

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Sunday | **May 16, 2021** | 5:05 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 (10-15-2-1) bring their historic 65th season in the AHL to a close tonight with one final go-around against the intrastate rival Utica Comets (16-10-0-1) at The Blue Cross Arena.

The 5:05 p.m. matchup will be the third of three get-togethers this week and the 11th meeting overall between the two teams this season. Utica has claimed each of the last four meetings, including Friday's 1-0 victory.

The contest 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 channel 16 beginning at 10 p.m. later tonight.

LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks held a 2-1 advantage in the second period against the Syracuse Crunch before allowing four straight goals and ultimately falling 5-3 to their intrastate rivals Saturday night at The Blue Cross Arena.

Rookie's **Brent Gates, Jr.** (1+1) and **Mattias Samuelsson** (0+2) both chipped in a pair of points as did defenseman **Nick DeSimone** (0+2). **Patick Polino** and **Remi Elie** rounded out the scoring for the Amerks, who finished with a 5-5-2-0 record over the 12-game season series with Syracuse.

Elie became the first Amerk this season to reach the 10-goal mark with his first-period power-play goal. It also marked the first time in his six-year pro career that Elie, who tied his previous career-high mark in 31 fewer games, scored 10 goals in a season. He's now tied for the team's scoring lead with 19 points (10+9) entering tonight's regular-season finale against Utica.

In his third appearance with Rochester since making his NHL debut, goaltender **Michael Houser** (0-3-0) made 22 saves but was dealt with the loss. In three starts in the Amerks crease, Houser has made 82 saves while posting a 2.79 goals-against average to go with a .911 save percentage.

POWER UP

Now 28 games into the season, Rochester's power-play has gone 27-for-104 with a 26.0% conversion rate that is currently third in the AHL. The Amerks 27 goals on the man-advantage are most among all North Division teams and eight off the AHL lead behind the San Diego Gulls.

The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in 18 of their first 28 games this season and have registered multiple power-play tallies in four overall, including a season-high three against Syracuse on April 3 and, most recently on April 23 against Utica.

LENDING A HAND

Despite having played just 28 games this season, the Amerks had 36 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 spent time with the Sabres in goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** and defenseman **Mattias Samuelsson**, the Sabres' second-round selection in 2018.

Coming into the final weekend of the season, the Amerks saw 13 different players recalled to the big club while five made their NHL debuts in **Jacob Bryson**, **Brett Murray**, **Arttu Ruotsalainen**, **Samuelsson** and **Luukkonen**. They combined to skate in 73 NHL games with the Sabres this season.

2020-21 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Remi Elie	27	10	9	19	14	-1
Brett Murray	26	9	10	19	23	-8
Michael Mersch	27	8	10	18	24	-1
Oskari Laaksonen	27	2	15	17	6	-6

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	2	1-1-0	68	.932	2.51
Michael Houser	3	0-3-0	82	.911	2.79
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	14	7-5-2	389	.888	3.60
Stefanos Lekkas	7	1-5-1	183	.863	4.32
Billy Christopoulos	5	1-1-0	75	.815	6.03

2020-21 COMETS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Lukas Jasek	27	4	19	23	8	-5
Sam Anas	22	3	19	22	2	-8
Jonah Gadjovich	19	15	3	18	17	5
Nolan Stevens	26	6	12	18	6	0

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Evan Fitzpatrick	3	2-0-0	53	.930	1.65
Jon Gillies	5	3-1-1	110	.902	2.37
Michael DiPietro	4	3-1-0	109	.916	2.52
Joel Hofer	10	4-6-0	272	.898	3.33
Jake Kielly	7	4-2-0	165	.878	3.62

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Utica Comets	Rochester Americans
16-10-0-1	Record 10-15-2-1
11-2-0-0	Home Record 3-9-2-0
5-8-0-1	Road Record 7-6-0-1
6-4-0-0	Last 10 Games 2-8-0-0
14-3-0-1	Record When Scoring First 6-5-1-0
3.26 (8th)	Goals-For Per Game 3.11 (14th)
3.16 (16th)	Goals-Against Per Game 4.11 (28th)
19.7% (9th)	Power-Play 26.0% (3rd)
81.1% (T-17th)	Penalty Kill 74.8% (26th)
1-0 @ ROC	Last Game 5-3 L vs. SYR
N/A	Next Game N/A



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BACK FROM BUFFALO

Earlier this week, the Sabres reassigned forwards **Steven Fogarty**, **Brett Murray** and **C.J. Smith**, defenseman **Mattias Samuelsson** and goaltender **Michael Houser** to Rochester for the team's final four games of the season.

