



# ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

*Friday, February 28, 2020*

*TONIGHT'S GAME: Laval vs. Rochester*

Only goal in the shootout beats Rochester, gives Utica win  
Buffalo News  
By: Staff Report  
Feb. 26, 2020

Sven Baertschi scored in the fifth round of the shootout to give the Utica Comets a 3-2 win over the Rochester Americans on Wednesday night at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

Baertschi beat Rochester goalie Andrew Hammond after four of his teammates had failed.

Taylor Leier, Andrew Oglevie, Casey Mittelstadt, Sean Malone and Lawrence Pilut were the five unsuccessful shooters for Rochester.

Baertschi had given the Comets a 2-1 lead at 5:20 of the second period with his 11th goal of the season but Scott Wilson scored his 10th for Rochester with 28 seconds left in regulation to tie it.

Brogan Rafferty scored for Utica in the first, but Mittelstadt's goal with 1:02 to go in the period tied it. It was Mittelstadt's eighth of the season for Rochester. C.J. Smith and Oglevie had the assists. It was the 14th assist of the season for Oglevie, the former Notre Dame star.

Michael DiPietro made 34 saves for Utica. Hammond had 19 for Rochester. He also picked up an assist on Mittelstadt's goal as did C.J. Smith, who now has 13.

With the win Utica (30-20-3-2, 65 points) moved within four points of second place Rochester (30-17-4-5, 69 points) in the North Division of the American Hockey League.

The Amerks will be home against the Laval Rocket on Friday before traveling to Syracuse to meet the Crunch on Saturday.

Wednesday's game was the fourth in a row that went into overtime or beyond for Rochester.

Rochester has 30 wins for the fourth consecutive season and third in a row under coach Chris Taylor. He is the first since Randy Cunneynworth, the all-time winningest coach in franchise history, to accomplish that.

Controversial SO goal beats the Amerks  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Craig Potter  
Feb. 26, 2020

The Rochester Americans continue to struggle getting goals as they once again outshot the opposition only to lose the third of four straight overtime games.

The Amerks were victimized by the Utica Comets, 3-2, in a shootout on Wednesday night before 3,137 fans at the Blue Cross Arena.

Rochester forced overtime by scoring in the final minute of play, but neither team could score in the 5-minute sudden death period. The Amerks dominated in shots with 36 as the Comets managed 21 shots on Rochester netminder Andrew Hammond.

"We played pretty well," said Amerks captain Kevin Porter. "We just needed one of those lucky bounces and we got one to send the game into overtime. We did not give up, and while we would have liked to get two points, we were still able to get that one."

The controversy arose on the only goal of the shootout. Sven Beartschi was Utica's fifth shooter. He came in, got Hammond down and out as he skated to his left, stick-handled the puck and lifted it over the sprawled Hammond for the game-winner.

"In my interpretation, you can't bring the puck back. You've got to bring the puck forward at all times," said Amerks coach Chris Taylor. "Just at the end, he (Beartschi) stopped it from going forward and brought it back a little bit and then put it in so it should be no goal."

The Amerks argued the call with the officials, but the referees allowed the goal to stand.

Rochester (30-17-4-5) dominated the opening period but it took the 15th shot to even the count 1-1 in the last minute of the stanza.

The Comets (30-20-3-2) had taken a 1-0 lead when Hammond was penalized for delay of game. Utica scored on the ensuing power play, but Hammond complete the statistical oddity when he assisted on the tying goal. He passed the puck to CJ Smith, who skated into the offensive zone and found Casey Mittelstadt open at the bottom of the left circle. Mittelstadt's shot beat Utica goalie Michael DiPietro on the short side as the teams skated off 1-1 at intermission.

Utica regained the advantage about 5 minutes into the second period when Sven Beartschi's shot trickled through Hammond and across the goal line for the 2-1 lead.

The Amerks kept applying pressure and it finally paid off in the final minute of the third period with Hammond on the bench for the extra attacker. Scott Wilson found the back of the net from the bottom of the right circle as Smith picked up his second assist of the contest.

"It was a good sign being able to score in the last 30 seconds," Smith said. "It was a way to show some grit. It was a bounce in our direction and now we just have to keep finishing games and earning points."

