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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Fletcher stars as the Americans down the Bighorns in the rivalry showdown

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., September 28, 2019 — After four games, the Great Falls Americans (4-1-0-0) have faced two opponents, the Gillette Wild and Butte Cobras heading into the fifth game of the season.

Great Falls has been in front of the home fans for three of the four contests with their lone setback on September 14th against Gillette (2-1). The Americans have outscored both of their opponents, 23-6 including a 9-2 win at home against Butte

last Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Helena Bighorns (3-3-0-0) have played the Cody, Wyoming based Yellowstone Quake four times in their home-away series the previous two weeks with Helena sneaking out three wins. On Friday (September 27th) in Missoula, Montana, the Bighorns had trouble finding the back of the net and fell, 6-1 to the Missoula Jr. Bruins to drop their overall record to 3-2 and fourth place in the eight-team Frontier Division. Great Falls is currently sitting in third place behind the Bozeman Ice Dogs and Gillette Wild.

During the 2018-19 campaign, Great Falls and Helena tangled on the ice eight times with the Americans picking up three wins, four losses and one shoot-out loss (3-4-0-1). Both squads made it to the 2019 Frontier Divisional Finals where the Bighorns swept Great Falls in two games of the best-of-three series to advance to the 2019 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Tournament.

It is a new season and time will tell if both squads make it back to the postseason.

The Great Falls Americans scored three first period goals and held off a comeback by the visiting Helena Bighorns, 5-2 thanks to Great Falls standout Bryson Fletcher's two goals and two assists during Saturday night junior hockey action at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The cold and winter weather in Great Falls didn't stop the 637 fans from coming to cheer on their favorite NA3HL team.

Bryson Fletcher, the forward from California, scored not once but twice along with one assist to open the first period. Fletcher's first goal came 4:04 into the game off the stick of Harley Nyhuis against Helena netminder Bailey Bradford. Brody Boyce, one of a dozen returning players for coach Greg Sears, netted his fifth goal of the season with help from Nick Ramstad and Bryson Fletcher to give the home team a 2-0 lead. Bryson Fletcher's third goal in a Great Falls uniform came unassisted with 4:39 to go before the first intermission. The fast-paced rivalry contest saw just one minor penalty by Helena. Great Falls was unable to capitalize on the power play. The host team continued to control the puck on the offensive end for most of the stanza and held a 13-8 shots-on-goal advantage over the Bighorns.

Despite Helena securing a goal, the Americans maintained their three-goal advantage after two periods. Alexander Bailey successfully created the first scoring opportunity for coach Bob Richards' squad. Whitefish, Montana native Blaine Krona set up the Bighorns first score seven minutes into the middle period to cut into Great Falls' lead (3-1). A few minutes later, Braydon Rachow added the fourth goal for the home team with assistance from Henry Fusco. The second twenty-minute period ended with Great Falls tallying 22 shots while the visiting squad registered 13.

Helena's Isaac Ellingson took advantage of the penalty by the Americans to contribute his fourth goal of the season over Great Falls goalie Viktor Wennberg to put the Bighorns within two goals (4-2) early in the final period. The power play opportunity went unassisted. Jake Hayes made sure the Bighorns didn't attempt a comeback as the Great Falls forward from Alaska took advantage of Helena's penalty to get the fifth goal with 2:22 remaining. Bryson Fletcher and Hendrik Robel each gathered their second assist in five games. Both offenses combined for just 12 shots in the last twenty minutes of action.

Eight total penalties accounting for 16 total minutes in the penalty box were accumulated in this contest. Great Falls and Helena each went 1-for-2 on the power play.

Bryson Fletcher was one of the Stars of the Game for the Americans. The Rancho Santa Margarita native had his best night by scoring four points (2 goals, 2 assists) while goaltender Viktor Wennberg went the distance and swatted away 24 of the 26 shots attempted by Bighorns offensive attack. The returning Sweden goaltender is now 3-0 on the season and has recorded 90 saves. Alexander Bailey and Isaac Ellingson recorded the goals in the losing effort for the Bighorns.

Washington standout Bailey Bradford started for Helena in the net and finished with eight saves in the first 15 minutes before being replaced by Garrett Dryden, who allowed two goals in 31 attempts.

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans will enter their second road test of the season when they head to Sheridan, Wyoming to face the newest member of the Frontier Division, the Sheridan Hawks. Great Falls will play two games (October 4-5th) at the Whitney Rink in the M&M's Center. Friday's (October 4th) contest is slated to start at 7:30PM while Saturday's (October 5th) game will begin at 7:00PM. All the action can be found on [HockeyTV](#), the NA3HL subscription streaming service.

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