Houser, who signed his first NHL contract with the Sabres on March 19, earned the start in Buffalo's final four games of the season, finishing with a 2-2-0 record, a 3.46 goals-against average, .901 save percentage and 127 saves. He picked up his first NHL win in his NHL debut on May 3 as he made 34 saves and then added 45 more stops the following night in Buffalo's 4-3 shootout victory over the New York Islanders.

Murray returns to the Flower City after making his NHL debut on May 6 against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Murray skated in two games with the big club, recording one shot on net while averaging 10:30 of ice time.

In his first 12 games with Buffalo, Samuelsson notched his first two points (0+2) in the NHL after making his debut on April 18 against the Penguins. Samuelsson registered 10 shots in nearly 18 minutes of ice time per game.

Despite being shuffled between Buffalo and Rochester, Smith has totaled 13 points (4+9) in 15 contests this season with the Amerks, including nine points (2+7) in his last 11 appearances.

In his first season with the organization, Fogarty, the Amerks team captain, collected three points (1+2) in nine games with Buffalo while also producing 10 points (7+3) in 15 contests with Rochester.

MERSCH, ELIE HEATING UP DOWN FINAL STRETCH

With an assist in Rochester's 5-3 loss with Syracuse last night, veteran forward **Michael Mersch** has tallied 11 points (5+6) over his last 13 outings, including a season-high four-point effort on April 23 with a pair of goals and two assists. It was Mersch's best single-game performance since a career-high five-point effort (3+2) back on March 27, 2015, the very same year he would lead the Manchester Monarchs to the Calder Cup.

With his goal last night, **Remi Elie** leads all Amerks skaters with a team-high 10 goals and is also tied for the team lead in overall scoring with only **Brett Murray** with 19 points (10+9) in 27 games. Murray, meanwhile, is at a close second with nine goals, matching the total from his rookie season in 30 fewer games. Six of his nine goals this season have come on the power-play.

THE BEST OFFENSE IS A GOOD DEFENSE

Rochester comes into the weekend owning three of the AHL's top scoring rookie defensemen in **Oskari Laaksonen**, **Mattias Samuelsson** and **Ryan Jones**, all of whom have combined for 37 points (6+31) this season.

Laaksonen leads all Rochester skaters and ranks fourth among all AHL rookie defensemen with 15 assists. His 17 points are also fourth-most among all first-year blueliners. Samuelsson, meanwhile, is tied for 11th among AHL rookie defensemen in assists (10) and points (13). He enters play tonight with two multi-point outings over his last four games dating back to April 17.

SCOUTING THE COMETS

The Comets come into the matchup winners in six of their last nine games dating back to a 2-1 shootout victory over the Syracuse Crunch on April 28. Utica posted a pair of shutouts to go with perfect a 3-0-0-0 record this week while outscoring its opponents 7-1 during that span.

AMERKS-COMETS 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Michael Mersch	9	4	5	9	10	3
Brett Murray	10	3	4	7	21	-1
Remi Elie	9	2	4	6	4	-3

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Michael Houser	2	0-2-0	3	.952	1.55
Dustin Tokarski	1	0-1-0	3	.912	3.02
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	5	3-1-1	16	.913	3.11
Billy Christopoulos	1	0-1-0	6	.824	6.25
Stefanos Lekkas	1	0-1-0	7	.825	7.02

UTICA

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jonah Gadjovich	8	8	3	11	12	7
Sam Anas	7	2	6	8	0	-1
Lukas Jasek	10	2	5	7	8	-3

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Evan Fitzpatrick	1	1-0-0	0	1.000	0.00
Michael DiPietro	2	2-0-0	2	.964	1.00
Jon Gillies	4	2-1-1	10	.903	2.46
Jake Kielly	3	2-1-0	10	.885	3.27

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
Apr. 9	W	4-2	25-36	1-5	4-5
Apr. 23	L	7-5	29-35	3-5	3-6
Apr. 30	L	7-1	21-40	0-4	5-7
May 12	L	3-1	34-37	0-2	4-4
May 14	L	1-0	33-27	0-6	3-3
May 16					

SERIES NOTABLES

Rochester has collected at least one point in 23 of the last 35 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 17-12-2-4.

The Amerks and Comets come into the matchup ranked first and second in the North Division with a 26.0% and 19.7% success rate on the power-play, respectively. They're also inside the top nine on the man-advantage in the entire American Hockey League.

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.



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