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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Americans come from behind to defeat the Bighorns, 4-2

By Kevin Scott

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., October 11, 2019 — After finishing last weekend (Oct. 4-5) with a 1-1 record on the road against the Sheridan (WY) Hawks, the Great Falls Americans (6-2-0-0) were happy to be back on familiar ice at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Friday evening against their rivals, the Helena Bighorns (3-6-0-0).

Two weeks ago, these two young junior hockey squads met on the ice in Great Falls for the first time during the 2019-20 season. The September 28th contest saw the home team come away with a 5-2 decision. Newcomer Bryson Fletcher scored four points (2 goals, 2 assists) and goaltender Viktor Wennberg added 24 saves.

The Americans were hoping to come away with two road wins in Wyoming last weekend but fell short of that goal. The Sheridan Hawks upended Great Falls 6-1 on Friday before Great Falls prevented a two-game skid with a four-goal shutout the following night. Helena had the difficult task of taking on the undefeated Bozeman Ice Dogs for a two-game series in Helena and Bozeman, respectively. Bozeman outscored Helena 10-3 including a 6-0 shutout last Saturday in Bozeman, Montana.

After being down 2-1 to the Helena Bighorns on Friday night after the first two periods concluded, the Great Falls Americans scored three unanswered scoring opportunities in the third period to defeat the Helena Bighorns, 4-2 as 925 spectators watched the home team pick up their sixth victory of the season. McDonald's was one of tonight's game sponsors and handed out FREE Big Mac coupons as part of their "We Win, You Win" promotional night at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

Great Falls and Helena battled hard throughout the opening period. Helena accumulated the only successful scoring opportunity while the Americans were in the penalty box. Jeremy Blondin and William Wallace assisted on the score by Isaac Ellingson, who collected his sixth goal of the season as the puck sailed by Great Falls goaltender Viktor Wennberg with 11:26 left in the period. Great Falls produced 13 of the 24 shots-on-goal.

After a slow start on the scoreboard, the host team received their first goal four minutes into the middle stanza when Minnesota native Jack Olson and Missouri's Blake Nerney found forward Jake Hayes for the game-tying score over Bighorns goaltender Rylan Labrie. Labrie, from Lethbridge, Alberta, is a recent addition to Helena's roster. The Bighorns offense lit up the lamp for the second time in as many periods as Andrew Deskin scored his first goal of the season for coach Bob Richards' squad to break the tie. Johnny Baird and Darian Wilson assisted on the tally for the final score of the period with 5:08 on the clock. Helena took ten more shots in the stanza than Great Falls attempted (19-9).

Seventy-four seconds is all it took for the Americans to tie the score up in the final period of regulation. Ivan Royo, one of three international players for coach Greg Sears's squad, and Kellen Harris got the puck to teammate Hendrik Robel for the second scoring drive. Great Falls would take their first lead of the game (3-2) two minutes later when Luke Richesin and Jack Olson each received an assist on Levi Mese's go-ahead score. An injury to one of the officials with 15:57 remaining in the contest forced the rest of the contest to be played with just two referees.

Jack Olson, the current assist leader for Great Falls with ten, registered his third assist of the game and Justin Ohnstad added his fifth overall assist when they dished the puck off to Kellen Harris, who ensured the Americans victory with his empty net score with 14 seconds left. Helena took out their starting goaltender (Rylan Labrie) for 31 seconds with 45 seconds to go in the contest to add another skater but Great Falls racked up the fourth goal while he was on the bench.

There were just five penalties called in the contest. Both Americans penalties came during the first period. Helena's first score of the contest was the only successful power play by either team.

Great Falls took 20 of their team's 42 shots in the final period. Helena also finished with 42 shots taken including 19 in the middle stanza.

Viktor Wennberg of Sweden won his fourth game in five appearances despite allowing two goals from Helena's offense in the first two periods. He accrued 40 saves in sixty minutes of action on the ice. Rylan Labrie, playing in only his third game as a member of the Bighorns, fell to 0-2. The Canadian completed his night with 38 saves.

NOTE: It was announced at the game tonight that next week's (October 19-20th) home games against the Yellowstone (WY) Quake have new start times due to a conflict with the University of Providence's men's hockey game previously scheduled for the same time on Saturday night. Saturday's (October 19th) contest will start at 3:00PM (MST) (instead of 7:30PM) and Sunday's contest has been moved up to a 1:00PM start.

NEXT CONTEST: Great Falls and Helena will tangle for the third time on the ice on Saturday, October 12, 2019. The rivalry will continue from the Great Falls Ice Plex at 7:30PM with streaming coverage provided by [HockeyTV](#).

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