

Wednesday | **October 19, 2022** | 7:05 PM ET | The Blue Cross Arena | AHL Game 36 | AHL TV, The Fan Rochester



GAME NOTES



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (1-1-0-0) open a busy stretch of three games in four nights tonight with a North Division showdown against the first-place Belleville Senators (2-0-0-0) at Blue Cross Arena. The 7:05 p.m. matchup will be carried live on 95.7 FM/950 AM The Fan Rochester as well as AHLTV.

The Amerks and Senators, who enter their sixth season in the AHL, will meet a total of seven other times during the 2022-23 regular season following tonight's contest, with tonight's matchup representing the first of four in the Flower City.

HEAD-TO-HEAD SERIES SNAPSHOT AGAINST BELLEVILLE

Tonight's contest is the first between the two teams since meeting in the play-in round of the 2022 Calder Cup Playoffs. Rochester swept Belleville courtesy of back-to-back overtime victories to embark on its first extended playoff run in 18 years.

Despite boasting a 3-3-1-1 record in the eight-game series last season against Belleville, Rochester shows a 12-8-5-1 mark over the last five years between the two teams. The Amerks earned four points in the four meetings in Rochester last season, and over the last five years show a 4-6-2-1 mark compared to a 8-2-3-0 record north of the border.

Rochester is 12-13-1 all-time against Belleville despite being outscored 94-89 through the first 26 meetings with the Senators. Three of the last six matchups between the two clubs have been decided beyond regulation.

BJORK JOINS AMERKS AHEAD OF BUSY WEEK

Rochester's offense was bolstered late Tuesday afternoon following the reassignment of forward **Anders Bjork** from the parent Buffalo Sabres.

Acquired by the Sabres in 2021 from the Boston Bruins, Bjork last appeared in the AHL during a brief seven-game stint with Providence in 2019-20. In 29 career AHL games, all with Providence, Bjork has recorded 22 points on six goals and 16 assists.

A 2017 Hobey Baker Award finalist at Notre Dame, Bjork is a three-time medal winner with the United States, including gold at the 2014 WJC18.

MERSCH TO LEAD AMERKS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Veteran forward **Michael Mersch** returns for third season in Rochester and second as the team's captain, overseeing an Amerks leadership group that also includes two alternate captains in forward **Sean Malone** and defenseman **Ethan Prow**. Both Malone and Prow served as alternates in 2021-22.

On top of captaining the Amerks to the North Division Finals of the 2022 Calder Cup Playoffs, Mersch finished last season with 54 points on 26 goals and 28 assists, all of which were, or matched, career totals in the league and pushed him over the 20-goal mark for the fifth time in his pro career.

The nine-year pro has appeared in 472 career AHL games between the Amerks, Texas Stars, Ontario Reign and Manchester Monarchs, totaling 318 points (156+162). Additionally, Mersch, a five-time 20-goal scorer in the AHL who won a Calder Cup with Manchester in 2015, has skated in 17 career NHL contests with the Los Angeles Kings.

2022-23 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Isak Rosen	2	1	1	2	0	-2
Lukas Rousek	2	1	1	2	0	1
Linus Weissbach	2	1	1	2	0	0
Sean Malone	1	0	2	2	2	-1
Brett Murray	2	1	0	1	2	0

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	2	1-1-0	59	.937	2.04

2022-23 SENATORS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jayce Hawryluk	2	2	2	4	0	2
Jake Lucchini	2	1	3	4	0	2
Cole Reinhardt	2	1	3	4	2	3
Philippe Daoust	2	1	2	3	0	0
Cedric Pare	2	1	2	3	0	1

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Antoine Bibeau	1	1-0-0	32	.914	3.00
Kevin Mandolese	1	1-0-0	24	.857	3.98

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Belleve Senators	Rochester Americans
2-0-0-0	Record 1-1-0-0
1-0-0-0	Home Record 1-0-0-0
1-0-0-0	Road Record 1-0-0-0
2-0-0-0	Last 10 Games 1-1-0-0
0-0-0-0	Record When Scoring First 0-1-0-0
6.00 (1st)	Goals-For Per Game 2.50 (T-20th)
4.00 (T-20th)	Goals-Against Per Game 2.50 (T-8th)
27.3% (T-12th)	Power-Play 33.3% (T-6th)
87.5% (10th)	Penalty Kill 66.7% (T-25th)
6-3 W vs. LAV	Last Game 3-1 L @ TOR
Oct. 21 vs. SPR	Next Game Oct. 21 vs. SYR



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APPERT YEAR THREE

Seth Appert enters his third season as head coach of the Amerks in 2022-23 after being named to the position on August 18, 2020.

Appert is 48-44-9-4 over his first two seasons behind the Amerks bench, which includes a 37-win campaign in 2021-22 that culminated with an extended playoff run as part of team's first playoff appearance in four years.

