



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

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TONIGHT'S GAME: Rochester @ Syracuse

Physical response lacking as Amerks drop playoff opener

Buffalo News

By: John Vogl

There's a different vibe in Rochester than Buffalo. Players have confidence. They believe they have a chance to win.

Still, after the Amerks' 6-2 loss to Syracuse on Friday night in the playoff opener, things sounded awfully similar.

"We had a game plan of doing things a certain way, and some guys didn't want to do it a certain way," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said in Oncenter War Memorial Arena.

A failure to stick to the game plan helped doom the Sabres. The Amerks followed suit with Buffalo General Manager Jason Botterill and coach Phil Housley watching from the stands.

"In the playoffs you need everybody kind of on the same page, and I don't think everybody was maybe playing as hard as we needed to just from a physical standpoint," defenseman Zach Redmond said. "Our effort was there, but they come out hard and we need to find a way to match that."

The wheels fell off for the Amerks during the third period. They entered in just a 3-2 hole, but the Crunch combined nice plays, Rochester mistakes and an empty-net goal to delight the crowd and pull away.

"For some reason, I don't think the third we came out very strong," Taylor said. "They came at us hard, and we didn't respond very well. In the third, they took over with the physicality, and that's what's disappointing to me. I thought we'd come out a lot harder and a lot more physical."

The speed and physicality were relatively even during the opening 40 minutes. But the Crunch, who advanced to the Calder Cup final last season, kept coming. The Amerks, playing their first playoff game since 2014, peeled off.

"We just need everybody finishing every check whenever possible," Redmond said. "It's just hard to play that way, and they do a good job of that. Every time you have the puck, you're kind of expecting a bit of physicality."

"We know what to do as far as that. We've done it before. It's just a matter of putting it in."

There's little doubt the atmosphere took a toll on Rochester. Syracuse went 11-1 at home during last year's playoffs. It's off to a similar start this year.

"This building is a tough building to play in," Amerks center Kyle Criscuolo said. "They like to finish hits and get the crowd into it, and then feed off that. We just need to weather it."

"There's a reason why they only lost one time in playoffs here last year."

Redmond and Criscuolo scored the Amerks' goals, sending the team into the opening intermission in a 2-2 tie. It was an uneven night for the Sabres' top prospects.

Alex Nylander failed to record a shot. Casey Nelson and Brendan Guhle were minus-2. Justin Bailey had three shots. Linus Ullmark stopped 28 of 33 shots.

The Crunch scored a five-on-three goal to make it 5-2 with 5:14 left. Gabriel Dumont finished his three-goal night into an empty net with 1:20 to play.

"It was probably a little closer than the score shows, but we've definitely got to be better," Amerks captain Kevin Porter said. "It's going to be a hard series. They came out hard. They were finishing every check, and we've got to do the same."

Aside from a couple of instances, the Amerks have been a good bounceback team. They don't let losses linger, which allows them to avoid losing streaks.

They have no choice but to keep that up in the best-of-five series that continues Saturday. They'll be wise to mimic the early going Friday and avoid the late, disjointed letdown.

Unlike the Sabres, they have the confidence to do it.

"The first two periods we played well," Porter said. "We played right with them. It was great game going into the third, and I'm not sure what happened."

Amerks drop series opener to Syracuse 6-2

13 Wham

By: Staff Report

The Rochester Americans and Syracuse Crunch exchanged a pair of goals during the opening period of Friday's Game 1 North Division Semifinals, but the Crunch outscored the Amerks 4-0 over the final 40 minutes to come away with a 6-2 win at the War Memorial Arena.

The Amerks were paced by Seth Griffith's two assists while Zach Redmond and Kyle Criscuolo scored their first markers of the postseason. Goaltender Linus Ullmark, who was one of several Amerks to make their AHL playoff debuts, stopped 28 of 33 but was tagged with the loss.

Gabriel Dumont (3+1) and Jamie McBain (1+2) each recorded multi-point outings for the Crunch, who improved to 12-1 on home ice dating back to last spring's Calder Cup Playoffs. Dominik Masin and Brendan Bradley rounded out the scoring while netminder Eddie Pasquale made 28 saves in a winning-effort.

After allowing the Amerks to even the game at 2-2 late in the first period, Syracuse responded with four straight unanswered goals, starting with a marker 1:44 into the second stanza.

