



SUNDAY, OCT. 4, 2026 – ROCKET ARENA



at



GRAND RAPIDS GRIFFINS (1-0-0-0) at CLEVELAND MONSTERS (0-1-0-0)
Griffins Game #2 * Road Game #2 * AHL Game #23

RECORDS

Season Series: 1-0-0-0 Home Series: 0-0-0-0 Road Series: 1-0-0-0
All-Time Series: 84-44-9-14 All-Time Home Series: 48-19-4-4 All-Time Road Series: 36-25-5-10

Griffins at Monsters

Second of eight meetings overall, second of four at Rocket Arena...The Griffins and Monsters met for two preseason games last weekend in Toledo, Ohio, with Grand Rapids claiming both games (3-1 W, 5-2 W)...The Griffins will compete against Cleveland in four of their first 10 games...In the last five seasons, Grand Rapids has a 16-10-3-4 overall record (.591) against the Monsters, including a 6-8-1-2 mark (.441) at Rocket Arena...Last season, Cleveland finished the regular season with a 37-26-6-3 (.576) record to finish third in the North Division. In the postseason, the Monsters fell 4-3 in the division finals to the eventual Calder Cup champions the Toronto Marlies...Last season, the Griffins went 5-2-0-0 against Cleveland, which included a 2-2-0-0 mark at Rocket Arena...The Monsters are led by new head coach Nick Bootland, following the departure of Trent Vogelhuber, who was hired as an assistant coach for the Columbus Blue Jackets. Bootland is a two-time Calder Cup winner with the Hershey Bears when he served as an assistant from 2022-26. Bootland began his coaching career in the ECHL with the Kalamazoo Wings and was their head coach/director of hockey operations for 14 seasons from 2008-22...Griffins head coach **Dan Watson** suited up for the Cleveland Barons from 2002-04 and calls Cleveland home during the offseason...**Cameron Butler** competed in parts of three seasons with the Monsters from 2022-25, making his pro/AHL debut on April 14, 2023, at Utica. Butler also made his NHL debut with Columbus on March 30, 2024, against Pittsburgh...Cleveland's new head coach Nick Bootland is the older brother of former Griffin Darryl Bootland, a fan favorite who racked up 140 points (72-68—140) and a team-record 1,164 penalty minutes in 293 games from 2002-07.

This Date in Griffins History

2013: Behind two goals by Ryan Sproul and three-point nights from Gustav Nyquist and Adam Almquist, the defending Calder Cup champion Griffins trounce host Rochester 8-1, setting team records for goals scored and margin of victory in a season opener.

We Meet Again

Dan Watson and Monsters new head coach Nick Bootland have a long history with each other, dating back to 2009. Bootland served as head coach of the ECHL's Kalamazoo Wings from 2008-22 and Watson was on the Toledo Walleye's bench from 2009-23. As head coaches between the ECHL and AHL, Watson and Bootland have met 42 times during the regular season, with Watson holding a 30-7-2-3 record (.774) over teams led by Bootland. In addition, Watson and Bootland competed together in the 2003-04 campaign as teammates with the Cleveland Barons (AHL), Columbus Stars (UHL) and Kalamazoo Wings (UHL).

31st Season of Hockey

The Grand Rapids Griffins are in the franchise's 31st overall season of play, 26th as a member of the American Hockey League, and 25th as the primary affiliate of the 11-time Stanley Cup champion Detroit Red Wings. The Griffins have competed in 2,278 games between the IHL and AHL and have amassed a 1,197-834-27-90-130 regular-season record (.586), to go along with 20 playoff appearances, eight division titles and two Calder Cups (2017, 2013).