After leading Rochester to a fifth-place finish in the AHL's North Division standings in 2021-22 and becoming the sixth straight head coach to reach the 30-win mark in his first full season at the helm, Appert spearheaded one of the most impressive playoff runs in nearly two decades.

Under Appert, the Amerks won their first playoff series since 2005 and advanced to the third round of Calder Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2004, first sweeping Belleville in the play-in round before ousting Utica, one of the AHL's top teams in the regular season, in the best-of-five North Division Semifinals.

YOUTH MOVEMENT TAKES OVER ROCHESTER

Of the 26 players on Rochester's current active roster, 11 are Buffalo Sabres draft picks, including two first-round selections.

Isak Rosen (14th overall,) and **Jiri Kulich** (28th overall) come to the Flower City as members of Buffalo's first-round selections in 2021 and 2022, respectively. Rosen spent the 2021-22 season with Leksands in Sweden, where he made his debut in the Swedish Hockey League. He led all 17-year-olds with the Leksands U20 as he posted 35 points (21+14) in 38 games. Kulich, meanwhile, spent most of last season with HC Energie Karlovy Vary of Czechia's top pro league as a 17-year-old, appearing in a career-high 49 games. He tallied 14 points on nine goals and five assists while also notching four points (2+2) in two games with HC Energie Karlovy Vary.

Aleksandr Kisakov (2nd round, 2021), **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** (2nd round, 2017), **Oskari Laaksonen** (3rd round, 2017), **Brett Murray** (4th round, 2019), **Filip Cederqvist** (5th round, 2019), **Sean Malone** (6th round, 2013) **Lukas Rousek** (6th round, 2019), **Linus Weissbach** (7th round, 2017), **Tyson Kozak** (7th round, 2021) round out the Sabres NHL Draft picks.

Last Friday's Opening Night lineup featured five players who made their North American professional debuts as well as a total of seven rookies. **Kohen Olischefski** and **Lukas Rousek** both skated with Rochester during 2021-22 but are still considered first-year skaters.

DEPTH ON DEFENSE

Excluding **Peter Tischke**, **Mitch Eliot**, and **Oskari Laaksonen**, the other five defensemen patrolling Rochester's blueline have all appeared in at least four NHL games, including newcomers **Kale Clague** and **Chase Priskie**.

Ethan Prow finished third in scoring amongst all AHL defensemen with 49 points (10+39) in 70 games during his first season with Amerks in 2021-22. It was also the second time in three AHL seasons he reached the 10-goal mark. He made his NHL debut last year which featured his first NHL goal on his first NHL shot at the age of 29 against New Jersey on Dec. 29.

Lawrence Pilut returns for his second stint in Rochester after spending the last two seasons with Traktor Chelyabinsk of the KHL, where he recorded 39 points on seven goals and 32 assists in 97 contests. He also produced 10 points (1+9) in 20 postseason contests.

AMERKS-SENATORS 2021-22 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jack Quinn	8	8	4	12	6	-8
JJ Peterka	6	2	6	8	2	-1
Michael Mersch	6	3	4	7	4	-1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Aaron Dell	3	3-0-0	7	.926	2.27
Mat Robson	1	0-0-1	3	.914	2.77
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	3	0-3-0	14	.841	4.79

BELLEVILLE

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Jake Lucchini	8	3	7	10	2	2
Cole Reinhardt	8	5	5	9	6	4
Egor Sokolov	8	4	5	8	4	2

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Mads Sogaard	2	1-1-0	7	.854	3.39
Filip Gustavsson	4	2-1-1	13	.849	3.75
Kevin Mandolese	2	2-0-0	8	.869	4.00

2021-22 HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Oct. 27	L	7-3	33-30	1-6	2-2
Nov. 3	W	4-3	24-30	2-5	2-4
Jan. 14	SOL	4-3	24-36	0-6	3-3
Jan. 15	OTL	6-5	26-35	2-3	1-2
Mar. 4	OTW	3-2	21-33	0-6	5-5
Mar. 5	L	6-5	28-32	2-6	3-4
Apr. 9	W	6-2	24-32	4-7	3-3
Apr. 15	L	2-1	29-27	1-7	3-4

SERIES NOTABLES

With two games against the Toronto Marlies and tonight's contest versus Belleville to start the 2022-23 campaign, it marks the first time since the 1995-96 season the Amerks have opened the season against three Canadian-based opponents. Rochester, who began that season with four straight games opposing Canadian teams, later went on to win the Calder Cup, the franchise's sixth and most recent championship.

Amerks goaltender **Malcolm Subban** played his junior career with the Belleville Bulls of the OHL, who play at the CAA Arena. Subban totaled a 64-42-6 record and eight shutouts in 118 career games. During his final season with the Bulls, he helped Belleville finish first in the East during the regular season by posting a career-best 29 wins in 46 appearances.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen made his professional debut against Belleville on April 14, 2019 as he stopped 32 of 34 shots while earning his first-career AHL victory. After allowing one goal in each of the first two periods, he made 20 saves to help preserve the win.



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