



ROCHESTER AMERICANS

DAILY PRESS CLIPS

Wednesday, April 25, 2018

TONIGHT'S GAME: Syracuse @ Rochester

AHL North Division Semifinals / Game 3

Amerks defenseman MacWilliam gets three-game suspension

Buffalo News

By: Mike Harrington

The first round of the Calder Cup playoffs is over for Rochester Americans defenseman Andrew MacWilliam. And unless the Amerks pull off a huge comeback in their series against the Syracuse Crunch, so is MacWilliam's season.

MacWilliam has been suspended for three games by the AHL for his actions Saturday night during the Crunch's 6-5 win over the Amerks in Game 2 at the Syracuse OnCenter War Memorial. That takes his suspension through a potential end of the best-of-5 series Saturday night in Syracuse.

MacWilliam was nailed under AHL Rule 28.1 for supplemental discipline that can be levied at the discretion of the league president for incidents on the ice, whether penalized by a referee or not. The league did not specify MacWilliam's offense but it's believed to be related to leaving a scrum after the end of the second period, heading to the tunnel and then returning to join the fray.

MacWilliam, who assisted on Nick Baptiste's goal that closed the scoring, was plus-1 in the game. The Amerks trail the series, 2-0, and will be trying to keep their season alive in Game 3 Wednesday night in Blue Cross Arena. If they win that one, Game 4 would be in Rochester on Friday night.

If Rochester is eliminated before the suspension can be served to completion, the remaining games would carry over to the next time MacWilliam is active on an AHL club roster.

MacWilliam, 28, had no goals, eight assists and 73 penalty minutes in 54 games for the Amerks this season. This is his fifth straight year in the AHL. The 6-foot-2, 230-pounder played for Albany last year and signed an AHL contract with Rochester last July.

AHL suspends Rochester Amerks defenseman for rest of Syracuse Crunch series

Syracuse.com

By: Lindsay Kramer

The American Hockey League hammered Rochester Amerks defenseman Andrew MacWilliam with a three-game suspension that will put him on the sidelines for the rest of the team's North Division semifinal series.

MacWilliam was suspended for his actions during a scrum at the end of the second period. MacWilliam left the ice and went into the tunnel and then returned to the ice to partake in an altercation.

Syracuse leads the best-of-five series two games to none. If the series does not go five games, the suspension will carry over to next season.

Game 3 is Wednesday night in Rochester.

Syracuse Crunch will change goalies for Game 3 of playoff series vs. Rochester

Syracuse.com

By: Lindsay Kramer

The Syracuse Crunch has been a two-goalie hockey team all season long, and that's worked out pretty well.

Crunch coach Ben Groulx is carrying that approach over into the playoffs.

Groulx said Connor Ingram will get the start against Rochester on Game 3 of the North Division semifinals on Wednesday. The Crunch leads the best-of-five series two games to none.

This will be Ingram's AHL playoff debut, although he has gotten pressure minutes in the World Juniors and in junior hockey playoffs.

"My wise father always says it's just a hockey game," Ingram said after practice Tuesday. "It doesn't matter if it's the Stanley Cup final or we're playing shinny in Imperial rink (in Saskatchewan). My job never changes, no matter what stage you're on. As long you keep the puck out of the net, people are going to be happy. The stakes might change, but my job never changes."

Ingram replaces Eddie Pasquale, who started the first two games. Pasquale gave up two goals in Game 1 and five in Game 2. He has stopped 48 of 55 shots.

Syracuse goalie coach Karl Goehring said the switch is more a factor of Groulx's desire to keep a rotation than any displeasure with Pasquale's play.

"Both goaltenders were a key part of us down the stretch here. Both guys are more than capable here to do the job," Goehring said. "We believe in both of them."

Syracuse's cushion also gives Groulx a chance to rest Pasquale and give Ingram some minutes to keep him sharp if he's needed again down the road.

Ingram was 20-11-2 this season with a 2.33 goals-against a .914 save percentage. He went 2-0-1, 1.34, .947 vs. Rochester.

"You know it's going to happen," Ingram said of the Amerks' likely hard push on Wednesday. "I think (it's) just controlling the pace and doing everything you can just to get into the game. The crowd's going to be into it. They (the Amerks) are going to be into it. You've just got to play your game. You can't control those things, so there's no point in focusing on them. Let's focus on us."

