

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

SIX-TIME CALDER CUP CHAMPIONS 1965 | 1966 | 1968 | 1983 | 1987 | 1996

Friday | **March 24, 2023** | 7:05 PM ET | The Blue Cross Arena | AHL Game 993 | AHL TV, The Fan Rochester, CW Rochester



GAME NOTES



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The oldest rivalry in the American Hockey League gets renewed tonight in Rochester as the Amerks (28-25-4-3) host the Hershey Bears (37-16-5-2) at The Blue Cross Arena for the only time this season. Game time between the AHL's two cornerstone franchises is slated for a 7:05 p.m. start and will be carried live on 95.7 FM/950 AM The Fan Rochester as well as AHLTV.

With 12 games remaining in the 2022-23 regular season, Rochester sits in fourth place in the AHL's North Division standings, just two points ahead of the Belleville Senators, who currently occupy the fifth and final playoff spot. The Amerks trail the Syracuse Crunch and Utica Comets, who are locked in a two-way tie for third place, by five points coming into the weekend.

LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks scored late in the third period to force Tuesday's game beyond regulation but ultimately fell 3-2 in a shootout to the Crunch at The Blue Cross Arena.

Despite the loss, Rochester has earned a point in nine of its last 14 games.

Michael Mersch scored for the second straight game from **Filip Cederqvist** and **Ethan Prow**. **Jiri Kulich** tallied his team-leading 19th goal of the year to open the scoring with **Brett Murray** logging the lone assist.

Goaltender **Malcolm Subban** (15-13-3) stopped 23 of the 25 shots he faced in his 31st appearance of the season.

HEAD-TO-HEAD SERIES SNAPSHOT AGAINST BEARS

It's the second meeting in less than a week between the two teams, who previously met last Saturday at Giant Center where the Bears overcame a 1-0 deficit and came away with a 2-1 win. The Amerks have collected at least one point in six of their last 12 games against Hershey, going 5-6-1-0 over that span dating back to the start of the 2016-17 campaign.

In 12 of the previous 13 matchups, the winning club has posted three or more goals.

Coming into tonight's 464th all-time regular-season meeting between the two teams, Rochester is 192-218-53 lifetime against Hershey, which includes a 5-3-1-0 mark in the last six years.

SUBBAN SHOULDERING THE WORKLOAD

After suffering a defeat in his season-debut, Subban has gone 15-12-3 since over his last 30 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	60	15	33	48	-3	22
Linus Weissbach	58	18	21	39	-10	47
Michael Mersch	49	15	24	39	-2	27
Brett Murray	59	17	21	38	-2	37

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Michael Houser	17	6-7-2	440	.902	3.03
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

*=Currently with Buffalo (NHL)

^=Currently reassigned to Cincinnati (ECHL)

2022-23 BEARS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PIM
Mike Sgarbossa	51	19	33	52	18	36
Mike Vecchione	57	20	26	46	15	16
Ethen Frank	52	27	17	44	12	16
Mason Morelli	60	11	24	35	15	60
Connor McMichael	46	14	18	32	-6	6

GOALTENDER

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Clay Stevenson^	3	3-0-0	73	.924	1.96
Hunter Shepard	26	15-6-5	583	.914	2.18
Zach Fucale	33	19-10-2	723	.899	2.57

* = Currently on recall with Washington (NHL)

^=Currently reassigned to South Carolina (ECHL)

HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Hershey Bears

Rochester Americans

36-16-5-2.....	Overall Record	28-25-4-2
20-8-2-1.....	Home Record	15-11-2-0
16-8-3-1.....	Road Record	13-14-2-2
6-4-0-0.....	Last 10 Games	3-5-1-1
27-7-3-2.....	Record When Scoring First	17-9-2-2
2.97 (T-26th).....	Goals-For Per Game	3.25 (T-10th)
2.55 (2nd).....	Goals-Against Per Game	3.37 (24th)
17.4% (27th).....	Power-Play	20.2% (13th)
80.7% (17th).....	Penalty Kill	79.8% (T-21st)
2-1 W vs. ROC.....	Last Game	3-2 SOL vs. SYR
Mar. 25 @ SYR.....	Next Game	Mar. 25 @ UTC



ROCHESTER AMERICANS | MEDIA RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

@AMERKSPR | @AMERKSHOCKEY

Warren Kosel | Senior Director of Public & Media Relations | 1.585.286.9928

Ryan Harr | Public & Media Relations Coordinator | 1.585.286.9940

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BIRO PILING UP THE POINTS

Despite missing a total of eight 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 on March 10 against Hartford.

By factoring in on both goals on March 15 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.

Jiri Kulich paces the team with 19 goals while **Linus Weissbach** (18) and **Brett Murray** (17) remain at a close second and third, all career-highs.