Neither team could score in the 5-minute overtime period, and no one scored through the first 4 rounds of the shootout. Lawrence Pilut was Rochester's fifth shooter but he could not beat DiPietro.

"I thought we had a really solid game," said Taylor. "I really liked our start as we generated a lot of chances. In the second period, I thought it was better than our last game as we continued to execute and stick to our game plan. In the third, we fought back for a goal to send the game into overtime.

"I really liked our game but we just could not find a way to put the puck behind their goaltender."

\*NOTES — Rochester's home stand concludes on Friday, Feb. 28 when they host the North Division rival Laval Rocket at the Blue Cross Arena at 7:05 pm. . . Casey Nelson is tied for ninth among all blueliners with a team-best plus-19 on-ice rating through 44 games this season. . . Jacob Bryson is sixth among all first-year defensemen with a plus-11 on-ice rating. Bryson, who scored his first pro goal on Wednesday and had the overtime game-winner Saturday night, is also tied for ninth among all rookie blueliners with 21 points (2+19) in 55 games while his 19 assists are eighth-most. . . 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. . . Former Amerk Justin Bailey remains at a close second behind teammate Reid Boucher with a career-high 26 goals in 46 games for the Comets. Bailey, who recently returned from a two-game stint with Vancouver, has five points in his last three games, including four goals. He's been one of Utica's most dominant goal-scorers since the turn of the New Year, scoring 14 goals in his last 12 games. The Buffalo native also scored three hat tricks in a four-game span in that stretch, including in back-to-back games against Hartford. He's now reached the 20-goal mark three times in his pro career having previously reached the mark in consecutive seasons with Rochester in 2015-16 and 2016-17. . . The game was the 500th professional game that Zach Redmond played in.

Comets down Amerks in shootout  
Utica Observer-Dispatch  
By: Ben Birnell  
Feb. 26, 2020

Goaltender Mike DiPietro is playing a confident game and it is helping the Utica Comets.

DiPietro capped another standout performance Wednesday with five stops in a shootout and Sven Baertschi scored the lone goal in extras as the Comets grabbed a 3-2 victory over the Rochester Americans in the second of three meetings over a span of about two weeks at Blue Cross Arena.

The 20-year-old DiPietro – described as the “hot hand” this week by Comets coach Trent Cull in seizing the team’s goaltending duties – finished with 34 saves to help Utica earn back-to-back wins. DiPietro is 4-2-1-0 while starting the last seven games for the Comets.

DiPietro – who said he’s improved many aspects of his game including the mental side – earned his 18th win of the season after the Comets were outshot 36-22 in Wednesday’s affair. He turned in a huge sprawling save on Remi Elie’s chance in tight late in the second period to help keep it a one-goal game.

It was a key victory for the Comets (30-20-3-2, 65 points), who remain in third place in a tight North Division. The Comets – who have won four of the last six games – are four points back of Rochester (30-17-4-5) and four ahead of rival Syracuse, which was idle.

The shootout ended with some disagreement. After going scoreless through four rounds, DiPietro stopped Lawrence Pilut’s fakeout attempt before Baertschi’s try. On his attempt, the veteran forward made a hesitation move in front to draw out Andrew Hammond and scored in the top corner of the net.

The Amerks disputed the goal with the officials, but it stood.

Baertschi also scored in regulation to give the Comets a 2-1 lead in the second period on a shot that dribbled off Hammond and in.

Rookie Brogan Rafferty’s first-period power play goal pushed him to 41 points, which is a single-season record for points by a defenseman. He surpasses Bobby Sanguinetti’s 40 points from 2014-15.

The Comets looked to be headed to a regulation win despite a so-so game. Baertschi nearly put in a empty-netter but appeared to be tripped and didn’t get a call late.

However, Scott Wilson tied the game with 28 seconds to go on a follow-up finish with Hammond on the bench for the extra attacker for Rochester, which controlled much of the game.

Utica jumped out to a short-lived quick start in the first period with help from the power play.

About a minute into the advantage, Nikolay Goldobin sent a short pass to Rafferty, whose shot from the point got through traffic and past Hammond. Reid Boucher added an assist on the goal less than two minutes into the game.

