

# ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

Friday | **April 30, 2021** | 7:00 PM ET | Adirondack Bank Center | Broadcast: ESPN Rochester, AHLTV



UTICA COMETS

## GAME NOTES

ROCHESTER AMERICANS



### TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (8-11-2-1) look to snap out of a season-long six-game slide tonight as they meet up with the intrastate rival Utica Comets (11-7-0-1) for a North Division showdown at the Adirondack Bank Center.

The 7:00 p.m. matchup will be the seventh meeting between the two teams this season with the Amerks earning at least one point in four of the last six games.

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

### LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks erased a three-goal deficit midway through the second period but could not complete the comeback as the club saw its winless streak reach six straight games following a 5-3 setback to the Syracuse Crunch Saturday at Upstate Medical University Arena.

The contest was the 10th meeting between the two teams this season. Prior to the matchup, the Amerks had recorded points in six of the first nine get-togethers with the Crunch this season while also posting a 16-10-3-1 record in their last 30 games against Syracuse.

In his Amerks debut, defenseman **Nick DeSimone** led the club with a pair of assists. Forwards **Remi Elie**, **Dominic Franco** and **Michael Mersch** all scored for the second straight night as the Amerks rallied back from a 3-0 first-period deficit before Syracuse tacked on two more in regulation.

**C.J. Smith**, **Brandon Hawkins**, **Brent Gates, Jr.**, and **Brendan Warren** all added an assist.

In his second consecutive start, goaltender **Billy Christopoulos** (0-1-0) allowed three goals on five shots before being replaced by **Stefanos Lekkas** (0-4-1) at the 14:49 mark of the first period. Lekkas stopped 23 of the 24 shots he faced but took the defeat.

### POWER UP

Now 22 games into the season, Rochester's power-play has gone 24-for-85 with a 28.2% 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 six off the AHL lead behind 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 Friday night against Utica.

### LENDING A HAND

Despite having played just 22 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, three of which are currently with the Sabres in goaltender **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** and defensemen **Mattias Samuelsson** and **Jacob Bryson**.

Coming into the final month of the regular season, the Amerks have seen 13 different players recalled to the big club while four have made their NHL debuts in Bryson, **Arttu Ruotsalainen**, Samuelsson and Luukkonen. They've combined for 13 points (5+8) in 49 NHL games with the Sabres.

### 2020-21 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

| SKATER           | GP | G | A  | PTS | PIM | +/- |
|------------------|----|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Remi Elie        | 21 | 9 | 8  | 17  | 14  | 0   |
| Michael Mersch   | 21 | 8 | 8  | 16  | 16  | -2  |
| Brett Murray     | 21 | 7 | 9  | 16  | 9   | -7  |
| Oskari Laaksonen | 21 | 2 | 12 | 14  | 4   | -4  |

| 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      | 5  | 0-4-1 | 118 | .849 | 4.45 |
| Billy Christopoulos  | 4  | 0-1-0 | 37  | .725 | 8.05 |

### 2020-21 COMETS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

| SKATER          | GP | G  | A  | PTS | PIM | +/- |
|-----------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sam Anas        | 14 | 2  | 15 | 17  | 2   | -6  |
| Jonah Gadjovich | 18 | 14 | 2  | 16  | 12  | 4   |
| Lukas Jasek     | 19 | 2  | 13 | 15  | 8   | -6  |
| Sven Bartschi   | 15 | 4  | 9  | 13  | 10  | -11 |

| GOALTENDER  | GP | REC   | SVS | SV%  | GAA  |
|-------------|----|-------|-----|------|------|
| Jon Gillies | 5  | 3-1-1 | 110 | .902 | 2.37 |
| Joel Hofer  | 7  | 3-4-0 | 190 | .892 | 3.61 |
| Jake Kielly | 7  | 4-2-0 | 165 | .878 | 3.62 |

### HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

| Utica Comets  | Rochester Americans                       |
|---------------|---|
| 11-7-0-1      | <b>Record</b> 8-11-2-1                    |
| 7-1-0-0       | <b>Home Record</b> 3-7-2-0                |
| 4-6-0-1       | <b>Road Record</b> 5-4-0-1                |
| 5-5-0-0       | <b>Last 10 Games</b> 2-7-1-0              |
| 9-3-0-1       | <b>Record When Scoring First</b> 4-5-1-0  |
| 3.26 (10th)   | <b>Goals-For Per Game</b> 3.41 (7th)      |
| 3.47 (23rd)   | <b>Goals-Against Per Game</b> 4.32 (28th) |
| 22.0% (7th)   | <b>Power-Play</b> 28.2% (3rd)             |
| 78.6 (20th)   | <b>Penalty Kill</b> 72.0% (28th)          |
| 2-1 W vs. SYR | <b>Last Game</b> 7-5 L vs. UTI            |
| May 2 @ SYR   | <b>Next Game</b> May 1 @ SYR              |