"I thought we started off pretty good," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor. "We played well in the first, and again in the second period, but we could not finish on some of the opportunities we had. In the third period, though, I did not think we came out as hard as we did the first two periods and it cost us tonight."

"It was a close game," said Redmond, Rochester's leading point-getter during the regular season. "We know our game-plan. We know we have to play the way we are capable and do the things that made us get to this point. It was a couple bounces here or there and it was a tight game."

Matthew Peca fired a shot from the left of Ullmark, but the rebound found its way to Masin atop the crease. The blueliner sprinted towards the loose puck before he banged in his first goal of the 2018 Calder Cup Playoffs, giving the Crunch a 3-2 lead.

Syracuse carried the one-goal cushion into the intermission break while holding a 27-10 shot-advantage.

"I thought the first two periods we played a great game," said Amerks captain Kevin Porter. "They were able to get a couple of goals during the third, but we had a few chances earlier in the game and we weren't able to finish the plays. I think the score doesn't indicate how close of a game it really was. We have to regroup and be better tomorrow."

The Crunch used the energy from their home crowd and doubled the lead at the 8:27 mark of the final period of regulation as Bradley fired in a cross-ice pass from Daniel Walcott.

Rochester tried to make a push but was penalized 57 seconds apart to give the Crunch a five-on-three-man advantage with just under six minutes left to play. Syracuse would capitalize, needing

only 14 seconds into the two man-advantage as Dumont redirected a shot on the doorstep to make it a 5-2 lead.

The Amerks pulled Ullmark late in the stanza to give way for the extra attacker, but Dumont put an end to any hopes of a Rochester comeback as he slid the puck into the vacant net to cap a four-point night and a 6-2 win for the Crunch

The Amerks will look to even the series tomorrow night when they meet the Crunch in Game 2 of the best-of-five series at the War Memorial Arena in Syracuse. Game time is slated for a 7:00 p.m. start and will be carried live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester.

Dumont's hat trick leads the Crunch to a Game 1 win over Amerks

WSYR

By: Darius Joshua

Gabriel Dumont recorded his first postseason hat trick to lead the Syracuse Crunch to a 6-2 victory over the Rochester Americans in Game 1 of the North Division Semifinals tonight at the War Memorial Arena.

Twelve different Crunch players tallied a point in tonight's victory to take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-five series.

Eddie Pasquale turned aside 28-of-30 shots in net for the Crunch, while Linus Ullmark stopped 28-of-33 between the pipes for the Amerks. The Crunch went 1-for-4 on the power play and 4-for-5 on the penalty kill.

Syracuse opened scoring just three minutes into the first period. Carter Verhaeghe tipped a feed into the slot for Dumont to pick up and light the lamp with a last minute shot from the goal line. Jamie McBain earned the secondary assist.

The Amerks answered back just 50 seconds later on the power-play when Zach Redmond ripped a slap shot from the blue line off a feed from Seth Griffith. Kevin Porter tallied a helper on the equalizer.

McBain put the Crunch back on top halfway through the first period. Dumont sent a cross-ice feed for the defenseman to score with a wrister from the top of the right circle. Alexander Volkov earned a point on the go-ahead goal.

Rochester tied the game for a second time with 52 seconds remaining in the first. Kyle Criscuolo came in on a breakaway and beat Pasquale five-hole. C.J. Smith and Griffith registered the assists.

Dominik Masin scored the lone goal of the second period to put the Crunch back in the lead. Matthew Peca fired a one-timer from the right circle that was blocked. Mitchell Stephens was unable to jam in the rebound, but Masin finally chipped in the loose puck.

Syracuse doubled their lead halfway through the third period. After picking up a pass from McBain, Daniel Walcott sped down the right wing and backhanded a feed across the crease for Brendan Bradley to shove in as he crashed the net. Six minutes later, the Crunch made it 5-2 when Dumont tipped Erik Cernak's shot from the left point. Mathieu Joseph tallied a point on the play. Dumont then completed the hat trick with an empty-netter off a pass from Erik Condra to close out the game.

The Crunch host the Amerks for Game 2 tomorrow night at 7 p.m.

Crunchables: The last playoff hat trick for the Crunch was by Philippe Paradis in Game 5 of the Eastern Conference Finals on June 1, 2013 against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins...Gabriel

Dumont has three career hat tricks...Dominik Masin scored his first professional playoff goal tonight.

