



AMERKS DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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Amerks Comeback Falls Just Short In Syracuse
By Staff Report
Amerks.com

Despite erasing a two-goal deficit, the Rochester Americans (4-3-0-0) saw their comeback attempt fall just short in a 4-3 loss to the Syracuse Crunch (2-4-1-0) Monday afternoon at Upstate Medical University Arena.

The contest was the final of Rochester's three-game road swing as well as the third of 12 scheduled meetings against the Crunch this season. Although the Amerks came away with victories in each of the previous two get-togethers against Syracuse, they suffered the loss today, pushing their record to 14-8-1-1 in their last 24 games against their longtime North Division rival.

Forward Ryan Scarfo (1+0) got the scoring started for the Amerks in the first period with his second goal of the season, and the second in as many games against Syracuse, while Michael Mersch (1+0), who appeared in his 400th professional game, and Andrew Oglevie (1+0) each scored on the power-play. Ryan Jones (0+1), Oskari Laaksonen (0+1), Jean-Sebastien Dea (0+1), Casey Fitzgerald (0+1), Brett Murray (0+1) and Arttu Ruotsalainen (0+1) all added assists, while rookie defenseman Griffin Luce (0+0) made his American Hockey League debut.

Goaltender Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen (3-2-0) dropped his second straight game of the season while making 21 saves.

The Crunch offense was powered by a pair of AHL firsts, with Devante Stephens (1+1) and John Ludvig (0+1) notching their first in the league. Forward Otto Somppi (1+1) had his first multi-point outing of the season, while Peter Abbandonato (1+0) also netted his first of the season. In just his second game of the year, Spencer Martin (1-1-0) recorded his first win, stopping 31 of the 34 shots he faced in net.

After three consecutive goals, Syracuse took a 3-1 lead early on in the second period.

Stephens tacked on his second point of the night with his first goal in the American Hockey League, giving the Crunch their first lead in a game since their opening night contest against the Utica Comets. Just 4:44 later after adding an assist on the goal prior, Somppi added his second point of the night to give Syracuse a two-goal cushion and his first multi-point effort of the 2020-21 season.

As Rochester's third power-play chance of the game ensued, they began to inch back at the Crunch lead at the 11:37 mark of the middle frame.

From just inside the blueline, Fitzgerald connected with Dea, who was positioned right above the left face-off circle. Dea then sniped a shot towards the Crunch net that Mersch redirected over the blocker of Martin to pull Rochester within one.

With Mersch's goal on the man-advantage, the Amerks have scored a power-play marker in seven of their last 11 games against Syracuse dating back to last season, going 9-for-37 (24.3%) over that span.

The Amerks then knotted the matchup in the third period with back-to-back power-play markers.

From outside the right face-off dot, Ruotsalainen sent a pass to Murray, who was stationed to the right of Spencer. Murray then set up Oglevie for a one-time feed that made its way through traffic and past the Syracuse netminder for his second goal of the year to make it a 3-3 game.

With just 5:31 to go in the third frame, the Crunch took their second lead of the game heading into the final minutes of the contest.

After battling for the puck in the near corner, Ryan Lohin (0+1) sent a pass to Ludvig in-between the face-off dots and he picked the upper corner over Luukkonen's glove to seal the 4-3 win for Syracuse.

With a combined 18 shots in the first period between the two clubs, it was Rochester who lit the lamp first.

On a pass from Laaksonen in the defensive zone, Jones moved the puck up the ice until he could slip a pass to Scarfo. From the neutral zone, Scarfo then drove the puck to the left face-off dot and roofed a shot to get the Amerks on the board just 7:08 into the first stanza.

Syracuse evened up the score with 3:36 to go when Abbandonato tallied his first goal of the season and just his seventh in the AHL.

The Amerks return home on Wednesday, March 3 when they host the intrastate rival Utica Comets in a North Division showdown at The Blue Cross Arena. Game time is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start and will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Amerks lose to Crunch in close game
By Staff Report
WHEC

The Rochester Americans won their first two games against the Syracuse Crunch.

Monday night was a different story, but the Amerks didn't let the win go without a fight.

They were all tied up by second period, but the Crunch managed to walk away with a 4-3 win.

Watch the video in the player above for highlights from the game.