Crunch announce goalie change before game three

Spectrum News

By: Kate Callaway

Crunch head coach Benoit Groulx announced that rookie Connor Ingram will get the nod over Eddie Pasquale Wednesday night in Rochester. The last time Ingram was between the pipes against the Amerks he notched 38 saves to shut out the rivals from the west. Heading into the meeting the Crunch are up 2-0 in the series and will look to punch a ticket to the North division finals with a victory.

Amerks must get back to basics to keep season alive past Wednesday

13Wham

By: Tobias Motyka

For the first time in four years, the Rochester Americans will host a playoff game.

But it will be the only one they host this year unless they collectively up their game.

Rochester trails in its best of five series 2-0, making Wednesday's game three a true must-win game.

After playing in Syracuse, being back in front of the home crowd will surely give the team a boost. But unless the Amerks get back to basics, they'll be going home for good sooner than they want to.

Ullmark, Amerks have uphill climb as save percentage goes downhill

Buffalo News

By: John Vogl

Linus Ullmark couldn't wait to get home. It was hard to blame the guy.

The goaltender spent two nights digging pucks out of his net. Regardless of whether the goals were his fault – many were not – it still takes a toll.

So after Rochester lost, 6-5, to Syracuse on Saturday to fall in a 2-0 hole in their playoff series, Ullmark turned his attention to a 1-month-old named Harry.

"First of all, I'm just going to go home and see my baby," Ullmark said. "Get a little bit more happy, you know? Then start preparing for Wednesday."

The Amerks will play for their season Wednesday when they host the Crunch in Game Three. A loss ends the best-of-five series. A win extends it to Game Four on Friday.

"I have faith in our team," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said in Oncenter War Memorial Arena. "I'd put a lot of money on them right now."

All bets are off if the team defense doesn't improve and Ullmark can't make a few more stops.

In line to be the Buffalo Sabres' starter next season, Ullmark has ghastly numbers in his first American Hockey League playoff series. He has allowed 11 goals on 55 shots in two games, good for a save percentage of .800 and a goals-against average of 5.59.

"Sadly, I couldn't put up enough saves," said Ullmark, who was relentlessly taunted by the Syracuse fans Friday and Saturday.

"I don't give a single beep about the crowd," added the netminder, who really said "beep" in a moment of self-editing. "I just try to focus on the next puck always. Just trying to focus, keep my mind into it. We put up five goals today. Like I said, I just didn't put up enough saves."

Two of the goals were tap-ins after the Amerks broke down. Two came on rebounds. One shot beat him from the faceoff circle, while another came from the point.

"We gave up way too many Grade A's," said right wing Nick Baptiste. "I'm sure there are a couple he might want to have back because he's such a competitive guy, but in no way, shape or form is this anything to do with him."

"He's one of the best goalies in the league, and there's a reason for that. I'd be surprised if you guys didn't see a pretty crazy effort on Wednesday. He's going to come out, and I think he's going to have a real great game."

The playoffs were supposed to be a coming-out party for the Sabres' prospects. The organization is watching closely as Rochester makes a long-awaited return to the postseason.

It hasn't gone well – at all. Defenseman Casey Nelson missed the game with an upper-body injury. Right wing Hudson Fasching was a healthy scratch. Left wing Alex Nylander was invisible for the second straight night.

Syracuse is among the class of the AHL, and it is taking the Amerks to school at times.

"I don't think I was at my best," Baptiste said. "I've got to be better for this team. I've got to be a leader on this team, and I've got to perform better. That's on me, and it's on guys that think they can play better."

Nylander barely played. With Rochester pushing for the tying goal, the No. 8 overall pick from the 2016 NHL Draft was nailed to the bench. Lined up with two players who were healthy scratches in Game One (Eric Cornel and Sahir Gill), Nylander played one shift in the third period and only nine overall.

"I just decided I was going with three lines, and I had three good lines that were going," Taylor said.

The good news regarding Nylander is he technically hasn't even started his career yet. He didn't appear in 10 NHL games in either of his first two seasons, so his entry-level contract slid to the following year twice. The three-year deal will begin next season for Nylander, who turned 20 last month.