Rochester grabbed control the rest of the period, keeping DiPietro busy. Rochester outshot Utica 15-2 in the frame.

Rochester caught Utica on a long shift with 1:02 remaining and Casey Mittelstadt scored from the left circle on an odd-man rush.

Amerks lose at home to Cleveland  
Buffalo News  
By: Staff Report  
Feb. 23, 2020

Sam Vigneault, a 6-foot-5 center, scored at 1:35 of overtime to give the Cleveland Monsters a 3-2 American Hockey League victory over the Rochester Americans on Saturday night at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

Dillon Simon and Trey Fix-Wolansky assisted on the winner.

Wolansky, a feisty 5-foot-6, 20-year-old winger, had a goal and two assists for Cleveland, his first three-point game of the season for the Monsters.

Cleveland took a 2-0 lead in the first period on a goal by Fix-Wolansky at 5:59 and another by Markus Hannikainen, with Fix-Wolansky assisting, at 7:35.

Rochester fought back, however.

Taylor Leier scored with an assist from Rasmus Asplund with 4:06 left in the first.

Rochester tied it when Brett Murray scored at 9:15 with defensemen Lawrence Pilut and William Borgen getting the assists.

The third period was scoreless, though Rochester outshot the Monsters, 13-4. Overall the Amerks had a 34-13 advantage in shots on goal.

Joonas Korpisalo made 32 saves for Cleveland, but did not receive one of the three-star awards which went to Vigneault, Fix-Wolansky and Leier in that order.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, Rochester's rookie goalie, had to come up with only 10 saves.

The lost point would have helped the second-place Amerks (30-17-4-4 for 68 points) keep pace with the first place Belleville Senators (35-16-4-1, 75 points) in the North Division of the AHL.

Cleveland, last in the division, is 24-26-3-2 for 53 points. Rochester has four regulation wins over the Monsters, but has two shootout losses and Saturday's OTL to Cleveland.

Next for Rochester is a Wednesday night home game against the Utica Comets.

Disappointing week ends for Luukkonen and the Amerks  
Pickin' Splinters  
By: Kevin Oklobzija  
Feb. 23, 2020

Throughout the season, Rochester Americans general manager Randy Sexton had said the development process for a young goaltender is a marathon, not a sprint.

You can't rush them through any phase. You can't be fooled by a stretch of strong play and think they're farther along than they really are.

We saw this week how very true that is for Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen. He allowed goals from essentially the same spot in overtime Wednesday and Saturday as the Amerks went just 1-0-2 in three games on home ice.

The week ended with a 3-2 loss to the Cleveland Monsters on Saturday night in front of 7,003 on First Responders' Night at Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

Cleveland center Sam Vigneault fired a shot from deep in the left circle past Luukkonen's left leg, capping a aggravating night for the Amerks.

They outshot the Monsters 34-13 and overcame an early 2-0 deficit yet lost.

"Right now I'm frustrated," said Amerks winger Taylor Leier, who scored his eighth goal. "This is a week when we should have had six points."

On Wednesday they squandered a 2-0 third-period lead and lost 72 seconds into overtime when Josh Norris drove a shot from the left circle under Luukkonen.

On Saturday, while, Vigneault was closer to the net, it's still a shot teams want to see made. Especially when Monsters goalie Joonas Korpisalo was making clutch stops for Cleveland.

Then again, Korpisalo was supposed to play in the NHL All-Star Game last month but instead has been on injured reserve because of a knee ailment. Saturday's start was his first game of a rehabilitation assignment from the Columbus Blue Jackets.

The Buffalo Sabres have high hopes for Luukkonen's future, especially after his dynamic MVP season a year ago in the Ontario Hockey League.

But he been just OK in his nine games with the Amerks. He has a 3-3-3 record, 3.16 goals-against average and .876 save percentage.

Of the 72 goalies who have played at least 500 minutes in the American Hockey League this season, only two have stopped a lower percentage of shots.

He has, however, shown what he's capable of doing. On Sunday he made two terrific point-blank stops to preserve a 3-2 win over Utica.

