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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**  
**Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator**  
**Phone: (406) 403-8146**

## **Hayes, Olson and Mese score two goals each to give Great Falls the opening night win**

**By Kevin Scott**

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., September 13, 2019 — The Great Falls Americans are back on the ice for the 2019-20 season after their disappointing three-game series loss to the Helena Bighorns in the 2019 Frontier Divisional Finals last March.

Great Falls mentor, Greg Sears, is back for year two with the club after having served as an assistant coach for the NA3HL's Yellowstone Quake.

The Americans return around twelve players from last year's club including goaltender Viktor Wennberg along with seven forwards (Levi Mese, Blake Nerney, Justin Ohnstad, Jack Olson, Dylan Olson, Nick Ramstad, and Brody Boyce) and four defensemen (Brandon Peterson, Nick Torres, Hendrik Robel, and Luke Richesin).

For the first time since the 2017-18 campaign, the Great Falls Americans opened the season on home ice when the visiting Gillette (WY) Wild invaded the Great Falls Ice Plex for a two-game series on Friday and Saturday evening.

The Great Falls Americans scored the first two goals and never trailed as they came away with a 7-1 decision on Friday evening over the visiting Gillette (WY) Wild to open the 2019-20 season on home ice in front of a fantastic and loud crowd of 1,102. A trio of players including Dylan Olson, Levi Mese, and Jake Hayes each recorded two goals accounting for six of the seven goals. Meanwhile, Viktor Wennberg was dominant in the net by amassing 39 saves.

Dylan Olson, a returning player from Minnesota, scored the first goal for Great Falls in the opening game for both squads when Jack Olson and Justin Ohnstad found him open to put the Americans in the lead 1-0 four minutes into the first period. The Americans received added another score as newcomer Jake Hayes found the back of the net with 11:08 left in the first stanza. Braydon Rachow and Nick Torres picked up the assists. Defenseman Easton Apodaca, a Gillette, WY native, got the puck through Americans starting netminder Viktor Wennberg to cut the deficit to 2-1. Ethan Becker and Hunter Beckett

Great Falls Americans Hockey 417 Central Avenue, Suite #303, Great Falls, MT 59401

collected the assists for the Wild of coach Steve Kruk. Alaska native and returning forward, Levi Mese chipped in his first goal of the season with 83 seconds before the first intermission off the sticks of Brody Boyce and Nick Torres, who gathered his second assist of the night. Despite trailing after the first twenty minutes, Gillette held a 15-12 lead over Great Falls in shots taken.

After having the last score before the end of the first period, Levi Mese netted his second scoring drive with help from Nick Ramstad, who returned for another season with Great Falls, nine minutes into the middle period to increase the Americans advantage to 4-1. The three combined power play opportunities went unanswered. Both squads had 27 shots after the first two periods with the host team having attempted 15 in the second stanza.

Americans forward Jake Hayes scored his second goal in three periods that was created by teammate Ivan Royo in the final period of regulation with 14:17 on the clock. The 5-1 deficit by the Wild was enough for Gillette mentor Steve Kruk to immediately pull starting goaltender Brad Muzarelli and inserted backup Shane Phillips for the rest of the contest. After putting the home team on the scoreboard in the first period, Dylan Olson also gathered his second goal of the night via a power play as Jack Olson garnered his second assist and Levi Mese his first to give the Americans a comfortable advantage. Before the horn sounded to end the contest, California forward Bryson Fletcher racked up his first score in a Great Falls uniform. Nick Silence assisted on the final tally.

Great Falls and Gillette each registered 27 shots after the first two periods, but Great Falls outshot the visiting Wyoming club 19-13 over the final twenty minutes to finish with 46.

Great Falls received five of the eight total minor penalties in the season opening contest for both teams. Dylan Olson's second goal in the third period was the only successful power play score for either squad. The Wild couldn't capitalize on any of the four American power plays.

Great Falls goaltender Viktor Wennberg had a phenomenal night making sure Gillette's offense never scored often as the Sweden native gave up just one first period score while stopping 39-of-the-40 shots he faced. Gillette native Brad Mazarelli allowed five goals before being pulled in the third frame in favor of backup Shane Phillips. Gillette's duo finished with a combined 39 saves in their first setback of the season.

Fans who arrived between 5:00PM and 7:00PM were treated to a FREE Americans Tailgate Party with food and drinks provided by the team ([see article](#)). It was also Howard's Pizza Night and McDonald's "We Win, You Win" Night where spectators received FREE Big Mac coupons with the Americans victory.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Americans will entertain the Gillette (WY) Wild again on Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup> with the puck set to drop at 7:30PM from the Great Falls Ice Plex.

**CONTACT:**

**Greg Sears**  
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager  
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811  
Email: [gsears@greatfallsamericans.com](mailto:gsears@greatfallsamericans.com)

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