There were moments for other prospects. Right wing Justin Bailey was a leg-churning, hitting machine, and his short-handed breakaway goal halted the Crunch's momentum after they made it 4-1 early in the second period. Baptiste tipped home a shot with 13:02 to play to make it 6-5.

But the Amerks couldn't tie it, despite a five-on-three for 47 seconds.

"That was the game for us," Taylor said.

It was a better effort than Game One, a 6-2 loss that got away from Rochester in the third period. They'll need more Wednesday.

"They held serve on home ice, and we've got to do the same when we go back to Rochester," Baptiste said. "We can outplay these guys when we play our best hockey."

With family atmosphere, Amerks live up to preseason promise

Buffalo News

By: John Vogl

The Buffalo Sabres know people are tired of empty promises. Owner Terry Pegula acknowledged it in his letter to season-ticket holders. General Manager Jason Botterill said it after the season.

The Rochester Americans backed up their vow. The organization said it would field a playoff team, and it did.

How did they put actions to their words?

"It was hard at the start," Amerks coach Chris Taylor said, "but we got guys to really understand and respect each other and understand what we're trying to do here. Everybody bought in. It comes from our staff. It comes from the leadership group. It came from everybody in the organization. It just trickled down here, and we started that.

"The biggest thing for me is wanting to come to the rink and be a family. We've created that culture here."

While the Sabres never became a cohesive unit, the Amerks jelled despite a steady stream of recalls and injuries. Taylor is getting a lot of the credit.

"For a guy in his first year as a head coach in the American League, I thought he's hit all the right buttons," Amerks GM Randy Sexton said. "He hasn't lost focus on development. He strikes the fine line between development and success on the ice. He's demanding and holds everybody accountable on and off the ice.

"He's just done a phenomenal job."

Already a member of the Amerks Hall of Fame, Taylor knew what a winner would mean to Rochester. The 46-year-old returned after one season with Botterill and Sexton in the Pittsburgh Penguins' organization and set about doing it.

There was no honeymoon, however. Winning was the only option.

"There's always pressure, and that's what it's all about," Taylor said in Oncenter War Memorial Arena. "At the start it was hard because there's always some resistance here and there with people coming from different places. I think our leadership group did a great job in the dressing room to start off the year. Randy brought in some great people to do that, and it rubs off on everybody."

It helped that Taylor already had a connection with some players. He was a Rochester assistant from 2011 to 2016, and prospects such as Justin Bailey, Nick Baptiste and Linus Ullmark arrived during that time.

"I always had a really good relationship with Tayls, even from my first year here," Bailey said. "This season, he really harped on having a family atmosphere. That was shown early on in the season, and it's helped us grow to where we are today. It's what's made us so successful this season."

Like Sabres coach Phil Housley, Taylor had a long playing career. Drafted by the New York Islanders in the second round in 1990, Taylor turned pro in 1992 and didn't hang up his skates until 2011. He played 617 games in the AHL, 371 in the International Hockey League, 160 in Germany and 149 in the NHL, including parts of four seasons with the Sabres.

When Taylor was sent down to Rochester during the 2003-04 season after spending four months with the Sabres, first-year Buffalo forward and future co-captain Chris Drury pulled a reporter aside and wanted it known how much Taylor taught the young squad. Those traits clearly still exist.

"He's really a player's coach," Amerks defenseman Brendan Guhle said. "He is. He treats you well, and if you ever need to talk to him about something, it's an open door. He has fun with the guys. He jokes around with us. It's great to see him at the rink every day."

The group is getting extended time together because it fulfilled its preseason promise.

"The biggest thing for me is our players have done a great job," Taylor said. "It's all done by them on the ice. We can give them structure. We can give them this, we can give them that, but ultimately they have to go out and do it. They've done a great job all year."

Amerks fall in to a 2-0 series hole as Ullmark struggles again in goal

Democrat & Chronicle

By: Brodie Inguaggiato

The Rochester Americans tried to battle back from a three-goal deficit to even their first-round AHL playoff series with the Syracuse Crunch, but fell short on the road, 6-5, Saturday.

The Amerks are in a 2-0 hole in the best-of-five series and return home for Game 3 on Wednesday.