The Watson Supercomputer

Dan Watson was named the 12th head coach in franchise history on June 14, 2023, and enters his fourth season at the helm. The Griffins have yet to drop a season opener under Watson, continuing the trend on Friday. Last season, Watson became the third head coach in franchise history to reach the postseason in each of his first three full years as head boss (Jeff Blashill 2012-15 & Todd Nelson 2015-18) and is looking to become the first coach to lead the Griffins to four consecutive playoff appearances. Watson was also named the head coach of the Central Division at the AHL All-Star Classic for the second straight season, becoming the second coach in team history to attend two all-star events and the first in its AHL history. In the 2025-26 regular season, Watson led the Griffins to a Central Division title as well as a Western Conference championship with a franchise-record 51-16-4-1 (.743) mark. With Grand Rapids, Watson sports a 126-68-16-7 regular-season mark (.634) and a 9-11 postseason ledger (.450). As a head coach, the Glencoe, Ontario, native possesses a 398-180-38-20 record (.671) during the regular season and a 60-45 (.571) mark over only eight playoff campaigns.

2025-26 Season in Review

The Griffins skated in their 30th season a year ago and concluded with a franchise-record 51-16-4-1 (.743) mark and 107 points, which were the fourth-most in team history. The Griffins went 24-9-3-0 at Van Andel Arena and 27-7-1-1 on foreign ice, earning the most road wins in franchise history. Grand Rapids also went on to win the Central Division and Western Conference during the regular season before falling in the Central Division Finals for the second time in the last three years. Grand Rapids enjoyed a franchise-record tying 15-game win streak from Nov. 22-Dec. 27, 2025, which tied for the sixth-longest run in AHL history, and the 19-game point streak from Nov. 22, 2025-Jan. 7, 2026 (18-0-1-0) tied for the longest run in franchise history. The Griffins began the 2025-26 season with a 29-1-1-1 record and their 17-game point streak on the road from Oct. 10, 2025-Jan. 23, 2026 (15-0-1-1) set an AHL record. The team had three representatives at the 2026 AHL All-Star Classic in Sebastian Cossa, **John Leonard** and **Dominik Shine**, in addition to having head coach **Dan Watson** man the bench for the Central Division. Leonard led the team in points (33-21—54) and goals (33), while Erik Gustafsson paced the roster in assists (33). Michael Brandsegg-Nygard, the 15th overall pick in the 2024 NHL Entry Draft, led the roster's rookies in points (44), goals (20) and assists (24). Brandsegg-Nygard ranked among the 2025-26 AHL rookie leaders in points (T10th), assists (T14th), goals (T6th), plus-minus (+17, T8th), power-play goals (7, T6th) and game-winners (8, 1st). Defensively, Gustafsson led the team's blueliners in points (37) and assists (33), while Antti Tuomisto ranked first in goals (8) and **William Lagesson** placed first in plus-minus rating (+33). Lagesson's plus-33 rating ranked first among AHL defensemen and third among all skaters. In net, Cossa and **Michal Postava** were named the winners of the Harry "Hap" Holmes Memorial Award, given annually to the team that allows the fewest goals per game in the regular season. Cossa produced a 26-8-4 record with five shutouts to go along with a 2.33 GAA and a .915 SV% in 39 games. During his rookie season, Postava went 17-6-0 with four shutouts, a 1.71 GAA and a .937 SV% in 25 outings and was named the starter for the entire 2026 postseason. Cossa ranked among the league leaders in games played (T12th), minutes played (12th), wins (3rd), GAA (5th) and save percentage (6th).

I Shall Return

Veterans **John Leonard** (33-21—54) and **Sheldon Dries** (23-22—45) both return to the Griffins after being the team's top two point producers last season. Captain **Dominik Shine** (21-18—39), who finished sixth on the roster in 2025-26 with nearly a point-per-game output, also returns. The Griffins went 35-3-2-0 (.900) a season ago when Shine was in the lineup. In addition to generating 21% of the team's points, Leonard, Dries and Shine accounted for 30% of Grand Rapids' goals from a year ago. Defensively, **William Lagesson** is back for his third campaign after pacing all AHL defensemen and ranking third among all skaters with a plus-33 rating last season. Goaltender **Michal Postava** enters his second season in North America after posting a 1.71 GAA and a .937 save percentage in 25 regular-season games, which were both franchise records for a single season.

