



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

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TONIGHT'S GAME: Binghamton vs. Rochester

Happy meal of memories: An oral history of Andrew Hammond's 'Hamburglar Run'
The Athletic
By: Chris Stevenson
Mar. 10, 2020

With the Ottawa Senators in California this week for back-to-back games against the Anaheim Ducks on Tuesday and the Los Angeles Kings on Wednesday, it's interesting that their visit coincides with the anniversary of one of the great stories in Senators history.

Five years ago, Andrew Hammond shutout the Ducks and Kings on back-to-back nights and "The Hamburglar Run" became a thing.

Hammond, a 27-year-old career minor leaguer, had been called up by the Senators when goaltender Craig Anderson injured his right hand. Robin Lehner took over the No. 1 job, but he was knocked out of a game against the Carolina Hurricanes when he collided with teammate Clarke MacArthur Feb. 16. MacArthur was attempting to stop a breakaway by Carolina forward Jay McClement. Both Lehner and MacArthur sustained concussions that would profoundly affect their careers.

It would be Lehner's last game with the Senators.

MacArthur played eight regular-season games over the next two seasons and had a brief, but spectacular, return in the playoffs in 2017 and then was forced to retire.

Hammond, signed as a free agent in 2013, had a 7-13-2 record and an .898 save percentage with the Binghamton Senators when he was called up. He was pulled 36 seconds into a game against the Lehigh Valley Phantoms Dec. 17 when he gave up three goals on three shots in 21 seconds.

In other words, there was no reason to believe he was going to make history over the final two months of the season.

It had been a tumultuous season for the Senators. General manager Bryan Murray had fired coach Paul MacLean in early December after an 11-11-5 start to the season, replacing him with assistant Dave Cameron. The Senators had the same 11-11-5 record under Cameron when the Hamburglar Run started.

The Senators were 14 points out of the last playoff spot in the Eastern Conference on Feb. 10.

After Hammond's 20-1-2 run with a 1.79 goals against average and .941 save percentage, the Senators were in the playoffs.

The Athletic interviewed some of the key people involved in The Hamburglar Run to mark the five-year anniversary. Here are some of their recollections and memories — some that will last a lifetime — from some of the key games of one of the best stories in Senators history.

Former Senators forward Mark Stone: I just remember the accident with Robin and Clarke and how gruesome that was and how awful everybody felt at the rink. But with Andrew coming in — I had played with him in the minors and I knew he was an awesome person — he took everything in stride and we embraced him. He was the straw that stirred the drink that whole run.

Senators goalie Craig Anderson: It was (defenceman) Chris Phillips' last year. We had some decent players. We were underachieving for sure throughout the year. Bryan made the change. It was one of those things. (Jason) Spezza got moved (in the summer), Karl (Erik Karlsson) took over as captain. Everyone looked at Paul and Paul wasn't intense, so why should we be? Davey came in and that was the big thing. Paul was a pro's pro. Davey came in and there was no joking around, no laziness, it was just all intensified. That was the start of the run, Dave Cameron.

Andrew "Hamburglar" Hammond: (Cameron) definitely had a fiery personality that I think for certain guys especially it rubbed off on them. He let guys play. You could almost play the way you want, but you are going to play with passion. I think that's what showed in our game. Everyone just kind of fully bought in. You were allowed to make skilled play, but you were going to be doing it with a ton of passion and care while you do it."

Former Senators forward Curtis Lazar: (Hammond) competed. He was obviously in a tough spot when the goalies went down there. He rose to the occasion. We really did rally around him. He showed up every single night. Some nights we got out played, but he kept us in it and we were able to find a way. Think about the team we had. Mark Stone, that's where he was just starting to come into his own. It was about character. I don't think I've seen a guy drink as much Pedialyte in that month as (Hammond) did just trying to recover. What he was able to do was pretty remarkable.

Anderson: Hammy was not having a great year in the minors. He backed up here for a couple of weeks, got thrown in there and no thinking involved. You just have to go play. We all rallied around it. It was kind of exciting to be a part of.

Hammond: I had been up for a while, but I was just practising with the team. (Senators goaltending coach) Rick Walmsley was great with me and we would have really intense practice sessions. I would be worn out the entire day after because I had been working so hard in practice. And then you would do it all over again. I had been doing that for a few weeks. I played 21:30 (after he replaced Lehner against Carolina and gave up two goals on five shots) and I don't think it could have gone worse for me. Just uncomfortable . . . everything."

But as soon as I knew I was playing I felt comfortable. I was doing practice every day and that gave me confidence. Once I made a couple of saves I started to believe it was my time to play and play well. You're still learning as you go because games consistently at that level. There are always things you are picking up on and figuring out how you need to play at that level.

Feb. 18 Ottawa 4, vs. Montreal 2, 42 saves. Hammond's first NHL start.

Hammond: That first game . . . I'm a Canadian kid, so growing up playing against the Montreal Canadiens, any Canadian team is pretty exciting, just the crowd and everything. When you are in Ottawa whether it's Montreal or Toronto they have their own contingent so I didn't need any extra added energy in the building but it certainly was there and I think I thrived on it.

They were trying to prey on me being in my first game. They were going to put everything on net. I was comfortable around the team because I had been up and that was a big part of it, being able to practice and how hard I was working on my game, it just felt like that was the result of a lot of hard work a few weeks before that.

Stone: He gets a win against Montreal. Then he gets a win against Florida. OK. That's a good first start. But going out to California, let's see what this guy can do.

Feb. 25 — Ottawa 3 at Anaheim 0, 25 saves

Feb. 26 — Ottawa 1 at Los Angeles 0, 35 saves

Feb. 28 — Ottawa 4 at San Jose 2, 30 saves

Hammond: For me, that was the turning point because the first game against Anaheim, in all honesty, I felt like garbage. I didn't feel like I was in the right spots. I knew where I was supposed to be, I just wasn't necessarily doing what I should that night. To walk out of that with a shutout, that kind of gave me the feeling that if I can get a shutout in this league and I'm not even playing well, then maybe there is something there.

