was Lawrence Pilut who was able to get one past Vehvilainen 3:24 in overtime to end the game.

As the Monsters walked down the tunnel to the locker room, not a sound was made for this was not the homecoming they wanted.

'Like, life goes on': Casey Mittelstadt takes his new Rochester assignment in stride  
The Athletic  
By: Joe Yerdon  
Jan. 17, 2020

To those watching the Sabres from the outside, Casey Mittelstadt's departure to Rochester may have come as a shock. But anyone following the team closely this season likely felt the move was overdue. After putting up 39 points in 114 NHL games, Mittelstadt was sent to the American Hockey League, where he's getting more minutes, more situations and more chances to get his game where he needs it to be to get back to Buffalo.

At 21 years old, the AHL isn't a punishment so much as it's a chance to learn from a group of veterans, play with a lot of familiar faces, and be part of a team that has Calder Cup aspirations. Through 11 games in Rochester, he has six points. *The Athletic* spoke with Mittelstadt about how things are going with the Americans, how he handled being sent down, and more.

What's the adjustment been like for you to play here? I always ask guys about the step up from the AHL to the NHL, but what's this been like?

It's a little bit different. I think more than anything, it's just a little more chaotic down here. More times than not you have two guys coming at you rather than one and things like that. I think it's just more chaotic. After a few games I got used to it and feel pretty good now.

I guess the better question would be, is the timing a big change?

I think the soft spots are different. The room on the ice is different and in a lot of different areas here versus the NHL. It's pretty consistent where you can go and find space. I think here it just depends on the play, depends on who you're playing. That's been different that way, but like I said, you adjust to it. It obviously takes few games, but you get used to it and you start going.

What was the message from Jason Botterill? I don't know if Ralph Krueger gave you the message too, but what was their feedback for you to come here to work on?

Just go down and play. I wasn't playing much in Buffalo, so just come down here and play. I've played quite a bit down here, so it's pretty fun. That was pretty much the message. It's been a good time.

They didn't have any specific checklist to work on?

No, not really. It was just come down and play. It's more minutes, it's more touches and that was pretty much it.

What was the difference between working under Phil Housley and working under Ralph? As far as hands on coaching and what they wanted to do with you?

I don't know. Ralph's a little bit more involved in the room, I think, more involved with players, where with Phil I worked with the assistant coaches a lot. I'm not saying I didn't work with the assistant coaches with Ralph. I worked with Donny (Granato) and (Chris Taylor) a lot when Tayls was there. But Ralph's a little more hands on. I think that if Phil talked to you it was a little

bit bigger of a deal, if that makes sense, whether it's good or bad — doesn't need to be either one. But yeah, Ralph is just a little more involved in the room. I think that's it more than anything else.

How important is it to have Taylor here after getting that time with him during training camp and then in Buffalo?

Taylor is great. It was nice to have him up there and now I have a pretty good relationship with him from that. He's a great guy and he's a great coach. I honestly can't say enough good things about him, he's been great.

Coming out of Minnesota and going right to the NHL, I know we've talked before about how that step up is big. You basically went from high school to college to the NHL in two years. What has this ride been like for you, because it seems like a lot to deal with?

I mean, I think it's life right? It feels normal to me, so it's kind of how I spent my whole life. Yeah, it's probably been a little chaotic and a few bumps along the road, but it's been fun. I've enjoyed every minute of it for sure.

Has anyone taken you under their wing in Rochester?

You know, I don't think it's anyone in particular. I think the leadership down here is so good and Ports (Americans captain Kevin Porter) and Reds (Zach Redmond) and those guys who have been around for a while, they did such a great job welcoming me in. And then I have guys like Borgs (William Borgen) and CJ (Smith) who live in Minnesota in the summer, I know them super well. So it's nice to have that to walk in and then know that you have at least a couple guys that you can hang around. I don't know if it's one particular guy, I think everyone in the locker room has done a great job. It's a great group of guys and I've really enjoyed it.

You're kind of unflappable about this whole thing. I have to ask you, how did you how did you take the news that they were sending you to the AHL?

Of course you don't want to be sent down, right? I wasn't happy with it. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't mad or rattled a little bit, but I think, like, life goes on. You wake up the next day, sun comes up, and I think I didn't realize how good of a group of guys they have down here either. Like I came in and everyone was so welcoming right away and especially when you're kind of the new guy in the situation you want to just be one of the guys and hang around them. They've been so good and so welcoming — the coaches have been the same way. So that's been great.

They seem to have a lot of fun here in the mornings after practice — they still watching game shows together?

Yeah, they've got a few things going on around here. We've been watching Family Feud and they do a lot of crosswords and things like that. I'm not too good at crosswords, but I like watching Family Feud so I can settle for that.

Ha! All right... To be serious again for a moment: For you, what is going to be your major accomplishment when you're working here? Is it just to be recalled to Buffalo and not come back or is there more?

Everyone wants to be called up, right? That's why they're playing. But I think it's important to come and at least leave somewhat of an imprint. Win a few games and have some fun with the guys and I think the biggest thing is just have a good attitude. I

started my career there and then I get sent down here. It's not how I wanted it to go, but coming here being one the guys, hanging around with them. I think that's super important because a lot of these guys are going to be teammates in Buffalo, hopefully one day, so I think that's a big thing. Obviously, you don't want to come down here and then be a bad guy. I think you approach it with a good attitude and everything works out.

I know it took a little bit of an adjustment coming here, but do you feel like you've kind of gotten things, I don't want to say figured out, but do you feel like you're in a good spot after that?

I think the first three games was a little tough. Even in Buffalo I hadn't been playing so it had been a couple weeks since I even played and I had to come down here and adjust to it. I feel the first three, four games after that I think I've been fine. I'm starting to find spots where there's room and making plays with the puck I think so it's been good.