Amerks crunched in first playoff game since 2014 as Syracuse takes series lead

Democrat & Chronicle

By: Andy Lipari

Friday was the first playoff game for the Rochester Americans in four years, and Game 1 against Syracuse went the way of a largely inexperienced playoff team facing the defending Eastern Conference champions.

It took the Crunch less than four minutes to score their first goal and Syracuse always had an answer for Rochester as the Amerks fell, 6-2, at Onondaga County War Memorial Arena in Game 1 of the best-of-5 series.

The first period went back-and-forth with each team scoring twice. Zach Redmond answered the early Syracuse goal on the power play to tie the game 4:12 in.

Former Sabres defenseman Jamie McBain scored the Crunch's second goal midway through the first, but Kyle Criscuolo netted a tying goal with 52 seconds remaining in the period.

The Crunch settled down and dominated the first half of the second period but they only scored once on Dominik Masin goal 1:44 into the period.

More: 5 keys to the Rochester Amerks beating the Syracuse Crunch in the Calder Cup playoffs

The back-breaker for the Amerks came right after they were unable to capitalize on a power play early in the third period. Brendan Bradley put the Crunch up by two with 11:33 remaining.

Gabriel Dumont added another 14 seconds into a power play with 5:14 left and finished the hat trick with an empty-netter with 52 seconds remaining.

Linus Ullmark made 28 saves for the Amerks in his first AHL playoff game.

Eddie Pasquale made 28 saves for Syracuse.

The Amerks have lost in the first-round each of their past five playoff appearances.

Amerks thumped 6-2 by Syracuse in Game 1

Rochester First

By: Dan Fetes

Amerks head Coach Chris Taylor liked the way his team played in the first period on Friday against Syracuse. He even thought they skated well in the second period.

It was the final 20 minutes that left Taylor frustrated as the Amerks dropped the opening game of their best-of-five series with Syracuse.

"I thought we would come out a lot harder and a lot more physical and we gotta go through guys," said Taylor. "If we wanna win this series you gotta play the man. Give credit to them. They came out in the third period like they went to the final last year."

The Amerks believe this game was a lot closer than the 6-2 scoreline and thought they had their chances."

"It's positive that we had some chances and had some looks," said forward Kyle Criscuolo. "If one of those goes in it could go the other way but ya know it's a tough game."

Amerks captain Kevin Porter kept it honest and simple saying the Amerks have work to do.

"We had couple half breakaways we could have gotten some good opportunities on," said Porter. "They back pressure hard. We gotta shoot the puck more and get more opportunities and get more rebounds and second chances."

The Amerks and Crunch go at it again Saturday night at 7pm from the War Memorial in Syracuse. Chris Taylor confirmed after the game that there will be changes.

Amerks crunched by Syracuse in Game One

Spectrum News

By: Staff Report

Syracuse scored early in the second period and pulled away in the third to win game one of their best of five AHL North Division Semifinal series, 6-2, in Syracuse Friday night.

Kevin Porter and Kyle Criscuolo scored first period goals as Rochester drew even with the Crunch. Dominik Mason's goal 1:44 into the second gave Syracuse a lead it would not relinquish.

The Amerks will attempt to even the series tonight in Syracuse before returning home on Wednesday for Game 3.

Vets show the way as Syracuse Crunch strikes first in playoff series vs. Rochester *Syracuse.com*

By: Lindsay Kramer

The second season has started out as a time for the graybeards on the Syracuse Crunch.

Or, at least, those players old enough to grow any type of beard at all.

Veterans Gabriel Dumont and Jamie McBain sailed the Crunch through a rocky start and across the finish line of a 6-2 win over Rochester in Game 1 of a North Division semifinal series Friday night in the War Memorial.

Dumont posted three goals and an assist and McBain chipped in with a goal and two helpers to guide the Crunch. Syracuse blew leads of 1-0 and 2-1 before scoring four straight to strike first in the best-of-5 series.

The Crunch built a strong regular-season resume in large part on the strength of the rapid development of its young players. And while the rookies still need to keep playing beyond their years in the postseason, Dumont and McBain were the valuable known commodities when the game hung in the balance.

"It's kind of having that presence in the locker room. We've been here before, obviously a lot of guys from last year's team have been here before. So they have that experience," McBain said. "But having such a young team, it's definitely important to get that first period, first shift out of the way, kind of get them in the game, get them understanding what playoff hockey is all about."

Dumont had been sidelined by an undisclosed injury and was listed as day-to-day heading into the postseason. Coach Ben Groulx said he was a game-time decision.

