

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Friday | **April 23, 2021** | 7:05 PM ET | The Blue Cross Arena | Broadcast: ESPN Rochester, AHLTV, CW Rochester



UTICA COMETS

GAME NOTES

ROCHESTER AMERICANS



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (8-9-2-1) look to snap out of a four-game slide tonight as they welcome back the intrastate rival Utica Comets (9-6-0-1) for a North Division showdown at The Blue Cross Arena.

The 7:05 p.m. matchup will be the sixth of 14 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season with the Amerks earning at least one point in four of the last five games.

The matchup will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester and AHLTV. It will also be tape-delayed on CW Rochester.

LAST TIME OUT

After giving up a three-goal lead, the Amerks nearly clawed their way back but ultimately could not overcome a six-goal run by the Syracuse Crunch, who held on for a 7-6 win in a back-and-forth high-scoring affair Wednesday at The Blue Cross Arena.

Newcomers **Brandon Hawkins** and **Brent Gates, Jr.** both netted their first goals as part of multi-point efforts while **Brendan Warren** also scored his first at the American Hockey League level in his Amerks debut. Rookie blueliner **Ryan Jones** (0+2) added a pair of helpers while **Remi Elie** and **C.J. Smith** both scored for Rochester. **Patrick Polino** also recorded his first professional goal in the defeat.

With an assist on Gates, Jr.'s goal, **Casey Fitzgerald** established a new career-high in both assists (8) points (10). The second-year defenseman has recorded four helpers in the last four games and five over his last six outings.

First-year goaltender **Stefanos Lekkas** (0-3-1) made his third straight appearance in net and made 26 saves but suffered the loss.

The contest, which was Rochester's seventh straight home defeat, was the ninth of 12 meetings between the two teams this season. The Amerks, however, have recorded points in six of the first nine get-togethers with the Crunch throughout the season series.

POWER UP

Now 20 games into the season, Rochester's power-play has gone 21-for-78 with a 26.9% conversion rate that is currently third in the AHL. The Amerks' 21 goals on the man-advantage are most among North Division teams and only six off the AHL lead behind the San Diego Gulls and Chicago Wolves.

The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in 14 of their 21 games this season and have registered multiple power-play tallies in three overall, including a season-high three against Syracuse on April 3.

FINN-ISHING TOUCH

After leaving Finland in January as Liiga's top point-getter, forward **Arttu Ruotsalainen** has taken his first season in North America by storm, averaging a point per game with 13 points (5+8) through his first 13 games. The Oulu, Finland, native began the slate by recording a point in each of his first four games and now shows nine points (4+5) over his last seven outings, including goals in back-to-back games twice over that span.

Having since earned a recall to Buffalo back on April 5, Ruotsalainen has appeared in seven games with the Sabres while also being one of three Amerks players to make their NHL debuts this season. He has goals in two of his last three games and averaging over 16 minutes of ice time per game.

2020-21 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Brett Murray	19	6	9	15	9	-3
Remi Elie	19	8	6	14	10	-1
Arttu Ruotsalainen	13	5	8	13	2	-2
J-S Dea	11	4	9	13	2	7

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	2	1-1-0	68	.932	2.51
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	14	7-5-2	389	.888	3.60
Stefanos Lekkas	4	0-3-1	95	.826	5.01
Billy Christopoulos	2	0-0-0	7	.583	9.42

2020-21 COMETS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jonah Gadjovich	15	12	2	14	7	1
Lukas Jasek	16	2	12	14	8	-4
Sam Anas	12	0	14	14	2	-6
Nolan Stevens	15	3	8	11	2	3

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Jon Gillies	5	3-1-1	110	.902	2.37
Joel Hofer	5	2-3-0	156	.902	3.43
Jake Kielly	5	3-2-0	135	.882	3.50

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Utica Comets	Rochester Americans
9-6-0-1	Record 8-9-2-1
6-1-0-0	Home Record 3-6-2-0
3-5-0-1	Road Record 5-3-0-1
5-5-0-0	Last 10 Games 2-6-2-0
7-2-0-1	Record When Scoring First 4-5-1-0
3.25 (11th)	Goals-For Per Game 3.35 (8th)
3.31 (18th)	Goals-Against Per Game 4.15 (28th)
21.5% (8th)	Power-Play 26.9% (3rd)
81.3% (T-14th)	Penalty Kill 74.1% (28th)
3-0 W vs. BNG	Last Game 7-6 L vs. SYR
Apr. 25 @ SYR	Next Game Apr. 24 @ SYR



ROCHESTER AMERICANS | MEDIA RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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ROSTER MOVEMENT

Through 20 games this season, the Amerks have had 35 different players appear in at least one game, highlighted by rookie forward **Jack Quinn**, Buffalo's eighth overall pick in the 2020 NHL Draft. A total of 11 different rookies have suited up for Rochester, two of which are with the Sabres in defenseman **Mattias Samuelsson** and goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen**. In addition to Samuelsson, 13 players have been recalled to the big club while three have made their NHL debuts (Ruotsalainen, Samuelsson and **Jacob Bryson**).

