



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Saturday, February 29, 2020

TONIGHT'S GAME: Rochester @ Syracuse

Cornel scores twice as Amerks top Rocket
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Feb. 29, 2020

Eric Cornel scored twice and Casey Mittelstadt had a goal and an assist as Rochester took care of Laval, 4-2, in front of 5,425 at the Blue Cross Arena.

Mittelstadt now has 15 points in his last 17 games with the Americans.

The win stopped a two-game slide for Rochester and kept the team in second place in the AHL North Division at 31-17-4-5 overall. Laval remains in fourth place in the division at 26-24-5-3 overall.

Andrew Hammond earned the win between the pipes for the Amerks. He made 36 saves throughout the night.

Rochester got out to an early 2-0 lead in the first period. First, Remi Elie notched his seventh goal of the season after finishing a pass from Mittelstadt off the faceoff.

Mittelstadt himself made the game 2-0 Rochester with 45 seconds left in the first when he scored on a power play.

While everything seemed to be going Rochester's way, things started to unravel as the second period progressed.

Laval was awarded a goal despite Hammond appearing to play the puck off the top of the net. At the same time, Kevin Porter was assessed a five-minute major penalty for a check to the head of Jake Luccini.

Porter was later ejected for the hit.

The Rocket missed the ensuing penalty shot but Laurent Dauphin found the back of the net minutes later to tie the game at two apiece.

Hammond opened the third period with a huge save on a Laval breakaway and Cornel was able to tip the pick into the Rocket net to put the Amerks back up by one goal.

With 6.2 seconds left, Cornel fired into an empty Laval net to seal the win. He is up to 12 goals this season, a career high.

Rochester is back in action on Saturday on the road at Syracuse.

Puck drop is scheduled for 7 p.m.

Amerks hold off Laval
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com
Feb. 29, 2020

Thanks to a pair of goals by Eric Cornel late in regulation, the Rochester Americans (31-17-4-5) concluded their season-long six-game homestand with a 4-2 win over the Laval Rocket (26-24-5-3) Friday at The Blue Cross Arena.

With the victory, the Amerks stretched their point streak to seven straight games, including a 3-0-2-1 record during the homestand, and remain just six points back of the Belleville Senators for the North Division lead with a game in hand. Rochester also completed the four-game season-sweep versus the Rocket this season, outscoring Laval 17-6 while improving to 13-3-0 all-time against Montreal's affiliate.

Cornel pushed his career-high in goals to 11 and 12 as he struck twice in the third period, first providing the go-ahead goal at the 14:44 mark before sealing the win with an empty-netter with seven seconds to spare in regulation. Casey Mittelstadt (1+1) and Taylor Leier (0+2) each produced a pair of points in the win while Remi Elie opened the scoring 2:10 into the contest as he added his seventh goal of the season. Goaltender Andrew Hammond improved to 15-11-3 on the slate as he made 34 saves in-between the pipes.

Forwards Nikita Jevpalovs and Laurent Dauphin both found the back of net for Laval, which saw its four-game point streak halted. First-year netminder Cayden Primeau (15-11-3) stopped 26 of the 29 shots he faced but was dealt the loss.

The Amerks saw the Rocket erase their 2-0 goal lead during the second period and saw the visitors register eight of the first 10 shots in the final 20 minutes. After successfully killing off its fourth penalty of the night, Rochester pushed back and was rewarded as Cornel redirected in his 11th of the season and first of the night at the 14:44 mark.

The line trio of Cornel, Sean Malone and Scott Wilson and defensemen Will Borgen and Brandon Hickey kept the Rocket trapped inside their own zone for an extended shift. Hickey pinched down the from left point to prevent the puck from escaping across the blueline and Malone gathered a pass from Wilson behind the net. Malone continued to cycle the puck around the zone as he banked a pass to Borgen at the blueline. The second-year defenseman rifled a shot towards Primeau and appeared to net his first goal of the season only to have Cornel provide a last-second redirection to give Rochester a 3-2 lead.

"I tried to do what I always do," said Cornel of what led to his first goal of the night. "I always want to work hard, get on the forecheck and make it hard on their defensemen."

Laval attempted to force overtime and pulled its goaltender for the extra attacker in the final minute of regulation. The Rocket tried to dump the puck into the offensive zone, but Asplund and Leier both held the line before Cornel sealed the 4-2 victory as he scored into the vacant net.

"He has confidence and is making plays," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor of Cornel. "He is not just throwing pucks away and his wall play has been really good. Both he and Malone have been on a line together for much of the year and they have been really thriving and feeding off one another."

"It's nice to see them both get rewarded for their efforts," Taylor continued.

