

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Monday | March 1, 2021 | 4:00 PM ET | Upstate Medical University Arena | Broadcast: ESPN Rochester, AHLTV



SYRACUSE CRUNCH

GAME NOTES

ROCHESTER AMERICANS



TODAY'S GAME OVERVIEW

Winners in four of their last five, the Rochester Americans (4-2-0-0) close out their three-game road swing this afternoon when they face-off against the Syracuse Crunch (1-4-1-0) for the second time in as many weeks at Upstate Medical University Arena.

The 4:00 p.m. contest will be the third of 12 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season after the Amerks came away with victories in each of the previous two get-togethers with the Crunch. The game will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

LAST TIME OUT

Despite a pair of goals by captain **Steven Fogarty**, the Amerks were on the wrong side of a 7-2 score against the Utica Comets (5-1-0-1) Friday night at the Adirondack Bank Center.

While Rochester saw its four-game win streak come to an end, the club has collected at least one point in 20 of the last 29 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 15-9-2-3 over that span.

In addition to Fogarty notching his first multi-goal effort since Dec. 7 of last season, veteran forward **Michael Mersch**, a seven-year pro and Calder Cup Champion, turned in his first multi-point effort as an Amerk with a pair of assists. The first helper from Mersch, who is expected to appear in his 400th professional game today, marked his 250th pro point. Through 399 career contests, Mersch has posted a combined 123 goals and 128 assists.

Forward **C.J. Smith** (2+4)earned an assist in Friday's game, marking his sixth point of the season, while defenseman **Alec McCrea** made his Amerks debut after signing a PTO with the team back on Feb. 8.

Goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** (3-1-0) managed the pipes for the fourth time this season and took his first loss of the campaign despite making 32 saves, snapping a personal three-game win streak in the process. The Finnish netminder has made 30-plus saves in three of his first four games of the season, including in each of his last three appearances.

After being held off the scoresheet in the Feb. 20 contest with the Crunch for just the first time this season, Rochester's power-play unit struck again on the man-advantage on Friday. Six games into the campaign, the Amerks' power-play has gone 8-for-25 with a 32.0% conversion rate that is currently third in the American Hockey League coming into this afternoon's tilt with Syracuse. The Amerks' eight goals on the man-advantage are fourth-most in the league, trailing only Chicago (10), Utica (9) and Grand Rapids (9).

LAAKSONEN LEADING THE WAY

Newcomer **Oskari Laaksonen** has quickly emerged as one of the top offensive defensemen in the AHL. Averaging juts under a point-per-game thus far, the first-year defenseman leads all Rochester blueliners with five points on five assists through his first six games of the season.

He's currently tied for the league league in assists among all first-year defensemen while having the third-most points despite having registered only one shot on goal.

Laaksonen has points in four of his first six games, including a season-high three assists in the 4-3 overtime win over Syracuse back on Feb. 10.

2020-21 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/ -
J-S Dea	5	3	4	7	0	4
C.J. Smith	5	2	4	6	2	0
Oskari Laaksonen	6	0	5	5	0	1
Steven Fogarty	6	4	0	4	8	-2

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	4	3-1-0	130	.890	3.91
Dustin Tokarski	2	1-1-0	68	.932	2.51

2020-21 CRUNCH OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/ -
Alex Barre-Boulet	3	3	1	4	0	2
Taylor Raddysh	6	1	3	4	0	-3
Aleksi Heponiemi	3	0	4	4	6	1
Gabriel Fortier	6	3	0	3	0	0

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Spencer Martin	1	0-1-0	29	.906	3.07
Samuel Montembeault	5	1-3-1	119	.875	3.43

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Syracuse Crunch

Rochester Americans

1-4-1-0	Record	4-2-0-0
1-3-0-0	Home Record	2-1-0-0
0-1-1-0	Road Record	2-1-0-0
1-4-1-0	Last 10 Games	4-2-0-0
1-0-0-0	Record When Scoring First	2-0-0-0
3.17 (13th)	Goals-For Per Game	3.67 (3rd)
3.67 (23rd)	Goals-Against Per Game	3.50 (T-19th)
13.6% (19th)	Power-Play	32.0% (3rd)
80.0% (T-16th)	Penalty Kill	70.8% (27th)
4-2 L vs. UTI	Last Game	7-2 L @ UTI
Mar. 3 @ WBS	Next Game	Mar. 3 vs. UTI



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YOUTH MOVEMENT

Rochester's roster features 12 incoming rookies ready to make a splash in their first season in the American Hockey League, most of whom are products of the NCAA in forwards **Brandon Biro** (Penn State), **Dawson DiPietro** (Western Michigan), **Dominic Franco** (Army West Point) and **Patrick Polino** (R.P.I.); defensemen **Ryan Jones** (Nebraska-Omaha), **Nick Welsh** (St. Mary's) **Griffin Luce** (Michigan) and **Mattias Samuelsson** (Western Michigan).