Third-seeded Rochester fell behind by three goals early in the second period but managed to trim the deficit with consecutive goals from Justin Bailey and Stuart Percy before the end of the period.

From then on, the two teams traded scores with the Amerks never drawing even and the second-seeded Crunch never leading by more than two.

Nicholas Baptiste scored Rochester's final goal of the game at the 6:58 mark of the third period.

Linus Ullmark struggled in net for the second straight game, allowing six goals on 22 shots. His counterpart, Eddie Pasquale, stopped 20 shots as the Amerks held a 25-22 edge.

Amerks head home in a 2-0 series hole

ESPN Rochester

By: Staff Report

The Amerks go home and face elimination after losing in Syracuse on Saturday 6-5. The Crunch leads the best-of-five series 2-0.

Linus Ullmark has had a nightmare series so far. He allowed five goals on 33 shots in Game 1 and six goals on 22 shots in Game 2.

Rochester made a good comeback to get back into the game, but couldn't get the equalizer in the last 13:02 of the game.

Syracuse had a 4-1 second period lead, but a shorthanded goal by Justin Bailey and an even strength goal by Stuart Percy just 52 seconds later made it 4-3.

The third period was wild as Syracuse made it 5-3 at 4:52, Kevin Porter made it 5-4 at 5:22, Alexander Volkov scored again at 5:59, but Nick Baptiste made it 6-5 at 6:58.

Brendan Guhle played with Casey Nelson in Game 1 and both were minus two. Chris Taylor told reporters that Nelson missed Game 2 with an upper-body injury, but Guhle and Taylor Fedun were minus three in Game 2. Hudson Fasching was also a healthy scratch.

On Saturday, Porter and Colin Blackwell both had a goal and an assist.

In two games Seth Griffith has three assists while C.J. Smith has no goals and two assists.

In this game Matthew Peca had a goal and three assists giving him five points in two games for Syracuse.

Crunch and former Sabre defenseman Jamie McBain has a goal and three assists in the series.

Game 3 is in Rochester on Wednesday and if the Amerks win, they'll host Game 4 on Friday.

In Kelly Cup action on Saturday, Sabres affiliate Cincinnati lost at home to Fort Wayne 2-1 and now trail three games to one. Jonas Johansson made 36 saves giving the 22-year-old goaltender a series save percentage of .929. Johansson made 45 saves in a Game 3, 7-6 overtime win. He stopped 68 pucks in a Game 1 double overtime loss.

The Sabres took Johansson in the third round of the 2014 Entry Draft.

The good, the bad and the ugly from the Amerks playoff weekend

Rochester First

By: Dan Fetes

The Good: *The offense.*

Don't let two losses fool you. The Amerks are coming off a five-goal performance with many of the big names you expect to see on the statsheet. Justin Bailey and Nick Baptiste both scored their first career AHL playoff goals Saturday night, which is a plus.

Seth Griffith has three assists in the first two games and CJ Smith had a pair of helpers himself.

Sabres head coach Phil Housley and general manager Jason Botterill were in attendance for game one of the series in Syracuse.

Bailey said he's aware of the 'chance up his stock in the playoffs,' and Baptiste added 'guys are playing for contracts.'

Scoring seven goals in Syracuse SHOULD have been enough offense to force at least a split with the Crunch. What's even more frustrating is there could have been more.

Bailey missed a mini-breakaway opportunity in the opening minutes of game one and the Amerks failed to convert on a third period 5-on-3 powerplay down 6-5 in game two.

Coulda, woulda, shoulda.

But on the bright side... the offense isn't the issue.

The Bad: *Linus Ullmark*

In 41 regular season games in Rochester, Linus Ullmark had a .244 GAA and .922 save percentage.

In his first two career AHL playoff starts: Ullmark has a 5.60 GAA and .800 save percentage.

[sad trombone noise]

The defense hasn't been great in front of him, but there are at least a few goals he'd like to have back.

Many believe Ullmark is a lock to start next season in Buffalo and compete for the starting job [sad trombone noise] but there's no doubt his stock has taken a hit over the weekend.

Ullmark has still made spectacular saves in his series. It's the head-scratching goals that have seemingly killed momentum.

Teammates say they're not worried about their goalie.

