

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Saturday | **March 6, 2021** | 7:00 PM ET | Upstate Medical University Arena | Broadcast: ESPN Rochester, AHLTV



SYRACUSE CRUNCH

GAME NOTES

ROCHESTER AMERICANS



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (5-3-0-0) make a return trip back to the Upstate Medical University Arena tonight to face-off with the North Division rival Syracuse Crunch (3-4-1-0) for the second time this week.

The 7:00 p.m. contest will be the fourth of 12 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season after the Amerks came away with victories in two of the previous three 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

On the strength of a pair of goals from defenseman **Casey Fitzgerald** and two assists by **Steven Fogarty**, the Amerks avenged last Friday's setback by doubling up the first-place Utica Comets with a 4-2 win in a North Division matchup Wednesday at The Blue Cross Arena.

With the victory, Rochester has collected at least one point in 21 of the last 30 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 16-9-2-3 over that span. Additionally, the Amerks earned their third straight win on home ice after dropping a 3-2 decision to the Comets on opening night.

With his first-career two-goal outing, including his first shorthanded marker, Fitzgerald is the first Amerks blueliner to score twice in a game since former defenseman **Casey Nelson** netted a pair as part of a three-point game back on Nov. 1, 2019 against Binghamton.

Fogarty recorded his second two-point game of the season while **Brett Murray** and **Arttu Ruotsalainen** scored their third and second goals of the slate, respectively. Murray has collected five points (2+3) in the last five games. **Michael Mersch** picked up an assist to push his point streak to four games after being held scoreless through his first three games.

Goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** (4-2-0) earned his third straight win in the Flower City while making 31 saves. The Finnish netminder has made 30-plus saves in four of his first six games of the season, which included a career-high 43 stops back on Feb. 12 in a 7-3 triumph at Cleveland.

POWER UP

Eight games into the campaign, Rochester's power-play has gone 10-for-33 with a 30.3% conversion rate that is currently fourth-best in the AHL. The Amerks' 10 goals on the man-advantage are tied for the second-most in the league with the Chicago Wolves, who have played in one more game than Rochester. The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in six of their first eight games this season and have registered multiple power-play tallies in four of their last seven outings overall.

LAAKSONEN LEADING THE WAY

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

He currently leads the league in assists among all first-year defensemen while having the third-most points despite having registered only five shots on goal. His six assists are also tied for the team lead all among skaters.

Laaksonen has points in five of his first eight 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	7	3	6	9	2	6
Steven Fogarty	8	4	2	6	8	-1
Brett Murray	8	3	3	6	2	-1
C.J. Smith	5	2	4	6	2	0

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	2	1-1-0	68	.932	2.51
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	6	4-2-0	182	.892	3.63

2020-21 CRUNCH OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Gabriel Fortier	8	3	2	5	0	2
Otto Somppi	8	3	2	5	4	-2
Boris Katchouk	8	1	4	5	6	2
Alex Barre-Boulet	3	3	1	4	0	2

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Spencer Martin	3	2-1-0	90	.928	2.29
Samuel Montembeault	5	1-3-1	119	.875	3.43

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Syracuse Crunch

Rochester Americans

3-4-1-0	.....	Record	.....	5-3-0-0
2-3-0-0	.....	Home Record	.....	3-1-0-0
1-1-1-0	.....	Road Record	.....	2-2-0-0
3-4-1-0	.....	Last 10 Games	.....	5-3-0-0
1-0-0-0	.....	Record When Scoring First	.....	2-1-0-0
3.13 (T-14th)	.....	Goals-For Per Game	.....	3.63 (5th)
3.25 (18th)	.....	Goals-Against Per Game	.....	3.38 (T-20th)
11.1% (T-24th)	.....	Power-Play	.....	30.3% (4th)
80.6% (16th)	Penalty Kill	76.5% (25th)
2-1 SOW @ WBS	Last Game	4-2 W vs. UTI
Mar. 12 @ UTI	Next Game	Mar. 10 @ 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 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 the team's top point-getter this season with a team-high nine points on three goals and six assists in seven games. Averaging more than a point per game, Dea is tied for 14th in scoring amongst all AHL skaters and has picked up at least one point in all but one game this season.

Remi Elie scored twice in his first game of the season against Syracuse on Feb. 10 before adding 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 66 career games with the Amerks dating back to 2017-18.

Currently on recall with the Buffalo Sabres taxi squad, 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 eight games this season, the trio has accounted for eight of the Amerks' 29 goals while combining for 35 shots and a plus-11 on-ice rating.

SCOUTING THE CRUNCH

Syracuse comes into the matchup having won two straight following a 2-1 shootout win over the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins on Wednesday. The back-to-back wins for the Crunch come on the heels of a five-game skid, during which they were outscored 21-13 while going 0-4-1-0 over that span, including a pair of losses to Rochester.

Syracuse is fueled by forwards Gabriel Fortier, Otto Somppi and Boris Katchouk, all of whom have five points while Alex Barre-Boulet sits nearby with four points (3+1). 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 Katchouk shares the lead with four assists. Somppi shows four points (2+2) in as many games, three of which have come against the Amerks.

AMERKS-CRUNCH 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Brett Murray	3	2	2	4	0	0
J-S Dea	3	0	4	4	0	3
Oskari Laaksonen	3	0	4	4	0	2

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	1	1-0-0	2	.949	2.00
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	2	1-1-0	7	.854	3.50

SYRACUSE

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Boris Katchouk	3	1	3	4	2	5
Otto Somppi	3	1	2	3	0	1
Taylor Raddysh	3	1	1	2	0	1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Spencer Martin	2	1-1-0	6	.909	3.03
Samuel Montembeault	1	0-0-1	4	.846	3.89

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	L	4-3	34-25	2-6	2-2
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 seven of their last 11 games against Syracuse dating back to last season, going 11-for-43 (25.6%) 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 14-8-1-1 in their last 24 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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