Brandon Biro's Lifelong Passion Propels Professional Hockey Career

By Alex Bauer

Onward State

When Brandon Biro was a child, his family naturally signed him and his brother Jordan up for youth soccer. After all, both of his parents, Dawn and Rob Biro, played collegiately. His father even played professionally for a year after college.

Additionally, the Biro brothers played youth hockey, too. Brandon first put on skates at age 2 before getting involved with organized hockey around age four.

If you were to ask Rob which sport Brandon was better at, he would say soccer. But both brothers, especially Brandon, took to hockey like it was second nature.

"He liked soccer, and he loved hockey," Rob said. "So, at about 14, he had to choose between the two, and it wasn't a real issue, so he chose hockey."

Brandon was always smaller than his counterparts. When he started playing junior hockey, the Canada native clocked in at only 130 pounds. However, that didn't stop him from rising through the ranks with the Spruce Grove Saints in the Alberta Junior Hockey League, winning the AJHL Rookie of the Year award in the 2014-15 season before heading to Penn State to play hockey in 2016.

Upon leaving Penn State, Brandon ranked eighth all-time in goals (41), fourth all-time on the program's career point list (116), and third on the career assists list (75.) Brandon was named captain during his senior season with the program in 2019, and in March 2020, he signed his first professional contract with the Buffalo Sabres.

While no hockey player expects their rookie professional season to be easy, they certainly never expected a pandemic to be an obstacle they would need to overcome. Instead of a typical October start date, the NHL kicked off its 2021 season on January 13, and the AHL started its season on February 5.

Biro, who is now playing in the AHL with Rochester Americans, didn't know where he'd end up as he sat in the hotel room on December 26.

Thirteen hours prior to his arrival in Buffalo, Biro received notice that he would be heading to training camp and would need to leave his hometown of Sherwood Park, Alberta, for Buffalo, New York at 9 a.m. the next morning.

"[I] kind of scrambled and packed everything in a couple hours and didn't get a lot of sleep," Biro said. "Next thing you know, I was on a flight out to Buffalo."

After a two-week quarantine in a hotel room in Buffalo, Biro was able to get on the ice and experience his first professional training camp.

"It's been really fun. It's been challenging," Biro said in early January. "Every day, we go to the rink in the morning — get a COVID test done, usually get two meals. . . Eat breakfast, eat lunch. Go back to the rink, have a workout, and then go to practice right after that. Pretty much been the same every day since camp started."

Playing with bonafide NHLers isn't something many hockey players get to experience, nor is playing under coaches within an NHL system. For Biro, the most rewarding part of training camp was the ability to learn and grow as a player.

"Just getting a chance to learn as much as you can and try to take notes at the end of each day, some advice that you might have gotten from the coaches," Biro said. "I think that's been probably the most rewarding thing, is just having this wealth of knowledge from guys who have been here — have access to players and coaches that I might not have had access to in the past."

At the end of the third week of training camp, Biro found out that he would be playing with the Rochester Americans of the AHL.

"Overall, it was a great experience to get to play with guys that have been in the league for so long and see what they do on a daily basis and kind of what it takes to be a permanent NHL player," he said. "I tried to learn as much as I could from this camp, and enjoyed every second of it."

Joining former Penn Stater Brett Murray down in Rochester, Biro started his fourth week of training camp and first week of AHL training camp adjusting to the schedule and life in Rochester.

"The first few practices last week were a lot of getting used to drills again, and passes, and the speed of everything — because they haven't had any real practices since it ended last year," Biro said. "It was definitely a benefit to be in Buffalo, cause we had those couple weeks of practice. . . It was good to meet new guys and see some new fresh faces and just excited to get the game going here."

Life outside of training camp in Buffalo was usually spent laying in bed watching Netflix or speaking with family and friends. Biro would turn on his favorite show, "The Office," if he needed background noise. Life outside training camp in Rochester was almost identical, with the exception of the added excitement of looking for an apartment with Murray.

One of nine former class of 2020 Penn State players to sign an NHL contract, Biro still keeps in touch with his old roommates, Liam Folkes, Peyton Jones, and Sucece, among other former teammates. Outside of speaking with his parents and former teammates, Biro regularly speaks with his childhood friend, Riley Perka.