"He's one of the best in the league for a reason. I'd be surprised if we didn't see some pretty crazy effort from him on Wednesday," said Baptiste.

The Ugly: *Alexander Nylander*

The former 8th overall pick has spent two full playoff games without thinking of hitting anyone.

The team stressed after game one they need to match Syracuse's physical style of play.

"I think in the playoffs you need everyone on the same page and I don't think everyone was playing as hard as we needed to from a physical standpoint," said defenseman Zach Redmond.

Saturday night, the team did respond and hit everything and everyone that moved.

Except Nylander.

He had only three shifts over the final 40 minutes in game two, including just one in the third period.

"I just decided I was going with three lines. I had three good lines going and that's what I decided to use," added Chris Taylor after the game.

Nylander has just one shot in six periods of playoff hockey. Not a great look with the entire Sabres coaching and front office watching from the stands.

What's next: The Amerks were the silver lining of a terrible season in the Sabres organization. Making the playoffs is one of the only things fans can hang their hat on this year (sigh) but making the playoffs and winning in the playoffs are two completely different things.

"I loved our compete," Chris Taylor said Saturday night. "I loved how we came back and battled back it's just we gotta start playing with the lead and it's tough to keep coming back."

In the twelve games this season with Syracuse (including the playoffs) ten have been decided by two goals or less.

"Our backs are against the wall. Guys know that. They care. No one is happy. All we care about is how we're going to come back Wednesday and respond. That's all we can do. I still have a lot of faith in this team. I'd still put a lot of money on them," smiled Taylor.

Amerks face elimination after 6-5 loss in Game 2 vs Syracuse

Rochester First

By: Dan Fetes

Despite the Rochester Americans scoring a pair of goals in each of the second and third periods of Saturday's Game 2 North Division Semifinal matchup, the Syracuse Crunch outlasted the Amerks as they came away with the 6-5 win at the War Memorial Arena. The Crunch hold a 2-0 series lead in the best-of-five opening round entering Wednesday's must-win Game 3 back in Rochester.

The Amerks were led by Stuart Percy, Kevin Porter and Colin Blackwell's two-point performances while Justin Bailey and Nick Baptiste each scored their first professional postseason goals in the loss. Goaltender Linus Ullmark made 16 saves in the contest but was tagged with his second straight defeat.

Matthew Peca (1+3), Alexander Volkov (2+0), Eric Condra (0+2) and former Amerk Mat Bodie (0+2) all helped the Crunch to their 13th home win in the last 14 games dating back to last season's Calder Cup run as they finished with multi-point efforts. Mathieu Joseph, Reid McNeill and Olivier Archambault rounded out the scoring while netminder Eddie Pasquale stopped 20 of 25 shots he faced in saves in the winning effort.

Trailing 6-5 with 11:15 to play in regulation, the Amerks seemed to catch a break as they had 47 seconds of a 5-on-3 man-advantage to work with after high-sticking and delay of game infractions were assessed to Syracuse. The Crunch, however, were able to successfully kill off both penalties to preserve their one-goal cushion.

"It was tough," said Amerks head coach Chris Taylor, when talking about not being able to capitalize on the two-man advantage. "In playoff games, special teams are a big part of the game, but we just could not find a way."

The Amerks continued to find the equalizer as the clock was dwindling down, but Pasquale held off Rochester to grab a 2-0 series lead and put the Amerks on the brink of elimination.

"I thought we pushed back tonight," Baptiste said. "Last night they came at us pretty hard, but I thought we had a better answer tonight. We have to try and start every game like that. We cannot let a team go up 4-1 in the playoffs. Syracuse is a good team and in the playoffs for a reason. We now have to regroup, go back to Rochester and take it one period at a time."

Syracuse opened the scoring less than four minutes into the game but Blackwell redirected a Percy shot to even the score at 1-1 at the 15:43 mark.

After collecting a pair of assists in last night's matchup, Seth Griffith was awarded the secondary helper on the power-play tally.

The Crunch countered to take a 2-1 lead into the intermission break as they scored with 1:29 left in the period.

The home squad continued to ride the energy into the second stanza as they took a 4-1 advantage less than three minutes into the frame.

Rochester, however, responded after using its timeout and tallied a pair of goals just 52 seconds apart to make it a 4-3 game.

