

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Wednesday | **March 3, 2021** | 7:05 PM ET | The Blue Cross Arena | Broadcast: ESPN Rochester, AHLTV



UTICA COMETS

GAME NOTES

ROCHESTER AMERICANS



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (4-3-0-0) are back on home ice looking to snap out of a two-game skid tonight as they host the first-place Utica Comets (5-1-0-1) in a North Division matchup at The Blue Cross Arena.

Tonight's 7:05 p.m. contest will be the fourth of 14 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season and will also be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester as well as AHLTV.

Rochester is 1-2-0-0 in the season series against the Comets after dropping a 7-2 decision in the teams' previous get-together in Utica this past Friday. The contest remained a 2-2 tie through 40 minutes until the Comets erupted for a season-high five goals during the final period to snap the Amerks' four-game win streak.

LAST TIME OUT

Despite erasing a two-goal deficit, the Amerks saw their comeback attempt fall just short in a 4-3 loss to the Syracuse Crunch Monday afternoon.

With the loss, Rochester's second consecutive after winning four straight, the club shows a 14-8-1-1 record in its last 24 contests against Syracuse.

Forward **Ryan Scarfo** 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 the Crunch. **Andrew Oglevie** also added his second of the slate while on the power-play.

Veteran forward **Michael Mersch**, who appeared in his 400th professional game, rounded out the scoring for Rochester with his first goal as an Amerk. After being held off the scoresheet in his first three games with Rochester, the four-time 20-goal scorer and Calder Cup champion has earned four points in his last three outings with a goal and three assists over that span.

Goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** (3-2-0) dropped his second straight game of the season while making 21 saves. The Finnish netminder has made 30-plus saves in three of his first five games of the season, which included a career-high 43 stops back on Feb. 12 in a 7-3 triumph at Cleveland.

POWER UP

Seven games into the campaign, Rochester's power-play has gone 10-for-31 with a 32.3% conversion rate that is currently third-best in the American Hockey League. The Amerks' 10 goals on the man-advantage are tied for the most in the league with the Chicago Wolves, who have played in two more games than Rochester. The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in six of their first seven games this season and have registered multiple power-play tallies in four of their last six 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 seven games of the season.

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

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

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	2	1-1-0	68	.932	2.51
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	5	3-2-0	151	.883	3.95

2020-21 COMETS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

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

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Jon Gillies	4	3-0-1	91	.910	2.20
Jake Kielly	3	2-1-0	82	.863	4.22

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Utica Comets

Rochester Americans

5-1-0-1.....	Record	4-3-0-0
2-0-0-0.....	Home Record	2-1-0-0
3-1-0-1.....	Road Record	2-2-0-0
5-1-0-1.....	Last 10 Games	4-3-0-0
5-0-0-1.....	Record When Scoring First	2-1-0-0
4.14 (2nd).....	Goals-For Per Game	3.57 (T-3rd)
3.29 (16th).....	Goals-Against Per Game	3.57 (T-20th)
28.1% (5th).....	Power-Play	32.3% (3rd)
78.4% (21st).....	Penalty Kill	73.1% (28th)
4-2 W @ SYR.....	Last Game	4-3 L @ SYR
Mar. 10 vs. ROC.....	Next Game	Mar. 6 @ SYR



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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 the team's top point-getter this season with a team-high eight points points on three goals and five assists in six games. Averaging just over a point per game, Dea is tied for 19th in scoring amongst all AHL skaters and 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 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 65 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 seven games this season, the trio has accounted for eight of the Amerks' 25 goals while combining for 34 shots and a plus-seven on-ice rating.

SCOUTING THE COMETS

Utica returns to Rochester winners in four of its last five, including each of the last two. The Comets, who boast a 4-0-1-0 record since suffering a 6-1 loss on Feb. 6, have scored 29 goals this season, which is tops in the North Division and fifth overall in the AHL.

Utica's well-balanced offense features four different players with seven points. Among those include third-year pro Jonah Gadjovich, who's currently tied for third in the AHL with six goals, four of which have come against Rochester.

Currently on recall with St. Louis, reigning AHL MVP Sam Anas has recorded a team-high seven assists, which are tied for sixth-most in the AHL.

AMERKS-COMETS 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Steven Fogarty	3	3	0	3	6	-1
J-S Dea	2	1	1	2	0	-2
Arttu Ruotsalainen	3	1	1	2	0	-1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	1	0-1-0	3	.912	3.02
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	2	1-1-0	10	.870	4.84

UTICA

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jonah Gadjovich	3	4	1	5	2	4
Kole Lind	3	2	1	3	4	1
Sven Baertschi	3	1	2	3	2	1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Jon Gillies	3	2-0-1	7	.914	2.27

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					
Mar. 10					
Mar. 13					
Mar. 19					
Mar. 24					
Mar. 28					
Apr. 9					
Apr. 23					
Apr. 30					
May 12					
May 14					

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 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.

The Amerks and Comets come into the matchup ranked first and second in the North Division with a 32.3% and 28.1% success rate on the power-play, respectively. They're also among the top three teams in goals for this season.



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