



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Friday, February 21, 2020*

*TONIGHT'S GAME: Lehigh Valley vs. Rochester*

## Overcoming Adversity Paying Off For Leier

Amerks.com

By: Suzie Cool

Feb. 19, 2020

Earlier this week, the Buffalo Sabres announced that the team signed forward Taylor Leier to a one-year, two-way contract for the remainder of the 2019-20 season.

"I knew I had to put the work in and that it just wasn't going to be given to me. I'm just really excited and happy that Buffalo has the belief in me, and I hope to prove them right," commented Leier after clearing waivers Tuesday afternoon, keeping him in Rochester.

Well, for now at least. The new two-way deal for Leier, who began the season on American Hockey League contract, now means the Sabres can bring him up whenever they need. He becomes the second Amerks forward this season to be elevated to an NHL contract, joining Dalton Smith.

Leier has spent parts of the last two seasons with the Rochester Americans after being acquired by the Buffalo Sabres in a midseason trade from the Philadelphia Flyers just last year. The Amerks forward has recorded 31 points (19+12) in 52 games with the Amerks, including eight points (7+1) in just 17 appearances due to an injury-filled season.

His last stint in the NHL came in 2017-18 when he spent the duration of the campaign with the Flyers, who drafted him in the fourth round (117th overall) in the 2012 NHL Draft, recording five points (1+4) in a career-high 39 games. In all, he's appeared in 55 NHL games, all with Philadelphia, totaling seven points (2+5).

Despite only being with the Buffalo organization for a little over a year now, Leier has taken the time to attribute much of his relaxed mindset on seeing time in different organizations and how no matter what he needs to just go and play his game.

"I try to just take it day-by-day and game-by-game. I try not to really think about the things that I can't control and the outside noise, like what management thinks of me or other teams think of me. I think those are things that players can't really think of. You just have to play your game"

Diving deeper into Leier's play this season with the Amerks, he started out watching 23 games from the stands before getting the go-ahead to join his teammates back out on the ice. After missing the first part of the season due to an upper-body injury that occurred over the offseason, Leier came out on fire. Through his first 10 games of the season, the versatile forward collected six points on four goals and two assists, including two multi-goal efforts.

He was starting to find a rhythm while rediscovering his scoring touch.

Then, adversity struck again.

Unfortunately, after that 10-game span, Leier found himself sidelined once more. During the first game of the new year against the Belleville Senators on Jan. 3, the Amerks forward would leave the game with an upper-body injury and no timeframe of when he could return to the ice.

"It was just a freak accident that I don't even think a lot of the guys on the team or coaching staff have really ever seen before. It was unfortunate but there's nothing much you can do with a situation like that. In the end, I think all these things can only make a guy stronger," recalled Leier.

Since then, Leier has made it back in the lineup for the second time after missing 12 more games. Making his comeback earlier this month against the Cleveland Monsters, Leier has appeared in seven games, notching two goals, including the game winner this past Sunday against the Utica Comets.

Even with his second return from injury, he still wasn't sure if the path he was on would lead him back to the NHL. That all changed on Monday.

"I'm super excited," said Leier. "It's been a long eight or nine months for me. I kind of took it step by step and tried to really work my way back after a significant injury."

There's no doubt that when the Amerks forward is in the game, he's giving his all in order to be a key factor behind his team's success – no matter who he's playing for. For now, Leier is just excited to be healthy, again, and focused on staying that way so he can make his return to the NHL.

"Just feeling like you're a piece of the puzzle and a part of the solution is a great feeling for a player, and that's what I strive to be for any organization and any team I play for. That's my goal. I want to be on a winning team, and I want to be a key factor on that winning team wherever I am."

Amerks can't hold lead, lose to Belleville at home

Buffalo News

By: Staff Report

Feb. 20, 2020

With a chance to close the gap between them and the first-place Belleville Senators on Wednesday night, the Rochester Americans could not hold a two-goal lead and lost to their American Hockey League North Division rivals, 3-2, in overtime.

Josh Norris, who tied the game with 4:49 left for the Senators, scored his 30th of the season at 1:12 of overtime to win it for Belleville.

The Amerks had taken a 2-0 lead on a first period goal by Jean-Sebastien Dea at 4:34 of the first period and defenseman Jacob Bryson's score at 10:56 of the second.

Halfway through the third period, Belleville got on the board with Vitaly Abramov's 18th goal with Norris and Rudolfs Balcers assisting. Then Jordan Murray and Balcers assisted on the tying goal by Norris.

Balcers also had the assist on the winning goal in overtime.

Dea's goal was his team-leading 15th for the Amerks. He assisted on Bryson's goal as well, giving him a team-best 35 points through 48 games. Zach Redmond and Taylor Leier had the assists on Dea's goal.

Rochester outshot the Senators, 29-18, in a game in which only two minor penalties were called. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made 15 saves for Rochester. Joey Daccord had 27 for Belleville.

Instead of gaining two points on the Senators (34-15-4-1, 73 points), Rochester (29-17-3-4, 65 points) dropped one point more behind the division leaders.

