

ROCHESTER AMERICANS HOCKEY CLUB

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

Sun. | **March 24, 2024** | 3:05 PM ET | The Blue Cross Arena | AHL Game 979 | AHL TV, The Fan Rochester, CW Rochester



GAME NOTES



TONIGHT'S GAME OVERVIEW

The Rochester Americans (30-22-6-3) close out their three-game homestand today with a 3:05 p.m. matinee against the Utica Comets (27-24-4-5). All the action from The Blue Cross Arena will be carried on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM The Fan Rochester as well as AHLTV.

The Amerks, who have points in 19 of their last 27 games dating back to Jan. 17, currently tied for third-place with the Marlies in AHL's North Division standings. Toronto, however, has one game in hand on Rochester coming into the weekend and concludes second straight three-and-three of the month.

Utica also wraps up a three-and-three today and has a four-game point streak as they show a 3-0-0-1 mark.

SEASON SERIES SNAPSHOT

Rochester has won 10 of the previous 11 games on the road against the Comets, the only exception being a 6-0 loss on Nov. 11. The Amerks maintain a 6-3-1-0 record through the first 10 games of the season-series and today is the third Sunday matinee of the four the two teams will play this season.

The Amerks boast a 13-10-1-1 record in Utica over the past five seasons while also showing an almost identical 13-11-1-1 mark in the Flower City.

The Amerks have scored at least one power-play goal in 23 of the 43 games (32-for-141) against Utica since **Seth Appert** took over as head coach.

After today's contest, the intrastate rivals will meet one more times prior to season's end with the final get-together to close out the season on April 21 in Utica.

LAST TIME OUT

The Amerks scored late in the third period to force the game beyond regulation but were unable to find the net again during the shootout as they came up short in a 2-1 loss to the Toronto Marlies Friday at The Blue Cross Arena.

Linus Weissbach, who missed the previous five games, returned to the lineup and scored his 11th goal of the season late in the contest. **Ryan Johnson** earned his third assist in as many games while **Tyson Kozak** notched the secondary helper. **Graham Slaggert** appeared in the 100th game of his AHL career against is former team.

Goaltender **Michael Houser** (2-1-1) made his fifth appearance of the season for the Amerks and first since Nov. 1. The Youngstown, Ohio, native stopped 19 of the 20 shots he faced before making two more saves in the shootout.

MURRAY MAKING HIS MARK

Back on Feb. 18 against Utica, **Brett Murray** became just the 36th forward in the 68-year history of the franchise to appear in 250 games for Rochester. Since joining the organization ahead of the 2019-20 campaign, the Bolton, Ontario, native has recorded 73 goals and 82 assists for 155 points while also posting 16 points (7+9) in 24 postseason contests.

Murray, who is third amongst all Amerks this season in goals (16), reached the 30-point mark for the third consecutive season following an assist on Wednesday against Hartford. Since Feb. 24, Murray has produced five goals and three assists for eight points over his last 12 outings with the team while also totaling 21 shots over that span.

2023-24 AMERKS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PIM
Mason Jobst	53	18	25	43	-12	39
Lukas Rousek*	48	10	28	38	-8	14
Isak Rosen	56	15	21	36	-2	12
Brandon Biro	50	14	21	35	-3	24

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Devon Levi*	19	11-5-3	606	.927	2.52
Dustin Tokarski	21	8-9-3	557	.887	3.48
Michael Houser	5	2-1-1	102	.857	3.95

*=Currently on recall with Buffalo (NHL)

2023-24 COMETS OVERALL SCORING & GOALTENDING LEADERS

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	+/-	PIM
Graeme Clarke	58	23	22	45	8	22
Ryan Schmelzer	60	16	29	45	14	34
Xavier Parent	59	11	27	38	-12	47
Kyle Criscuolo	51	13	22	35	0	15

GOALTENDER	GP	REC	SVS	SV%	GAA
Isaac Poulter*	28	17-8-1	687	.911	2.55
Akira Schmid	16	5-7-4	429	.890	3.27
Eric Källgren	16	4-6-3	326	.872	3.62

2023-24 HEAD-TO-HEAD BREAKDOWN

Utica Comets	Rochester Americans
27-24-4-5.....	Record 30-22-6-3
13-12-1-5.....	Home Record 14-11-3-2
14-12-3-0.....	Road Record 16-11-3-1
6-2-0-2.....	Last 10 Games 6-3-0-1
2-4.....	Overtime Record 8-6
2-5.....	Shootout Record 3-3
18-7-1-3.....	Record When Scoring First 18-6-4-1
15.9% (31st).....	Power-Play 17.9% (T-20th)
83.8 (7th).....	Penalty Kill 78.6% (26th)
3.05 (17th).....	Goals-For Per Game 3.13 (T-10th)
3.12 (21st).....	Goals-Against Per Game 3.51 (31st)
Mar. 23 @ WBS (3-0 W).....	Last Game . Mar. 22 vs TOR (2-1 SOL)
Mar. 27 vs LAV.....	Next GameMar. 27 @ SYR
Kevin Dineen (3rd).....	Head CoachSeth Appert (4th)



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RACE TO 20

After seeing three players reach the 20-goal mark last season, the Amerks could potentially have the same or more by the season's end.