This is a team that has made the playoffs and has Calder Cup aspirations – do you get that feeling here?

Even though it's been a bit of a rough patch and bad weekend for us last weekend, I think everyone is so confident. Even with one bad weekend, there's such a quiet confidence in the room — like no panic, no worry. Everyone just keeps working and get better. I think it's pretty fun to be around.

Rasmus Asplund, Lawrence Pilut, Scott Wilson assigned to Rochester  
Buffalo News  
By: Lance Lysowski  
*Jan. 19, 2020*

Rasmus Asplund, Lawrence Pilut and Scott Wilson won't be resting in preparation for a possible second-half playoff push with the Buffalo Sabres.

All three were assigned to the Rochester Americans on Sunday, giving them an opportunity to play American Hockey League games during the Sabres' bye week and All-Star break. The Americans play three games this week, beginning Wednesday night in Cleveland.

Asplund, 22, played 28 games with the Sabres after being recalled Nov. 16. He had one goal among three points with a minus-4 rating and was a healthy scratch in three of the final games before the break.

Pilut, meanwhile, had zero points in six games after joining the Sabres earlier this month. He was recalled while Jake McCabe nursed an upper-body injury and had zero shots on goal in 13:58 Saturday night in Nashville. The assignment also allows Pilut to play in the AHL All-Star Classic, which will be held Jan. 26-27 in Ontario, Calif.

Wilson played only two of seven possible games since being recalled by the Sabres. He had zero shots on goal with a minus-1 rating.

Amerks' slide continues with shutout defeat

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

Jan. 18, 2020

Rochester's losing streak in the American Hockey League reached six on Saturday with a 4-0 loss to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms in Allentown, Pa.

Greg Carey scored the first of his two goals in the game when he beat goalie Andrew Hammond at 5:48 of the first period. Max Willman's second of the season made it 2-0 for the Phantoms at 13:32.

Carey scored again, his 12th of the season, at 10:28 of the second. Mikhail Vorobyev got the fourth Lehigh Valley goal with 5:14 left in the third.

Hammond had 19 saves for Rochester. Jean-Francoise Berube got the shutout with 20 stops. Eleven of the 20 Rochester shots came from the defense.

Rochester's last win was 4-3 in overtime over the Belleville (Ont.) Senators on Jan. 3. Two of their six losses since then were in shootouts. The Amerks have dropped to third place in the AHL's North Division with 48 points, six in back of the first place Utica Comets and four behind the Belleville Senators.

The Amerks (21-12-2-4) will stay on the road to play at 5 p.m. game at Hershey on Sunday, followed by a Wednesday night game in Cleveland. The next home game will be Friday against the Laval Rocket.

Saturday's game was the Amerks' only visit to Lehigh Valley. They will play once more in Rochester in March.

Jean-Sebastien Dea continues to lead Rochester in both goals (12) and points (27) in 36 games this season. Dea had nine points (2 goals, seven assists) in his previous 11 games before Saturday night. He had only one shot on goal in the shutout loss. Defenseman Casey Nelson led Rochester with five shots on goal.

Sabres prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen starts slowly in return to AHL  
Buffalo News  
By: Bill Hoppe  
Jan. 18, 2020

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen's season debut with the Americans started slowly.

In the opening 15 minutes of Friday's 4-3 shootout loss, the Cleveland Monsters sprinkled only three shots on the Buffalo Sabres' top goalie prospect.

"It's tough for a goalie to get into it," coach Chris Taylor said of Luukkonen, who started his season with the Cincinnati Cyclones after undergoing hip surgery.

In the second period, the Monsters caught fire, beating Luukkonen three times on 11 shots and grabbing a 3-2 lead.

Then Luukkonen, 20, settled down, helping the Amerks kill a two-man advantage in the third period and another penalty in overtime.

After that power play expired, Luukkonen stymied Andrew Peeke, lunging forward to stop the defenseman.

The crowd of 5,610 in Blue Cross Arena roared in approval of the game-saving stop.

But Markus Hannikainen sealed Cleveland's win by roofing a backhand past a sprawling Luukkonen.

"He handled it very well, especially at the end of the game with the four-on-three, five-on-three, he did a really good job sticking with it," Taylor said of Luukkonen. "Even with the overtime there, I thought he was good."

Overall, Luukkonen, who was recalled from the ECHL on Sunday, made 24 saves in his second career American Hockey League outing.

"I feel like there's some things I still have to sharpen up and there's some things I'm happy about," Luukkonen said.

So what will the Sabres do with the Finn now?

They play road games Saturday against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms and Sunday afternoon versus the Hershey Bears.

When the Sabres promoted Luukkonen, Amerks general manager Randy Sexton said they would keep him in Rochester for a week, something he repeated during the second intermission Friday.

"We'll see how this weekend goes and go from there," he said.

Sexton said the staff and coaches would decide following Friday's game if Luukkonen, who's scheduled to play in Wednesday's ECHL All-Star Game, receives another start this weekend.

Luukkonen acclimated to the ECHL quickly, compiling a 12-5-3 record with a 2.12 goals-against average, a .917 save percentage and three shutouts in 20 games.

The Sabres mapped out a plan for months ago for Luukkonen to be in Rochester this week.

"We planned to have here a couple times here during the year as far back as the summer," Sexton said.

Sexton said Luukkonen's promotion has nothing to do with the play of Andrew Hammond or Jonas Johansson, the Amerks' other goalies.

Despite some recent struggles — the Amerks have lost five consecutive games and nine of their last 12 — the goaltending has been strong most of the season. Johansson recently won nine straight games and was named an AHL All-Star. With Luukkonen up, the Amerks scratched Hammond.