The next night in L.A. I was challenged a lot more and I made a lot of really good saves. That got me believing in myself and believing in the team and how we were playing we could do something special. Back then the L.A. Kings weren't far off winning a Stanley Cup. Jeff Carter and those guys, I have a lot of respect for. For me it was something that gave myself and the team a ton of confidence. I think that was definitely one of the turning points of that whole run.

Stone: He shut out Anaheim and L.A. in a back-to-back. OK, this is awesome. Then we go into San Jose, we're down 2-0 five minutes in and it was like, alright, this is coming to an end. The fairytale is over. But he battled back and battled through that whole trip and once we got back from that trip, I knew something special was about to happen."

Anderson: A lot of it is state of mind. You have a good game, you have another good game and now it's like alright I can do this, I can play. The guys were really rallying around him. That was probably helping too as far as building his confidence. He was building everybody else's confidence. We all kind of played a role. Stoney was arguably the best player in the league at the time. Karl (captain Erik Karlsson) was playing great for us. It was just kind of like the perfect storm and it got us to where we needed to be.

He had a purpose. He had a rough year. He had something to prove. He set his mind to it and he achieved his goal. When you have an athlete who is determined and has a purpose and something to prove you get a little more out of yourself when you're that guy.

Hammy was a very likeable guy. I don't think there's one guy who has ever played with him that said anything bad about him. He was always smiling, always having a good time always ready to go to dinner and let's go have a beer.

March 4 — Ottawa 3 at Winnipeg 1, 36 saves

Hammond: We were playing back-to-back in Winnipeg and Craig was coming back from an injury and originally he thought he would be good to go so he was going to start that game in Winnipeg. I think I found out via Twitter when I was refreshing it that I was starting.

I got a phone call from the goalie coach that I was going to be playing again, Craig wasn't quite ready. The week and everything was just more or less catching up to me and I was pretty tired. We went out for warmups and I don't think I stopped a beach ball. I remember I saw Curtis (Lazar) and I said, 'Man I don't even know how I am going to do this, I'm so tired.' I grabbed a Red Bull and drank it.

I think that was one of my best games. Those are the little things that are funny to look back on, but for me as a goalie it taught me how to find a way through times when you don't feel great. You take advantage of the times you do feel great. We still joke

about that. I saw Stoney this summer and it came up about how bad my warmup was and then went out and played a great game.

I saved all my saves. I didn't use them in warmup that night.

March 17 — Ottawa 2 at Carolina 1 (OT), 36 saves

Hammond: I don't even remember exactly how many games it was, but you just remember certain ones that kind of stick out. Once we started getting on a roll you could see it becoming more a realistic chance. There were certain games . . . I think back to the Carolina game in Carolina.

I remember going into it how many years it had been since they had won in Carolina. Basically knew that was going to be the newest challenge for us, a place historically where we had never played well. I remember they came out in the first period guns blazing. I made a backdoor save that honestly to this day I'm kinda . . . I just got over and got enough of it. A big save there.

It was kind of back and forth. We didn't get a lot of chances. They were playing well. It was 1-1 and then it went to overtime and (Kyle) Turris pulled the puck between the legs and walked the defenceman and put it in the net. That was the icing on the cake for that game.

March 19 — Ottawa 6 vs. Boston 4, 35 saves

Lazar: The whole thing with (eating the hamburger), we were playing Boston I remember and I missed an empty net and they came down and hit the post or something. I was more so trying to deflect attention that I almost blew it there. You guys know me. I'm all about having fun. It's bigger than just the game, a chance to react with the fans. There was hunger after the game, too, so why not a McDonald's burger?

Anderson: It was still warm, too. Whoever threw it on the ice must have been sitting on it for the whole game. So, yeah.

Hammond: I got a few gift cards (from McDonald's), but I spend my summers in the U.S. and the gift cards only worked in Canada. I think I ended up giving most of them to some friends. Once in a while I would go for some late night ice cream and swing through the drivethru. That was about it.

I don't think they were going to turn down that free promotion or free advertising and marketing they were getting with that. They were all great to me, meeting a lot of the local franchise owners. They were all great to me. They gifted me a McDonald's gold credit card. It's in a frame with a picture of me holding up the hamburger. That will be something that I will look back on and kind of laugh at.

(Photos courtesy Andrew Hammond)

April 11 — Ottawa 3 at Philadelphia 1, 35 saves

Stone: Early in my career that was as nervous as I've ever been as a hockey player. Win and you're in (the playoffs). That was something crazy. Especially against a team that's not really fighting for anything. Those games can be tough. Once I got that goal, if you looked at the track record, Andrew wasn't not letting in more than two goals. To get that third one felt pretty good.

Hammond: It really was different guys every night and Mark was a huge part of it, but there were lots of guys that stepped up. I think overall we felt a little bit of pressure, but at the end of the day, we were all playing with the casino's money kind of thing. I think the pressure was really just what we put on ourselves. I think we all handled it pretty well. I think of all the teams I've been on now, it was just a lot of guys that liked having fun together. I think that translated into our play on the ice.

The one that really sticks out for me was the last game of the season against Philadelphia. Even before that, going into New York and knowing we had to win. Up until probably the last four games it was we're pretty sure we need to win but necessarily a must-win thing. Once you see how the other teams were doing around you. Going into New York and getting that win and realizing we put ourselves in a position where we didn't need to wait on anybody else to how they did. If we just won we were in. Just the memories you have of getting into the locker room after the game and heading back to Ottawa and people were waiting at the airport for us. To see how much the city rallied around what we did getting into the playoffs.

Lazar: It was so much fun. We went through a stretch there where I don't think we practiced for a month. It was game day, off, game day, off. Our team was kind of willing our way into the playoffs. It was something special. You talk about getting experience. For a guy like myself, trying to carve out a career and earn and regular spot, that's big for me.