It was the first of five home games in a row for Rochester. The Amerks will face the Lehigh Valley Phantoms on Friday at Blue Cross Arena, and the Cleveland Monsters come in for a 7:05 p.m. game on Saturday.

Amerks learn why Belleville is the team to beat  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklobzija  
Feb. 20, 2020

If the Rochester Americans were realistically going to take a run at first place in the American Hockey League's North Division, then victory on Wednesday night was paramount.

The Belleville Senators came to Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial with a seven-point lead over the second-place Amerks.

They left with an eight-point lead — and left behind a perplexed Amerks team and a dismayed Amerks coach.

Ahead 2-0 and in total control through two periods, the Amerks allowed Josh Norris and the Senators to tie the score in the final 10 minutes before winning the game 72 seconds into overtime.

Norris set up the first Belleville goal by Vitaly Abramov 10:23, tied the score with a slick mid-slot deflection with 4:49 to play, then ended the game by driving a shot from the left circle past goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen.

"Tonight was a big game," said rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson, who scored his first goal as a pro at 10:56 of the second period. "They have a lot of young talented forwards. That's the team to beat right now."

The Senators (35-15-4-1, 73 points) joyously celebrated the comeback victory, and rightfully so. They erased a late-game deficit on the road against a team that entered Wednesday with a 20-1-2-2 record when leading after two periods.

Then again, the Amerks (29-17-3-4, 65 points) have hardly mastered the great-from-start-to-finish playbook, and they know it.

"I think that's what we have to work on, playing a full 60 minutes," said winger Jean-Sebastien Dea, who scored his team-leading 15th goal. "We either don't start strong or don't finish strong."

The winning goal was scored after defenseman Lawrence Pilut attempted to dangle down the slot and between two defenders. It ended up being a rather nothing scoring chance that the speedy, look-to-attack Senators exploited.

Rudolfs Balcers passed to Norris, who sped away down the left wing before unloading from the left circle for his 30th goal, second-most in the AHL.

"He's a game-changer for sure," Taylor said.

Taylor is very familiar with Norris. He was a teammate of Norris' father, Dwayne, in Germany a dozen years ago.

"Josh is the same age as Sami (his daughter, Samantha)," Taylor said. "I used to drive them to school."

On Thursday he'll try to again drive home the point to his team about finding a killer instinct.

While the overtime play by Pilut didn't resemble anything you'd draw up, and consequently Dea and Taylor Leier weren't in position to defend.

"I'm not even looking at the overtime, there shouldn't have even been an overtime," Taylor said. "It's hard to win games, it's hard to finish teams off. We weren't willing to finish that team off."

He was especially perturbed at the overall play in the third period.

"We play four lines, there's no excuse not to have fresh legs," Taylor said. "You have a power play . . . you have no shots on it."

Thus, the Amerks learned again why the Senators are in first place.

"We have to give them credit," Dea said. "They're talented, they're young, they're hungry."

Taylor is hoping the Amerks find a little more late-game hunger soon.

Amerks squander lead, fall in OT  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Craig Potter  
Feb. 20, 2020

The Belleville Senators demonstrated why they not only lead the North Division, but also have the most points in the Eastern Conference of the American Hockey League with an overtime, come-from-behind 3-2 victory over the Rochester Americans Wednesday night before 3,783 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

"I'm not even looking at the overtime, they're shouldn't have even been an overtime," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor. "It's hard to win games, it's hard to finish teams off. We weren't willing to finish that team off.

"We play four lines, there's no excuse not to have fresh legs. You have a power play (early in the third period)... you have no shots on it."

The Amerks dominated the first period as they outshot the Senators, 13-1, through 19 minutes but only led 1-0.

"We have to be willing to finish teams off," Taylor said. "As hard as it is to win games, it is even harder to finish them off. We did not finish off plays and we let them back into the game."

"I thought we came out strong," said Jean-Sebastien Dea. "We seemed to think it was maybe going to be an easy game, but we have to play a full 60-minute game. At times lately we have not been able to play a full 60 whether it be a slow start or finishing the game. It's something that we need to regroup and get better moving forward."

Dea scored his team-high 15th goal, off assists from Zach Redmond and Taylor Leier, to give Rochester the 1-0 lead.

Belleville registered just one shot, by Erik Brannstrom at 7:35, in the first 19 minutes of the opening stanza. The Senators posted 2 shots in the final minute of the period.

"I think that's what we have to work on, playing a full 60 minutes," Dea said. "We either don't start strong or don't finish strong."

Rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson recorded his first professional goal midway through the second period for a 2-0 Rochester advantage.

"It took nearly 50 games but it does feel good," said Bryson. "It was a set play off the face-off. 'Aspie' (Rasmus Asplund) made a great pass and all I really had to do was put the puck on net. It was a great feeling."

"It's nice to see him get rewarded finally," said Taylor. "Jacob is one of those guys who is very good defensively, but over the last 10 games or so he has had a lot of really good offensive chances. I am very happy for him."