"Whether JJ and Andrew had been lights out or if they had been playing OK or if they had been playing poorly, (Luukkonen) was coming this week, because that was the plan," Sexton said.

Luukkonen clearly wanted two of the three goals he allowed Friday back.  
He was screened on Ryan MacInnis' goal.

"I have to see the puck more," said Luukkonen, who was named the Ontario Hockey League's MVP and top goalie with the Sudbury Wolves last season. "The play's a lot faster here."

After Trey Fix-Wolansky beat Luukkonen from the right circle, Kole Sherwood put Cleveland up 3-2, capitalizing following an odd bounce off end boards.

"Probably should have read that a little bit better," Luukkonen said. "It was a little bit of an unfortunate bounce."

UPL makes debut for Amerks, w ho lose in shootout  
Buffalo New s  
By: Staff Report  
Jan. 17, 2020

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 23 saves in his season debut as Rochester was defeated in a shootout by Cleveland, 4-3, Friday night at the Blue Cross Arena.

Luukkonen made several big saves, including a crucial stop in overtime when he lunged and kicked away a Monsters shot to preserve the tie.

Markus Hannikainen had the game-winner in the shootout for Cleveland. He faked Luukkonen out for the only goal.

Ryan MacInnis, Trey Fix-Wolansky and Kole Sherwood scored in regulation for the Monsters (18-19-1-2).

The Americans' goals came courtesy of John Gilmour, Casey Mittelstadt and C.J. Smith.

Rochester has now lost five games in a row and nine of 12. They sit in third place in the North Division at 21-11-2-4.

Gilmour opened the scoring in the second period, taking the puck coast to coast unassisted and finishing with a wrist shot past Cleveland goalie Veini Vehvilainen.

MacInnis tied the game in the second period by sending a shot over Luukkonen's shoulder.

The game remained tied at one until Mittelstadt scored off a rebound to put the Amerks up again by a goal.

It wouldn't last long. The game was tied again just a minute later on Fix-Wolansky's wrist shot.

Cleveland took the lead late in the second when Sherwood finished off an errant puck that took a bounce off the boards.

Smith tied the game with five minutes to spare but Rochester could not capitalize in overtime and did not score in the shootout.

The Amerks will be on the road Saturday when they travel to Allentown, Pa. to play Lehigh Valley.

Amerks send Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen to ECHL  
Buffalo Hockey Beat  
By: Bill Hoppe  
*Jan. 20, 2020*

The Rochester Americans sent top Buffalo Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen back to the ECHL today.

Luukkonen, 20, joined the Amerks on Jan. 12 and started two of their three games over the weekend, his first AHL appearances this season.

Amerks general manager Randy Sexton had said Luukkonen's recall from the Cincinnati Cyclones would likely last a week.

Luukkonen started Friday's 4-3 shootout loss to the Cleveland Monsters and Sunday afternoon's 4-1 defeat to the Hershey Bears.

Overall, the Finnish rookie compiled a 0-1-1 record with a 3.38 goals-against average and an .887 save percentage with the Amerks.

The Amerks have lost seven straight games (0-5-2) and nine of the last 10 (1-7-2).

Luukkonen 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. He is scheduled to play in Wednesday's ECHL All-Star Game.

The Sabres sent Luukkonen to the ECHL in November after he recovered from hip surgery.

Sabres send Rasmus Asplund, Scott Wilson and Lawrence Pilut to Amerks  
Buffalo Hockey Beat  
By: Bill Hoppe  
*Jan. 19, 2020*

The Buffalo Sabres sent forwards Rasmus Asplund and Scott Wilson and defenseman Lawrence Pilut back to the Rochester Americans this morning.

The Sabres' bye week, which started today, and the NHL All-Star break are back-to-back, so they have eight straight days off. They don't play again until Jan. 28.

Asplund scored one goal and three points in 28 games during his first NHL stint. The Swede, 22, recently subbed on the top line for injured winger Jeff Skinner. Asplund has been a healthy scratch three of the last four games.

Wilson, 27, had zero points in two appearances in his first recall this season.

Pilut, an AHL All-Star, compiled zero points in six games with the Sabres. The Swede, 24, has enjoyed a stellar season with the Amerks, scoring five goals and 21 points in games.

Amerks blanked by Phantoms  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Staff Report  
Jan. 18, 2020

The Rochester Americans (21-12-2-4) fell into a two-goal deficit midway through the first period against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms (18-19-1-4) and could not muster any offense as they suffered a 4-0 defeat Saturday night at the PPL Center. Despite the loss, the Amerks show a 16-9-1-3 record over their last 29 games dating back to Nov. 1, earning points in 20 games over that span. Rochester remains in third in the AHL's North Division standings entering Sunday's final game of the three-in-three weekend.

Defenseman Casey Nelson registered a game-high five shots on net while goaltender Andrew Hammond (10-9-2) suffered his seventh straight loss for the Amerks.

Forward Greg Carey tallied a pair of goals, including the game-winner, for Lehigh Valley, who have won five straight games and six of its last seven. Max Willman and Mikhail Vorobyev rounded out the scoring. Netminder Jean-Francois Berube (9-8-3) appeared in his fourth straight contest and made all 20 saves to record his second shutout of the campaign.

Just 19 seconds after an Amerks hooking penalty in the opening period, the Phantoms wasted little time to capitalize on the man-advantage when Morgan Frost handed Cal O'Reilly the puck near the left circle. The former Amerk captain fired a shot towards Hammond, but as he attempted to make the save, Carey gathered the rebound and flipped it into the net, giving Lehigh Valley a 1-0 lead 4:48 into the first frame.

