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Miller To Retire Following 2020-21 Season
By Staff Report
Amerks.com

Goaltender Ryan Miller announced his retirement today at the conclusion of the 2020-21 season, closing the books on an illustrious 18-year professional playing career that included parts of four seasons with the Rochester Americans. Miller will retire as the all-time leader among U.S.-born goaltenders in wins (current numbers) with 390, second in shutouts (44) and games played (794).

Throughout his career, Miller is the only player in hockey history to be named the top goaltender in the NCAA, American Hockey League, Winter Olympics and the NHL.

Miller won the 2010 Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goaltender, was named the Most Valuable Player and Best Goaltender in the 2010 Olympics, the 2005 American Hockey League's (AHL) Baz Bastien Memorial Award as the AHL's best goaltender, and the 2001 Hobey Baker Award as the NCAA's top collegiate player. He was also named the NCAA's best goaltender in 2001 and 2002 and holds the NCAA record with 26 shutouts.

One of the most decorated goaltenders in franchise history, Miller joined the Amerks for the 2002-03 season following three seasons as a standout at Michigan State University, where he was a three-time CCHA Goaltender of the Year and won the Hobey Baker Award as the top collegiate player in 2001 after leading the nation in wins, winning percentage, save percentage (.950), goal-against average and 10 shutouts. He also a two-time First Team All-American and was named the 2001 Big 10 Men's Athlete of the Year and USA College Hockey Player of the Year. Miller, who set an NCAA record with 26 shutouts, became just the second goaltender ever to win the prestigious award following Robb Stauber, another former Amerks goaltender. In 106 career games with the Spartans, Miller posted a 73-19-12 record with a 1.64 goals-against average and a .941 save percentage. He was inducted into the Michigan State Hall of Fame in 2013-14.

In 172 career games with the Amerks, the two-time AHL All-Star selection posted a 92-61-16 record with a 2.34 goals-against average and a .922 save percentage and 15 shutouts, tied for second-most in franchise history behind only Amerks Hall of Famer Bobby Perreault. His goals-against average remains the 10th-best all-time in team history.

A native of East Lansing, Michigan, Miller reached the 20-win mark and led Rochester to the postseason in each of his first three seasons with the Amerks, boasting a 13-13 record with a 2.37 goals-against average, .916 save percentage and two shutouts in 26 playoff contests. He also saw time in 18 contests with the Buffalo Sabres, the team that selected him in the fifth round (138th overall) in the 1999 NHL Draft, including 15 during his rookie season.

His best season as an Amerk came during the 2004-05 campaign when he backstopped the Amerks to an AHL-best 51-19-4-6 record, helping Rochester claim the Macgregor Kilpatrick Trophy as regular-season champions, earning him his second straight AHL All-Star selection. He was also named the recipient of the Aldege "Baz" Bastien Memorial Award as the top AHL's top goaltender and Amerks MVP.

That same season he would also go on to set the single-season franchise record for most shutouts in a season with 8 while posting a 41-17-4 record to go along with a 2.45 goals-against average and a .922 save percentage. Miller came just seven wins shy of tying Gerry Cheevers' mark for wins in a season with 48.

The 40-year-old Miller appeared in 18 seasons with Anaheim, Vancouver, St. Louis and Buffalo from 2002-21, posting a 390-289-87 record with a 2.64 goals-against average (GAA) and .914 save percentage (SV%) in 794 career NHL games. Miller made his NHL debut with the Sabres Nov. 19, 2002 at New Jersey. All-time, Miller ranks 14th on the NHL's wins list, 12th in saves (21,621) and 19th in games played (794). He also ranks fifth in save percentage among all-time NHL goaltenders with 700 appearances. The only four others with a higher save percentage all-time are Hasek (.922), Roberto Luongo (.919), Henrik Lundqvist (.918) and Tomas Vokoun (.917).

He is the all-time leader among U.S.-born goaltenders in wins and is one of six goalies in NHL history to win 30 games in seven straight seasons (2006-12). He also leads American goaltenders in career SV% (.914) and ranks third in GAA (2.64) with at least 500 games played. Since his NHL debut in 2002-03, Miller ranks fourth among NHL goaltenders in wins, saves and appearances. He remains one of just 30 goaltenders in NHL history to win 300 games in his career. He won his 390th career game Mar. 18, 2021 vs. Arizona, passing Dominik Hasek (389) for 14th place on the NHL's all-time wins list for goaltenders and surpassed John Vanbiesbrouck (374) for the all-time lead among U.S.-born goaltenders in wins (375) on Feb. 17, 2019 vs. Washington.