Shine On, Captain

Dominik Shine enters his 11th season with the Griffins and his second as captain, becoming just the second player in team history to reach 11 seasons (Brian Lashoff 14). During the 2025-26 AHL season, Shine finished with 39 points (21-18—39), 41 penalty minutes and a plus-25 rating, setting career highs in goals, plus-minus and shooting percentage (20.5%). He also competed in his first-ever AHL All-Star Classic, serving as an alternate captain for the Western Conference. Shine spent Feb. 28 until the end of the NHL regular season with the Detroit Red Wings and showed three goals and seven penalty minutes across a career-best 18 outings. He scored his first NHL goal on March 8 at the New Jersey Devils, becoming the fifth-oldest player in Red Wings history to score his first-career NHL goal. On the all-time regular-season franchise leaderboard, Shine ranks third in games played (524), third in goals (96), seventh in assists (128), fourth in points (224), fifth in penalty minutes (594), tied for fifth in shorthanded goals (6), tied for third in game-winners (15), tied for first in unassisted goals (10), and third in shots (903).

Pure Michigan

Several Griffins will be competing in their home state this year, as the roster features seven Michiganders in **Ronnie Attard** (White Lake Township), **Trey Augustine** (South Lyon), **Kienan Draper** (Bloomfield Hills), **Sheldon Dries** (Macomb), **Sutter Muzzatti** (Okemos), **Dominik Shine** (Detroit) and **Jacob Truscott** (Port Huron). In addition, the roster is comprised of seven players that competed collegiately in the Great Lakes State, including Attard (Western Michigan), Augustine (Michigan State), Draper (Michigan), Dries (Western Michigan), **Nolan Moyle** (Michigan), Shine (Northern Michigan) and Truscott (Michigan).

Holy Goalies

The Griffins' goalie room this year will feature a pair of young prospects in **Trey Augustine** and **Michal Postava**. Augustine, the 41st overall pick by Detroit in 2023, enters his rookie campaign, while Postava, signed in 2025 as an undrafted free agent out of Czechia, returns to the Griffins for his second season in North America. Augustine, the 2025-26 Richter Award winner as the NCAA's best goaltender, comes to Grand Rapids after an illustrious career at Michigan State, winning three Big Ten titles. As a Spartan from 2023-26, the 21-year-old went 66-25-7 with nine shutouts, a 2.40 GAA and a .922 SV% in 99 appearances. In the all-time rankings at Michigan State, Augustine places second in SV%, fifth in GAA, sixth in saves (2,838), sixth in wins and sixth in shutouts. The South Lyon, Michigan, native is also the winningest goaltender in Team USA history at the World Junior Championship, collecting a 12-1-1 record and two gold medals across three tournaments. As a rookie last season with Grand Rapids, Postava logged a 17-6-0 record during the regular season to go along with four shutouts, a 1.71 GAA and a .937 SV% in 25 outings. Along with teammate Sebastian Cossa, the duo won the 2025-26 Harry "Hap" Holmes Memorial Award with a league-low 159 combined goals allowed. In the franchise's all-time single-season record book, Postava's 2025-26 season ranked first in GAA, first in save percentage and tied for 10th in shutouts. The 24-year-old was also named the team's starter for the 2026 Calder Cup Playoffs and went 4-4 with one shutout, a 2.09 GAA and a .912 SV% in eight appearances. Throughout Postava's five-year pro career, the 6-foot-1 netminder has shown a 92-71-9 record with 16 shutouts, a 2.05 GAA and a .932 SV% in 170 regular-season contests.

Roster Breakdown

Seventeen players (forwards **Ondrej Becher**, **Cameron Butler**, **Noah Dower Nilsson**, **Sheldon Dries**, **Dylan James**, **Jesse Kiiskinen**, **John Leonard**, **Sutter Muzzatti**, **Theo Rochette**, **Dominik Shine** and **Wilmer Skoog**; defensemen **Ronnie Attard**, **Jacob Bryson**, **Shai Buium** and **William Lagesson**; goaltenders **Trey Augustine** and **Michal Postava**) on the roster are under contract to the Red Wings, while six players (forwards **Tag Bertuzzi**, **Kienan Draper** and **Nolan Moyle**; and defensemen **Justice Christensen**, **Alex Kannok Leipert** and **Jacob Truscott**) are playing on a Griffins contract. Six players are Red Wings draft picks (Augustine, Becher, Buium, Dower Nilsson, Draper and James).