The Amerks, however, were unable to close out the game as the Senators took just 4 shots on rookie goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, and scored on 2 of them to tie the game and send it into overtime.

"We did not play a 60-minute game," said Amerks team captain Kevin Porter. "We let up a little bit and they picked it up and took it to us in the third period. To get two points out of this game would have been huge."

Josh Norris ended the game in 1:12 of the extra session with his second tally of the contest for the victory.

"He's a game-changer for sure," Taylor said of Norris.

"Tonight was a big game," Bryson added. "They have a lot of young talented forwards. That's the team to beat right now."

\*NOTES — The Amerks need just one more win to reach the 30-win mark for the fourth consecutive season and third straight under head coach Chris Taylor. With the team's next win, Taylor will become the first Amerks head coach since Randy Cunneynworth, the all-time winningest coach in franchise history, to lead his team to 30 or more wins in each of his first three seasons behind the bench...Jean-Sebastien Dea, who remains the only Amerk this season to reach the 30-point plateau, continues to pace the team in goals (14) and points (33) through 47 games... Rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson is tied for 11th among all first-year defensemen with a plus-6 rating. Bryson is also eighth among all rookies with 18 assists in 51 games...The Senators lineup features two former Amerk defensemen in Jack Dougherty and Stuart Percy.

Meet the Amerks: Sean Malone  
Rochester First  
By: Alexa Ross  
Feb. 18, 2020

Sean Malone was born and raised in West Seneca, NY. A lifelong Sabres fan, the 24-year old center fell in love with the game ten miles southeast of Hockey Heaven.

"Watching the Sabres growing up in the Stanley Cup playoffs was the coolest thing in the world," said Malone.

All of his childhood dreams came true when he heard his name called by Buffalo in the 2013 NHL Entry Draft.

"To be drafted by your hometown team is something special and it's been a long journey for sure," said Malone.

It comes with a lot of perks, including having loved ones nearby for support on and off the ice. His parents come to see him play regularly and have also taken some important road trips, like Sean's NHL debut game against the Florida Panthers. He got the call while playing for Harvard in the 2017 Frozen Four.

"My parents were able to come, one of my old coaches was in the area and able to come," said Malone. "It was special seeing how happy they were when I got off the ice and how happy I was too."

Malone was a stranger to Rochester, never having visited before he moved to the Flower City on assignment with the Amerks. So far he is enjoying the eastern side of Western New York, especially playing for one of the oldest franchises in the AHL.

"It's a historical place, playing in front of those fans and that arena every day is really cool," said Malone.

Of all of Malone's fanboy moments in his seven years with the Sabres organization, he feels meeting Rene Robert, legendary right-wing and member of the French Connection. The two spoke at a golf tournament, when their carts were parked next to one another.

"Being able to be in the presence of those guys who have done so much for the organization and being such a huge fan growing up, it was pretty cool."

Amerks Hometown Heroes Night  
Rochester First  
By: Mark Gruba  
Feb. 18, 2020

The Rochester Americans will host their annual Hometown Heroes Night this coming Saturday, February 22 at the Blue Cross Arena.

The Amerks will take on the Cleveland Monsters in a 7:05 faceoff.

Amerks Host Suzie Cool, Lt. Ralph Montinarelli of the Rochester Police Department, and Capt. James McGowan of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office discussed the event Tuesday during News 8 at Noon.

"It's honoring all police officers, firefighters, doctors, first responders and then military personnel and veterans," said Cool. "So for this game, all of those people can go to the box office or they can get a complimentary ticket online at [Amerks.com/Heroes](http://Amerks.com/Heroes). And if any of their loved ones, friends, or family are interested, they can also go to that same link and purchase tickets for as low as \$12. The best part about this is when they go to that online offer, \$2 is going to go towards SOAR thanks to Advantage Federal Credit Union who is presenting this night for us."

Rochester Police officer Denny Wright, who lost his sight when he was stabbed by a suspect last fall, will drop the ceremonial first puck before the game. Wright and his family will also be situated in a suite near the Amerks play-by-play team to enjoy the game. In addition, Wright will receive a special jersey from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. That will happen when the Sheriff's Office and Police Department square off in their annual showdown at 4:00 p.m. on the Blue Cross Arena ice.

"The Amerks organization has been great to us, bending over backward and really supporting Denny and, and all law enforcement, military, and first responders," said Montinarelli.

McGowan added, "It's nothing but humbling really. You know, we go out there, we get to play on the rink and we get treated great by the front office and the Amerks and everyone's so supportive and it's great to have everybody out there saying, thank you. You know, what we do is a calling, everybody would agree with that and you're not there to get rich. You're a civil servant. But we are there to try and protect and serve. And that's what we try to do."

## Amerks forward Taylor Leier signs NHL deal WHEC

By: Carly Mascitti

*Feb. 17, 2020*

Taylor Leier is officially inked with an NHL deal. The Amerks forward didn't practice on Tuesday, but he has cleared waivers and made his one-year, two-way contract worth \$700,000 official.