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### NEWCOMERS MAKING IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Since joining the Amerks lineup over the last few weeks, defenseman **Nick DeSimone** and forwards **Brendan Warren**, **Brent Gates, Jr.** and **Brandon Hawkins** have made an immediate impact on the scoresheet as can be said for rookie **Dominic Franco**.

Despite having been thrust into the lineup without a full team practice under his belt, DeSimone made the most of his Amerks debut on Saturday with a team-high two assists against the Crunch. Prior to being acquired by the Golden Knights, the fifth-year pro appeared in 14 games with the San Jose Barracuda (AHL) to begin the season, recording five assists during that time.

On the Amerks' first goal of the game in Syracuse, Gates, Jr. and Hawkins set up Elie's ninth goal of the season. The primary helper from Gates, Jr. gives him four points (1+3) in his last three games while Hawkins earned his third point (1+2) in his first three games since joining the club back on April 20.

After finding the back of the net in back-to-back games, including his first AHL shorthanded goal, Warren earned a helper on Saturday for his third point in as many games.

The month of April has been a productive one for Franco, who after recording just one point through his first seven games of the season, has produced seven points (4+3) in his last nine games dating back to April 3. The West Point product comes into the weekend with goals in back-to-back games.

### LET'S GO STREAKING

With his game-tying goal on Saturday, veteran forward **Michael Mersch** has tallied nine points (5+4) over his last seven outings, including a season-high four-point effort last Friday 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.

**Remi Elie**, meanwhile, has a point streak of four games with four markers and a pair of helpers. With 17 points on the season (9+8), Elie has grabbed the team-lead in both points and goals while Mersch is second on the club in both categories. Elie's nine goals match a career-high he set in 2015-16.

In his fourth season with the Amerks, **C.J. Smith**, who has been shuffled between the Buffalo Sabres and Rochester, has totaled 11 points (3+8) in 10 games in this season, including eight points (1+7) in his last seven appearances.

### 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 third and tied for 11th in assists while also sitting in fifth and 12th in points, respectively. Samuelsson has four points (2+2) in his last five games, while Laaksonen has eight points (2+6) over his last 10 outings, including back-to-back multi-point efforts over that span for the first time all season.

### SCOUTING THE COMETS

The Comets come into the matchup winners of three in their last four games dating back to a 3-0 victory over the Binghamton Devils on April 21. Utica has also won four straight on home ice while going 7-1-0-0 on the season.

### AMERKS-COMETS 2020-21 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

#### ROCHESTER

| SKATER         | GP | G | A | PTS | PIM | +/- |
|----------------|----|---|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Michael Mersch | 6  | 4 | 5 | 9   | 8   | 4   |
| Remi Elie      | 6  | 2 | 4 | 6   | 4   | 0   |
| Brett Murray   | 7  | 2 | 4 | 6   | 7   | 0   |

#### 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 |
| Billy Christopoulos  | 1  | 0-1-0 | 6  | .824 | 6.25 |

#### UTICA

| SKATER          | GP | G | A | PTS | PIM | +/- |
|-----------------|----|---|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Jonah Gadjovich | 7  | 7 | 2 | 9   | 7   | 6   |
| Sam Anas        | 4  | 2 | 5 | 7   | 0   | -1  |
| Sven Bärtschi   | 7  | 1 | 5 | 6   | 2   | -7  |

#### GOALTENDER

|             | GP | REC   | GA | SV%  | GAA  |
|-------------|----|-------|----|------|------|
| 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 |        |       |       |     |     |
| May 3   |        |       |       |     |     |
| 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 33 games against Utica dating back to the start of the 2017-18 campaign, going 17-10-2-4.

The Amerks and Comets come into the matchup ranked first and second in the North Division with a 28.2% and 22.0% success rate on the power-play, respectively. They're also inside the top seven on the man-advantage in the entire American Hockey League.



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