What a ride that was.

Postscript: Hammond, who needed hip surgery at the end of his time in Ottawa, is playing for the Rochester Americans of the AHL

Hammond: It's great. I didn't play in the NHL last year and I haven't yet this year, at least. I'm enjoying playing hockey. I'm healthy and I feel like my game is as good as it's ever been. I'm enjoying it and having fun working with younger players now and kind of taken on a bit of a mentorship role. I'm just really enjoying playing again.

Leier balancing hockey with promoting healthy living
The AHL
By: Suzie Cool
Mar. 10, 2020

Imagine being able to eat cookies every single day of your life and never gaining a pound. That'd be pretty sweet, right?

Well, as it turns out, this could potentially be an actual possibility.

Prior to his professional hockey career, Rochester Americans forward Taylor Leier and his best friend, Austin Calladine, shared a vision of starting a health-based business to provide consumers with healthy alternative snacks. But with Leier soon being drafted by the Philadelphia Flyers in the fourth round of the 2012 NHL Draft, it became more difficult for him to make both dreams become a reality with hockey consuming most of his life.

But before we dive too much into that, let's first go back to the summer of 2019. Leier had just finished up his fifth year in professional hockey after splitting the 2018-19 season between two organizations. Acquired by the Buffalo Sabres in a midseason trade from Philadelphia, Leier scored a career-high 22 goals in 69 games between with the Amerks and Lehigh Valley Phantoms.

But as his fifth professional season came to an end, like most players, Leier made his way back to his hometown of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where ice time is limited. And with limited ice time comes the different ways to ensure that a player still gets the conditioning needed in order to be fully prepared before the season starts up again – like rollerblading not too far from home.

And that's the exact moment when reality hit.

As the Amerks forward was out rollerblading, a rock became lodged in his blade and down he went. In an effort to brace his fall, Leier threw out his hand, which led to his shoulder blade completely coming out of place and an immediate trip to the emergency room. About a week would pass before an MRI was taken to reveal the damage done, and after the results were examined, surgery was performed just another week later.

With surgery always comes the aftermath of rehabbing your body back to health, and while Leier was doing all he could to get his body back into hockey shape, he decided to approach a company called Sweet Nutrition, a start-up founded by his friends Calladine and Casey Parker.

"This past summer when I was rehabbing my injury, I had a lot of extra time," said Leier. So, I decided to approach Austin and Casey because as a start-up business I knew that they would need an investor and the health and wellness industry is something I'm very passionate about."

Sweet Nutrition is a Canada-based company that has created delicious-tasting snacks with even better ingredients. After Calladine and Parker tried out the "9-to-5" life, they decided to embark on something that they were both extremely passionate about while trying to help create a healthier lifestyle for those that regularly crave desserts.

Starting out locally in Saskatchewan during the summer of 2018, Sweet Nutrition became nationwide throughout Canada in February of last year. Now a reliable retail seller online and located in over 200 locations throughout Canada, Sweet Nutrition

cookies can be found in three different flavors — chocolate chip, snickerdoodle and peanut butter. Not to forget, their color scheme of bright blue and orange is quick to catch your eye.

“Our brand is basically a healthy alternative with clean ingredients and it’s for everyone, whether you’re an athlete or a person who lives a more regular everyday lifestyle. They’re great-tasting and we try to keep them as clean as possible, while still trying to make them like a sweet treat,” said Leier.

As the official co-owner, Leier is a presence that’s out and about in the community, which enables him to market the Sweet Nutrition brand quite easily while still being a professional hockey player. For him it’s as simple as posting a picture to Instagram for his 16,000 followers to see, handing out a list to his teammates who want to put clean ingredients in their body or simply just wearing a bright blue sweatshirt with the word “Sweet” across the front that will catch people’s eyes, and boom, there’s another point of sale for the brand.

Although hockey will always come first, Sweet Nutrition has given Leier the ability to make that second dream of his a reality and has helped take his mind away from the game of hockey when need be.

“Obviously hockey means everything to me, aside from family, but I wanted to find something that I was passionate about and that could take my mind away from thinking about hockey all of the time. This is my sixth year pro and each year I’ve become more interested and knowledgeable outside of the game. Sweet Nutrition definitely fits my brand and I think I fit their brand as well.”

Although Sweet Nutrition has just a small menu of products to choose from now, there are ideas in the works to expand in the years to come. While Leier knows his place within the organization is to be an advocate of the brand and an investor of the product, he can’t say enough about his business partners and the hard work that they put in day in and day out.

“Austin and Casey are the co-founders, and they work so hard and they work every day nonstop to do everything behind the scenes. I’m very, very proud of them and I’m just happy to be a part of Sweet Nutrition with them. They put their lives into this, and they deserve all the credit.”

As Sweet Nutrition is located throughout Canada in a number of supplement and grocery stores, their products are also readily available online at sweetnutritioncanada.com; use promo code Leier10 at checkout for 10 percent off.

Amerks close off dressing room as coronavirus precaution

WHEC

By: Staff Report

Mar. 10, 2020

The Rochester Americans are limiting access to their dressing-room to only players and essential team personnel as a health and safety measure, the team said in a statement Tuesday.

The policy, which is now in place across the American Hockey League, follows the lead of the NHL and other sports leagues in the wake of outbreaks across the world of a new type of coronavirus. The team says that media members who would normally come into the dressing room after games will instead have that availability in a media room across from the Amerks dressing room.

The full statement can be found below:

As of today, the American Hockey League is following the lead of the National Hockey League and limiting dressing-room access strictly to players and essential team personnel due to precautionary health and safety measures.

Effective immediately and until further notice, all post-game media availability will be held in the media room, located directly across the hall from the Amerks dressing room.

The overall health and safety of our guests remains our top priority at Blue Cross Arena. We are continuing to monitor the situation and diligently reviewing all relevant information provided by federal, state and local health departments and agencies.