"It's been a long eight or nine months for me. I kind of just took it step by step and tried to really work my way back after a significant injury. I knew I had to put the work in and it wasn't going to be given to me, so I'm just really excited and happy that they have a belief in me. I hope to prove them right," Leier said.

"People follow him. His hard work, his daily routine, his habits - everything he does - is very professional and what every player should be doing to try to get to the NHL. We want guys to learn from him," Amerks Head Coach Chris Taylor said.

Leier has played 17 games for the Amerks this season, producing seven goals and an assist. He says whether he's on the Amerks' roster or the Sabres', he wants to be impactful.

"Feeling like you're a piece of the puzzle and part of the solution is a great feeling for a player. That's what I strive to be for any organization and any team I play for. That's my goal. I want to be on a winning team, and I want to be a key factor on a winning team," Leier said.

The Sabres suspended defenseman Zach Bogosian on Monday for failure to report to the Amerks. With that, you could consider Leier's outlook a breath of fresh air.

Leier and the Amerks will be back on the ice when they host the Belleville Senators at Blue Cross Arena on Wednesday.

Sabres sign Amerks winger Taylor Leier to NHL contract

Buffalo News

By: Mike Harrington

*Feb. 17, 2020*

In a move that could be a precursor to a deal involving one of their current forwards, the Buffalo Sabres have signed Rochester Amerks left winger Taylor Leier to a one-year, two-way contract worth \$700,000. Leier, who was on an AHL contract, will be assigned to Rochester once he clears waivers.

Leier, 26, has seven goals and one assist in 17 games for the Amerks this season. He had 12 goals and 23 points in 35 games for Rochester last year after arriving in a trade from Philadelphia for Williamsville native Justin Bailey.

Leier underwent surgery to repair a torn labrum on June 3 after an accident while stickhandling on roller blades at a tennis court near his home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He didn't play this season until December.

The Sabres have several forwards who are unrestricted free agents who could move at next week's trade deadline, including left wingers Jimmy Vesey, Conor Sheary and Zemgus Girgensons. The contract puts Leier in position for a call-up if a trade goes down.

## Amerks' Nathan Paetsch keeps promise to son with the 'Kellen Wiggle'

Buffalo News

By: Bill Hoppe

Feb. 17, 2020

Kellen Paetsch was at hockey practice last week when he learned his father, Amerks veteran Nathan Paetsch, had scored his first goal and fulfilled a promise.

"He freaked out. He's like, 'He better have did it, he better have did it!' " a smiling Nathan Paetsch said of his son's reaction.

When Kellen, 9, and his mother, Jaclyn, returned home Feb. 5, they pulled up the Amerks' 4-2 road win over the Cleveland Monsters on AHLTV and watched the goal.

After Paetsch beat goalie Matiss Kivlenieks in close 9:20 into the first period, he celebrated by wiggling a little bit, a move Kellen uses.

"He saw it, freaked out," said Paetsch, who told his son he would do the "Kellen Wiggle."

Jaclyn caught Kellen's celebration earlier this season after he scored his first goal for the Rochester Monarchs, a team Paetsch coaches.

"She's like, 'Did you see that wiggle he did?'" Paetsch said. "I'm like, 'I have no idea what you're talking about.' And then he scored again, and then I saw it."

Paetsch, 36, said Kellen's teammates love the move.

"So no matter what he's got to do it every time," he said. "So he made me promise. He said, 'Dad, if you score again, you got to do my wiggle for me.' So I had to."

Paetsch, a defenseman the Amerks have been utilizing as a winger, often sits out for long stretches. He scored in his just his 10th appearance.

Last season, he scored once in 11 games. Two years ago, he went goalless for the first time in his life during 22 appearances.

But Paetsch, who spent parts of four seasons with the Sabres, has scored 55 goals during his 12-year American Hockey League career.

"I've never done anything but put my hands up," Paetsch said. "That's why like as soon as I scored I'm like, 'Oh, I got to wiggle.' I promised him.

"Well, I'm the coach of the team, too, so all the boys, they came in (the day after) to practice and all the kids were so pumped up. So it was really cute. It's not about me, it's about them."

Paetsch said the celebration was probably a one-time deal.

"I promised him one," he said, "so I think that's enough."

Sabres sign Taylor Leier to NHL deal

WGR 550

By: Kim DeGeroge

*Feb. 17, 2020*

The Buffalo Sabres announced on Monday that the team has signed forward Taylor Leier to a two-way contract for the remainder of the 2019-20 season.

The 26-year-old has appeared in 17 games for the Rochester Americans this season in the American Hockey League, scoring seven goals and registering one assist. Leier missed the first two months of the season after undergoing offseason surgery, and has missed some time during this season due to other injuries.

Leier was acquired last season from the Philadelphia Flyers in exchange for forward Justin Bailey on Jan. 17, 2019. In 35 games last season with the Amerks, Leier was able to produce 12 goals and amass 11 assists for 23 points.

The Sabres placed Leier on waivers on Monday, which means he will need to clear waivers by noon on Tuesday in order to be eligible to be called up to Buffalo.