Venture Across the Pond

Forwards **Noah Dower Nilsson**, **Jesse Kiiskinen** and **Theo Rochette** are all embarking on their first full professional seasons in North America. Dower Nilsson, the 70th overall pick by the Detroit Red Wings in 2023, competed in parts of four Swedish Hockey League seasons with Frolunda since 2022-23, notching 28 points (11-17—28) in 91 regular-season outings. Kiiskinen was the 68th overall pick by the Nashville Predators in 2023 and has shown 83 points (35-48—83) in 145 regular-season games in the Liiga (Finland) since 2022-23. Rochette is a 24-year-old undrafted prospect out of Switzerland who has suited up for three seasons in the National League (Swiss), totaling 104 points (50-54—104) in 131 regular-season games with Lausanne.

Young Guns

The Griffins have eight players who are considered rookies this season in forwards **Dylan James**, **Kienan Draper**, **Noah Dower Nilsson**, **Sutter Muzzatti** and **Jesse Kiiskinen**, defensemen **Justice Christensen** and **Jacob Truscott**, and goaltender **Trey Augustine**.

Oldies but Goodies

The Griffins' roster features five veterans, including forwards **Sheldon Dries**, **John Leonard** and **Dominik Shine**, and defensemen **Jacob Bryson** and **William Lagesson**. A player receives veteran status if he has competed in at least 261 games in the NHL, AHL or European elite leagues. Shine leads all veterans with 551 professional games played, while Dries (524) ranks second and Lagesson (428) places third.

Where It All Began

The Griffins near the 30-year anniversary of their first-ever game and victory, which occurred on Oct. 5, 1996, in a 1-0 win at the Indianapolis Ice. Grand Rapids opened its inaugural campaign on the road at Market Square Arena versus the Ice and emerged with a 1-0 win behind 30 saves by **Pokey Reddick** and a first-period power-play goal by **Michel Picard**, the first goal in franchise history.

World Travelers

The Griffins have nine Americans in forwards **Kienan Draper**, **Sheldon Dries**, **John Leonard**, **Nolan Moyle**, **Sutter Muzzatti**, **Dominik Shine**, defensemen **Ronnie Attard** and **Shai Buium**, and goaltender **Trey Augustine**. There are six Canadians on the roster, including forwards **Tag Bertuzzi**, **Cameron Butler** and **Dylan James**, and defensemen **Jacob Bryson**, **Justice Christensen** and **Alex Kannok Leipert**. From overseas, Sweden leads the way with three players in forwards **Noah Dower Nilsson** and **Wilmer Skoog**, and defenseman **William Lagesson**. Next, the roster features two Czechs in forward **Ondrej Becher** and goaltender **Michal Postava**. Finally, Finland (**Jesse Kiiskinen**) and Switzerland (**Theo Rochette**) both feature one player with the Griffins.

Pour Me A Draft

The Griffins' roster is highlighted with three former second-round picks, including **Trey Augustine** (41st in 2023 DET), **Shai Buium** (36th in 2021 DET) and **Dylan James** (40th in 2022 DET). The roster also includes four third-round picks in **Ronnie Attard** (72nd in 2019 PHI), **Ondrej Becher** (80th in 2024 DET), **Noah Dower Nilsson** (70th in 2023 DET) and **Jesse Kiiskinen** (68th in 2023 NSH), and 14 total draft picks.

All 32 Teams Unlocked

On Thursday night with the New Jersey Devils, Amadeus Lombardi made his NHL debut, becoming the 224th former Griffin to compete in the NHL. During Friday's season opener with the Detroit Red Wings, Anton Johansson became the 225th alum to make their NHL debut. With Sebastian Cossa making his season debut with the Utah Mammoth last night, at least one former Griffin has played for each of the NHL's 32 teams.

Milestones

Ronnie Attard—One point from 100 as a pro

Sheldon Dries—Three games from 400 in the AHL

John Leonard—Four games from 300 in the AHL

Dominik Shine—One goal from 100 as a pro, four goals from 100 as a Griffin

Dan Watson—Two wins from 400 as pro head coach