Earlier this week, the Amerks signed forward **Brandon Hawkins** to a Professional Tryout (PTO) while defenseman **Nick DeSimone** was loaned to the club from the Vegas Golden Knights (NHL).

Hawkins joins the Amerks after registering 19 goals and 12 assists for 31 points in 28 games with the Fort Wayne Komets (ECHL) to begin the 2020-21 season. The 5-foot-10, 198-pound forward currently paces all Komets skaters in both goals and points in addition to leading the ECHL with 10 power-play tallies. He also 11 games at the American Hockey League level with the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins over the previous two seasons.

A native of East Amherst, DeSimone began the 2020-21 season with the San Jose Barracuda (AHL), where he recorded five assists in 14 games while serving as an assistant captain. The 6-foot-2, 185-pound blueliner was recently acquired by the Golden Knights on April 12 in exchange for a fifth-round selection in the 2022 NHL Draft from the San Jose Sharks.

MURRAY ON THE MOVE

Coming off an impressive rookie campaign with Rochester in 2019-20, **Brett Murray** continues to be one of the Amerks' most consistent point-getters this season. With an assist Wednesday against Syracuse, Murray officially took over the team's scoring lead with 15 points (6+9) in 19 games. More impressively, the second-year forward has not gone without a point in back-to-back games all season. Murray, who earned his first recall to the Sabres taxi squad earlier this season, posted a career-high three-point night back on April 3 in Syracuse as he tallied a pair of power-play goals to go with an assist, all of which came in the first period. He's also second among all Rochester skaters with eight points (4+4) while on the man-advantage this season, with more than half of his goals also coming on the power-play.

THE BEST OFFENSE IS A GOOD DEFENSE

Rochester comes into the week owning three of the AHL's top scoring rookie defensemen in **Oskari Laaksonen**, **Matentias Samuelsson** and **Ryan Jones**, all of whom have combined for 32 points (6+26) with just one game all season being missed between the three blueliners.

Among all AHL rookie defensemen, Laaksonen and Samuelsson rank tied for second and ninth in assists while also sitting in fourth and eighth in points, respectively. Samuelsson has four points (2+2) in his last five games, while Laaksonen has seven points (2+5) over his last nine outings, including back-to-back multi-point efforts over that span for the first time all season.

SCOUTING THE COMETS

Utica returns to the Flower City after blanking the Binghamton Devils 3-0 on Wednesday night. Prior to that, the Comets had won just two of its first six games following a 30-day layoff due to COVID-19 protocols.

The Comets come into the matchup winless in their last four road contests dating back to a 4-2 setback in Rochester on March 3. Over that span, Utica has been outscored 21-7 and held to just two or fewer goals in each game.

AMERKS-COMETS 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Steven Fogarty	5	3	2	5	8	0
Michael Mersch	5	2	3	5	6	4
Brett Murray	6	1	4	5	7	2

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	1	0-1-0	3	.912	3.02
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	5	3-1-1	16	.913	3.11

UTICA

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jonah Gadjovich	6	7	2	9	2	4
Lukas Jasek	6	1	4	5	8	-4
Sam Anas	3	0	5	5	0	0

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Jake Kielly	2	1-1-0	5	.914	2.42
Jon Gillies	4	2-1-1	10	.903	2.46

2020-21 SEASON SERIES GAME-BY-GAME BREAKDOWN

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Feb. 5	L	3-2	29-34	1-5	5-6
Feb. 18	SOW	4-3	27-38	2-4	1-4
Feb. 26	L	7-2	26-39	1-7	2-3
Mar. 3	W	4-2	23-33	0-2	7-8
Mar. 10	SOL	3-2	34-38	1-4	4-4
Mar. 13 (PPD)					
Mar. 19 (PPD)					
Mar. 24 (PPD)					
Mar. 28 (PPD)					
Apr. 9	W	4-2	25-36	1-5	4-5
Apr. 23					
Apr. 30					
May 12					
May 14					
May 16					

SERIES NOTABLES

Amerks defenseman **Dylan Blujus** spent the past three seasons with the Comets, recording 33 points (9+24) in 123 games. Utica assistant coach Daniel Tkaczuk had a brief seven-game stint with the Amerks in 2009-10.

Rochester has collected at least one point in 23 of the last 32 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 17-9-2-4.

The Amerks and Comets come into the matchup ranked first and second in the North Division with a 26.9% and 21.5% success rate on the power-play, respectively. They're also inside the top eight on the man-advantage in the entire American Hockey League.



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