“We showed a lot of resilience after the timeout,” said Blackwell. “Coach ‘Tayls’ calmed us down and basically said we have nearly two full periods of hockey left in the game. Before the timeout we had a few mistakes that came back to cost us and they were able to put the puck into the net.”

The two clubs tightened down for the remainder of the period as they combined for just 12 shots in the second stanza, but Rochester faced a one-goal deficit going into the final frame of regulation.

After emerging from the dressing rooms, the Amerks and Crunch joined to score four goals in a span of 2:06 early in the final period.

The Crunch began the scoring barrage, and despite third-period goals from Porter and Baptiste, Rochester was unable to get one more past Pasquale and fell one goal short of tying the game.

“Much like last night I thought we had a good start,” said Taylor. “We used the body and finished our checks, but we weren’t able to find the tying goal.”

The Amerks look to stave off elimination as the best-of-five series shifts back to Rochester on Wednesday, April 25 for Game 3 of the North Division Semifinals at The Blue Cross Arena. Opening puck drop is scheduled for 7:05 p.m.

Amerks must win to keep season alive

13 WHAM News

By: Staff Report

Two playoff games and two playoff losses for the Amerks, but Rochester Head Coach Chris Taylor still has confidence in his team. The Amerks now in a must win situation if they look to keep their season alive. The Amerks will host the Syracuse Crunch Wednesday April 25th a 7:05pm in Game 3.

Amerks in 2-0 series hole after 6-5 game two loss

13Wham

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The Amerks look to stave off elimination as the best-of-five series shifts back to Rochester on Wednesday, April 25 for Game 3 of the North Division Semifinals at The Blue Cross Arena. Opening puck drop is scheduled for 7:05 p.m. and can be heard live on The Sports Leader 95.7 FM/950 AM ESPN Rochester.

Crunch hold off Amerks to take 2-0 series lead in North Division Semifinal series

Local SYR

By: Darius Joshua

The Syracuse Crunch are in full control of its opening series in the Calder Cup Playoffs after a 6-5 win over Rochester in Game 2 of the North Division semifinals.

The three stars of the game were Matthew Peca(1 goal, 3 assists), Alexander Volkov(2 goals) and Erik Condra(2 assists).

Matthew Peca and Mathieu Joseph both scored in the first period to put the Crunch ahead 2-1 after one.

Olivier Archambault and Reid McNeil picked up their first playoff goals less than a minute apart in the second period to put Syracuse up 4-1. Rochester answered back with a short handed goal from Justin Bailey and a score from Stuart Percy to make it a 4-3 game after two periods.

In the third, Alexander Volkov gave the Crunch just enough of a cushion with two goals in the period.

The Crunch can sweep the series when Game 3 starts up on Wednesday, April 25th, at 7pm in Rochester.

Crunch win wild GM2 6-5 to put Amerks on the brink

Spectrum News

By: Staff Report

Syracuse nearly surrendered 4-1, 5-3 and 6-4 leads, but with the young stars playing much wiser than their years, the Crunch have the Amerks one game away from elimination.

Syracuse Crunch lands one more haymaker than Rochester to win playoff slugfest, 6-5

Syracuse.com

By: Lindsay Kramer

The Syracuse Crunch played its best hockey when challenged on Saturday night.

There was a lot of that drama against Rochester, almost too much from a Crunch perspective. But Syracuse successfully walked the line between spitting up and breathing fire to take control of its playoff series against the Amerks in the War Memorial.

In one of the wildest and most improbable playoff games in the 24-year history of the franchise, Syracuse held off Rochester 6-5 to grab a two games to none lead in their North Division semifinal showdown.

It was a frenetic contest in which momentum got motion sickness riding a pendulum and it was in doubt until the Amerks' Taylor Fedun buried a shot from the right side into the gut of Syracuse goalie Eddie Pasquale at the final horn.

"I think it's a great win. The more you go into the playoffs, the more intense games become. And today, a lot of momentum swings both sides," said Syracuse coach Ben Groulx. "I thought we held our composure. I think it was an exciting game. That's probably why I don't have hair anymore on my head."

Syracuse almost coughed up leads of 4-1, 5-3 and 6-4 before moving to within one game of clinching the best-of-five series. The teams pounded each other for a combined four goals within the first 6:02 of the second and four more for within the first 6:58 of the third before the Crunch finally slammed the door.