Miller spent 11 seasons with Buffalo from 2002-14, going 284-186-57 in 540 games. He holds Sabres franchise records in career wins (284), appearances (540), minutes (21,660:48) and single-season wins (41 in 2009-10). He led Buffalo to the Eastern Conference Final in both 2006 and 2007, joining Dominik Hasek as the only Buffalo goaltender to reach consecutive Conference Finals.

Additionally, Miller has made seven career trips to the Stanley Cup Playoffs with the Ducks, Canucks, Blues and Sabres. In 57 career Stanley Cup Playoff games, the 6-2, 170-pound goaltender went 28-27 with three shutouts, a 2.52 GAA and .913 SV%. Miller ranks second in Sabres postseason history wins (25), games played (47) and saves (1,336).

Internationally, Miller represented Team USA at the 2010 and 2014 Olympic Winter Games, leading the U.S. to a silver medal in 2010. He was named the MVP, Best Goaltender and an All-Star at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, posting a 5-1 record with a 1.35 GAA and .946 SV% in six tournament games. Overall, he went 6-1 with one shutout, a 1.30 GAA and .945 SV% in seven tournament games. His six Olympic wins are the second-most in Team USA history. Miller also represented his country at three World Championships (2001, 2002, 2003), posting two shutouts with a 2.09 GAA and .932 SV% in eight tournament contests.

AHL Announces Plans For 2021 Playoffs; Amerks Will Not Participate In Postseason Play

By Staff Report
Amerks.com

American Hockey League President and Chief Executive Officer Scott Howson today announced that due to league COVID-19 protocols, the AHL will not be able to conduct traditional Calder Cup Playoffs in 2021.

Each of the league's five divisions has been provided the opportunity to independently determine its own postseason format. The members of the Pacific Division will complete the 2020-21 season with a playoff tournament to determine a division champion, while members of the other four divisions will not participate in postseason play.

"While we are disappointed that we will not be able to award the Calder Cup this spring, we are grateful to have been able to provide a safe and competitive environment for more than 1,000 players to play AHL hockey and continue their development," said Howson. "We're especially thankful for the work done by our athletic trainers, COVID-19 officers and other front-line workers to ensure the health and safety of all of our players and staff throughout the league."

In the Pacific Division, a postseason tournament will be held to determine the division championship. The format for the tournament will be announced at a later date. The tournament winner will be awarded the John D. Chick Trophy as champions of the Pacific Division; the Chick Trophy has been presented to an AHL division champion annually since 1961-62.

In the Atlantic Division, the team finishing in first place during the regular season (ranked by points percentage) will be awarded the Emile Francis Trophy as division champions; the Francis Trophy has been presented to an AHL division champion annually since 2001-02.

In the North Division, the team finishing in first place during the regular season (ranked by points percentage) will be awarded the F.G. (Teddy) Oke Trophy as division champions; the Oke Trophy is one of the oldest trophies in North American sports, first presented in 1927 to the London Panthers of the Canadian Professional Hockey League.

In the Canadian Division, the team finishing in first place during the regular season (ranked by points percentage) will be awarded the Frank S. Mathers Trophy as division champions; the Mathers Trophy has been presented to an AHL division or conference champion annually since 1995-96.

In the Central Division, the team finishing in first place during the regular season (ranked by points percentage) will be awarded the Sam Pollock Trophy as division champions; the Pollock Trophy has been presented to an AHL division champion annually since 1995-96.

2021-22 Calendar Set

The AHL Board of Governors has also approved the calendar for the 2021-22 season.

The AHL's 86th season, with 31 clubs expected to be active, will begin October 15, 2021 and conclude April 24, 2022.

Division alignments and schedule information will be announced during the offseason.

In operation since 1936, the AHL serves as the top development league for all 31 National Hockey League teams. Nearly 90 percent of today's NHL players are American Hockey League graduates, and more than 100 honored members of the Hockey Hall of Fame spent time in the AHL in their careers.