Leier was a former fourth round pick (117th overall) in the 2012 NHL Draft.

Buffalo Sabres suspend Zach Bogosian for not reporting to Rochester

WGRZ

By: Kim DeGeroge

*Feb. 17, 2020*

The Buffalo Sabres have suspended defenseman Zach Bogosian for failing to report to the Rochester Americans team.

Bogosian was placed on waivers Friday and then the Sabres assigned him to Rochester when he cleared waivers.

Injuries have been an issue for Bogosian during his career, especially with the Sabres. He has played in only a handful of games this season. Bogosian will become an unrestricted free agent after this season.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, Amerks hold off Comets  
Buffalo News  
By: Staff Report  
Feb. 16, 2020

Rochester built a three-goal lead through the first 21 minutes and 48 seconds of the game and held off the Utica Comets for a 3-2 American Hockey League victory on Sunday at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

A 27-save performance by rookie goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen helped the Amerks preserve the victory, which allowed them to stay ahead of Utica in second place in the AHL's North Division.

Rochester is 29-17-2-4 for 64 points. Utica is 28-20-3-2 for 61 points. The Belleville Senators lead the division with 69 points. Belleville will be the Amerks' opponent on Wednesday night at Blue Cross Arena before home games Friday against Lehigh Valley and Saturday against Cleveland.

Remi Elie scored with assists from William Borgen and Casey Mittelstadt to put the Amerks in front to stay at 2:13 of the opening period. Eric Cornel made it 2-0 with his 10th of the season from Scott Wilson and Sean Malone at 10:15. The assist gave Mittelstadt 18 points (7-11-18) in 26 games with Rochester after starting the season with the Buffalo Sabres.

Taylor Leier made it 3-0 at 1:48 of the second with Jean-Sebastien Dea and Zach Redmond assisting.

Utica took care of the rest of the scoring, John Stevens scored at 12:40 of the second and Nikolay Goldobin came through with his 19th of the season with 7:23 left in regulation.

Luukkonen made seven of his saves in the third period. Utica outshot Rochester, 29-25. Michael DiPietro had 22 saves for Utica.

Luukkonen's last-minute heroics save Amerks  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklobzija  
Feb. 16, 2020

Of the 6,769 fans, 40 players, two referees, two linesmen, plus the dozens of support personnel in Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial on late Sunday afternoon, all but three no doubt thought the Rochester Americans had just bungled sure victory in the final minute.

"I'm sure it went through everybody's mind," Amerks coach Chris Taylor admitted.

A 3-0 second-period lead had already been whittled to 3-2, and now the Utica Comets had the greatest of great chances to tie it with 33 seconds remaining.

One of those believers, however, was Amerks goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen.

And if there's one person you need to believe, it's the guy in goal.

So when Utica winger Kole Lind corralled a rebound in the middle of the slot and fired toward a mostly open net, Luukkonen had no thoughts of giving in, or giving up.

After kicking out with his left leg the initial shot from the left circle from Comets sniper Reid Boucher, the rookie goaltender shifted quickly across his crease and somehow got his left leg and/or catching glove in front of Lind's instant shot off the rebound to preserve the 3-2 victory.

"He's capable of making those big saves and we have confidence in him," said winger Eric Cornel, who scored his career-high 10th goal.

Remi Elie and Taylor Leier also scored goals as the second-place Amerks (29-17-2-4, 64 points) moved three points ahead of third-place Utica in the battle for home ice in the first round of the Calder Cup playoffs.

They were thanking their goalie for the cushion, too. "He kept them from getting a point," Taylor said. "That's a big-time save. He's maturing right before us."

While the Amerks played quite well in the two weekend games — a 4-3 shootout win at Syracuse on Saturday before the win on Kids' Day Sunday — they were in danger of giving up at least a point to their division rival.

Needing Luukkonen to be the last-minute hero wasn't in any coaching game plan.

"For us to give up that opportunity, it's not good," Taylor said. "We can't allow that if we want to go where we want to go (in the post-season)."

Then again, there will always be times when a goaltender must make the impossible save, and guy labeled the Sabres goalie of the future proved he can do it at the American Hockey League level.

"It just felt like he owned that crease," Taylor said, "and nothing we getting by him."

Luukkonen was playing just his seventh game of the season for the Amerks. He was an ECHL All-Star with Cincinnati before a January one-week looks-see in Rochester. He came back up to the Amerks after Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark suffered a lower body injury late last month.

"It's a big step up from the East Coast and junior and for sure I've been adjusting to that game more and more here," Luukkonen said.

In his seven games, the 20-year-old native of Espoo, Finland has a 3-3-1 record, 3.31 goals-against average and .887 save percentage.

Those aren't All-Star numbers, but he's just beginning his development journey. He showed on Sunday what he's capable of achieving, not so much with his 27 total saves in the game, but the one with 00:33 showing on the clock.

"It was one of those where you try to get something in front of the puck," Luukkonen said. "It feels good; you want to help your team as much as you can."