Updates will be provided as they become available.

Goalie Linus Ullmark Sabres' best option this season and likely next one
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Mar. 8, 2020

Expect Linus Ullmark to morph into a workhorse again over the final four weeks this season. If the goalie can stay healthy, he might start 12 or 13 of the reeling Sabres' 14 remaining games.

Ullmark, who hasn't played since suffering a lower-body injury Jan. 28, will likely start Monday against the Washington Capitals at KeyBank Center.

Before Ullmark missed 17 games — he backed up Carter Hutton on Saturday — he seized the No. 1 job, starting 25 out of 30 contests and 13 of the last 14.

The Swede, 26, developed into the Sabres' backbone during his career-best run, compiling an 11-5-2 record with a 2.64 goals-against average and a .913 save percentage.

"I played well," Ullmark said Friday. "The guys played well in front of me as well, made it easy for me to go to work every night."

In his absence, it became clear Ullmark is the Sabres' best option in net this season and next year.

Hutton, 34, enjoyed some terrific performances subbing for Ullmark, possibly saving his career by winning six out of eight starts over a three-week stretch.

But Hutton isn't the long-term solution in net. The veteran endured a stunning in-season decline, losing 12 straight games after starting 6-0-0. He has struggled again in the last two weeks — not that he's had much help — losing four times during the Sabres' six-game skid.

In Saturday's 3-1 loss in Philadelphia, Hutton cemented the Flyers' win late by committing one of the worst goalie gaffes this season. After Sabres defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen dished the puck back to Hutton in his crease, he appeared not to see Joel Farabee zooming toward him, and he gave it to the Flyers forward for an easy goal.

Meanwhile, goalie prospect Jonas Johansson, who was recalled when Ullmark went down, looked impressive at times during his first six NHL games, going 1-3-1 with a 2.94 goals-against average and an .894 save percentage. But the Swede, an AHL All-Star with the Rochester Americans, clearly isn't ready for the big leagues yet.

With Johansson in Buffalo, the Amerks recalled top Sabres goalie prospect Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen from the Cincinnati Cyclones, their ECHL affiliate.

Luukkonen, 20, has posted below-average numbers — 3-4-3, 3.15 and .874 — in 10 AHL outings. While it's a small sample size and the Finn is a rookie, his play in the AHL illustrates he almost certainly won't be ready for the NHL next year. Goalies often need two, three or even four years to develop in the minors.

With Johansson, 24, back with the Amerks, Luukkonen could be sent back to the Cincinnati again soon.

Ullmark, who has compiled a strong .914 in 33 total appearances, was on pace to play 54 times this season before getting injured. If he stays healthy next year, he could surpass that number.

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The Sabres' feeble offense, which has scored only 10 goals in the last six games, showed signs of breaking out Saturday.

Against the Flyers, the NHL's hottest team, the Sabres pumped 39 shots on goal.

Sabres coach Ralph Krueger rearranged his lines before the game, most notably putting winger Jeff Skinner back with top center Jack Eichel and Sam Reinhart for the first time this season. Meanwhile, rookie Victor Olofsson moved beside center Marcus Johansson and newcomer Dominik Kahun, who scored the Sabres' only goal.

"It felt really good, I really liked the team tonight," Krueger said of the new lines to reporters Saturday in Philadelphia. "I thought we had two real nice pushing more pushing more offensive lines with Johansson and Eichel. I thought they created some nice opportunities, they had a different look to them.

"I thought (Johansson's) line was more of a free-flowing (line), kind of moving pucks, supporting each other. Jack's line was pretty linear and also had some good o-zone time, especially in the first period. Both the (Curtis) Lazar and (Johan) Larsson lines created a lot of those offensive zone grind time, which is what you like to see."

Every trio generated a Corsi For — the percentage of shot attempts by the team while the line is on the ice five-on-five — of at least 57.1% on Saturday, according to NaturalStatTrick.com.

Johansson's line had the highest Corsi For at a whopping 72.2%.

Notes: The Sabres had Sunday off. . . . The Sabres sent defenseman John Gilmour back to the Amerks on Sunday. They summoned Gilmour on Saturday because defenseman Lawrence Pilut (illness) couldn't play. Gilmour was scratched. . . . Sabres winger Michael Frolik played Saturday after sitting out four straight games as a healthy scratch. To make room, the Sabres scratched winger Jimmy Vesey.

Amerks gain more ground on Belleville
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Mar. 7, 2020

Rochester used a big three-goal third period to overwhelm Belleville and secured a 4-2 win Saturday night at the CAA Arena in Belleville, Ont.

The victory moved the Americans (33-19-4-5) to within six points of first place in the AHL North Division after Friday's 5-3 victory over the Senators. Belleville (38-19-4-1) is still in first place.

The Amerks played with five defensemen on the ice in an effort to limit Belleville's potent offense.

Just like Friday, Rochester outshot its opponent. The Amerks rattled off 41 shots to the Senators' 26.

Jonas Johansson made 24 saves in net for Rochester.

Belleville got on the scoreboard 2:57 into the game when Max Lajoie fired a shot into the top right corner of the Amerks' net.

The lamp wouldn't be lit again until the second period when Rochester's Taylor Leier finished off a pass from Casey Mittelstadt to tie the game at one goal apiece.

Belleville took the lead again just 37 seconds later. Drake Batherson gave the Senators a 2-1 advantage as the Amerks' defense was turned around.

Once again, the game went quiet. Rochester's offense came alive in the third period, though, starting with Jacob Bryson's tally 2:48 into the final stanza.

He scored on a one-timer assisted by Eric Cornel.

It looked like the game would need overtime, but William Borgen gave Rochester its first lead of the night with less than a minute and a half left to play in regulation.

It was the young defenseman's first goal this season for Rochester.

Sean Malone added the icing on the cake with 29 seconds left in the game. He scored on Belleville's empty net to ensure the victory.

The Americans have a brief homestand on deck this week.