Dumont was a key piece of Syracuse's run to the Calder Cup finals last year and of all the team's current skaters might be the most indispensable.

"Whenever we play at home we always want to come out hard. I don't think we played the way we wanted in the first half of this game. We kind of played better after that," Dumont said. "We're always trying to help them (the younger players). We're always trying to share as much as we can with them. But at the same time, these guys are young guys, really talented guys. So you just want to let them play. They're good players."

Defenseman Dominik Masin and new forward Brendan Bradley also put up scores for Syracuse. Syracuse goalie Eddie Pasquale stopped 28 shots.

Masin, a second-year blueliner, potted the only goal of the second period to snap a 2-2 tie. Matthew Peca and Mitchell Stephens tested Rochester netminder Linus Ullmark with shots that the goalie turned aside, but Masin pinched down low to sweep back a rebound from the left side.

Bradley, a late-season callup from Kalamazoo of the ECHL, started piling on the insurance goals at the 8:27 mark of the third. Linemate Daniel Walcott found Bradley with a quick cross-crease fed, and Bradley easily chipped it home for a 4-2 Crunch edge.

"I think kind of being the new guy kind of takes the pressure away a little bit. I'm not really used to being here," Bradley said. "My game's speed. My game's getting on the forecheck, so I think that's what I have to do to be successful."

Groulx credited the fourth line of Bradley, Walcott and Troy Bourke for creating energy all game long.

"I think as a line, we just want to get pucks behind the d, kind of just play in their end," Bradley said. "I think we did that tonight."

Dumont made it 5-2 with a 5-on-3 power-play goal from the left point at the 14:46 mark, then popped in an empty netter for good measure with 52 ticks left.

"He was in every battle tonight. Credit to him," Groulx said of Dumont.

"His contributions, night-in and night-out, you can't replace," McBain said of Dumont. "We didn't know coming into the week, for sure whether he was going to be able to go. So, to have him in the lineup definitely gives us a big boost."

Syracuse had several defensive breakdowns in the first period, and one of them allowed the Amerks to knot the game at 2-2 going into the first intermission. Kyle Criscuolo found all kinds of room to break in alone on the right side and beat Pasquale with a low shot with 51.9 seconds remaining.

McBain gave the Crunch a 2-1 lead with 8:45 remaining. He capped a strong shift by whistling a shot from above the right circle past Ullmark's glove side.

"We had a good cycle shift going, and I was able to activate a few times and had a few opportunities. I just couldn't control the puck early and eventually Doomie made a great play, found me and I was able to get a shot through," McBain said.

A slashing penalty on the Crunch's Kevin Lynch set up an Amerks power-play goal that knotted the contest at 1-1 at the 4:12 mark. Zach Redmond blistered a bid from the high slot past Pasquale.

That followed Dumont's game-opening goal at the 3:22 mark. He took a drop pass from Carter Verhaeghe and drifted in to the right goal line extended, from where he beat Ullmark from a sharp angle.

"The first (goal) was just a great play by Carter. He's 1-on-4 and he still finds me," Dumont said. "I made a good move, and the goalie bit on it. I just closed my eyes and shot it. It went in."

Game 2 is 7 p.m. Saturday in the War Memorial.

"They're a good team, and they're doing a lot of good things as well," Groulx said of the Amerks. "The game was on the line for the most part. We know that we're going to have to get better tomorrow. We like our team tonight. But it's over and we know that tomorrow it's going to be a hard-fought battle."

Amerks Notebook: Depth charges Rochester; Borgen learning

Buffalo News

By: John Vogl

When the Rochester Americans opened the playoffs Friday night, they scratched a U.S. Olympian and a two-time Calder Cup champion.

That's the kind of depth the Buffalo Sabres want.

While the Amerks participate in the postseason, the Sabres are back to the drawing board. The brain trust will be scouting players who can perform and push their teammates to be better. They hope some of those players come from Rochester.

"What excites us is that we're starting to build, which I think is key for us moving forward, some internal competition," Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill said. "That's what we have to improve on because right now when we have an injury or two – every team has injuries – but we don't have the depth right now to overcome those injuries."

The Sabres got almost no help from their part-time players this season. The replacements played 165 games and produced just 13 goals and 15 assists.

Rochester, meanwhile, entered the postseason with an abundance of riches. Among the scratches Friday in Syracuse were defensemen Will Borgen, who represented the United States at the Pyeongchang Games, and Nathan Paetsch, who won American Hockey League titles in 2013 and 2017.