With goals in two of his last four games, **Jiri Kulich** is on the brink of his second straight 20-goal season. Kulich, whose 19 goals lead all Amerks, can become the first Amerks player to score 20 or more goals in back-to-back seasons since Cole Schneider and Justin Bailey each did so in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Mason Jobst, the team's leading point-getter who's amid a career-year in terms of scoring, needs just two more goals to reach the mark for the first time in his pro career. He, too, has goals in two of his last four games and prior to Friday was riding a season-long six-game point streak (2+6).

Brett Murray (16) is also on pace for his second straight 20-goal season while **Isak Rosen** is also within reach after scoring his career-high 15th goal of the season on Wednesday, reaching the mark in 10 fewer games than his rookie campaign.

NEW YEAR, NEW NEUCHEV

After producing just five points in his first 23 games, rookie forward **Viktor Neuchev** has unsurprisingly emerged as Rochester's top scoring rookie through late March.

Dating back to Dec. 29 and the turn of the New Year, Neuchev has erupted for 21 points on eight goals and 13 assists over his previous 26 games.

Neuchev has recorded at least one point in 14 games over that span, including a season-long six-game point streak from Dec. 29 to Jan. 20 which saw him score three goals and record eight points.

Buffalo's third-round selection (74th overall) in 2022, Neuchev's most impressive performance of the season came back on Jan. 27, finding the back of the net for the third time in four games with the game-winning goal while also adding two assists in the 7-4 win over Laval. Since Jan. 5, Neuchev has recorded six multi-point games, which includes a pair of three-point efforts.

Of Neuchev's 10 goals this season, seven have been scored on home ice and three have come against Laval. Neuchev, who had a 40-goal season while playing for Russia's junior league during the 2021-22 campaign, currently leads all Amerks rookies with 26 points (10+16) and 69 shots in 47 games.



WORKING OVERTIME

The 2-1 shootout loss against Toronto on Friday was the fifth game over the last 15 for Rochester that went beyond regulation, with three of the four producing a 2-1 score. Overall, the Amerks have gone to extra time on 20 different occasions, the second-most by any team this season (Cleveland), including each of the first three games of the campaign.

Two of the first 10 games against Utica have required extra time to determine a winner, which include each team winning once in each team's venue earlier this season.

Four of **Jiri Kulich's** team-high five game-winning goals this season have come by way of overtime while **Isak Rosen**, **Brandon Biro**, **Jeremy Davies**, and **Zach Metsa** have each netted the clinching goal during the extra frame.

Never before in the near 68-year history of the franchise have the Amerks opened a season with three consecutive overtime contests.

Of Rochester's 12 games in February, five were decided past regulation. The club was 1-3 in overtime in the month and showed an 0-1 record in the shootout.

Dating back to Jan. 20 of last season, 30 of Rochester's previous 98 regular-season games have required overtime to determine a winner. Of the Amerks 46 wins during that same span, 16 have come following the end of regulation.

The Amerks show a 8-6 record in overtime this season and are 3-3 in the shootout.

Rochester tied an AHL record with 29 overtime games in 2017-18, showing a 9-11 record in overtime and 3-6 in the shootout.

LEANING ON LEVI

Devon Levi has earned the start in 17 of the last 23 games since being reassigned to Rochester on Jan. 20, including five straight to open the month of February. Currently on NHL recall with Buffalo, he enters the week end having won four straight and five of his last six dating back to March 1.

Levi, who boasts a 11-5-3 record in 19 appearances with the Amerks, totaled 130 saves on 136 shots he faced over a three-game win streak in February, boasting an impressive 1.95 goals-against average and a .956 save percentage over that span.

His career-high 52 saves in the Amerks overtime win at Toronto on Feb. 19 were the most by an Amerks goaltender since **Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen** had 54 in a 2-1 win at Syracuse on Feb. 25, 2022.

Levi, who ranks fifth among all rookie netminders with a 2.52 goals-against average, has held the opposition to three or fewer goals in 16 of his 19 starts. He's 11-2-3 this season in those games.

Levi won the Mike Richter Award, given annually to the top goaltender in men's college hockey, for the second straight year following the 2022-23 season.

The only two-time winner in the award's history, Levi led the nation again with a .933 save percentage, and tied for third in both shutouts (6) and saves (1,183).



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TOKARSKI ON THE MOVE

Veteran goaltender **Dustin Tokarski**, who missed the first eight games of the season due to an injury he sustained in training camp, made his season debut back on Nov. 3 against Utica.

