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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**Americans fall in overtime to the Alexandria (MN) Blizzard at the NA3HL Showcase**

**By Kevin Scott**

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BLAINE, Minn., December 16, 2019 — The Great Falls Americans (21-3-4) fell to the Granite City (MN) Lumberjacks (19-4-0) 4-1 on the opening day of the 2019 NA3HL Showcase Tournament on Sunday afternoon. The Lumberjacks scored all four goals in the first period.

Great Falls was hoping for a better showing and outcome on Monday evening when they battled the NA3HL West Division's Alexandria Blizzard from Minnesota on Day 2 of the prestigious tournament.

The Blizzard, coached by Jeff and Jon Crouse, are 11-9-2-1 on the season and are fourth in the six-team West Division where five of the six squads hail from the state of Minnesota. Alexandria competed against the St. Louis Junior Blues (18-9-1), a Missouri team that is in second place in the Central Division on Friday night. Each team scored two goals before the second intermission before the Blues outscored the Blizzard 2-0 in the final stanza to take the contest, 4-2.

Many college and junior hockey programs including the North American Hockey League (NAHL) send scouts to watch the league's best talent in action at the three-day tournament. Each team plays three games in three days against other divisional squads with the contests counting in the season standings. Sunday's game with the Granite City Lumberjacks and today's game against the Alexandria (MN) Blizzard are considered road games and Tuesday's contest against the Lewiston/Auburn (L/A) Nordiques will be listed as a home game.

The Great Falls American had a 3-1 lead in the third period over the Alexandria (MN) Blizzard before the Minnesota junior hockey team fought back to send the game into an extra period. Ike Taraszewski scored the game-winning goal for Alexandria three minutes into the five-minute sudden-death period to claim their 11<sup>th</sup> win of the season by the score of 4-3.



During the first eight minutes, Great Falls had a pair of goals by Levi Mese and Jake Hayes to give the Montana team the early two-goal advantage and the first lead for them in the tournament. Jack Olson collected his 30<sup>th</sup> assist when Mese put the puck between the pipes 4:27 into the opening stanza. Bryson Fletcher and Levi Mese each received one assist apiece on the score by Hayes. Alexandria cut the Americans lead in half when Val Popowski's pass to Carter Rieland turned into a goal for the Blizzard with 7:08 left in the period. Despite trailing on the scoreboard, Alexandria had a 15-9 advantage on shots taken after the first twenty minutes.

No goals were announced in the middle period as the two evenly matched teams combined for 20 shots and two unsuccessful power play chances. There were only three stoppages of play after the first two periods concluded due to penalties.

Thirty-five seconds in the third period, Jack Olson gave the Americans a 3-1 cushion. His 12<sup>th</sup> goal of the season came on the first successful power play for either team with help from Bryson Fletcher, who received his second assist of the game. Alexandria bounced back and didn't give in to their two-goal deficit. The Blizzard scored twice in the next seven minutes to tie the contest, 3-3. Two Minnesota natives each racked up a goal against Great Falls netminder Trever Mellen. Evan Sivets and Cole Jacobs responded when their team needed them to and four players tallied assists including Alex Heidenreich, Dylan Carlson, Mathias Branton, and Ike Taraszewski. Both teams skated around for the final 12 minutes but neither team scored. An overtime was needed to declare the winner.

The five-minute extra frame saw the Blizzard rack up the game-winning goal by Ike Taraszewski three minutes in as the scoring drive went unassisted. His sixth goal was the fourth goal allowed by Great Falls' Trever Mellen in 64 minutes in the net.

Alexandria's offensive attack led to 41 shots being taken against the Great Falls goalie with 15 being made in the first period. Great Falls never had more than nine shots in a period and finished with 23.

Eight total penalties resulting in 16 minutes spent in the penalty box by Great Falls and Alexandria came in the first three stanzas. The third and final goal in the third period by Great Falls' Jack Olson was the only time that either team scored while down a man.

Ville Hyttinen of Alexandria played the entire 64 minutes as the netminder for the Blizzard and escaped with the victory. Hyttinen's seventh win in 17 appearances gave the Finland native his first win since a November 23<sup>rd</sup> contest against the Willmar WarHawks. Meanwhile, Trever Mellen suffered his third overtime setback of the season (7-1-3) but not before getting 37 saves.

The other seven Frontier Division teams ended the second day of the tournament with three wins and four losses. The Yellowstone Quake, Butte Cobras, and the Missoula Junior Bruins all won their games by multiple goals. The Helena Bighorns, Bozeman Ice Dogs, Sheridan (WY) Hawks, and the Gillette (WY) Wild all fell short. [Click here](#) to see the stats from Monday's contests.

For more information about the tournament that features many college and junior scouts in attendance, please [click here](#) or see the league press release by [clicking here](#).

**NEXT CONTEST:** For the third and final game of the [2019 NA3HL Showcase Tournament](#), the Great Falls Americans will serve as the host team on Tuesday, December 17th when they face the Lewiston/Auburn (L/A) Nordiques, the team that fell at the 2019 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Championship Game to the Texas Brahmas. The puck will drop at 10:45AM MST and can be seen on the league's streaming service, [HockeyTV](#) from the [National Sports Center \(NSC\) Super Rink](#).

Great Falls will resume competition after the two-week hiatus for the holiday break on Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup> (New Years Eve) when they head to Helena, Montana to challenge the Helena Bighorns with action starting at 7:05PM from the Helena Ice Arena.

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