Brandon Biro and **Lukas Rousek**, the team's top two point-getters this season, along with **Michael Mersch** 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 124 of the 130 games dating back to the start of the 2021-22 campaign.

In 55 games this season, Prow, who recorded his first three-point outing of the season on March 10 against Hartford, is tied for 22nd in scoring amongst all AHL defensemen with 33 points while his 27 assists are currently tied for 17th-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 21 points (4+17) in his last 30 outings dating back to Dec. 28 and comes into tonight with two goals and 12 assists over his last 20 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 2022-23 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Michel Mersch	1	1	0	1	0	0
Mason Jobst	1	0	1	1	0	1
Brett Murray	1	0	1	1	0	1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Michael Houser	1	0-1-0	2	.938	2.03

HERSHEY

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Ethen Frank	1	1	0	1	0	0
Connor McMichael	1	1	0	1	0	1
Benton Maass	1	0	1	1	0	2
Mike Sgarbossa	1	0	1	1	0	0

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Hunter Shepard	1	1-0-0	1	.957	1.00

2022-23 GAME-BY-GAME BREAKDOWN

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Mar. 18	L	2-1	23-32	0-4	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 the 19th different player to don the red, white and blue colors for the first time in their career.

Both Rochester (17-3-1-1, first) (20-4-2-1, second) and Hershey (17-6-1-1, first) (22-2-0-1, second) enter tonight's matchup with winning records when leading after the first and second periods, respectively. On the other hand, both clubs have losing records when trailing after 40 minutes of play (ROC, 5-19-1-0) (HER, 1-12-1-0).

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 Lapiere (22nd overall, 2020) Dyland McClrath (10th, 2010) and Lucas Johansen (28th overall, 2016).

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).

Tonight is Rochester's final matchup this season against Atlantic Division opponents. In 17 games, the Amerks have compiled an 8-7-1-1 record.



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EARNING THEIR STARS AND STRIPES

With 11 points (5+6) over his last 14 games, **Linus Weissbach** is 11 points back from the team-lead with 39 points (18+21) through 58 games. By scoring his 18th goal and 38th point of the season back on March 12 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 five Amerks with at least 38 points on the campaign, has captured a new career-high in all offensive categories from last season, including goals (17), assists (21) and points (38). The fourth-year pro comes into tonight with 12 points (3+9) in his last 16 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 16 games, **Sean Malone** reached the 20-point mark in back-to-back campaigns for the first time in his career. Through 41 contests in his fifth season with the Amerks, Malone has 12 goals and 13 assists.

Amerks captain **Michael Mersch** shows 30 points (14+16) over his last 35 games dating back to Dec. 17. More impressively, with 39 points in 49 games, he needs just one more point to reach 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 54 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 16 games, Davies has collected five goals and seven assists for 12 points.

Rookie **Isak Rosen** has posted 15 points (7+8) in 25 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 37-16-5-2 overall record and have a 6-4-0-0 mark in its last 10 contests. The Bears are three points behind the Providence Bruins for the top spot in the division but Hershey has a game in hand.

Hershey comes to Rochester fueled by leading point-getters Mike Sgarbossa and Mike Vecchione as both returned to the lineup last Saturday night versus Rochester. Sgarbossa tops all Bears with 33 assists and 52 points in 51 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 27 goals, including a team-best nine power-play tallies.

Zach Facale (19-10-2) and Hunter Shepard (15-6-5) have handled the goaltending duties for a majority of the season for Hershey. Facale, who is back with the Bears following a recent stint with the Washington Capitals, is tied for sixth in the AHL amongst all qualified goaltenders with 19 wins while Shepard ranks second with a 2.18 goals-against average, respectively. Shepard has allowed one or fewer goals in 10 of his 26 appearances.

A JOB 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 49 games this season, the Speedway, Indiana, native has already established career-highs in all offensive categories, including goals (13), assists (17) and points (30).

With an assist in the 2-1 loss in Hershey on March 18, Jobst reached the 30-point mark for the first time in his pro career, becoming the ninth different Amerk this season to eclipse the mark.

Since the turn of the New Year, Jobst has amassed 10 goals and 16 points over his previous 23 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 10 points over his previous 11 games, a stretch highlighted by a career-best three-game goal-scoring streak.

Jobst has totaled 43 points (17+26) over 75 career games with the Amerks dating back to last season.

WORKING OVERTIME

The 3-2 shootout loss this past Tuesday against Syracuse was Rochester's 14th game this season -- and just the sixth in 2023 -- that went beyond regulation for the Amerks.

The Amerks are 6-4 in overtime and show an even 1-3 mark in shootouts.

Rochester has played in the 16th-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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