

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Saturday | **April 24, 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 (8-10-2-1) look to snap out of a five-game slide tonight as they meet up with the intrastate rival Syracuse Crunch (13-8-1-0) for a North Division showdown at Upstate Medical Arena.

The 7:00 p.m. matchup will be the 10th of 12 scheduled meetings between the two teams this season and second in four days with the Amerks boasting a 4-3-2-0 record thus far.

The matchup will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester and AHLTV.

LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks scored three power-play goals and five overall, but were unable to snap their four-game slide Friday night in a 7-5 loss to the Utica Comets (10-6-0-1) at The Blue Cross Arena.

The contest, which was Rochester's eighth straight home defeat, was the sixth of 14 meetings between the two teams this season. Prior to Friday, the Amerks earned at least one point in four of the last five games versus the Comets and in 23 of the last 33 games overall dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 17-10-2-4 over that span.

Veteran forward **Michael Mersch** turned in a season-high four points (2+2), his most since a career-best five-point outing (3+2) back on March 27, 2015 as a member of the Manchester Monarchs.

Remi Elie and **C.J. Smith** both tallied a pair of helpers while **Brett Murray**, **Brendan Warren** and **Dominic Franco** all found the scoresheet with a goal. **Oskari Laaksonen**, **Casey Fitzgerald** and **Brent Gates, Jr.** all recorded an assist in the defeat.

In his first-career start in the American Hockey League and third appearance overall, rookie goaltender **Billy Christopoulos** made 27 saves but took the loss.

POWER UP

Now 21 games into the season, Rochester's power-play has gone 24-for-83 with a 28.9% conversion rate that is currently third in the AHL. The Amerks' 24 goals on the man-advantage are most among all North Division teams and only three off the AHL lead behind only the San Diego Gulls.

The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in 15 of their 22 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, last night against Utica.

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 on April 5, Ruotsalainen has appeared in eight games with the Sabres while also being one of four Amerks players to make their NHL debuts this season. He has goals in three of his last four games and averaging over 16 minutes of ice time per game with the Sabres.

2020-21 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Remi Elie	20	8	8	16	12	-1
Brett Murray	20	7	9	16	9	-5
Michael Mersch	20	7	8	15	16	-2
Oskari Laaksonen	20	2	12	14	4	-5

GOALTENDER

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	3	0-1-0	11	.756	7.38

2020-21 CRUNCH OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Boris Katchouk	21	10	16	26	18	21
Otto Somppi	22	10	11	21	16	16
Taylor Raddysh	18	8	13	21	4	9
Alex Barre-Boulet	10	8	4	12	0	9

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Christopher Gibson	2	2-0-0	62	.925	2.51
Samuel Montembeault	12	7-4-1	306	.900	2.85
Spencer Martin	9	4-4-0	224	.900	3.10

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Syracuse Crunch	Rochester Americans
13-8-1-0	Record 8-10-2-1
6-5-0-0	Home Record 3-7-2-0
7-3-1-0	Road Record 5-3-0-1
7-3-0-0	Last 10 Games 2-7-1-0
9-3-0-0	Record When Scoring First 4-5-1-0
3.77 (3rd)	Goals-For Per Game 3.43 (8th)
3.00 (T-11th)	Goals-Against Per Game 4.29 (28th)
18.2% (15th)	Power-Play 28.9% (3rd)
77.38 (T-21st)	Penalty Kill 72.5% (28th)
7-6 W @ ROC	Last Game 7-5 L vs. UTI
Apr. 25 vs. UTI	Next Game Apr. 30 @ UTI



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ROSTER MOVEMENT

Through 21 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 four have made their NHL debuts (Ruotsalainen, Samuelsson, Luukkonen 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 a goal last night against Utica, Murray has a share of the team's scoring lead with 16 points (7+9) in 20 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 tied among all Rochester skaters with nine points (5+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 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 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 eight points (2+6) over his last nine outings, including back-to-back multi-point efforts over that span for the first time all season.

SCOUTING THE CRUNCH

Syracuse comes into the matchup on the heels of a 7-3 win over the Amerks Wednesday night. The Crunch are 7-3-0-0 in their last 10 games, and since the start of March, have gone 12-4-0-0 while outscoring their opponents 61-44 over that span.

Currently tied for the AHL's longest active point streak at 12 games (9+12), Boris Katchouk leads the Crunch in goals (10), assists (16) and points (26).

AMERKS-CRUNCH 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Brett Murray	8	5	4	9	2	1
Arttu Ruotsalainen	5	3	5	8	2	0
Oskari Laaksonen	8	1	7	8	2	3

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Dustin Tokarski	1	1-0-0	2	.949	2.00
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	6	3-2-1	21	.864	3.55
Stefanos Lekkas	2	0-1-1	11	.823	5.43

SYRACUSE

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Boris Katchouk	9	5	9	14	8	10
Taylor Raddysh	8	4	5	9	2	4
Otto Somppi	9	3	6	9	6	6

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Samuel Montembeault	5	4-0-1	15	.876	3.00
Spencer Martin	5	1-3-0	18	.856	4.47

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	W	4-2	27-29	2-5	6-8
Mar. 26	OTL	4-3	25-29	1-3	2-2
Apr. 2	L	6-2	27-29	1-4	3-5
Apr. 3	W	5-3	27-30	3-4	1-1
Apr. 7	OTL	4-3	28-21	0-3	3-4
Apr. 21	L	7-6	20-33	0-2	3-4
Apr. 24					
May 1					
May 15					

SERIES NOTABLES

The Amerks have scored a power-play goal in 11 of their last 17 games against Syracuse dating back to last season, going 18-for-64 (28.1%) with the man-advantage over that span.

Amerks defenseman Dylan Blujus spent time with the Crunch after being drafted by the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2012. He played his first three seasons with the Syracuse from 2014-2017, recording 49 points (11+38) in 151 games.

Rochester has recorded points in six of the first nine games this season and have posted a 16-10-3-1 record in its last 30 contests against Syracuse.



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