They'll host Binghamton on Wednesday and Syracuse on Friday at the Blue Cross Arena.

Both of those games are scheduled for 7:05 p.m.

Sabres send Jonas Johansson to Amerks; Linus Ullmark ready to dress
Buffalo Hockey Beat
By: Bill Hoppe
Mar. 7, 2020

With goalie Linus Ullmark ready to back up Carter Hutton tonight against the Philadelphia Flyers, the Sabres sent rookie Jonas Johansson back to the Rochester Americans on Friday.

A lower-body injury has sidelined Ullmark, 26, the last 17 games. He started practicing again Monday.

"It's just the next step," Sabres coach Ralph Krueger said of Ullmark dressing for a game. "We're being patient in this process and making sure that he's game ready, so he'll get a good skate tomorrow morning. We liked what we saw today."

Johansson, 24, played six games during his first stint in the NHL, compiling a 1-3-1 record with a 2.94 goals-against average and an .894 save percentage.

The Swede stopped 28 shots in Thursday's 4-2 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, his fifth start.

Johansson has enjoyed a stellar season with the Amerks, compiling a 13-3-3 mark with a 2.19 goals-against average, a .925 save percentage and two shutouts in 20 outings. He was the Amerks' player representative at the AHL All-Star Classic.

In other news, Sabres winger Zemgus Girgensons (maintenance) and defenseman Lawrence Pilut (illness) missed Friday's practice inside Harborcenter.

Krueger said both players are day-to-day and could miss Saturday's game

"There's a good chance we'll be going with this lineup that practiced today," he said.

That means winger Michael Frolik, a healthy scratch the last four games, could return.

Update: The Sabres have recalled defenseman John Gilmour from the Amerks.

Amerks complete sweep of Belleville
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report
Mar. 7, 2020

The Rochester Americans (33-19-4-5) faced a one-goal deficit going into the final period of regulation, but thanks to three unanswered goals, including a pair in the final 1:12, the Amerks completed the weekend sweep over the North Division-leading Belleville Senators (38-19-4-1) with a 4-2 victory in the season series finale between the two teams Saturday at CAA Arena.

With the win, the Amerks, who have earned 15 out of a possible 22 points in their last 11 games, hold a two-point lead over the Comets for second place in North Division standings. Rochester also boasts an 8-0-2-0 record all-time in the road portion of the head-to-head series while also claiming at least one point in 13 of the first 18 meetings with the Senators dating back to the 2017-18 season.

Forward Taylor Leier opened the scoring with his team-leading sixth power-play goal of the season and 10th overall, while rookie defenseman Jacob Bryson scored his second marker in as many nights for the Amerks, who posted a 4-1-1-0 record against Belleville this season as well as a perfect 3-0-0-0 mark north of the border. Will Borgen notched his first goal of the season, which held as the game-winning goal, before Sean Malone sealed the win with his 12th of the campaign.

In his first AHL appearance since Jan. 24, goaltender Jonas Johansson (14-3-3), who was reassigned by the Buffalo Sabres on Friday, made 24 saves in his return to the Amerks lineup to earn the win. Dating back to Nov. 13, the Swedish netminder boasts an impressive 12-1-1 record with two shutouts, a 2.10 goals-against average and a .929 save percentage while allowing just two goals or less in nine starts over that span.

Max Lajoie and Drake Batherson both lit the lamp for Belleville, who suffered back-to-back regulation losses for only the fourth time all season. In his third-career AHL appearance and second in as many nights, rookie netminder Alex Dubeau (1-2-0) made 37 saves on the 40 shots he faced but was dealt his second straight loss of the weekend.

Early in the third period while facing a 2-1 deficit, Andrew MacWilliam pinched down from the right point to keep the puck inside the offensive zone. Eric Cornel tracked the loose puck and circled behind the Senators net before setting up Bryson for a one-time feed near the left face-off dot.

Bryson's goal at 2:48 that tied the game at 2-2 was the rookie's second of the weekend after he notched his first-career shorthanded tally in last night's 5-3 victory.

Both teams traded scoring chances over the last few minutes of the final frame, and prior to a face-off win by Jean-Sebastien Dea to the left of Dubeau, the game remained deadlocked at 2-2. With the puck sitting just inside the left point, Borgen rocketed a shot through traffic to give the Amerks their first lead of the night with just 1:12 remaining in regulation.

The Senators used their only timeout after Borgen's goal and pulled Dubeau for the extra attacker. However, Malone intercepted a pass before capping off the win as he fired home his 12th goal of the season into the vacant net to erase any hope of a potential Belleville comeback.

Belleville opened the scoring just 2:57 into the contest as Lajoie scored his fourth of the season in the top corner of the net, but the Amerks held a 13-6 shot-advantage after the opening 20 minutes of play.

Midway through the second stanza, Rochester drew a roughing penalty behind the play to earn its first man-advantage of the contest. The Amerks used the extra skater to knot the score at one when Leier finished off a Casey Mittelstadt and Rasmus Asplund pass at the 10:13 mark.

The goal extended Leier's point streak to five games (2+4) while Mittelstadt, who was credited with the primary assist, has now totaled 22 points (9+13) since the turn of the New Year and shows 13 points (3+10) in 15 games.

Belleville, though, did not was any time to regain a 2-1 lead just 37 seconds later on Batherson's 16th goal of the season from Vitaly Abramov and Josh Norris, who recently returned from Ottawa.

The Senators carried the one-goal lead into the third period, but three straight goals from Rochester over the course of the final 20 minutes of play put the finishing touches on the two-game sweep.

*NOTES — Tonight's win over Belleville moved Rochester to within 6 points of the Senators for the top spot in the AHL's North Division standings with a game in hand. The Amerks, who have earned 15 out of a possible 22 points in their last 11 games, also hold a 4-point lead over Utica for second place in the Division, but the Comets do have a game in hand on Rochester...The Amerks return to the Blue Cross Arena on Wednesday, Mar. 11. when they welcome the Binghamton Devils at 7:05 pm...The Amerks have claimed at least one point in 13 of the first 18 meetings with the Senators dating back to the 2017-18 season. Rochester holds a record of 8-0-2-0 in the all-time road portion of the head-to-head series.

