



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019 – ALLSTATE ARENA



at



GRAND RAPIDS GRIFFINS (0-0-0-0) at CHICAGO WOLVES (0-0-0-0)
Griffins Game #1 * Road Game #1 * AHL Game #11

RECORDS

Season Series: 0-0-0-0 Home Series: 0-0-0-0 Road Series: 0-0-0-0

All-Time Series: 84-61-2-6-3 All-Time Home Series: 42-27-2-4-2 All-Time Road Series: 42-34-0-2-1

Griffins at Wolves

First of eight meetings overall, first of four at Allstate Arena...The Griffins and Wolves are division rivals for the eighth consecutive season...Grand Rapids has faced Chicago 156 times in the regular season, the second-most of any Griffins opponent (Milwaukee, 184)...Tonight marks Grand Rapids' 80th regular season game at Chicago...Second-year head coach **Ben Simon** and Wolves' third-year bench boss Rocky Thompson are both members of Todd Nelson's coaching tree...Simon was an assistant under Nelson in Grand Rapids from 2015-18 and won the 2017 Calder Cup...Thompson served on Nelson's staff in Oklahoma City from 2010-14 as an assistant...As part of his 11-year professional playing career, Simon registered 87 points (37-50—87) in 196 games with the Wolves from 2001-03 and 2004-05 and was a part of Chicago's first Calder Cup title in 2002...Grand Rapids finished 3-5-0-0 against Chicago last regular season, including 1-3 at Allstate Arena...In their last 10 in the Windy City, the Griffins are 4-5-0-1...The Griffins are opening their season against the Wolves for the third time and show a 2-0 mark, including a 3-1 victory on home ice on Oct. 14, 2016, and a 3-2 overtime triumph at Chicago on Oct. 11, 2003...Grand Rapids' first road game is coming at Chicago for the fifth time, and first since 2016, possessing a 3-1 record...Saturday is the third time in the last four seasons, and second consecutive, in which Chicago is opening its home slate against Grand Rapids...The Wolves defeated Grand Rapids 5-1 in their home opener last season and lost 4-2 to begin the 2016-17 campaign...Among returning players, **Turner Elson** (4-3—7 in 8 GP) and **Matt Puempel** (5-1—6 in 7 GP) led the Griffins in scoring in the 2018-19 season series vs. Chicago...**David Pope** (10/13/18 at CHI), **Vili Saarijarvi** (10/20/18 vs. CHI) and **Evgeny Svechnikov** (10/15/16 at CHI) all picked up their first AHL goals against the Wolves while **Joe Hicketts** notched his first pro point (assist, 10/15/16 at CHI).

Ready to Roar in Season 24

The Griffins begin the franchise's 24th overall season of play, 19th as a member of the American Hockey League and 18th as the primary affiliate of the 11-time Stanley Cup champion Detroit Red Wings this evening when they travel to the defending Western Conference champion Chicago Wolves. This marks the second consecutive season in which the Griffins will launch their schedule against the reigning conference champs (Texas, 2018). Grand Rapids has competed in 1,818 games between the International Hockey League and AHL and has amassed a 965-656-27-58-112 regular season record (0.585), to go along with 17 playoff appearances, seven division titles and two Calder Cups (2017, 2013). After tonight the Griffins will return to Van Andel Arena for their home opener on Friday, Oct. 11 against Milwaukee.

Season Openers

The Griffins own a 13-7-2-1 record (0.630) all time in season openers and a 14-7-2-0 (0.652) mark in road openers. When the season opener comes on foreign ice, the Griffins show a 6-3-2-0 ledger (0.636). Grand Rapids has kicked off a season on Oct. 5 three times previously, 1996 at Indianapolis (1-0 W), 2001 vs. Utah (0-3 L) and 2018 at Texas (1-3 L). Note the important dates in Griffins history as Oct. 5, 1996 was the team's debut as a franchise and in the International Hockey League, and Oct. 5, 2001 was the club's AHL debut.

This Date in Griffins History

1996: The Griffins open their inaugural campaign on the road at Market Square Arena versus the Indianapolis Ice and emerge with a 1-0 win on 30 saves by Pokey Reddick and a first-period power play goal by Michel Picard, the first goal in Griffins history.

2001: The Griffins make their AHL debut in a 3-0 loss to the Utah Grizzlies at Van Andel Arena. The team's sixth consecutive opening night sellout crowd watches the Griffins sustain the first opening night loss in franchise history and the first defeat in a home opener since their inaugural 1996-97 season.

Let's Try This Again

For the first time in franchise history, the Griffins will open the season against the team responsible for eliminating them from the previous postseason. Grand Rapids had its season end in the Central Division Semifinals for the second consecutive year last spring after falling 4-2 in the decisive Game 5 at Allstate Arena. The Griffins return 12 players who participated in that five-game series that saw a combined 236 PIM and a 17-15 Grand Rapids scoring edge. This is only the third time Grand Rapids is opening a campaign against a team it faced in the preceding playoffs. The Griffins defeated Cleveland in six games in the 2000 Eastern Conference Semifinals and then won 4-3 in a shootout to open the 2000-01 season at home against Cleveland. Grand Rapids swept Chicago 4-0 in the 2003 Western Conference Semifinals and then claimed a 3-2 overtime victory at the Wolves to begin the 2003-04 year on Oct. 11.