Later in stanza, the Phantoms doubled their lead with 6:28 remaining as former Amerk Kyle Criscuolo sprung an outlet pass to Willman as the Amerks were changing behind the play. Sprinting with the puck into the offensive zone, Willman snuck in a shot just inside left post of Hammond from atop the right faceoff dot.

The two teams emerged from the intermission break and Lehigh Valley cushioned its lead to 3-0 when Carey beat Hammond for his second of the contest with 9:32 left in the middle frame.

While in the neutral zone, Tyler Wotherspoon dumped the puck in behind the Amerks netminder. As Hammond went to play the puck, it bounced over his stick and to right to David Kase in the trapezoid. With the goaltender scrambling back to his crease, Kase centered a pass to Carey parked in-front of the cage.

The Phantoms closed out the scoring with 5:23 left in regulation as they sealed the 4-0 shutout with their second power-play marker of the night.

The AHL's oldest rivalry will be renewed on Sunday, Jan. 19 when the Amerks visit the Hershey Bears to put the finishing touches on their final three-in-three of the season at Giant Center. The puck drops on the 460<sup>th</sup> all-time meeting between the league's two oldest teams at 5:00 p.m. with all the action being carried live on The Sports Leader AM 950/95.7 FM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Even UPL can't save the Amerks from another loss  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklonzija  
Jan. 17, 2020

The long-awaited next step in Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen's journey to Goalie of the Future for the Buffalo Sabres finally took place on Friday.

The much-awaited end to the Rochester Americans slump did not.

C.J. Smith's power play goal with 4:28 remaining in regulation sent the game to overtime, and it didn't end until Cleveland's Markus Hannikainen scored the only goal in the shootout as the Monsters posted a 4-3 win on Pride Night at Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

And so, that's seven losses in the past eight games, though the Amerks did get points in two of the losses (1-5-0-2). They've won just three of the past 12 (3-7-0-2).

"I think we can go to bed knowing we played a solid game," said defenseman John Gilmour, who scored a sensational goal with an end-to-end rush and then bar-down finish in the first period.

Luukkonen played a solid game, and made a fair share of top-notch saves, especially late, but was burned in the shootout on a dynamic move by Hannikainen, a fellow Finn.

"Of course it sucks to lose," said Luukkonen, who stopped 24 of 27 shots. "There are some things I have to sharpen up and some things I'm happy about."

Luukkonen was chosen in the second round (54th overall) by the Sabres and turned pro this season after winning the Ontario Hockey League's Most Outstanding Player award a year ago.

Off-season surgery on both hips delayed the start of his first pro season until November but he is right on schedule, according to Sabres assistant general manager Randy Sexton.

In 20 games with the ECHL's Cincinnati Cyclones, Luukkonen was 12-5-3 with a 2.12 goals-against average (third-best in the league) and .912 save percentage. His play earned him a spot in the Jan. 22 ECHL All-Star Game.

He joined the the Amerks this week for a mid-season AHL test drive to gauge his progress, apparently all part of the Sabres blueprint.

"We planned to have him here a couple times this year," Sexton said. "Whether JJ (Jonas Johansson) and Andrew (Hammond) had been lights out or OK or playing poorly, he was coming here this week.

"We did the same thing with Jonas last year. It's all part of the overall development process."

The three goals in regulation allowed by Luukkonen all came in the second period, as 1-0 and 2-1 Amerk leads provided on goals by John Gilmour and Casey Mittelstadt turned into a 3-2 deficit.

The go-ahead goal by Kole Sherwood at 15:11 was very much a fluke. Defenseman Doyle Somerby wristed a shot from above the right circle that missed the net on the short side.

Luukkonen logically thought the carom would come back out to his right, so he began to shift across the crease. The puck, however, somehow bounced back on the same side it was shot from and Sherwood had an empty net.

"It's a crazy bounce behind the net; I probably should have read it a little better," Luukkonen said.

Said Taylor: "There's nothing worse than a bad bounce like that. It was going nowhere. But you make your won breaks and I talked to the team about that."

The Amerks haven't done nearly enough of that during their slide.

Even Taylor ended up taking a penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct, putting the Amerks two men down for more than a minute. He was angry that Derek Barach wasn't penalized for hitting Zach Redmond into the boards from behind, and even more upset that Amerks forward Jean-Sebastien Dea ended up with the only penalty from the ensuing scrum.

"I thought his (Redmond's) head hit off the glass, I thought it was kind of a high hit," Taylor said. "Casey got called for that same play when the guy (Trey Fix-Wolansky) turned a little and he didn't even hit the boards.

"But we'll get those calls when we start to play the right way."

Amerks winless streak reaches 3 with loss in Hershey  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Staff Report  
Jan. 20, 2020

In a meeting between the American Hockey League's two oldest teams, the Hershey Bears (25-13-2-3) scored three times in the third period on their way to a 4-1 win over the Rochester Americans (21-13-2-4) Sunday in the weekend finale at Giant Center.

The matchup, which was the 460th all-time meeting among the league's cornerstone franchises, results in a season split after the Amerks prevailed with a 5-1 victory in the only other get-together with the Bears back on Oct. 23 in Rochester.

Despite the loss, the Amerks show a 16-10-1-3 record over their last 30 games dating back to Nov. 1, earning points in 20 games over that span. Rochester remains just six points out of first place behind the Utica Comets and are four points back of the Belleville Senators in the AHL's North Division standings to close out the weekend. The Amerks also have two games in hand on the Comets and one on the Senators following Sunday's contest.

Forward Remi Elie provided the lone Amerks tally in the final minute of regulation with his fourth of the season from Jean-Sebastien Dea while rookie goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (0-1-1) made his second appearance of the weekend. The Finnish netminder made 32 saves but suffered the loss.