Local professional teams keeping eye on coronavirus

WHEC

By: Staff Report

Mar. 7, 2020

Two of the Rochester area's most popular professional sports teams are keeping an eye on the increasing spread of coronavirus.

It is a concern for sports teams across the country, amidst reports that baseball teams are limiting autographs and that some leagues including the NHL may cut back on access to locker rooms.

The Rochester Americans, who still have eight hockey games left in their regular season and a possibility of more in the playoffs, gave the following statement:

As always, the safety of our guests is our top priority at Blue Cross Arena. We are monitoring the situation and diligently reviewing all relevant information provided by federal, state and local health departments and agencies.

A representative for the Amerks said that they have not yet received any word on whether the American Hockey League will follow the NHL's possible actions involving locker room access.

While the Rochester Red Wings are still weeks away from the start of baseball's regular season, they say they will continue to monitor the situation as the season approaches. They also shared a statement from Minor League Baseball, which can be seen below:

"Minor League Baseball is closely monitoring developments surrounding the coronavirus outbreak around the world and will follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding safety and preventative measures that should be followed in Minor League Baseball stadiums. The health and safety of Minor League Baseball fans, players and executives is our top priority as we remain committed to providing the same great customer service and a safe, clean, family-friendly entertainment to which our fans have grown accustomed. Our thoughts are with those around the world who have been affected by this deadly outbreak."

B-Sens drop second straight to Amerks
Quinte News
By: David Foot
Mar. 7, 2020

For the second time in as many nights and for pretty much all of their six game season series, the Belleville Senators and Rochester Americans played another low-scoring, tight-checking game on Saturday night, with Rochester skating to a 4-2 win and sweeping the back-to-back games at CAA Arena over the weekend.

Once again the Amerks gain more ground on Belleville, who sit atop the North Division, with the B-Sens' lead shrinking to six points.

It's also the first time the Senators have lost back-to-back games in regulation since November 16 and 20.

Belleville's best moments were early in the game, after they couldn't score on a power play 15 seconds in, but would open the scoring after a brief delay around the 3:00 mark.

The Amerks' Casey Nelson collided with Kevin Porter at the Belleville line and the play was blown dead, as he was bleeding on the ice, which had to be cleaned up.

Off the ensuing faceoff Lajoie wired a laser beam wrist shot into the top right corner to make it 1-0.

Rochester would turn the tables halfway through the period, picking up the physical play along the boards, winning more puck battles and putting eight straight shots at the Belleville net, but Dubeau was able to handle the spurt of high workload.

Both teams would get some chances early in the period including a Rochester three-on-one rush shorthanded, which was thwarted by a glove save from Dubeau and an opportunity for Vitaly Abramov on the Amerks' doorstep, met by the blocker of Johansson.

Rochester would tie the game midway through the second on the power play after Leier's shot bounced up into the air and past Dubeau to even the score 1-1.

But Belleville would answer just 37 seconds later when Batherson one-timed his 16th of the year past Johansson, off a pass from Abramov out of the far corner and give the B-Sens the lead after two periods.

The Amerks tied the game 2-2 less than 3:00 into the third with Bryson's second in as many nights.

Zach Redmond curled around the Belleville net and fed a pass out to the near circle, with Bryson charging into it and driving a slap shot between the legs of Dubeau.

Rochester controlled the play through the period as well, even getting a couple of shorthanded chances, during a Senators' power play, then a couple more on a man advantage of their own, but again Dubeau continued to be solid in the Belleville goal.

The Amerks would break through with just 1:12 to go though, on a clean faceoff win in the Belleville zone.

The puck came straight back to William Borgen who slammed a long slapper by Dubeau.

Sean Malone added the empty netter to finish things off.

Senators Coach Troy Mann says he thought his team put together a better effort compared to Friday's loss.

He added that they'll have to refocus ahead of three divisional road games next week.

The Senators' three-game road trip has them stop in Laval (Wednesday), Utica (Friday) and Syracuse (Saturday).

Amerks make gain in AHL North with win over Belleville
Buffalo News
By: Staff Report
Mar. 6, 2020

Rochester gained a little ground in the AHL North Division standings by defeating first place Belleville, 5-3, Friday night at the CAA Arena in Belleville, Ontario.

The Americans (32-19-4-5) are now eight points behind the Senators (38-18-4-1) in the North Division.

C.J. Smith had three points - one goal and two assists - to lead the Amerks. Kevin Porter, Jacob Bryson, Andrew Ogilvie and Scott Wilson also scored for Rochester.

The Amerks outshot Belleville 44-28.

Smith's goal broke a 2-2 stalemate at the end of the second period. Rochester had taken a 1-0 lead to open the game but the Senators roared back in the second period.

First, Alex Formenton netted his 27th goal of the season just 32 seconds into the middle period to tie the game at one goal each.

Later, Belleville took its only lead of the night off Filip Chlapik's wrist shot, assisted by Darren Archibald.

Bryson was able to tie the game five minutes later, the first shorthanded goal of his Rochester career. He finished off a rebound originally shot by Sean Malone.

Chlapik tied the game at three each in the third period, but Ogilvie quickly broke the tie and Wilson put the nail in the coffin with less than two minutes to spare.

The Americans are back in Belleville today at 7 p.m. where they will have the chance to gain more ground on first place in the North.

How healthy scratch helped spur Sabres prospect Jacob Bryson
Buffalo News
By: Bill Hoppe
Mar. 6, 2020

Jacob Bryson saw an opportunity materialize late in a tie game Wednesday and pounced on it, aggressively leading the Americans' attack.

