

Saturday | **March 18, 2023** | 7:00 PM ET | Giant Center | AHL Game 956 | Free AHL TV Game of the Week



GAME NOTES



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The oldest rivalry in the American Hockey League gets renewed tonight at Giant Center when the Rochester Americans (28-24-4-2) meet the Hershey Bears (36-16-5-2) in a battle between the AHL's two cornerstone franchises. The 7:00 p.m. matchup will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM The Fan Rochester as well as AHLTV.

With 14 games remaining in the 2022-23 regular season, Rochester sits in fourth place in the American Hockey League's North Division standings, just three points ahead of the Belleville Senators, who currently occupy the fifth and final playoff spot. The Amerks trail the third-place Syracuse Crunch by two points coming into the weekend.

LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first period and then came back to force overtime before ultimately falling 5-4 in a shootout to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins Friday at Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.

Forwards **Mason Jobst** (1+1) and **Brett Murray** (0+2) each collected a multi-point night while **Jiri Kulich**, **Sean Malone** and **Jeremy Davies** all scored in the contest with one goal each. **Isak Rosen**, **Michael Mersch**, **Lukas Rousek**, **Linus Weissbach**, and former Penguin **Matt Bartkowski** all notched one assist.

Goaltender **Malcolm Subban** (15-13-2) stopped 31 of the 35 shots he faced in regulation and overtime before stopping two of three in the shootout.

HEAD-TO-HEAD SERIES SNAPSHOT AGAINST BEARS

Tonight's contest is the first against the Bears in Hershey since the Amerks recorded a 4-3 come-from-behind win on Dec. 19, 2021. The Amerks were trailing 3-1 early in the third period before storming back for three unanswered goals in 9:57 for the win. With Rochester's 7-3 win over the Bears in the first meeting of the 2021-22 season, the Amerks have collected at least one point in six of their last 11 games against Hershey, going 5-5-1-0 dating back to the start of the 2016-17 campaign.

In each of the 12 previous matchups, the winning club has posted three or more goals. Coming into tonight's 463rd all-time regular-season meeting between the two teams, Rochester is 192-216-53 lifetime against Hershey, which includes a 5-2-1-0 mark in the last five years.

SUBBAN SHOULDERING THE WORKLOAD

After suffering a defeat in his season-debut, Subban has gone 15-12-2 since over his last 29 starts, including seven straight wins between Dec. 10 to Jan. 14. The seven-game win streak was the longest of his pro career.

He was the first Amerks goaltender to post seven straight wins since Jonas Johansson won nine consecutive contests during the 2019-20 campaign.

Subban had arguably his best performance of the season during a 75-save weekend in Rochester's two-game sweep over the Charlotte Checkers in mid-December. A night after stopping a regular-season career-high 45 saves, Subban was flawless in a 30-save shutout on Dec. 17, then his first in the AHL since April 8, 2017, with the Providence Bruins.

It's the first time Subban has posted multiple shutouts in a season since earning three during the 2014-15 campaign with the Providence Bruins. He's also within one win of matching his previous career-high of 16.

2022-23 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PIM
Brandon Biro	48	15	35	50	5	12
Lukas Rousek	58	15	33	48	-1	22
Linus Weissbach	56	18	21	39	-10	47
Michael Mersch	47	13	24	37	-3	27
Jiri Kulich	50	18	18	36	-5	16

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Eric Comrie	3	1-2-0	79	.898	3.03
Malcolm Subban	30	15-13-2	844	.903	3.05
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen*	9	6-3-0	238	.898	3.07
Michael Houser	16	6-6-2	410	.899	3.09

*=Currently with Buffalo (NHL)

2022-23 BEARS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PIM
Mike Sgarbossa	50	19	32	51	18	36
Mike Vecchione	56	20	26	46	15	16
Ethen Frank	51	26	17	43	12	16
Mason Morelli	59	11	23	34	15	60
Connor McMichael	45	13	18	31	-7	6

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Hunter Shepard	25	14-6-5	561	.912	2.23
Zach Fucale	33	19-10-2	723	.899	2.57

* = Currently on recall with Washington (NHL)

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Hershey Bears	Rochester Americans
36-16-5-2.....	Overall Record 28-24-4-2
20-8-2-1.....	Home Record15-11-2-0
16-8-3-1.....	Road Record 13-13-2-2
5-4-0-1.....	Last 10 Games4-4-1-1
27-7-3-2.....	Record When Scoring First 17-8-2-2
3.00 (T-23rd).....	Goals-For Per Game 3.30 (8th)
2.60 (2nd).....	Goals-Against Per Game 3.37 (24th)
17.5% (26th).....	Power-Play 20.3% (12th)
81.1% (18th).....	Penalty Kill 79.4% (24th)
2-1 W @ LV.....	Last Game 5-4 SOL @ WBS
Mar. 24 @ ROC.....	Next Game Mar. 21 @ SYR



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BIRO PILING UP THE POINTS

Despite missing six games due to injury, third-year forward **Brandon Biro** has blazed his way atop the team's scoring lead following a productive December in which he led the team with 16 points (6+10) in 10 games. He recorded multi-point efforts in seven of his 10 appearances, including six straight between Dec. 9 and Dec. 30 before closing out the month with an assist in the 3-2 win in Toronto.