Tyler Lewington registered his second straight two-point (0+2) outing for Hershey while Martin Fehervary, Brian Pinho and Garrett Pilon all chipped in a goal. Riley Sutter rounded out the scoring as he netted his first professional goal. Goaltender Vitek Vanecek stopped 30 of 31 shots he faced to improve to 13-7-1 on the season.

Trailing by a goal early in the third period, Andrew Oglevie left a drop pass for Will Borgen just inside the Hershey blueline. The Amerks defenseman neatly maneuvered around a Bears' skater before dishing a back-door feed to Casey Mittelstadt, but the tap-in attempt skipped across the goal-line and off the right post, keeping Rochester off the board.

Less than three minutes later, Hershey increased its lead to 3-0 with a pair of goals 56 seconds apart as Pinho and Pilon each scored from nearly the same spot for their 12th and 11th goals of the season, respectively.

The Bears added their final tally at the 13:48 mark of the third period when Sutter wrapped around Luukkonen's cage and slipped the puck between the left pad and near post to make it a four-goal Hershey advantage.

With the game out of reach and less than a minute remaining in regulation, Elie snapped a shot off the glove of Vanecek to break the shutout for his fourth of the season at the 19:32 mark. Dea picked up the lone assist, his team-leading 28th point of the season.

Following a scoreless first period, Fehervary put the home team on the board as he backhanded a shot from the right of the goal-mouth of the Amerks net to give Hershey a 1-0 lead with 4:28 left in the middle stanza.

**\*NOTES** — The Amerks return to action for their final three games before the annual All-Star break beginning on Wednesday, Jan. 22 when they travel to Cleveland for a rematch against the Monsters at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse. Following the 7 pm matchup, the Amerks will play host to the Laval Rocket at the Blue Cross Arena on Friday, Jan. 24 at 7:05 pm, before closing out

the weekend in Syracuse with a 7 pm faceoff against the Crunch from Upstate Medical University Arena on Saturday, Jan. 25...Jean-Sebastien Dea continues to lead the team in both goals (12) and points (27) in 37 games this season. Coming into tonight, Dea, who is also second among all Amerks forwards with 73 shots on goal, has 9 points (2+7) in his last 12 games dating back to Dec. 20...Tonight's matchup marks the 460th all-time meeting between the AHL's two senior-most franchises with Rochester holding a 192-213-54 lifetime record against Hershey...The Bears have claimed 5 of last 8 meetings dating back to the 2016-17 season while the Amerks have earned 7 out of a possible 10 points in the 5 games dating back to the 2017-18 season.

Amerks shut out by Lehigh Valley  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Staff Report  
Jan. 19, 2020

The Rochester Americans (21-12-2-4) fell into a two-goal deficit midway through the first period against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms (18-19-1-4) and could not muster any offense as they suffered a 4-0 defeat Saturday night at the PPL Center.

Despite the loss, the Amerks show a 16-9-1-3 record over their last 29 games dating back to Nov. 1, earning points in 20 games over that span. Rochester remains in third in the AHL's North Division standings entering Sunday's final game of the three-in-three weekend.

Defenseman Casey Nelson registered a game-high five shots on net while goaltender Andrew Hammond (10-9-2) suffered his seventh straight loss for the Amerks.

Forward Greg Carey tallied a pair of goals, including the game-winner, for Lehigh Valley, who have won five straight games and six of its last seven. Max Willman and Mikhail Vorobyev rounded out the scoring. Netminder Jean-Francois Berube (9-8-3) appeared in his fourth straight contest and made all 20 saves to record his second shutout of the campaign.

Just 19 seconds after an Amerks hooking penalty in the opening period, the Phantoms wasted little time to capitalize on the man-advantage when Morgan Frost handed Cal O'Reilly the puck near the left circle. The former Amerk captain fired a shot towards Hammond, but as he attempted to make the save, Carey gathered the rebound and flipped it into the net, giving Lehigh Valley a 1-0 lead 4:48 into the first frame.

Later in stanza, the Phantoms doubled their lead with 6:28 remaining as former Amerk Kyle Criscuolo sprung an outlet pass to Willman as the Amerks were changing behind the play. Sprinting with the puck into the offensive zone, Willman snuck in a shot just inside left post of Hammond from atop the right faceoff dot.

The two teams emerged from the intermission break and Lehigh Valley cushioned its lead to 3-0 when Carey beat Hammond for his second of the contest with 9:32 left in the middle frame.

While in the neutral zone, Tyler Wotherspoon dumped the puck in behind the Amerks netminder. As Hammond went to play the puck, it bounced over his stick and to right to David Kase in the trapezoid. With the goaltender scrambling back to his crease, Kase centered a pass to Carey parked in-front of the cage.

The Phantoms closed out the scoring with 5:23 left in regulation as they sealed the 4-0 shutout with their second power-play marker of the night.

The AHL's oldest rivalry will be renewed on Sunday, Jan. 19 when the Amerks visit the Hershey Bears to put the finishing touches on their final three-in-three of the season at Giant Center. The puck drops on the 460th all-time meeting between the league's two oldest teams at 5 pm.

*\*NOTES* — Lehigh Valley's roster includes four former Amerks in forwards Kyle Criscuolo, Cal O'Reilly and defensemen T.J. Brennan and Eric Knodel. . . Despite just going 1-3-0-0 during the 2016-17 season against the Phantoms, the Amerks are 6-6-1-1 in the last 14 meetings between the two teams dating back to the 2015-16 campaign.

Amerks fall in SO in UPL's debut  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Craig Potter  
Jan. 18, 2020

The Buffalo Sabres fulfilled their development plan for goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen Friday night at the Blue Cross Arena before 5,610 fans. He ended up making 23 saves but lost 4-3 in a shootout.

