



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

# Great Falls Americans Press Release

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## Americans fall to Granite City, 4-1 during the first day of the NA3HL Showcase Tourney

By Kevin Scott

<a href="#">Box Score</a>	<a href="#">Game Sheet</a>	<a href="#">League Scoreboard</a>	<a href="#">Americans Team Statistics</a>
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BLAINE, Minn., December 15, 2019 — The Great Falls Americans (21-3-3) began their sixth season as members of the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) in September and October with 10 wins in 13 contests. Earlier in the season they were sitting in third place but have since made the jump to second behind the top team in the NA3HL, the Bozeman Ice Dogs (24-3-0-0), whom they have yet to face this season. Great Falls will see them in early January 2020 for their first matchup.

The Americans opponent in Sunday's Showcase tournament is the Granite City Lumberjacks from the NA3HL's West Division. The Lumberjacks (19-4-0-0) from Sauk Rapids, Minnesota started at 10-3 and have since won eight of their nine games. Granite City is six points (44-38) behind the first place, North Iowa Bulls, who are 21-4-2.

Greg Sears, is in his second season at the helm of the Great Falls junior hockey franchise, is led by two forwards and two league-leading goaltenders. Returning forward Jack Olson paces the Americans with 40 points including 29 assists and teammate and newcomer to this year's squad, Jake Hayes, has 19 goals scored to lead the experienced Americans. Netminders Viktor Wennberg (14-2-1) and Trevor Mellen (7-1-2) have only combined to lose six games after 27 games. Wennberg, the Sweden native, has 427 saves and a Goals Against Average (GAA) of 1.58 and currently is third for all goaltenders in that category early in the season. Mellen is from Minnesota and has 357 saves which ranks him sixth in the league with a 1.81 GAA.



The Lumberjacks, coached by Brad Willner, are led by forwards Carson Simon, who has a team-leading 15 assists and 29 points and Daymin Dodge is second in points scored with 27. Nate Johnston leads the trio of goaltenders on the roster with an undefeated 10-0 record and a GAA of 1.40 and 211 saves and is second in the league.

The prestigious three-day tournament includes many college and junior scouts that are in attendance to watch the league's best talent. The three

games that each team appears in does count toward their season standings as Great Falls is the visiting team for two of those three including today's game and Monday afternoon's contest against the Alexandria (MN) Blizzard.

How did the Americans fare in the 2018 Showcase Tournament? Great Falls went 1-2 including an overtime thriller over New Jersey's Skylands Kings, 2-1 in the second day of competition. They fell in the opening game to the Louisiana Drillers (3-0) and closed out the tournament with a 5-3 setback to the Northeast Generals from Massachusetts.

The Granite City (MN) Lumberjacks, second in the West Division, used a four-goal first period to down the visiting Great Falls Americans (second in the Frontier Division), 4-1 during the opening day of the 2019 NA3HL Showcase Tournament at the NSC Super Rink in Blaine, Minnesota.

The Lumberjacks jumped out to a four-goal lead after the first twenty minutes on the ice. Three of the four scorers from Granite City hail from the tournament host state of Minnesota. Jonah Jangula, Nathan Green, and Troy Dahlheimer each scored for head coach Brad Willner's squad. The other goal came from Cody Dias from Neenah, Wisconsin. Assisting on the scores were Josh Baker, Kearby Larson, Landin Johnson and Jack Helle. The Lumberjacks took 17 first period shots against NA3HL's top goaltender Viktor Wennberg. An unusual showing by Great Falls resulted in four shots against Lumberjacks netminder Nate Johnston.

After the first intermission, both squads had many scoring chances, but none were successful. Great Falls offense struggled for the second straight period taking only six of the 17 total shots.

It took 41 minutes of game time but the Great Falls Americans, listed as the visiting team for today's contest, registered their first successful scoring drive. Bryson Fletcher and Nick Torres assisted on the 19<sup>th</sup> goal by Jake Hayes to cut into Granite City's lead (4-1). The goal by Hayes would be the closest the Americans would come to the Lumberjacks.

Granite City led Great Falls in shots-on-goal in two of the three periods. The Minnesota squad ended their sixty-minute contest with 37 and Great Falls made half of their shots in the final period to conclude their night with 20.

The two junior hockey teams each had four minor penalties accounting for eight minutes in the penalty box.

Granite City's Nate Johnston had a perfect game for the first two stanzas before Great Falls allowed one goal by forward Jake Hayes to spoil the effort. The goaltender from Rogers, Minnesota picked up the win with 19 saves. The Americans played both of their top goaltenders in Viktor Wennberg and Trever Mellen. Wennberg got the start and played in the first period. He allowed four first period goals and had 13 of the 43 saves. Mellen played the second and third periods and prevented all 20 shots from getting into the net.

In other action from the rest of the Frontier squads on Sunday, only two teams from the eight-team Frontier Division, the Yellowstone Quake and the Sheridan Hawks were victorious. Yellowstone defeated the Wisconsin-based Wassau RiverWolves and Sheridan defeated the New Ulm (MN) Steel by the identical scores of 4-2. The top-ranked Bozeman Ice Dogs lost for the third time this season when they fell to the North Iowa Bulls, 5-1. The Skylands (NJ) Kings escaped with a 4-3 win over the Gillette (WY) Wild and the Breezy Point (MN) North Stars won by two goals over the Helena Bighorns (4-2) The Missoula Junior Bruins lost to the Minnesota-based Willmar WarHawks, 8-2. The Milwaukee Power made

sure the Frontier Division went 2-6 on the first day of competition at the prestigious tournament by downing the Butte Cobras, 6-2 in the nightcap. [Click here](#) to see the stats from Sunday's contests.

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

**NOTES:** On Friday (December 13<sup>th</sup>), the Great Falls Americans traded away two forwards from Canada. Remington and Rhodes Buffalo were sent to the NA3HL's Gillette (WY) Wild. Rhodes had one assist in four games for Great Falls while his twin brother, Remington, appeared in four games for the Americans. They had been on the roster for Great Falls since November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Americans face their second opponent from the host state (Minnesota) in as many days at the [2019 NA3HL Showcase Tournament](#). The Alexandria Blizzard will serve as the home team in Monday's night game that begins at 5:35PM (MST) from the [National Sports Center \(NSC\) Super Rink](#). Great Falls finishes out the tournament with a morning contest (10:45AM MST) against the Lewiston/Auburn (L/A) Nordiques out of the Coastal Division. The Nordiques made it all the way to the 2019 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Championship game before falling to the Texas Brahmas, 2-1.

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