Having known the oldest Biro brother since kindergarten, Perka also played hockey with Biro when they were around eight or nine years old through Bantam. Perka said Biro's drive is what sticks out most to him.

"He's just really competitive and passionate," Perka said. "He just has a lot of fun doing whatever it is, it doesn't even have to be hockey-related. . . He always plays to win, and he has that competitive drive. I think he gets that from his work ethic, and I know that his brother, Jordan, he's the same way too."

"He put in a lot of work to get to where he is. Where he is now, at his first pro camp. . . it's not a surprise that he's there, that he signed a contract. Having the chance to play with him, and know him, and skate with him over the years, he's definitely put in a ton of work to get to where he is."

Rob agrees with Perka. Outside of hard work and determination, Biro's parents believe he's been able to get to this point in his career by playing hockey "the right way."

"He doesn't cheat, he doesn't try to get points, he doesn't leave the zone early. He's always playing the right way," Rob said. "As a parent, it's been fantastic watching him start living the dream that he's been working for the past 15 to 17 years."

A day during AHL training camp would start out with a COVID test, followed by breakfast, a team meeting, an off-ice warmup, a long practice, a workout, and end with lunch. Biro, like many other players on his team, looked forward to the start of the season.

"I'm excited," Biro said on January 25, only 10 days before the Rochester Americans would play their first game. "I'm honestly not really too nervous. I think being at Buffalo's camp, been around a lot of the same guys, and skating with them for over a month now. Definitely feel pretty comfortable with the guys and the coaching staff."

"Been practicing a lot and working out a lot, so it's pretty taxing on your body without actually getting into any games. It'll be fun. I know we only play the same three teams all season, so that'll be I'm sure a little bit repetitive, but we're playing hockey so I'm looking forward to it."

On Friday, February 12, Biro played his first professional game.

His parents, who never missed any of his games, were watching from their home in Sherwood Park, Alberta.

When Biro started playing hockey, he never complained about needing to get up at 5:15 in the morning to go to the rink for practice at 6 a.m. When he had to choose between hockey and soccer at age 14, picking hockey was a no-brainer. His love for the sport was, and still is, unwavering.

"Brandon had a passion to play," Rob said. "If there was a day off, he was out playing hockey. If there was extra ice (time), he was going to extra ice (time). It wasn't like, 'I think I should go,' or, 'This would help me.' It was, 'I wanna go.' Everything he did was because he absolutely loved it."

Syracuse Crunch edges Rochester Amerks, 4-3
By Staff Report
Syracuse.com

The Syracuse Crunch snapped a five-game skid with a 4-3 win over the Rochester Americans on Monday at the Upstate Medical University Arena.

After giving up the first goal, the Crunch rattled off three consecutive markers by Peter Abbandonato, Devante Stephens and Otto Somppi. Rochester came back to tie the game, but John Ludvig netted the game-winner with his first professional goal to secure the victory. The Crunch is now 2-4-1-0 on the season and 1-1-1-0 in the 12-game season series with the Amerks.

Goaltender Spencer Martin turned aside 31-of-34 shots between the pipes for the Crunch. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 21-of-25 in net for the Amerks. Rochester went 2-for-6 on the power play, while Syracuse was 0-for-2.

The Amerks opened scoring 7:08 into the game. Martin made the initial stop, but the puck slid behind him for Ryan Scarfo to poke in during a battle in front of the cage.

The Crunch knotted the score late in the first period. Luukkonen made the save on Gabe Fortier's redirection but left the rebound loose for Abbandonato to backhand in.

Syracuse potted two more early in the second period to build a two-goal lead. At 2:05, Stephens tipped in Boris Katchouk's left side shot as he cut down the slot for his first AHL goal. Four minutes later, Somppi skated the puck into the zone and sent home a wrister from the left circle.

Rochester stole one back halfway through the middle frame when Michael Mersch tipped Jean-Sebastien Dea's left point shot while on the power play.

The Amerks tied the game with another power-play goal at 6:35 of the third period. After some quick passing, Andrew Oglevie fired a one-timer in from the right circle.

Syracuse went back on top when Ludvig netted the game-winner with 5:31 remaining in the game with a wrister from the slot.

The Crunch travel to face the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins at 5 p.m. Wednesday.