Bogosian is an Amerk, sort of but not really  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklobzija  
Feb. 16, 2020

On the day Zach Bogosian cleared waivers and was officially assigned to the Rochester Americans, it isn't known if the veteran defenseman ever will report.

Amerks coach Chris Taylor offered no insight on the Bogosian's status on Sunday evening, saying only that "it's up to Buffalo. I'm just worried about our team now."

Bogosian, 29, no longer fits into the plans of the Sabres coaching staff and went unclaimed Friday into Saturday during the 24-hour waiver period. He hasn't played since Feb. 4 and was a healthy scratch in 17 of Buffalo's previous 26 games heading into the weekend.

It's possible that the Sabres are trying to find a trading partner, and quite likely that they have given the player permission to shop himself.

With a pro-rated salary of \$6 million (and a cap hit of \$5.14 million), there may be interested teams who would have difficulty fitting him in under their cap.

The 12th-year veteran from Massena came to the Sabres from the Winnipeg Jets in a Feb. 11, 2015, trade orchestrated by former general manager Tim Murray.

The Sabres received Bogosian, Evander Kane and also goalie Jason Kasdorf while Tyler Myers, Drew Stafford, Joel Armia and Brendan Lemieux all went to Winnipeg, along with a first-round draft pick (which became Jack Roslovic).

Five years later, the Sabres from that trade have nothing on their roster and only two prospects in the system (forwards Brayden Tracey and Ethan Keppen, who were chosen in the 2019 draft).

Meanwhile, Myers, Kane, Armia, Lemieux and Roslovic are entrenched on NHL rosters.

UPL's heroics lift the Amerks over Utica  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Craig Potter  
Feb. 16, 2020

Rookie goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made a spectacular save on a rebound shot with 30 seconds left in regulation to preserve a 3-2 Rochester Americans victory over the Utica Comets on Sunday afternoon before 6,769 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

The Comets pulled goalie Michael DiPietro in the final minute for the extra attacker in an effort to score the tying goal and send the game into overtime.

However, UPL made a left leg save on the initial shot by Comets sniper Reid Boucher. It appeared to the crowd that Utica would score on the rebound to tie the game and send it into overtime.

"I'm sure it went through everybody's mind," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor.

Luukkonen, however, shifted quickly across his crease and somehow got his left leg and/or catching glove in front of Kole Lind's shot off the rebound.

The crowd roared its approval.

"It was one of those where you try to get something in front of the puck," Luukkonen said. "It feels good; you want to help your team as much as you can."

"It just felt like he owned that crease," said Taylor, "and nothing was getting by him."

The regulation victory was key as the Amerks entered the contest with a 1-point lead over the Comets for second place, as well as having a game-in-hand on Utica.

"He kept them from getting a point," Taylor said. "That's a big-time save. He's maturing right before us."

Luukkonen was playing just his seventh game of the season for Rochester as it was his second straight contest in less than 24 hours. UPL played Saturday night in the win in Syracuse.

"He said 'I want the game,' and for me that told me everything," Taylor said.

Luukkonen was an ECHL All-Star with Cincinnati before a January one-week looks-see with the Amerks. He came back up to Rochester after Sabres goalie Linus Ullmark suffered a lower body injury late last month.

"It's a big step up from the East Coast and junior and for sure I've been adjusting to that game more and more here," said Luukkonen.

With the win, Rochester improved to 29-17-2-4 for 64 points while Utica dropped to 28-20-3-2 for 61 points.

The Belleville Senators lead the North Division with 69 points as the Sens come to the BCA for a Wednesday night tilt at 7:05 pm.

The Amerks took the lead in the first period when Casey Mittelstadt sent a pass to defenseman Will Borgen, who was set to blast the puck on goal. However, he didn't get all of the shot as Remi Elie garnered in the puck and shot it past DiPietro for a 1-0 lead.

Eric Cornel put Rochester ahead 2-0 when he fired in a rebound off a Scott Wilson shot. Sean Malone also received an assist on the play. The goal was Cornel's 10th of the season, a career-high for the 6-year veteran forward.

The hosts forged ahead 3-0 early in the second stanza when Taylor Leier, who recently returned to the lineup following an injury, scored. Jean-Sebastien Dea and Zach Redmond picked up assists on the play.

The Comets finally beat UPL when John Stevens backhanded a shot past the netminder.

Luukkonen stopped a breakaway late in the period to keep the 2-goal advantage at intermission.

Utica pulled to within 1 goal midway through the third period but the Comets were thwarted by UPL the rest of the way as the rookie goalie finished with 27 saves.