Sabres' Prospect Watch: Mattias Samuelsson

By Jordan Jacklin

The Hockey Writers

It's time for another Buffalo Sabres prospects update, a series that checks in on the young talent available in the team's system, whether they are playing in North America or Europe. A player that is intriguing to discuss is Mattias Samuelsson, a former second-round pick in 2018 (#32nd overall). He was drafted out of the USDP and played two seasons at Michigan before jumping to professional Hockey. After playing with the Rochester Americans for the majority of the season, he made his NHL debut and has gotten to play a string of games as of late.

Going into his draft year, he was scouted as a player that could have been selected earlier than 32nd overall. According to multiple draft rankings, many scouts believed he should have been a mid-to-late first-round pick. His play suggested that he was solid defensively and could skate surprisingly well for how big he was, at 220 pounds. His offensive game needed work, such as breaking the puck out of the defensive zone and being more confident creating plays in transition.

In this piece, I will dissect Samuelsson's play in the AHL and NHL over the course of the 2020-21 season and will use video scouting and analytics to create an opinion of his play so far.

His Play With the Rochester Americans

So far this season, Samuelsson has played 19 games with Rochester, scoring three goals and 11 points. For his first year as a professional Hockey player, he looked very comfortable playing first-pairing minutes with Casey Fitzgerald. As shown in the play below, he jumped into the rush and showcased his lethal shot, but he waited that extra second to shoot instead of directly firing the puck off his stick. His poise with the puck is quite surprising for a player of his age.

Rochester's head coach Seth Appert and Samuelsson go way back to the National Team Development Program. Abert was the head coach of the NTDP and coached Samuelsson during his draft year. Fast forward, and both would be reunited with the Amerks this season, and the trust between the two is quite evident. He's played in all situations for the team, and his role increased as players were getting called up to the taxi squad.

Before taking the job as Rochester's head coach, Appert had this to say about Samuelsson, "Mattias Samuelsson is going to be a top-three defenceman on some NHL team for the next 15-plus years. He's going to eat minutes, he's going to help you win, and he's going to be miserable to play against." That is quite the statement to make about a player, and if he can live up to that, the Sabres will Rasmus Dahlin and Samuelsson anchoring the top two defensive pairings.

Looking at the underlying numbers, there is concern about play-driving abilities according to various metrics. His shot share was at 48% earlier on in the season, according to Chad DeDominicis. To put that into words, when he was on the ice, the opposing team generated more shots. Over a large sample size, most of Rochester's players are below 50%, which can indicate a systems issue. The entire Amerks team has tended to give up many shots this season and have been outplayed. This would suggest that he still needs to develop more before taking the full-time jump as an NHL player.

His Play With the Buffalo Sabres

As the season dwindles for the Sabres, they decided to give Samuelsson a shot on the third-pairing. Over the course of six games, he has picked up two assists and is averaging a time on ice (TOI) of 16:40. He picked up his first NHL point on a Casey Mittelstadt

goal, and the team has gone 2-4-0 since he's been called up. The potential is certainly there, but he is not an NHL regular as of this moment.

Looking at the eye test, he is making impressive plays on the defensive side. He was able to break up Artemi Panarin's breakaway in yesterday's game against the New York Rangers by using his long reach to gain inside positioning. Although the pairing of Rasmus Dahlin and Henri Jokiharju has been quite stellar as of late, it would be interesting to see Samuelsson play with Dahlin on the second-pairing. Their style of play could mesh very well, and he would support when Dahlin jumps up into the rush.

Looking at the underlying numbers, it's important to note that the sample size is quite small. Generally, when using analytics for player evaluations, it takes a 20+ game sample to trust the results that are being garnered. With that being said, he currently has an expected goal for percentage (xGF%) of 28.57% and a Corsi for percentage (CF%) of 43.45%, according to Natural Stat Trick. This would tell us that Samuelsson has made impressive plays in his stint, but he is generally being outplayed when he is on the ice.

The big defender has a lot of potential and has only just begun his professional career. This was a successful first season for him, and he was able to play a few NHL games to showcase how he can perform at that level. Another season in the AHL would do wonders for his development and prepare him to be a full-time Sabre by 2022-23. Although he looks quite old for his age, Samuelsson is young and a name that you should get used to hearing about.