Jack Quinn, Buffalo's eighth overall pick in the 2020 NHL Draft, rounds out Rochester's rookie class this season. The highly touted 19-year-old is coming off an explosive 52-goal season for the Ottawa 67's in 2019-20, during which he became just the eighth player since 2000-01 to reach the 50-goal mark in his NHL Draft Year. He finished the season second in the Ontario Hockey League in goals and tied for fifth with 15 power-play tallies while also adding 37 assists. He made his professional debut with Rochester back on Feb. 18 against Utica, recording an assist on the game-tying third-period goal before scoring the shootout-clinching goal on a dazzling effort in the second round. Quinn is the third eighth overall pick of the Sabres in the last five years to spend time in Rochester, joining **Alexander Nylander** (2016) and **Casey Mittelstadt** (2017), and the second to make his pro debut with the Amerks following Nylander, who would spent parts of three seasons in Rochester.

TERRIFIC TRIO

After leading the Amerks in points (39) and holding a share of the team-lead in goals (15) during the 2019-20 season, his first in Rochester, forward **Jean-Sebastien Dea** is again atop the team's leaderboard this season with a team-high seven points points on three goals and four assists in just five games. Averaging nearly a point and a half per game, Dea is tied for 24th amongst all AHL forwards in scoring while he also shows a team-best plus-four on-ice rating.

Remi Elie scored twice in his first game of the season against Syracuse on Feb. 10 before adding an another against Utica on Feb. 18. The two-goal outing was the first career multi-goal effort for Elie, who has now scored 19 goals in 64 career games with the Amerks dating back to 2017-18.

Currently on recall with the Buffalo Sabres, fourth-year forward **C.J. Smith** shows six points (2+4) through his first five games to start the campaign. Smith, who was named as one of the Amerks' alternate captains for road games, has recorded 135 points (59+76) in 174 career contests since the start of the 2017-18 season.

Through the team's first six games this season, the trio has accounted for eight of the Amerks' 22 goals while combining for 30 shots and a plus-seven on-ice rating.

SCOUTING THE CRUNCH

The Crunch conclude a three-game homestand this afternoon as they host the Amerks for the second time this season at the Upstate Medical University Arena. Syracuse come into the matchup winless in its last five games, going 0-4-1-0 over that span since earning a 6-1 season-opening win over Utica on Feb. 6. The Crunch have been outscored 21-13 on their current five-game skid, which also includes back-to-back losses to Rochester.

Syracuse is fueled by forwards Alex-Barre-Boulet, Aleksi Heponiemi and Taylor Raddysh, all of whom have four points. Barre-Boulet, the AHL's top scoring rookie and leading goal-scorer for the 2018-19 season, shares the team-lead with three goals while Heponiemi has a team-high four assists.

AMERKS-CRUNCH 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
J-S Dea	2	2	1	3	0	0
Remi Elie	2	0	3	3	0	3
Oskari Laaksonen	2	0	3	3	0	3

SYRACUSE

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Boris Katchouk	2	1	1	2	2	3
Taylor Raddysh	2	1	1	2	0	1
Aleksi Heponiemi	1	0	2	2	2	1

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	1	1-0-0	2	.949	2.00
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	1	1-0-0	3	.870	2.93

2020-21 SEASON SERIES GAME-BY-GAME BREAKDOWN

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Feb. 10	OTW	4-3	26-23	2-3	1-1
Feb. 20	W	3-2	32-39	0-3	3-4
Mar. 1					
Mar. 6					
Mar. 17					
Apr. 2					
Apr. 3					
Apr. 7					
Apr. 21					
Apr. 24					
May 1					
May 15					

SERIES NOTABLES

The Amerks have scored a power-play goal in six of their last 10 games against Syracuse dating back to last season, going 9-for-37 (24.3%) with the man-advantage over that span.

Amerks goaltender **Dustin Tokarski** and defenseman **Dylan Blujus** both spent time with the Crunch after being drafted by the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2008 and 2012, respectively. Blujus played his first three seasons there.

The Amerks are 14-7-1-1 in their last 23 contests against Syracuse.

Syracuse head coach Benoit Groulx spent two seasons behind the Amerks bench from 2008-10, leading the team to a postseason berth in 2010.



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