In doing so, the two-time Calder Cup winner and AHL All-Star became just the 18th goaltender in league history to play in 400 career games, a list that also includes former Amerks Bobby Perreault (512), Michael Leighton (507), Drew MacIntyre (440) and Ed Chadwick (417).

Tokarski, who's in his second stint with the Amerks and 10th different AHL franchise, went 1-1-0 during a brief two-game stint with Rochester as part of the COVID-shortened 2020-21 campaign. He went 12-20-7 in 42 appearances with the Buffalo Sabres from 2021-23.

On Wednesday, he earned his second straight start and appeared in his 500th pro game. He has played in 80 NHL contests and 420 AHL games.

Tokarski, who's 8-9-3 in his first 21 appearances, surpassed the 10,000-save mark for his AHL career following a 31-save effort against Utica on Nov. 10. He also reached the 12,000-save mark for his pro career the week prior when he made his season debut against the Comets.

Entering tonight, the 34-year-old Tokarski is only five wins away from tying Red Almas for 11th all-time in career wins (218). He's also 20 games away from tying Drew MacIntyre for 13rd all-time (440) and will tie Yann Danis for eighth all-time on his next shutout.

JOBST HAVING A CAREER YEAR

Forward **Mason Jobst** enters the contest with 28 points (11+17) over his last 29 games, the most by an Amerk since the turn of the new year. Jobst, who hasn't gone more than one game without a point over that span, recorded a career-best three-assist outing on Feb. 16 against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton and followed that up by scoring goals in three straight games, including his career-high 16th goal of the season against Belleville on Feb. 23.

Since then, the fifth-year forward has already surpassed his goal total in 18 fewer games this season and successfully reached the 40-point mark for the first time in his career with another three-assist effort last Wednesday in Syracuse to take over the team's scoring lead.

Jobst has totaled 94 points (36+58) in 140 career games as an Amerk and has amassed 119 points (47+72) over 214 career American Hockey League games with Rochester, San Jose, Bridgeport, and Binghamton.



AMERKS-COMETES 2023-24 SEASON SERIES BREAKDOWN

ROCHESTER

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Mason Jobst	7	3	3	6	0	-2
Kale Clague	6	2	4	6	0	-2
Lukas Rousek	8	0	6	6	4	1

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Devon Levi	2	2-0-0	4	.946	2.00
Dustin Tokarski	5	3-0-1	11	.903	2.56
Michael Houser	1	1-0-0	4	.778	4.01
Devin Cooley	3	0-3-0	15	.844	5.40

UTICA

SKATER	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM	+/-
Kyle Crisculo	10	4	9	13	0	5
Graeme Clarke	10	3	6	9	0	4
Xavier Parent	10	3	6	9	11	-2

GOALTENDER

	GP	REC	GA	SV%	GAA
Akira Schmid	1	0-0-1	2	.938	1.85
Isaac Poulter	6	3-3-0	13	.921	2.44
Erik Källgren	4	1-2-0	13	.862	3.68

2023-24 SERIES BREAKDOWN VS. UTICA

Date	Result	Score	SF-SA	PP	PK
Oct. 28	W	5-4	28-18	1-3	0-1
Nov. 3	OTL	4-3	32-20	0-4	1-1
Nov. 10	W	4-3	34-34	0-2	4-4
Nov. 11	L	6-0	23-40	0-2	4-5
Dec. 30	SOW	3-2	33-30	0-4	5-6
Jan. 19	W	2-1	29-25	1-2	2-2
Jan. 26	L	4-0	32-28	0-3	1-1
Feb. 14	W	6-2	25-39	2-5	2-2
Feb. 18	L	7-3	33-33	0-3	3-4
Mar. 10	W	3-2	23-35	1-1	2-2

SERIES NOTABLES

Amerks captain **Michael Mersch** enters the weekend having played 603 professional games. Mersch, who has 149 points (63+86) with the Amerks since the start of the 2020-21 season, became the 58th forward in franchise history to skate in at least 200 games back on March 1 at Belleville.

Amerks defenseman **Ethan Pro** comes into tonight's contest having played 402 career AHL games. Since the start of the 2015-16 campaign, the Sauk Rapids, Minnesota native has totaled 51 goals and 170 assists for 221 points while also logging 13 points (2+11) in 31 postseason contests with Rochester, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton and Springfield.

Both Rochester (15-5-2-1) and Utica (15-3-1-2) come into the matchup sporting nearly identical winning records when leading after the first period. The Comets are a 18-1-1-3 this season when carrying a lead into the second period while the Amerks remain a perfect 19-0-0-1 in that regard.

The Amerks have appeared in 20 games decided beyond regulation while Utica (11) has also appeared in double digit contests in overtime this season.



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