On Wednesday, however, the Norris OT shot needed to be stopped. On Saturday, he misread a carom of a shot wide of the net and the Monsters turned it into their second goal.

Then the overtime goal wasn't necessarily the toughest shot a goalie will face.

"I'm sure he'd like to have it back," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said, "just like our shooters would like to have some of those back, then we would even be talking about it."

Indeed, the Amerks have difficulty scoring. They've produced just 20 goals in the past nine games. Of the 16 teams currently in playoff position, just three average fewer goals than the Amerks (2.93).

Leier said it's not necessarily what they're doing when they shoot, either.

"It's the five seconds before the play happens," he said. "It's being sync with your linemates. It's puck management. It's plays at the blue line. If we want to win now and win in the playoffs, we have to start making a lot more of those plays."

Amerks drop 2nd of 3 straight OT games  
C&C Worldwide  
By: Craig Potter  
Feb. 23, 2020

It's getting to be a broken record for the Rochester Americans the past 3 games, outshoot your opponent but lose 2 of the 3 contests in overtime.

"Right now I'm frustrated," said Amerks winger Taylor Leier, who scored his eighth goal. "This is a week when we should have had six points."

"It was not the result in the end that we wanted," said assistant captain and veteran defenseman Andrew MacWilliam. "If I said I was not frustrated I'd be lying, but that's what being a professional is all about. We just need to learn from it and come back on Monday ready to get back to work."

The Amerks latest shortcoming was Saturday night before 7,003 fans at the Blue Cross Arena as the Cleveland Monsters scored on their first 2 shots of the game, then wound up winning on the only shot in overtime for a 3-2 victory.

Sam Vigneault netted the game-winner 1:35 into the extra session for the Monsters.

"He would have liked to have that one back," Amerks head coach Chris Taylor said of Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen after allowing the overtime-winning goal. "Just like our shooters would like to have some of those back, then we would even be talking about it."

The Monsters capitalized on a couple of Rochester defensive mistakes to grab a 2-0 lead in the first period against rookie goalie Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen.

However, the Amerks kept plugging away with shots on Cleveland goalie Joonas Korpisalo, who was on a rehab assignment from the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Taylor Leier got the Amerks on the scoreboard as he took a pass from Rasmus Asplund, then roared down the right wing and closed to put the puck through the 5-hole for the goal.

Rochester held a 16-3 shot advantage but trailed 2-1 at the end of the period.

Brett Murray evened the count in the second stanza as Lawrence Pilut picked up his 100th pro assist on the play. Will Borgen also received an assist on the goal.

"I liked how we were able to get back into the game after trailing," said Taylor. "We are frustrated with the result, but the positive is we got back into the game. We could have let the game get away from us, but we didn't. We got close to 35 shots on net and made a game out of it."

"We showed mental toughness and did not give up," Leier added. "When you're down, guys need to step up and make plays. You also have to put the puck in the net. It starts inside your own zone, from your own blueline then continues further up the ice."

The Amerks had numerous opportunities in their 34 shots as they hit the post 3 times and miss several open nets.

"It's the five seconds before the play happens," Leier said. "It's being sync with your linemates. It's puck management. It's plays at the blue line. If we want to win now and win in the playoffs, we have to start making a lot more of those plays."

Korpisalo finished with 32 saves as he came up with several key stops.

\*NOTES — By way of last night's 3-2 overtime win, the Amerks reached the 30-win mark for the fourth consecutive season and third straight under head coach Chris Taylor. Taylor became 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...Rochester's homestand continues on Wednesday, Feb. 26 when they host the Utica Comets at the Blue Cross Arena at 7:05 pm...Jacob Bryson is tied for sixth among all first-year players with a plus-10 rating. Bryson, who scored his first pro goal on Wednesday and had the game-winner Friday night, also is tied for eighth among all rookie blueliners with 21 points (2+19) in 53 games...Amerks assistant coach Toby Petersen was behind the bench when Cleveland won the Calder Cup in 2016...Rochester holds a record of 29-7-4-4 over Cleveland since the start of the 2011-12 campaign and has earned a point in all 7 games so far this season.

Officer Denny Wright honored at hometown heroes hockey game  
Rochester First  
By: Atyia Collins  
Feb. 23, 2020

Two hockey games on Saturday, with one goal; to celebrate the work of our area's first responders including one Rochester police officer.