Biro, who made his NHL debut with the Buffalo Sabres last season, totaled 11 points (2+9) over a recent five-game point-streak, which began with a career-high five-point effort last Friday against Hartford.

By factoring in on both goals on Sunday against Laval, he reached the 50-point mark for the first time in his pro career and currently leads with 50 points in 48 games.

He shows 19 points (6+13) over his last 11 games, which includes his first career hat trick in the 7-5 loss at Laval to open the month of March.

He's recorded at least one shot in all but eight games so far this season.

In 111 career games with the Amerks, Biro has totaled 96 points on 29 goals and 67 assists, never going more than seven games without a point over the last three years.

SHARING THE WEALTH

After producing three 20-goal scorers last season, the Amerks could potentially have five or more by the season's end.

Linus Weissbach and **Jiri Kulich** currently leads Rochester with 18 goals each while **Brett Murray** remains at a close second with 17, all career-highs.

Brandon Biro and **Lukas Rousek**, the team's top two point-getters this season, come into the weekend with 15 goals.

The last time Rochester had at least five different 20-goal scorers in the same season was during the 2018-19 campaign when the team had six.

PROWESS ON THE BLUELINE

Entering the Jan. 19 game against Laval, **Ethan Prow** was the only Amerks defenseman to appear in every game this season. Overall, he has skated in 122 of the 128 games dating back to the start of the 2021-22 campaign.

In 53 games this season, Prow, who recorded his first three-point outing of the season last Friday against Hartford, is tied for 20th in scoring amongst all AHL defensemen with 32 points while his 26 assists are currently tied for 19th-most at his position. This season marks the fourth straight in which the veteran defenseman has reached the 20-assist mark and the fifth consecutive year with 20 or more points, which includes an abbreviated campaign overseas in 2020-21.

The seventh-year pro has posted 20 points (4+16) in his last 28 outings dating back to Dec. 28 and comes into tonight with two goals and 11 assists over his last 18 games.

He's second among all Amerks defensemen with at least five multi-point outings, including a two-goal effort in the 4-3 win at Syracuse back on Jan. 7, and has never gone more than five games all season without a point.

AMERKS-BEARS 2021-22 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Peyton Krebs	2	2	3	5	2	0
Michael Mersch	2	2	2	4	0	2
JJ Peterka	2	0	4	4	0	1
Mark Jankowski	1	1	2	3	0	1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Michael Houser	1	1-0-0	3	.909	3.00
Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen	1	1-0-0	3	.925	3.00

HERSHEY

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Garrett Pilon	2	2	1	3	12	3
Ryan Dmowski	2	1	1	2	0	1
Joe Snively	1	0	2	2	0	3
Kody Clark	2	1	0	1	0	-1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Ryan Bednard	1	0-1-0	4	.882	4.12
Phoenix Copley	1	0-1-0	7	.650	7.05

2021-22 GAME-BY-GAME BREAKDOWN

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Nov. 26	W	7-3	20-40	4-9	5-5
Dec. 19	W	4-3	34-34	1-3	2-2

SERIES NOTABLES

With **Austin Strand** making his Amerks debut against Hartford on March 10, he became the 38th overall player to appear in one game with the Amerks in 2022-23 and the 15th defenseman. He was also be the 19th different player to don the red, white and blue colors for the first time in their career.

Between both teams, there's a combined eight players selected in the first round during their respective NHL Drafts. Rochester's **Jiri Kulich** (28th overall, 2022) **Isak Rosen** (14th, 2021), **Malcolm Subban** (24th overall, 2012) and Hershey's **Connor McMichael** (25th overall, 2019), **Henrik Borgstrom** (23rd overall, 2016), **Hendrix Lapierre** (22nd overall, 2020) **Dyland McIlrath** (10th, 2010) and **Lucas Johansen** (28th overall, 2016).

Tonight is Rochester's final game on the road this season against Atlantic Division teams. So far this season in 16 games, the Amerks have compiled an 8-6-1-1 record, which includes a 4-2-1-1 mark on the road.

Currently in his first season as Hershey's head coach, **Todd Nelson** spent the 2000-01 season with the Amerks as a defenseman, recording 26 points (6+20) in 74 games before adding two assists in four playoff appearances. A three-time Calder Cup winner, Nelson owns the distinction of being just the third person in AHL history to win a Calder Cup as a player (1994, Portland), assistant coach (2008, Chicago) and head coach (2017, Grand Rapids).



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EARNING THEIR STARS AND STRIPES

With 11 points (5+6) over his last 12 games, **Linus Weissbach** is 11 points back from the team-lead with 39 points (18+21) through 56 games. By scoring his team-leading 18th goal and 38th point of the season this past Sunday against Toronto, he established career-highs in both categories, surpassing the marks he set during his rookie campaign in 2021-22.