"It stinks to lose, especially at home," said Luukkonen. "I thought we played a solid game tonight and there are some bounces that I would have liked to go the other way. There are some things I still need to sharpen up and some that things that I am happy about. Overall, it was not a bad game."

"I think he handled it really well," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor of Luukkonen. "Especially during the 4-on-3 and the two 5-on-3's we had tonight, I thought he did a really good job. He stayed with it tonight, and after only seeing a few shots early on, I thought he was good."

The 20-year-old Finish rookie made his AHL debut after being called up from the Cincinnati Cyclones of the ECHL earlier in the week. UPL earned All-Star status with the Cyclones, but the Sabres wanted to expose him to AHL calibre play this season as well.

"We planned to have him here a couple times this year," Amerks General Manager Randy Sexton told the media during the second period intermission. "Whether JJ (Jonas Johansson) and Andrew (Hammond) had been lights out or OK or playing poorly, he was coming here this week."

"We did the same thing with Jonas last year. It's all part of the overall development process."

UPL saw only 2 shots through the first half of the opening period, but ended up going the distance with an overtime and shootout in his debut.

"It probably helps me to see how the 3-on-3 is and how the shootout is," Luukkonen said.

The Amerks gave him a 1-0 lead on John Gilmour's length of the ice rush as he beat Cleveland netminder, and fellow Finn, Veini Vehvilainen.

"On the power-play there is obviously more room on the ice," said Gilmour, who has recorded a goal in each of his last two contests. "Going out on the ice, just being confident and making plays while trying to help the team win. One thing about tonight's game is we can go to bed proud of the game as it is really anyone's game in the shootout."

The Monsters tied the game with a power play goal early in the second stanza, but the Amerks regained the advantage when Vehvilainen came out to play the puck. Jean-Sebastien Dea gained control and fired a shot. The rebound came to Casey Mittelstadt, who put it into the vacated side of the net.

"I feel J.S., Remi (Elie) and myself have been playing well together as of late," said Mittelstadt. "It took us a while to build the chemistry, but it was good to see a goal go into the net tonight. The chances and the goals will come, but one wasn't enough for our line tonight."

However, the advantage lasted just 73 seconds as the Monsters evened the count once again.

Cleveland forged ahead on a bad bounce off the backboards on a puck that normally would have gone around the net, but came back out from and had Luukkonen helpless as the Monsters scored to take a 3-2 lead.

"It's a crazy bounce behind the net; I probably should have read it a little better," said Luukkonen.

Taylor added, "There's nothing worse than a bad bounce like that. It was going nowhere. But you make your won breaks and I talked to the team about that."

The Amerks defense was taxed as Rochester successfully killed off two 5-on-3 Cleveland power plays.

Rochester cashed in a power play late in the third period when CJ Smith tallied the equalizer to send the game in to overtime.

Defenseman Casey Nelson cleared a loose puck following a UPL save, then UPL made a spectacular save while killing off Rochester's 8th penalty of the contest.

Cleveland's Markus Hannikainen scored the lone goal in the shootout as Mittelstadt, Andrew Oglevie, and Smith failed to convert for the Amerks.

"It was not a perfect game but we can take some positives out of tonight's game and into the rest of the weekend," Taylor said. "Getting one point was big for our team as we are trying to get back on track. Any time we can get points, we are happy but we have to be ready for the rest of the weekend."

*\*NOTES* — The Amerks continue their last 3-in-3 this season on Saturday, when they square off against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms at the PPL Center at 7:05 pm, before closing the weekend Sunday night in Hershey against the Bears at 5 pm. . . Jean-Sebastien Dea continues to lead the team in both goals (12) and points (27) in 36 games this season. Coming into tonight, Dea, who is also second among all Amerks forwards with 72 shots on goal, has 9 points (2+7) in his last 11 games dating back to Dec. 20. . . Rochester holds a record of 28-7-3-4 over Cleveland since the start of the 2011-12 campaign. . . Amerks forward Andrew Oglevie scored his first career hat trick in the previous meeting between the two teams back on Nov. 30, single-handedly outscoring Cleveland in Rochester's 3-2 victory. . . Amerks assistant coach Toby Petersen spent the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons behind the bench with the Monsters. Petersen helped the team earn its first Calder Cup in 2016. . . Rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson is tied for fourth in the AHL for all first-year players with a plus-9 on-ice rating while being the only Amerk to appear in all 38 games so far this season.

Amerks lose for 2nd straight day, fall to Hershey Bears 5-1

Rochester First

By: Staff Report

*Jan. 20, 2020*

The Rochester Amerks (25-13-2-3) closed out the weekend with a 5-1 loss on the road against the Hershey Bears (12-13-2-4).

It was the second loss in as many days for the Amerks, as they also fell 4-0 on the road Saturday against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms.

Forward Remi Elie provided the only Amerks goal for the weekend split, in the final minute of regulation with his fourth score of the season on an assist from Jean-Sebastien Dea. Rookie goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 32 saves in the loss.

Despite the loss, the Amerks maintain a 16-10-1-3 record over their last 30 games, picking up points in 20 of those games along the way.

The Amerks return to action for their final three games before the annual All-Star break beginning Wednesday when they travel to Cleveland to take on the Monsters.

Sabres' Lazar has earned a spot to stay in Buffalo  
ESPN Rochester  
By: Staff Report  
Jan. 20, 2020

Curtis Lazar had a good training camp and should've made the Sabres right away. Jason Botterill sent the forward to Rochester because he brought back too many players that didn't need to be here.

Lazar went to the Amerks and played 18 games netting six goals and eight assists for 14 points. In Buffalo he does so many things during a game that others either can't or won't do.