In the opening period, after Elie gave Rochester an early one-goal lead, Mittelstadt notched his ninth of the campaign in the final minute of the frame from Jean-Sebastien Dea and Leier.

With his goal and assist tonight, Mittelstadt has 11 points (3+8) in 13 games during the month of February and shows eight points (2+6) over his last nine appearances. The former-first round selection and second-year pro has 20 points (9+11) since the turn of the New Year.

"At this point of the season, it always feels good when you can take the points as you can get them," said Mittelstadt. "Leiersy kind of just threw the puck at the net and J-S made a great play knocking it out of midair. The rebound came right to me and I had nearly the whole net."

The Rocket erased Rochester's two-goal advantage during the second period on goals from Jevpalovs and Dauphin, but Cornell's two goals in the final six minutes of regulation gave the Amerks the victory.

"I thought we had a good start," said Taylor. "After their (first) goal and penalty it was a little tough, but we battled back on the penalty kill. We just hung in there, and while we made some mistakes, I thought Hammond played really well."

"We fought back in the third period, which is nice, and found a way to capitalize on our opportunities," Taylor added.

The Amerks conclude the month of February on Saturday, Feb. 29 against the Syracuse Crunch at Upstate Medical University Arena. Game time is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start and will be carried live on The Sports Leader AM 950/95.7 FM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Amerks double up Laval to close out homestand
Pickin' Splinters
By: Staff Report/Amerks.com
Feb. 28, 2020

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As Sabres' postseason hopes dwindle, Casey Mittelstadt eyes playoff run in Rochester
The Athletic
By: Joe Yerdon
Feb. 29, 2020

While the postseason hopes for the Buffalo Sabres dwindle, the Rochester Americans are very much alive in their quest for the Calder Cup playoffs.

Rochester's lineup is balanced up front, deep with defensemen, and steady in goal, but the player who has helped make a big difference since the start of the New Year is Casey Mittelstadt.

When we last caught up with Mittelstadt in mid-January, he was emerging from the transition from the NHL to the AHL. His start in Rochester was not good, as he posted one point in his first five games. But since the start of the year, things have gone much better with nine goals and 11 assists in 25 games.

"He wants to be a guy that's on the ice and in every situation, not just offensively. He wants to be on the ice in defensive situations," Americans head coach Chris Taylor said. "He's becoming a guy that we can count on for penalty killing (and the) last minute of a game for a face off.

"He's not just waiting to be told, 'Hey, you're going out there.' He's standing up ready to take charge and that's what you want."

It's always the cumulative stats that we'll all look at to judge how a player is doing in the minors. Mittelstadt's 22 points in 31 games won't grab anyone's immediate attention, but he wasn't sent to Rochester to be a savior. He was sent to get his game into gear and that's what's happened of late.

"I think the biggest thing for me has always been (if) the chances stop coming then you get worried," Mittelstadt said. "But they've been coming. Even last game I thought my line played really well. We had a ton of chances, probably should have had more than one (goal). But I think once those stop coming then it's time to get worried. But as long as you're getting those, eventually you seem to break out and they go in."

As we've seen with the Sabres all season long, the distinct lack of an offensively creative center behind Jack Eichel has been a glaring issue. A lot of the hopes for next season are being preemptively tossed on Dylan Cozens's shoulders, but Mittelstadt's development in Rochester will have a big say in both how Cozens is brought along and how the Sabres approach the position in the offseason. Whether it's on Jason Botterill for not sending Mittelstadt down sooner or Mittelstadt for not being NHL-ready right out of college, the 21-year-old is trending in a good direction with the Americans. Part of that growth is being part of a winning team with a lot of veteran voices and being involved in a playoff race.

The signal to culture building is something the entire organization has worked on. With Taylor in charge in Rochester, that's been a huge focus. But nothing teaches a player how to improve more than reps and being put into situations where they're being counted on most in high-pressure circumstances. The Americans are second in the North Division, just ahead of Utica but behind Belleville. That situation doesn't have the same attention as a race for the Stanley Cup playoffs, but the need to win is the same.

"Teams want winners," American defenseman Zach Redmond said. "I remember it was my first or second year (with St. John's), we had a really good team went to the finals the one year and ended up losing, but just the amount of success guys had just going into the fire in the playoffs... it is a different game. It's more intense. I guess your true colors can really shine or go the opposite way on you.

"What (scouts) can see from you stands out and who rises to the challenge are the guys that you want on your team and in the organization. So yeah, this is big for any young guy looking to make that next step."