First, The Rochester Americans honoring first responders at their 'Hometown Heroes Night' game against the Belleville Senators.

Before that game, another match up at the Blue Cross Arena, this one between two local law enforcement agencies, with one local hero, officer Denny Wright, being recognized.

The Rochester Police Department" and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office going head to head on the ice, all for charity during this year's hometown heroes exhibition game.

"it's been a four-year rivalry we beat them the last three. I think today might be a pretty competitive game," said Lt. Ralph Montinarelli of the Rochester Police Department.

This year's gaming carrying an even greater meaning, as officer Denny Wright, a Rochester Police Officer who lost his eyesight while responding to call, was recognized for his dedication to the community, receiving a jersey.

"It's got his IBM number on it. Just want to say thanks for his service to the community," said Capt. James McGowan of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

"It's difficult this job, it's pretty rough. You got people out there serving the community. It's not always seen that way by the community. Then you got somebody like Denny Wright who pretty much made almost the ultimate sacrifice and he's in a difficult spot right now. We want to let him know that we care about that. We appreciate what he did. We just want to say thanks in whatever way we can do that," said McGowan.

Funds raised went towards the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Association of Retirees (SOAR).

## Cleveland Monsters take down the Rochester Americans in overtime

SB Nation The Cannon

By: Elaine Shircliff

*Feb. 23, 2020*

The Cleveland Monsters took down the Rochester Americans in a thrilling overtime battle on Saturday night. Joonas Korpisalo was in net for the first time since going down with an injury on December 29th, 2019. He put on a show stopping 31 of the 33 shots the Amerks put on goal.

In Friday night's loss to the Syracuse Crunch, the Monsters started the game jumpy and flustered. Tonight, the Monsters came out cool, calm, and confident. This change in attitude gave the Monsters the upper hand in the first period.

Trey Fix-Wolansky put the Monsters on the board with a breakaway wrister four minutes into the game. This also happened to be the Monsters first registered shot of the evening.

On the Monsters' second shot of the night, they extended their lead over the Amerks to 2-0. Fix-Wolansky grabbed an errant puck towards the top of the right faceoff circle. He swatted it towards the net but it sailed a bit wide. Markus Hannikainen chased it down before banging it off the post from below the goal line to make it 2-0 7:35 into the game.

With 4:06 left in the first period, Taylor Leier cut the Monsters lead in half. Michael Prapavessis was knocked over while trying to close up the hole left by Korpisalo's right skate which allowed the puck to fly into the net. If Prapavessis hadn't been knocked out of position, the puck likely would have been stopped by his blade. It was a smart defensive move by Prapavessis that, unfortunately, did not work out the way he planned.

At the end of the first period, the Monsters led the Amerks 2-1. However, they trailed the Amerks in shots 16-3. The good thing about the lack of shots is the fact 2/3 of the registered shots found the back of the net.

The Amerks were able to tie the game at two with 10:45 left in the second period. Brett Murray picked up a rebounded puck and quickly fired it into the net.

For the remainder of the second and the entirety of the third, the Monsters did their best to keep the Amerks out of scoring position. Especially Hannikainen who dug multiple pucks off the board and had a nice breakaway. Branden Troock and Doyle Somerby spent a great deal of the final stanza of play trying to put pucks on net. While, Trey Fix-Wolansky continued to break up plays and pick off passes.

Regulation wasn't enough time to settle the battle between the Monsters and Amerks. In the first minute of overtime fans were treated to Ryan MacInnis' ability to not let the opposition get the best of him. Twice he was double teamed while making a move for the net but didn't let the extra pressure prevent him from moving up the ice with the puck. Fix-Wolansky did a great job of keeping the Amerks from leaving the neutral zone during overtime as well.

The first registered shot from either team in overtime turned into the game winning goal. Sam Vigneault skated along the boards with the puck before gliding into the left faceoff circle. Once he hit the faceoff dot, Vigneault launched the puck into the net for the Monsters 3-2 win over the Amerks.

The Monsters look to keep the winning going in Toronto against the Marlies at 11am on Wednesday.