You may have noticed that as the Sabres are on break, three players were sent to back to Rochester, but he wasn't. That's a clear sign that Ralph Krueger appreciates what Lazar brings. The head coach said, "Curtis is a different look up the middle with the size that he brings. He's hard to play against and can defend against top lines."

Lazar is one of the few Sabres that will stand in front of the net. He also drives the goaltenders crazy because he'll get a piece of them and brush by them and make it look totally innocent. He's tough along the walls and wins many battles all over the ice. He hits and does something else not many on this team can do, win faceoffs.

Lazar has won 51.5% of his draws and Krueger said, "He's working hard on his faceoffs and gives us a powerful right handed draw and he's learning every day to play better within our defensive structure that we want and the principles and the concepts that we need."

Lazar hasn't always been good at faceoffs. In 65 games with Calgary two years ago Lazar only won 39.7% of his draws. It's a skill he's worked to get better at, "Last year was the chance for me to hone in on it and it's just my will to work there. I take a lot of pride in my faceoffs, but if you look at my recent stats, my faceoffs weren't that good, but it's something that I embrace and I like that challenge."

In 19 games with the Sabres Lazar has four goals and four assists for eight points.

Over 82 games that equals 17 goals and 17 assists for 34 points. Compare that to the projected 82 games totals for Zemgus Girgensons (15-7-22), Johan Larsson (8-15-23), Kyle Okposo (11-15-26), Vladimir Sobotka (5-10-15), Evan Rodrigues (6-9-15), Rasmus Asplund (3-6-9), Casey Mittelstadt (11-13-24), Jimmy Vesey (11-15-26), Conor Sheary (14-18-32) and Michael Frolik (11-11-22). That combined with the grit and determination shows why it was a huge blunder by Botterill out of training camp.

Despite being a No. 1 pick by Ottawa in 2013, Lazar has never scored more than six goals in an NHL season. He said he now believes in himself more, "I think its confidence. Last year I spent a year in the American League in more of a scorers role (20 goals in 57 games with Stockton) and it let me tap into that potential again and now when I get a chance, I'm not rushing my shots or rushing my passes, I see it and I make it."

Lazar feels his hard work is paying off, "I think it's coming full circle, I'm in my sixth year pro and it's nice to see that all those years and those hard earned miles and games are finally paying off and the game's starting to slow down."

It's funny that in the 19 games that he's played, his role has already changed. In one game Lazar even played center for Marcus Johansson and Frolik. He said, "What I showed in training camp, I was just known as the Energizer Bunny, the guy that ran

around and almost acted like there wasn't a puck, but now I'm trying to play composed and play with the puck and if I'm put in a checking role, I embrace it and get a lot of ice-time and it shows the coach's trust."

I've heard Lazar say at least three times this season that he knows he's an NHL player. Many fans disagree and aren't afraid to say so. He said, "In today's day with the media and social media, everyone's got an opinion and sometimes it's not what you want to hear, but the way to deal with that is don't hear it and just prove those haters wrong."

"They're allowed to think what they want of me, but I'm playing in the top hockey league in the world, so I guess I get the last laugh."

Lazar only signed a one-year contract with the Sabres, but if he plays like he has all season long, Botterill would be wise to offer in a year or two more.

Pride celebrated at Amerks game  
13 Wham  
By: Staff Report  
*Jan. 17, 2020*

Pride was on display Friday night in Rochester.

The Rochester Americans hosted their first-ever Pride Night at the Blue Cross Arena.

They partnered with the Out Alliance to make it happen.

This follows the Rochester Red Wings first Pride Night this past season.

The Out Alliance says nights like this are important for inclusivity in sports arenas.

"This is just one more opportunity to create a space for our families, for members of the LGBTQ community to come out, enjoy a Rochester attraction and know it's a safe, welcoming space for them," said Tanara Leigh, director of operations and public relations at Out Alliance.

Fan Amanda Albino said the event was a good idea.

"It shows everyone can be equal and not feel left out," she said.

The Amerks played the Cleveland Monsters, but fell short, losing 4-3.

Greg Carey scores twice as Phantoms blank Rochester for 5th straight win  
The Morning Call  
By: Staff Report  
*Jan. 14, 2020*

Greg Carey scored a pair of goals Saturday, including his 100th career tally in a Phantoms uniform, leading Lehigh Valley to a comfortable 4-0 rout of the Rochester Americans at PPL Center.

Mikhail Vorobyev and Max Willman also scored for the hosts, while Jean-Francois Berube earned his second shutout of the week with a 20-save effort. The Phantoms have won five straight games.

The Phantoms jumped out to a 1-0 lead for the fifth consecutive game at the 5:48 mark in the first period, when Carey netted a power-play goal, his 11th of the season. Morgan Frost took a wrist shot from the top of the right circle, which was redirected across the crease by Cal O'Reilly and knocked in by Carey.

Willman scored the second goal of the game, and his second of the season at the 13:32 mark of the period. Chris Bigras gathered the puck behind the net in the defensive zone before feeding it to Kyle Criscuolo. Criscuolo then passed it across the ice to Willman, who shot it in above the glove of Rochester goalie Andrew Hammond.

With just over ten minutes gone by in the second period, Carey scored his second goal of the game, and 100th goal with Lehigh Valley to make the score 3-0. David Kase picked up the puck before Hammond could reach it and passed it to Carey, who had a lot of open net to work with as he shot it in before Hammond could regain his position.

Vorobyev tacked on another goal at the 14:46 mark in the third period off a nice assist from Isaac Ratcliffe behind the net.