Laval @ Rochester recap & highlights: Depleted Rocket fall late to the Americans
SB Nation Eyes On The Prize
By: Scott Matla
Feb. 29, 2020

After struggling through one of their worst stretches of the season less than a month ago, one that saw the Rocket fall well back of the playoff race, the team battled its way back into that chase. Three straight wins, including back-to-back victories over the Toronto Marlies and Belleville Senators, left them just one point out of the final playoff spot in the North Division. Standing in their way on Friday night was yet another season-long bogeyman, the Rochester Americans.

The last time the two teams clashed it was marred by Keith Kinkaid scoring on himself, and Charles Hudon being ejected for a late hit at centre ice. Since then the Rocket were entirely remade under Joël Bouchard's direction, shipping out a trio of underperforming veterans and bringing in some new faces to rebuild the lineup.

Unfortunately for Bouchard, he came into this critical game minus Hudon, Jake Evans, Karl Alzner, and Xavier Ouellet, who were with the NHL club, and also missing Jesperi Kotkaniemi, out due to illness. The return of the hard-working Joe Cox and offensive-minded Otto Leskinen helped to lessen the blow, while a resurgent Cayden Primeau started between the pipes.

Laval jumped into it right off the opening draw, with Ryan Poehling collecting an aerial pass and breaking in alone on Andrew Hammond. As Poehling went to get his shot off his stick failed, harmlessly dribbling the puck into Hammond's pads.

The Americans quickly countered, forcing Primeau into a desperation save with his glove and pad. Unfortunately for Primeau, the next shot he faced after the faceoff trickled in under his pad, putting the Rocket down just over two minutes into the game.

Laval gained a chance to tie the game up with the first power play of the night as Sean Malone sat for a cross-check. The Rocket power play, minus its main attacking pieces, created a handful of chances, but Hammond stood tall to send the Laval shots out of play and away from his net to keep Rochester in the lead.

As the teams traded hits and scoring chances, the Americans still kept their one-goal advantage, but a sloppy line change sent Laval back to the man advantage on a too many men call. In the opening seconds Laval nearly tied the game, but an unchecked Poehling sent his shot just wide from the back-post position.

Leskinen put Rochester on its first power play of the night, taking a high-sticking penalty with under two minutes left in the period. After killing a chunk of Leskinen's minor, a shot from the point was launched sky-high, bouncing around in front of Primeau and his penalty-killers, it eventually landed on Casey Mittelstadt's stick, and the Rochester forward had no issue making it a 2-0 game.

Ryan Culkin nearly halved that deficit, but his blast was saved by Hammond's mask as the horn sounded, leaving Laval with a two-goal hole to work their way out of in the second period.

Laval opened the second with a massive chance, as Kevin Porter was ejected for a check to the head of Jake Lucchini. As the officials waited to whistle play dead, Nikita Jevpalovs fired a shot on Hammond that went straight up in the air, and just trickled off Hammond's back and in to cut the Rochester lead in half.

The Rocket then had a five-minute advantage to work with, and in that time they managed two decent chances as the Rochester penalty-killers kept them contained to the outside. The major penalty came to an end, and the Rocket failed to take any sort of advantage from it, leaving them still trailing a goal approaching the midpoint of the game.

Laval followed up its lacking power play by taking a tripping penalty of their own, forcing their penalty-killers into a massive spot. They came through with flying colours, with Alexandre Alain and Poehling nearly converting short-handed to end the kill in style.

The Americans refused to go away, with Rasmus Asplund drawing a penalty shot as he split through the Rocket defence. The Swede took his shot, coming in slow, then cutting wide as Primeau kicked out his pad, but fired it high and wide, keeping Laval well in the game.

The Rocket then took advantage of a lazy play by the Amerks, with Cox snagging an errant pass creating an odd-man situation. Cox dished to Alain, who paused for a moment then slid a pass to Laurent Dauphin to roof his 12th goal of the year.

With momentum on their side, the Rocket headed into the intermission having battled out of an early deficit, and with a big chance to keep their winning streak alive.

They came out swinging to start the final period, and Cox's hard work drew a hooking call, putting Laval on a massive power play early in the period. The man advantage threw everything at Hammond, testing the veteran netminder, but he refused to budge on anything, swallowing up every shot.

Laval nearly took the lead as Yannick Veilleux took advantage of a John Gilmour turnover, playing give-and-go with Antoine Waked. As the duo worked in on net they caught Hammond out of position with a yawning cage, but Veilleux pushed his chance just wide.

The Americans took control afterward, hemming in the Rocket and breaking the deadlock with Eric Cornel tipping a Will Borgen shot by Primeau to restore Rochester's lead.

The Rocket struggled to get Primeau to the bench due to the Amerks' defensive pressure, and once they did Rochester immediately added an empty-net goal.

Final Score: Rochester 4, Laval 2

The Rocket road trip wears on tomorrow as the team heads to Utica for a showdown with the Comets.

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 Cunneyworth, 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.