Amerks General Manager and Sabres Assistant GM Randy Sexton knew there would be recalls and injuries, so he signed extra players with AHL experience during the offseason.

"A lot of guys filled in and did a great job with our depth," coach Chris Taylor said in Oncenter War Memorial Arena. "That goes to Randy signing a lot of depth players to achieve what we wanted to achieve."

"It's tough decisions for us as a coaching staff. That's the hard part about it. It's also we have a lot of tools in the toolbox, and it's great because we're going to need everybody."

The Amerks have three extra defensemen and four extra forwards, so players feel pressure to perform or risk losing their spot.

"Guys are going to be pushing each other in practice," right wing Justin Bailey said, "and I think it's good to have a guy ready to step in right after one another."

Borgen, signed a month ago following the conclusion of his junior year at St. Cloud State, played in eight regular-season games. He had no points, eight shots and an even rating.

"Will's had a great transition," Sexton said. "It's quite a whirlwind year for Will. He was on the No. 1 team in the NCAA. He was picked for the U.S. Olympic team, and now he's in pro hockey. That's a bit of a trifecta.

"If you talk to him, he's just enjoying every day. Every time I see him he's got a big smile on his face. He seems to be having fun."

The Amerks don't want to rush the 21-year-old into the playoffs before he's comfortable and can contribute.

"Part of the importance of him being here is to soak in everything that goes into preparing as a professional for playoffs," Sexton said. "He got a little taste of regular season. Now it's playoff time. Those are critical learning moments for young players like Will.

"Whether he gets in the lineup or not will remain to be seen, but equally important is he's here learning despite the fact he may not be playing."

The Amerks' forward lines featured Danny O'Regan centering for left wing Kevin Porter and Bailey; Kyle Criscuolo in the middle of C.J. Smith and Seth Griffith; Colin Blackwell between Alex Nylander and Nick Baptiste; and Sean Malone centering for Garret Ross and Hudson Fasching.

The defense pairs were Brendan Guhle-Casey Nelson, Matt Tennyson-Zach Redmond and Andrew MacWilliam-Taylor Fedun.

What to know as Amerks start AHL playoff series

Buffalo News

By: John Vogl

The Syracuse Crunch won more playoff series last year than the Rochester Americans have won since 2005.

All that matters to the Amerks is this year.

Rochester and Syracuse begin their best-of-five series at 7 p.m. Friday in Oncenter War Memorial Arena. The Crunch, the American Hockey League affiliate of the Tampa Bay Lightning, won three series to advance to the Calder Cup final last season. The Amerks missed the previous three postseasons and haven't gotten out of the first round since 2005.

Here's what to know:

Schedule

Game One – 7 p.m. Friday in Syracuse

Game Two – 7 p.m. Saturday in Syracuse

Game Three – 7 p.m. Wednesday in Rochester

Game Four* – 7 p.m. next Friday in Rochester

Game Five* – 7 p.m. April 28 in Syracuse.

*-if necessary

Records

Rochester – 37-22-17, 91 points, third place in North Division

Syracuse – 46-22-8, 100 points, second place in North Division

Home

Rochester – 18-14-6

Syracuse – 24-11-3

Road

Rochester – 19-8-11

Syracuse – 22-11-5

Head to head

Rochester – 4-5-1, 25 goals

Syracuse – 6-2-2, 29 goals

Goals per game

Rochester – 3.08 (tied for 11th)
Syracuse – 3.08 (tied for 11th)

Goals against per game

Rochester – 2.91 (15th)
Syracuse – 2.49 (3rd)

Coaches

Rochester – Chris Taylor, first season
Syracuse – Benoit Groulx, second season

Leading scorers (Goals-Assists-Points)

Rochester – Defenseman Zach Redmond 15-32-47
Center Colin Blackwell 17-28-45
Left wing C.J. Smith 17-27-44

Syracuse – Forward Mathieu Joseph 15-38-53
Forward Carter Verhaeghe 17-31-48
Forward Matthew Peca 13-33-46

Starting goaltender (Wins-Losses-Overtime Losses-Save Percentage)

Rochester – Linus Ullmark 21-12-4, .922
Syracuse – Edward Pasquale 10-1-2, .938

Miscellaneous

Rochester – Led the AHL with eight wins when trailing after two periods
Syracuse – Went 11-1 at home during the 2017 playoffs