Cleveland Monsters win first game of road trip against Rochester Americans

SBNation The Cannon

By: Elaine Shircliff

Jan. 18, 2020

The Cleveland Monsters took on the Rochester Americans on Friday night. Hopes of ending their winless streak filled the Monsters' heads. After the halfway point, no one likes to be last in their division. Last night began their quest to leave the cellar of the North.

Right off the bat the Amerks were too much for the Monsters' defense to handle. They kept allowing the Amerks to get near the crease or into the crease giving Veini Vehvilainen a massive workout.

With 6:28 left in the first period, the Monsters had to kill off 18 seconds of a two-man disadvantage with the faceoff taking place in the d-zone. The Monsters lost the faceoff giving the Amerks full control of the ice. A little over a minute later the Amerks were able to score a 5-on-4 power play goal courtesy of John Gilmour who skated around every Monster on the ice with ease before poking a shot into the net.

With three goals and five power plays from the Monsters in the second period, everything seemed to go Cleveland's way.

The Monsters headed to the power play 1:48 into the second after Marko Dano was tripped up behind the net. This was the first time in over a month the Monsters would be icing a power play without Adam Clendening on the ice for two solid minutes. Due to Clendening being in Columbus, the Monsters ran their power play a bit differently last night. They didn't surround the crease while someone fired off shot after shot from the point like normal. Instead they would throw the puck into their defensive zone and build a play from behind Veini Vehvilainen.

This particular set up allowed the Monsters to score 1:07 into their first power play of the night. After receiving a pass from Andrew Peeke, Ryan MacInnis powered down the ice before cutting through the faceoff circle with confidence. As he neared Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, MacInnis saw an opening up top and sniped the puck into the net for the 1-1 equalizer.

The Monsters headed to their second power play of the night 7:27 into the second period when Jean-Sebastien Dea was collared for hooking. Almost immediately Peeke launched a rocket of a shot at Luukkonen that was quickly denied. Other than Peeke's shot, nothing of note happened on the second pp.

With 10:18 left in the second, the Amerks broke the tie giving themselves the 2-1 lead over the Monsters. Vehvilainen kicked away Casey Mittelstadt's initial shot but continued to try and play the puck. With Vehvilainen out of position, Mittelstadt was able to scoop up the rebound and snip it into the net.

A little over a minute later, the Monsters fired back with a goal of their own to tie the game at two. Gabriel Carlsson picked up the puck near Vehvilainen. He skated along the boards before tossing the puck into the neutral zone for MacInnis. Trey Fix-Wolansky was wide open to the right of MacInnis. So, MacInnis cut slightly to the right before passing the puck off to Fix-Wolansky who fired it home for the goal.

The Monsters headed back to the power play with 7:43 left in the second. Except this time, the power play had a lot of dicey moments. First Remi Elie had a massive breakaway blowing past Peeke before launching a shot at the net which banged off the

post. Then there were a plethora of sloppy, wobbly passes. When you pair that with the fact they couldn't catch anyone who made a move for the net, the Monsters were lucky the Amerks didn't score a goal.

Kole Sherwood gave the Monsters the 3-2 lead with 3:39 left in the second. Doyle Somerby launched a shot that flew just wide of the net. It bounced off the boards in the direction of Sherwood who was posted on the doorstep. When the puck reached the crease, Sherwood quickly fired it past an unprepared Luukkonen.

During the third period, the Amerks did a great job of taking away passing and shooting lanes from the Monsters. In fact, most of the Amerks takeaways were a direct result of blocking a Monsters shot.

With a little under five to play in the game, Anton Karlsson went to the box for holding. The penalty kill fell on the job and allowed the Amerks to tie the game, 3-3, with 4:28 left in the game.

As time wound down on the clock, it was clear 60 minutes was not going to be enough time to close this game out. The boys were headed to overtime.

Monsters' Head Coach Mike Eaves iced Fix-Wolansky, Peeke, and Stefan Matteau to start the extra stanza of play. They immediately turned on their burners and began to skate circles around the Amerks. The Monsters were able to maintain this momentum when Elie demolished an unsuspecting Fix-Wolansky at the blue-line giving Cleveland the man advantage 37 seconds into overtime.

Some good things happened on this power play. Matteau launched a shot through traffic that Luukkonen managed to knock out of the air with his stick. Fix-Wolansky raced towards the doorstep to try and pick up the rebound. Luukkonen saw Fix-Wolansky making a move for the crease and quickly jumped on the puck. If Luukkonen wasn't paying attention, the game likely would have ended with a rebound goal.

Also during the overtime pp, MacInnis tried multiple times to catch Luukkonen off guard. Luukkonen was up to his tricks and managed to stop MacInnis at every turn.

With 1:46 left in overtime, Fix-Wolansky headed to the box. Not the best time to take a penalty. For the rest of overtime, the Monsters clogged all the shooting lanes forcing the Amerks to continue to pass the puck instead of shoot. The pressure the Monsters applied on the Amerks during the kill allowed the Monsters to get overtime without giving up a goal. Which means the game went into a shootout.

First up for the Amerks was Mittelstadt who swung right before he skate through the faceoff circle and powered down the slot. Vehvilainen stuffed Mittelstadt's shot attempt.

Fix-Wolansky came out first for the Monsters. He went wide left before banging a shot off the post.

Round two consisted of Andrew Oglevie and Markus Hannikainen. Oglevie awkwardly shot the puck causing it to sail to the left of the net. Hannikainen glided in front of the doorstep before faking a shot. When Luukkonen jumped to stop the shot, Hannikainen fired it top shelf for the goal.

C.J. Smith was up next for the Amerks. If he made the shot, the shootout would continue. If he didn't make the shot, the game would end with a Monsters win. Basically, there was a lot riding on Smith's ability to shoot the puck. Smith powered toward the net with confidence, fired, and missed the net handing the 4-3 victory over to the Monsters.