Simon Says

Ben Simon, 41, begins his second season as Grand Rapids' head coach. In his first year, he guided the Griffins to a 38-27-7-4 record (87 points, 0.572) and a fourth-place finish in the Central Division while becoming the eighth head coach in franchise history to lead the Griffins to the postseason during his first full season behind the bench. Simon served as an assistant coach in Grand Rapids from 2015-18 under Todd Nelson and helped the franchise win its second Calder Cup in 2017. He is the fourth former Griffins assistant to then become the head coach. Appearing in 21 games and scoring nine points (4-5—9) with the Griffins in 2006-07 as part of an 11-year professional playing career, Simon is the third former Griffins player to serve as Grand Rapids' head coach, joining Nelson and Danton Cole (2002-05).

First Things First

Grand Rapids' roster currently features five recent Detroit first-round draft picks (**Moritz Seider** 2019, **Filip Zadina** 2018, **Joe Veleno** 2018, **Michael Rasmussen** 2017, **Evgeny Svechnikov** 2015). Five of the Red Wings' last six first rounders are on the west side of the state, with the lone exception being Dennis Cholowski, the 20th selection in 2016 who made Detroit's roster following training camp and the preseason slate. From 2002-15, the Griffins had only seven Detroit first rounders suit up for them: Jakub Kindl (2005-11; 14-15), Niklas Kronwall (2003-06), Dylan Larkin (2015 playoffs only), Anthony Mantha (2014-15), Tom McCollum (2009-15), Riley Sheahan (2011-14) and Brendan Smith (2010-13). The Griffins have never had more than two Detroit first-round selections in their opening night lineup. The Griffins have also never seen more than three Red Wings first rounders suit up for the club at any point in the same season. The 2016-17, 2015-16, 2014-15, 2012-13, 2011-12 and 2010-11 editions of the Griffins all showcased three first-round Detroit draft picks. Adding in **Matt Puempel** (24th overall by Ottawa in 2011) and **Dylan McIlrath** (10th overall by the New York Rangers in 2010), Grand Rapids' roster boasts seven former first-round draft selections.

Winning Ways

The Griffins have earned 40 or more wins and accumulated 90 or more points in six of the last seven seasons. Last year's team finished with 38 victories and 87 points. Grand Rapids has qualified for the Calder Cup Playoffs in a franchise-record seven consecutive seasons and has advanced to at least the second round on five occasions, including Calder Cups in 2017 and 2013. Since the 2012-13 season, Grand Rapids ranks second in the league in both regular season wins and points. (*tables*)

Team	Wins	Team	Points
Toronto	317	Toronto	687
Grand Rapids	305	Grand Rapids	667
Wilkes-Barre/Scranton	304	Providence	660
Providence	298	Wilkes-Barre/Scranton	657
Chicago	285	Chicago	638

Roster Breakdown

Twenty players (forwards **Turner Elson**, **Ryan Kuffner**, **David Pope**, **Matt Puempel**, **Michael Rasmussen**, **Givani Smith**, **Evgeny Svechnikov**, **Chris Terry**, **Dominic Turgeon**, **Joe Veleno** and **Filip Zadina**; defensemen **Joe Hicketts**, **Oliwer Kaski**, **Brian Lashoff**, **Gustav Lindstrom**, **Dylan McIlrath**, **Vili Saarijarvi** and **Moritz Seider**; goaltenders **Filip Larsson** and **Calvin Pickard**) on the roster are under contract with the Red Wings, while six players (forwards **Matthew Ford**, **Troy Loggins**, **Jarid Lukosevicius**, **Gregor MacLeod** and **Dominik Shine**; defenseman **Alec McCrea**) are playing on a Griffins contract. Eleven players are Red Wings draft picks (Larsson, Lindstrom, Pope, Rasmussen, Saarijarvi, Seider, Smith, Svechnikov, Turgeon, Veleno and Zadina).

GRG → DRW

Fourteen former Griffins players begin the season on the Red Wings' active roster, including Justin Abdelkader, Andreas Athanasiou, Tyler Bertuzzi, Dennis Cholowski, Danny DeKeyser, Christoffer Ehn, Jonathan Ericsson, Valtteri Filppula, Luke Glendening, Darren Helm, Jimmy Howard, Filip Hronek, Dylan Larkin and Anthony Mantha. Since the affiliation began in 2002-03, 89 Griffins have gone on to play for the Red Wings. In fact, 27 Griffins alumni wore the Winged Wheel during the 2018-19 season.

Donuts and Seider

Defenseman **Moritz Seider** is expected to make his North American professional debut with the Griffins. The sixth overall selection by Detroit in last June's draft, Seider can tie **Filip Zadina** as the highest Detroit draft pick ever to suit up for Grand Rapids. A native of Zell, Germany, Seider won the Deutsch Eishockey Liga's Rookie of the Year award last season after posting six points (2-4—6) in 29 games with Adler Mannheim as a 17-year-old.