Brett Murray, one of eight Amerks with at least 36 points on the season, has captured a new career-high in all offensive categories from last season, including goals (17), assists (19) and points (36). The fourth-year pro comes into tonight with nine points (3+6) in his last 14 games and has recorded at least one shot in all but five games during that span dating back to Nov. 23.

With six points (3+3) over his last 14 games, **Sean Malone** reached the 20-point mark in back-to-back campaigns for the first time in his career. Through 39 contests in his fifth season with the Amerks, Malone has 12 goals and 13 assists.

Amerks captain **Michael Mersch** shows 28 points (12+16) over his last 33 games dating back to Dec. 17. More impressively, with 37 points in 47 games, he's well on his way of reaching the 40-point mark for the sixth time in his nine-year pro career. The former Calder Cup winner is also a five-time 20-goal scorer, reaching the mark four times in his first five seasons and again last season when he scored a career-high 26 goals.

Through 52 games, defenseman **Jeremy Davies** established a career-high with 11 goals, reaching the mark for the first time in his pro career while also becoming the first Amerks defenseman this season to do so. Over his last 14 games, Davies has collected five goals and seven assists for 12 points.

Rookie **Isak Rosen** has posted 15 points (7+8) in 23 games since Jan. 21. In the 7-1 victory over Springfield, Rosen, the Sabres' first-round selection (14th overall) in the 2021 NHL Draft, notched his first-career three-point game as well as his first-ever two-goal outing. Overall, four of his 10 goals on the season have come while on the power-play. Rosen is one of only two rookies this season to reach the 30-point mark.

Mitch Eliot tied his previous career-high in goals (3) at Providence on Feb. 26, reaching the mark in 24 fewer games than the 2021-22 campaign.

SCOUTING THE BEARS

Hershey comes into the matchup sitting in second place in the AHL's Atlantic Division standings with a 36-16-5-2-4-5 overall record and have a 5-4-0-1 mark in its last 10 contests. The Bears are one point behind the Providence Bruins for the top spot in the division but Hershey has one more win.

Hershey will likely again be without the services of leading point-getters Mike Sgarbossa and Mike Vecchione as both were out of the lineup in the Bears' 2-1 win last night over Lehigh Valley. Sgarbossa tops all Bears with 32 assists and 51 points in 50 games while Vecchione is second in both with 26 and 46, respectively. First-year forward Ethen Frank leads all AHL rookies with a team-high 26 goals, including a team-best nine power-play tallies.

Zach Facale (19-10-2) and Hunter Shepard (14-6-5) has handled the goaltending duties for a majority of the season for Hershey. Facale is tied for sixth in the AHL amongst qualified goaltenders with 19 wins while Shepard ranks second with a 2.23 goals-against average, respectively.

A JOBST WELL DONE

Mason Jobst has made the most of his second opportunity with the Amerks as the fourth-year pro is in the process of assembling a career-year.

Through 47 games this season, the Speedway, Indiana, native has already established career-highs in all offensive categories, including goals (13), assists (16) and points (29).

With an assist in the 5-4 overtime win in Belleville on Feb. 4, Jobst reached the 20-point mark for the first time in his pro career, becoming then the ninth different Amerk to eclipse the mark.

Since the turn of the New Year, Jobst has amassed 10 goals and 15 points over his previous 21 games, including his first career hat trick in the 7-5 loss to the first-place Toronto Marlies back on Jan. 14. He comes into tonight with six goals and eight points over his previous nine games, a stretch highlighted by a career-best three-game goal-scoring streak.

Jobst has totaled 42 points (17+25) over 73 career games with the Amerks dating back to last season.

WORKING OVERTIME

The 5-4 shootout loss last night against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton was Rochester's 13th game this season -- and just the fifth in 2023 -- that went beyond regulation for the Amerks.

The Amerks are 6-4 in overtime and show an even 1-2 mark in shootouts.

Rochester has played in the 11th-fewest overtime games in the AHL this season.

Rochester tied an AHL record with 29 overtime games in 2017-18.

CLOSING OUT FEBRUARY ON A HIGH NOTE

The Amerks had arguably their best weekend of the season to close out the month of February, winning three straight games in as many days while outscoring the opposition 20-6 to begin a stretch of six games over a nine-day span.

After opening the weekend with an 8-4 win over Laval on Friday, Rochester scored seven straight unanswered goals, including three on the power-play, on their way to a dominating 7-1 win over Springfield on Saturday. The Amerks then put the finishing touches on the 20-goal weekend by scoring four first-period goals and never looking back on their way to a decisive 5-1 win at Providence on Sunday.

Of the 23 different skaters to appear in at least one game last weekend, 18 had one point or more, 15 tallied at least one assist and 12 scored one or more goal. Five skaters registered a multi-assist game while three posted a multi-goal game.

Forwards **Jiri Kulich** (3+3), **Lukas Rousek** (1+5), **Brandon Biro** (1+4), **Linus Weissbach** (3+2), **Anders Bjork** (0+4) all paced the club last weekend.

Goaltenders **Malcolm Subban** (2-0-0) and **Michael Houser** (1-0-0) manned the pipes for Rochester, combining for a .943 save percentage and a 2.00 goals against average in the three games.



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