Three or four months ago, the Buffalo Sabres' defense prospect likely would have made the safe play with 11 minutes remaining in a tight contest.

"I might've been a little timid to make plays like that, just a new coaching staff, my first year pro," Bryson said following the Amerks' 3-1 loss to the Utica Comets in Blue Cross Arena. "It comes with confidence, and I've played a lot of games now. I kind of know what to expect, and I think I have the ability to make those plays."

So the rookie zoomed into the left circle and adroitly fed defenseman Zach Redmond in the slot before goalie Michael DiPietro stymied the chance.

The scoring opportunity illustrates Bryson's slick playmaking ability and growing confidence. Bryson, 22, has rapidly developed during the second half this season, earning big minutes and praise from Amerks coach Chris Taylor.

"He's headsy, he works hard, he's focused on what he wants to do, he keeps it pretty simple," Taylor said. "He doesn't try to do a lot of different things. He's simple and he gets his feet moving and he uses his strengths, and his strength is he can escape guys."

"He's very intelligent, but I just like how he makes simple plays, and all of a sudden that's the right play."

Bryson said: "I try to keep it simple, because I know that's part of our game plan, make the simple play if you can. Sometimes I like to do a little extra, like that play (Wednesday)."

On Wednesday, the 5-foot-9-inch, 179-pound Bryson also created winger Taylor Leier's power-play goal, carrying the puck to the Utica blue line before moving in front of DiPietro.

"He was our best defenseman," Taylor said of Bryson's performance.

If Bryson, a fourth-round pick in 2017 (99th overall), keeps progressing, he will likely earn a recall from the Sabres at some point.

"He's just the whole package," said Redmond, Bryson's defense partner all season. "He reads plays really well. He reads offensively and defensively what he needs to do. That was just a good showcase of everything he can do and what he's about."

"I'm excited for him. He's got a really good career ahead of him."

The potential genesis of Bryson's second-half surge came Jan. 22 in Cleveland.

Bryson looked comfortable in the American Hockey League from the get-go following his three-year career at Providence College. But after playing the Amerks' first 40 games, Taylor scratched Bryson and relayed a message, telling him he experienced something similar early in his playing career.

So Bryson studied the action on the ice in the Amerks' 3-2 overtime win against the Monsters from high above in Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse.

"I have never done that before," Bryson said of being a healthy scratch. "I mean, it was different. I think it did help. In the back of my head, I was like, 'I can be a really good player here,' and I was watching it from up top, and I think that helped a lot."

He added: "I guess from there out I've been playing good hockey lately."

Taylor said sometimes taking a step back helps a young player, especially someone fresh out of college. Bryson played only 42 games last season, with his college career ending at KeyBank Center in the NCAA semifinals.

"You're coming from college and you don't play a lot of games and probably things went a lot smoother because he probably dominated the league, and this is a tough league," he said.

Bryson has compiled two goals, 11 points and a plus-4 rating in 18 games since being scratched. Overall, he has two goals, 20 points and a plus-10 rating in 58 appearances.

He scored his elusive first AHL goal Feb. 19 in his 52nd outing before getting another the next game.

"That's kind of a confidence booster, and now that I know that I can put the puck in the back of the net, I can just kind of play with that in the back of your head," Bryson said. "It made the game a lot easier, I think, as far my confidence goes and ability to make plays."

Amerks notes

The Amerks, who have lost five of their last seven games (2-2-3), have scored two or fewer goals five times in that stretch. On Wednesday, they pumped 37 shots on goal. "We got to get more guys in front of the net, we got to get better shot selection," a frustrated Taylor said. "Our shot management, it seems like we're always going high. We don't get second and third opportunities." ... The Amerks play road games against the Belleville Senators on Friday and Saturday. ... Defenseman Casey Nelson returned Wednesday after an upper-body injury sidelined him 10 games. ... The Sabres returned goaltender Jonas Johansson to the Amerks on Friday.

Amerks cool off Belleville
C&C Worldwide
By: Staff Report
Mar. 6, 2020

Forward C.J. Smith (1+2) and defenseman Jacob Bryson (1+1) each recorded a multi-point game to help the Rochester Americans (32-19-4-5) to a 5-3 victory over the first-place Belleville Senators (38-18-4-1) at CAA Arena Friday night. The contest served as the first game of a weekend set between the North Division rivals.

With the win, the Amerks, who have earned 11 out of a possible 16 points in the last eight games, hold a two-point lead over the Comets for second place in the AHL's North Division standings. Rochester holds a 7-0-2-0 record all-time in the road portion of the head-to-head series while also claiming at least one point in 12 of the last 17 meetings with the Senators dating back to the 2017-18 season.

Along with both Bryson and Smith scoring their third and 12th goals of the season, respectively, Kevin Porter, Andrew Oglevie and Scott Wilson all found the back of the net for the Amerks. Goaltender Andrew Hammond (16-12-3) stopped 25 of the 28 shots he faced against his former team to improve to 16-12-3 in his 33rd appearance of the campaign.

Rookie forward Alex Formenton notched his 27th marker of the season in the first period while Filip Chlapik scored twice, his fourth and fifth goals in his last four games for Belleville. In his second-career AHL appearance, rookie netminder Alex Dubeau (1-1-0) made 39 saves of the 43 shots he faced but was dealt the loss.

Five minutes after seeing Belleville take a 2-1 lead midway through the second period, Rochester was called for its third penalty of the game inside the 7:00 mark. While on the penalty kill, however, a Senators defenseman broke his stick just inside the offensive blueline and Rochester skated the other way on an odd-man rush towards Dubeau.

Sean Malone carried the puck across the Belleville blueline before centering a pass to Bryson, who joined the rush. As the pass came to the front of the goal-mouth, the rookie defenseman steered in his shorthanded goal from Malone and Taylor Leier at the 14:28 mark to even the game at two goals apiece.