\*NOTES — A total of 14 of the last 25 games between the Amerks and Comets have been decided by one goal. . . The Amerks continue their season-long 6-game homestand on Wednesday, Feb. 19 when they play host to the first-place Belleville Senators at 7 pm at the Blue Cross Arena. . . After producing just 1 point through his first 5 games with the Amerks, following his midseason reassignment from the Sabres back in December, Casey Mittelstadt quickly has evolved into one of Rochester's most consistent point-getters. The second-year pro has piled up 18 points (7+11) in 25 games for Rochester, including 16 points (7+9) since the turn of the New Year. . . Jean-Sebastien Dea, who remains the only Amerk this season to reach the 30-point plateau, continues to pace the team in goals (14) and points (33) through 47 games. . . Jacob Bryson is tied for 10th among all first-year defensemen with a plus-9 rating while being tied for 13th among all rookies with 18 assists in 50 games. . . The Sabres assigned Zach Bogosian to the Amerks, after the veteran defenseman cleared waivers Sunday, but as of today's game, he had not yet reported.

Early goals stand up in Amerks win  
Rochester First  
By: Staff Report  
*Feb. 16, 2020*

The Rochester Americans (29-17-2-4) jumped out to a 3-0 lead 1:48 into the second period and held off a second-half push from the Utica Comets (28-20-3-2) for a 3-2 win Sunday afternoon at The Blue Cross Arena.

With the win, Rochester has collected at least one point in 18 of the last 24 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 13-6-2-3 over that span. The Amerks also trimmed the Belleville Senators' first-place lead to five ahead of Wednesday's contest between the two teams in Rochester.

Forwards Remi Elie and Taylor Leier notched their sixth and seventh goals of the campaign, respectively, while Eric Cornel established a new career-high with his 10th marker in the first period. Rookie goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (3-3-1) made 27 saves in his second consecutive start while earning his third win of the season.

John Stevens booked his sixth goal of the campaign in the middle frame while Nikolay Goldobin redirected his 19th goal of the season from Jalen Chatfield and Dylan Blujus to finish off the scoring for Utica. Netminder Michael DiPietro (16-9-24) stopped 22 of 25 shots he faced in the contest but suffered the loss.

Following three unanswered goals, the Amerks saw the Comets spoil Luukkonen's potential first AHL shutout with 7:20 to go in the second period. As an Amerk had the puck in the near corner, Sven Baertschi stripped him off the puck before Stevens tucked a shot over the left shoulder of Luukkonen.

Utica continued to push for its second tally of the afternoon, but the horn sounded and Rochester held a 3-1 advantage going into the final period of regulation.

The teams traded chances in the first half of the third stanza, but both Luukkonen and DiPietro made timely saves, keeping the score a two-goal game. The Comets did not let the Amerks off the hook, however, as they pulled within a goal with 7:23 left in regulation when Goldobin tipped in a Chatfield point shot.

After Rochester was unable to capitalize on a 5-on-3 for 55 seconds, Utica pulled its goaltender for the extra attacker in the final minute of the contest, but Luukkonen turned aside the scoring chances, including a pair of game-saving point blank stops to give the Amerks their second win in as many nights.

Rochester opened the scoring just 2:13 into the first period as Elie forced a turnover inside the Comets zone. A rolling puck was cradled by Casey Mittelstadt atop the right point before he left it for Will Borgen jumping into the play. Despite the blueliner not fully connecting on the one-time feed, Elie finished off the play as swept the puck into the cage for his sixth of the season.

Near the midway point of the stanza, Cornel upped the Amerks lead as he pounced on a loose rebound for his 10th goal of the campaign from Scott Wilson and Sean Malone. With the puck in the feet of bodies to the right of the Comets zone, Wilson dug out the puck and backhanded a shot towards DiPietro. Wilson attempted to follow his own rebound, but the goaltender poked it onto the stick of Cornel atop the goal-mouth at the 9:45 mark.

The two clubs went into the dressing rooms even at shots, but Rochester showed a 2-0 lead.

Using the early goal magic much like the first period, the Amerks grabbed a three-goal cushion 1:48 into the second stanza. Veteran defenseman Zach Redmond patiently kept the puck inside the Utica zone before connecting with Jean-Sebastien Dea at the right face-off dot. With his head up and looking to the right of the Comet netminder, Dea pushed the puck across the crease to Leier for a backdoor tap-in to make it a 3-0 lead.

Utica was able to pull within a goal as they scored in the second and third periods, but the Amerks hung on for the 3-2 win.

The Amerks continue their season-long six-game homestand on Wednesday, Feb. 19 when they host the first-place Belleville Senators at The Blue Cross Arena. Puck drop is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start

Comets struggle in road loss  
Observer-Dispatch  
By: Ben Birnell  
Feb. 16, 2020

The Utica Comets aren't making things easy for themselves.

Another sluggish start – and uneven play throughout Sunday -- didn't help matters for the Comets in another key North Division matchup.

An early deficit proved too much for the Comets in suffering a 3-2 setback against the Rochester Americans at Blue Cross Arena.

Taylor Leier provided the eventual winner early in the second period, scoring on a backdoor tap-in against the Comets, who continue to have some defensive lapses.

It was the sixth consecutive game decided by a goal for the Comets (28-20-3-2 overall), who faced a multi-goal deficit for the second time in three days. The setback means Utica again missed a chance to move past Rochester (29-17-2-4) in a tight division with 23 regular-season games remaining.