"We're resilient. Consistent. We just keep throwing," said Syracuse captain Erik Condra.

"It's two good teams out there. Both teams were responding to each other," said Syracuse defenseman Reid McNeill. "We're going to have to take a look at the video and clean up some areas. Obviously, we don't want to be giving up five goals a game. But we're happy we got the win. We've got to learn how to manage the momentum."

Rookie forward Alexander Volkov popped in both of the Crunch's third-period scored to lug his team to the win, and Matthew Peca added a goal and three assists. Mathieu Joseph, Olivier Archambault and McNeill also potted scores for Syracuse.

The Crunch's offense has been tearing up the Amerks through two games. Syracuse won 6-2 in Game 1 Friday, and Saturday's output marked the first time in five years the Crunch have hung up at least a half-dozen in consecutive games.

But it was not a good night to be a goalie. Pasquale and Rochester's Linus Ullmark allowed a combined 11 scores on 47 shots. But the Crunch will take it, moving on to Rochester for Game 3 on Wednesday with the chance for a sweep.

The Crunch nursed a 4-3 lead going into the final 20 minutes before Volkov potted his first at the 4:52 mark. Syracuse defenseman Jamie McBain set him up with a gorgeous pass from the deep right corner, and Volkov flicked in the bid from outside the crease.

But Rochester's Kevin Porter responded with a gruesome goal just 30 ticks later, a shot from the right circle that hit off Pasquale and rolled across the line to make it a 5-4 game.

"We didn't think (for) a second that that team was not showing up today. We knew they would put their best foot forward," Groulx said of the Amerks.

Volkov then spoke up again, jamming home a rebound 37 seconds later. Volkov led the Crunch with 23 goals in the regular season and his net-crashing efforts Saturday indicate he's adapted to the sort of goal-scoring style that's needed in the playoffs.

"They are not pretty goals. He can definitely score pretty goals," Peca said. "But he has a knack for being around the net and finding loose pucks. He's been awesome all year and you could really see him picking up his stride at the end of the year. He's just an all-around good player."

The Crunch was in a far too generous mood, though, and less than a minute later Nicholas Baptiste hammered home a shot from the left circle to bring the Amerks within 6-5.

Although there was nothing that would portend it at the time, that was the end of the flashing red lights for the night. But not before Syracuse handed Rochester a golden chance to tie it up.

Condra was whistled for high sticking at the 7:32 mark, and 1:13 later Gabriel Dumont sent off for a faceoff violation on a call that Groulx disputed. That put the Crunch on a 5-on-3 manpower disadvantage with two of its best penalty killers in the box.

But Syracuse pushed back against the Amerks' power play and then mustered enough fire to keep Rochester off the board the rest of the night.

"I was a little nervous, but the guys did a great job," Condra said of the penalty kill. "That sparks a team when you kill something like that off late in the game. I gave them a few extra pats when they got back to the bench, that's for sure."

Syracuse escaped a wild second period with a 4-3 edge. Archambault spoke up first, flipping in rebound from the left side at the 1:29 mark for a 3-1 Crunch lead.

McNeill, a defensive blueliner who hadn't scored all season, increased the Crunch's cushion to 4-1 46 seconds later. His long shot from the left point just inside the blueline ticked off an Amerks player and flew past Ullmark. The goal was McNeill's first of the season.

"It was nice to finally chip in and help the team out there," McNeill said. "This time of year, they don't have to be pretty. I wouldn't say there was a monkey on my back. I'm not here to score goals. But it's always nice chipping in."

But the Amerks stormed back quickly. With the Crunch on a power play, Justin Bailey jumped on a Syracuse turnover and beat Pasquale on a short-handed breakaway at the 5:10 mark.

And just 52 seconds later, Stuart Percy drilled a long shot past a Bailey screen in front and by Pasquale to make it a one-goal game.

"Give them credit. They work hard, they don't give up. They've got a lot of players that can hurt you," Peca said. "We closed it out. So that's the biggest thing."

The winner of this series will take on the winner of the North Division semifinal between Utica and Toronto. Toronto took an overtime decision in Game 1 of that meeting Saturday afternoon.