To close out the scoring in the middle period, Smith stepped out of the penalty box after serving a slashing infraction and picked up a loose puck that hopped over the Belleville defenseman's stick. As Smith raced in all alone towards Dubeau, he flipped in his 12th goal of the season over the netminder's glove to regain the Amerks' one-goal cushion going into the final 20 minutes of play.

In the final period, Belleville tied the game at the 14:18 mark, but Rochester was able to reclaim the lead for the third time of the night as Oglevie and Smith teamed up for a goal with 3:01 left in regulation.

As the puck was in the right corner of the Senators zone, Smith dug it out and dished a pass to Oglevie, who was stationed near the goal crease. The second-year pro gathered the puck before evading a diving Dubeau and slipped in his 15th goal of the season to give Rochester a 4-3 lead.

The Senators attempted one final push to force overtime and pulled their goaltender in favor of the extra attacker, but Wilson sealed the 5-3 victory as he deposited the puck into the vacant net.

Despite not capitalizing on their first power-play of the night midway through the opening stanza, the Amerks continued to press to open the scoring on the young netminder. Oglevie intercepted an intended outlet pass out of the Senators zone to begin Rochester's cycle with C.J. Smith and Porter. The trio used the defensive pairing of Jacob Bryson and Zach Redmond to keep Belleville hemmed inside its own zone. As Smith flung a shot from the left point, it caromed off the end boards and right onto the stick of Porter, giving Rochester a 1-0 lead.

The goal would snap a season-long 10-game scoring drought for Rochester's captain.

Both Belleville and Rochester each tallied a pair of goals during the second period, while Oglevie and Wilson each added a late marker to give the Amerks the 5-3 victory after the Senators evened the score at three.

Following a quick turnaround, the Amerks and Senators close out their two-game set and season series on Saturday, Mar. 7 with a 7 pm rematch at CAA Arena.

Smith with three-point effort, leads Americans over Senators

TSN/The Canadian Press

By: Staff Report

Mar. 6, 2020

C.J. Smith had a goal and two assists as the Rochester Americans downed the Belleville Senators 5-3 on Friday in American Hockey League action.

Kevin Porter, Scott Wilson, Andrew Oglevie and Jacob Bryson rounded out the offence for the Americans (32-19-9).

Oglevie broke a 3-3 tie at 16:56 of the third when he finished off a play started by Smith.

Filip Chlapik had a pair of goals while Alex Formenton also scored for the Senators (38-18-5), who had a three-game win streak halted.

Andrew Hammond made 25 saves for Rochester as Alex Dubeau stopped 39-of-43 shots for Belleville.

B-Sens outworked by Amerks in front end of double header

Quinte News

By: David Foot

Mar. 6, 2020

The Belleville Senators dropped their first of two meetings this weekend with the Rochester Americans (Buffalo Sabres) by a 5-2 margin on Friday night, being heavily outshot and not getting enough done on the offensive side of the ice.

Filip Chlapik had a pair of goals for the Senators in the loss, with Alex Formenton also notching a goal and Alex Dubeau making 39 saves on 43 shots.

Kevin Porter, Jacob Bryson, C.J. Smith, Andrew Oglevie and Scott Wilson all countered for Rochester and former Senator Andrew Hammond stopped 25 of 28 shots he faced.

With the win the Amerks close within eight points of the Senators for the North Division lead and hold a game at hand.

After a slow first 5:00 on both sides the Amerks began to pepper Dubeau in the Belleville net and eventually got one by him about halfway through the frame.

Dubeau made a pair of saves, but a rebound shot went wide off the end boards, catching him on the wrong side of the net and Kevin Porter tapped it in to open the scoring.

The Sens had a chance to counter about 14:00 in on a two-on-one with Jordan Szwarz, but Hammond made a nice stop on the far side of the net to keep the lead intact.

He would stop a shot from Drake Batherson in the slot moments later as well, with the Senators unable to get anything going offensively and allowing far too many chances the other way.

It only took Belleville 33 seconds of the second period to even the game, after Jean-Sebastien Dea took an early penalty.

Josh Norris won a faceoff back to Batherson, who slid the puck down to Jordan Szwarz on the goal line and he zipped a quick feed to Formenton, who beat Hammond upstairs for his 27th goal of the season.

Belleville took the lead at 9:02 when Filip Chlapik meandered over the Rochester blue line and surprised Hammond with a wrist shot from above the circles.

It was Chlapik's fourth goal in as many games and his ninth of the season.

But Rochester would tie the game with a shorthanded goal, on an unfortunate break, at 14:28 of the period.

Batherson tried to shoot from the far point and his stick shattered, sending the Amerks on a three-on-one rush, with Sean Malone backhanding a pass across to Bryson, who beat Dubeau high on the blocker side.

The Amerks would take the lead on another lucky bounce at the 18:00 mark as a Belleville power play expired.

The Senators had forced Hammond to make at least three great saves during the man advantage and the puck hopped over Jordan Murray's stick, just as CJ Smith left the box and he had a clear breakaway in on Dubeau, putting it between his legs to make it 3-2.

Chlapik's second of the game would come at a crucial time with just under 6:00 remaining in the third period.

He took a give-and-go pass from Joseph LaBate through the neutral zone, cut around a defender and used another quick wrister to tie the game 3-3.

But Rochester took back their lead just moments later when Oglevie skated out of a crowd in the corner and dodged Dubeau, who had sprawled out to try and poke check him, before slipping it into the empty net.

Wilson tacked on the empty netter from his own blue line with about 1:30 left to play to round out the scoring.

Senators Head Coach Troy Mann felt his team got outworked.

He did credit Dubeau for keeping his team in the game and giving them an opportunity to win.

The Senators and Amerks will go at it again on Saturday night, with a 6:50 p.m. broadcast time on 800 AM CJBQ for Eastern Overhead Doors and Deerhaven Farm and Garden.

Mann added that Joey Daccord won't be ready to return to the net until at least next week and didn't say whether Dubeau would get a second third straight start, or if Clint Windsor would make his AHL debut.