It was the eighth loss in the last 11 games (3-7-1-0) for the Comets, who were without a total of six players in the lineup due to injury or illness Sunday. Since an eight-win October, the Comets have gone 20-20-3-2.

The Comets – in the middle of an extended stretch of divisional games – remain in third place in the North with 61 points and three back of the Amerks. Utica holds a slim lead over fourth-place Toronto (57 points) and Syracuse (56), which both play Monday. The top four teams in the North qualify for the playoffs.

John Stevens scored his third goal since being acquired in a trade a month ago and Nikolay Goldobin added his 19th of the season for the Comets, who outshot the Amerks 29-25.

Mike DiPietro was again solid for the Comets while totaling 22 saves in his fifth consecutive start. He is 16-9-2 with a 2.82 goals-against average this season.

The slow starts continued for the Comets, who didn't generate much until late in the first period.

Rochester grabbed a 1-0 lead 2:13 into the game on a fluky goal. After a shot was blocked at the point, Remi Elie swept in the puck from the slot past DiPietro.

It was the fifth consecutive game the Comets allowed a goal within the opening five minutes.

The opportunistic Amerks extended the lead when an unchecked Eric Cornel put in a rebound from the slot with 9:45 remaining in the period.

Leier's goal 1:48 into the second frame made it 3-0 before the Comets began to get better pressure.

Utica made it 3-1 with 7:20 remaining in the second when Sven Baertschi forced a turnover in Rochester's zone and then fed Stevens, who backhanded in his sixth goal of the season from the slot past Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (27 saves).

The Comets pulled within 3-2 with 7:23 remaining. On the play, Jalen Chatfield sent the puck toward the net and Goldobin redirected it in for his 101st professional goal across the AHL, NHL and Finland. Dylan Blujus helped set up the goal with a short pass to Chatfield.

The Comets then had to kill a short 5-on-3 penalty, which took away momentum. Utica pulled DiPietro late and had two of their best chances of the game by Baertschi and Boucher denied by Luukkonen with about 30 seconds to play.

Notes: Defensemen Ashton Sautner (arm), Olli Juolevi (illness) and forward Francis Perron (hit in helmet by puck) each didn't play Sunday. ... Also out was Micheal Ferland (concussion symptoms), who was supposed to have his conditioning stint end Sunday. It is unclear what the next step is for him. ... Utica is 12-7-3-2 in one-goal games this season.

Casey Mittelstadt scores shootout winner for Amerks  
Buffalo News  
By: Staff Report  
*Feb. 15, 2020*

Casey Mittelstadt scored Rochester's second goal in the shootout and the Amerks gained a 4-3 victory over the Syracuse Crunch on Saturday night at the Upstate Medical University Arena in Syracuse.

The Amerks came from behind to tie the game at 3-3 on a power-play goal by C.J. Smith at 5:28 of the third period. Rochester had led, 2-1, on goals by Brett Murray and Andrew MacWilliam in the second period. Syracuse had scored first on Otto Sompfi's goal at 2:44 of the second.

Boris Katchouk tied the game at 2-2 for the Crunch 38 seconds into the third period and Syracuse took the lead on Alexander Volkov's seventh of the season.

Andrew Oglevie scored first for Syracuse in the shootout. Volkov and Alex Barre-Boulet failed to score for Syracuse against Rochester's Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen. Both Rochester shootout scorers, Oglevie and Mittelstadt, had assists on Rochester goals.

The win came after four straight losses by the Amerks, who will be home for a 3:05 game on Sunday in Blue Cross Arena against the Utica Comets. With Saturday's win the Amerks (27-17-2-4 60 points) moved within a point of the second-place Comets (28-19-3-2) in the North Division standings of the American Hockey League.

Luukkonen stopped 15 of the 18 shots he faced in regulation and overtime. Spencer Martin had 35 saves for Syracuse.

Sabres recall John Gilmour, Andrew Hammond from Rochester  
Buffalo News  
By: Lance Lysowski  
*Feb. 15, 2020*

The Buffalo Sabres' roster shakeup continued Saturday with defenseman John Gilmour and goalie Andrew Hammond recalled from Rochester.

Gilmour, 26, will likely replace defenseman Zach Bogosian, who was placed on waivers Friday. If another team does not claim Bogosian before noon Saturday, the Sabres could assign him to Rochester or loan him to another American Hockey League team. Bogosian could also remain on the Sabres' roster, though that is unlikely after Gilmour joined the team.

Hammond, meanwhile, joined the team because Carter Hutton missed practice Saturday for "maintenance." Michael Frolik (illness) did not participate in the on-ice session, while Marcus Johansson (upper body) rejoined the team after not playing Thursday against Columbus.

Coach Ralph Krueger will address the media following practice Saturday morning.

Gilmour has six goals with seven assists and a minus-14 rating in 32 games with Rochester. He made the Sabres out of training camp and appeared in four games before being assigned to the Amerks in November.

Hammond, 32, has a .905 save percentage in 28 games with Rochester. He has not played in an NHL game since April 22, 2018.