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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**Americans sweep the Wild in weekend series; remain atop the Frontier standings**

**By Kevin Scott**

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GILLETTE, Wyo., January 4, 2020 — The Great Falls Americans (25-3-4) and the Gillette (WY) Wild (15-17-0) have each played 32 games this season with 15 games remaining in the 2019-20 North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) regular season.

The Americans and Wild have met six times this season with four of them taking place at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Great Falls has had five of their season total of 25 wins against the Wyoming club. On Friday (January 3<sup>rd</sup>), the Great Falls offense raced out to a 4-0 lead before Gillette scored near the end of the second period. The Americans scored two more goals and defeated the Wild on their home ice, 6-1. Americans standout Brody Boyce was one goal shy of hat trick (2 goals) and goaltender Trever Mellen, who had a perfect first and third periods along with one goal allowed in the second period, finished with 27 saves. Jake Hayes contributed three points (1 goal, 2 assists) for the top team in the Frontier Division.

The #1 Great Falls Americans are still atop the Frontier Division standings in the NA3HL after a weekend sweep of the #4 Gillette Wild. Great Falls had a more challenging night as the Montana team trailed 2-1 after two periods of play before they racked up three straight goals to eventually defeat the Wyoming team, 5-3 in their final matchup of the season on Saturday evening at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena.

It took one full period before both offenses started to get the biscuit in the basket. The scoreless first period ended with Gillette holding an 11-9 advantage in the shots-on-goal category.

Declan Young, the Wild's team leader in goals scored (33), assists (30), and points (63) scored the first goal for either team 2:09 after the first intermission. The unassisted tally came while Great Falls was in the penalty box. Young is from Fergus Falls, Minnesota and is ranked #5 in points and is tied with the Northeast General's Carson Asper. Seven minutes later, Great Falls evened up the score when Nick Torres and Brody Boyce found Bryson Fletcher open for this 12 score of the season. The scoring drive was the first of two successful power plays for the Americans. Gillette, Wyoming native Austin Newson successfully scored the go-ahead goal before the period concluded off the stick of Jacob Kaminski, who added his 15<sup>th</sup> assist for Gillette's second power play of the stanza. The Wild took 20 shots in the middle period and had 31 after the first forty minutes. Great Falls ended the second period with 15 and had 24 heading into the third frame.

The Americans came out of the locker room on a mission. Harley Nyhuis racked up his fourth and fifth goals of the season during a seven-minute span to give Great Falls their first advantage (3-2). Bryson

Fletcher, Jake Hayes, Ivan Royo, and Nick Silance each provided one assist apiece. Minutes after Nyhuis' second goal, Nick Ramstad increase the Americans lead to 4-2 as his second goal of the 2019=20 season came on a power play that was set up by Nick Torres and Jake Hayes, who recorded their second assists of the evening. Caleb Sanborn struck the back of the net as he tried to rally Gillette with the Wild's third goal of the contest coming with under two minutes remaining. Declan Young earned the assist. It was too little too late for the host team as Great Falls' Jake Hayes buried the puck in the net with seconds left to ensure the Americans would get win number 25.

Gillette's offense out-shot Great Falls 31-24 entering the third period when the Americans claimed a 19-8 advantage to finish four ahead (43-39) of the Wild when the final horn sounded.

Twenty-three total shots were attempted by both teams in the third period with two of the nine minor penalties occurring during the last period of regulation. The game saw six power play opportunities that were denied by the opposing defenses. The teams amassed eight total power play chances with five of them lighting up the lamp.

NA3HL officials whistled ten combined minor penalties that resulted in 20 minutes in the sin bin.

Coach Greg Sears' squad was led by Jake Hayes, who scored an identical three points from Friday's contest (1 goal, 2 assists), Harley Nyhuis scored twice along with Nick Torres' two assists and Bryson Fletcher scored one goal and one assist for the winning side. Meanwhile, Declan Young led Taylor Shaw's team with two points (1 goal, 1 assist).

Viktor Wennberg reached his 17<sup>th</sup> victory in twenty appearances as the netminder for the Americans redirected 36 of the 39 shots by Gillette's offense. The Sweden goaltender ranks third in the league with a Goals-Against-Average (GAA) of 1.59. Shane Phillips garnered his seventh loss of the season as the Oregon native finished with 38 saves for the Wild.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Great Falls American will play the only team in the division they haven't encountered this season, the Bozeman Ice Dogs (26-5-0-1) on Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup> from Bozeman's Haynes Pavilion. The Ice Dogs, who had the top spot in the Frontier Division for most of the season, are tied with the Sheridan (WY) Hawks (26-6-1) in their inaugural season in the NA3HL with 53 points for second place. The action from the Bozeman ice facility will begin at 7:30PM and can be seen live on [HockeyTV](#).

The Americans will return home for the first time in a month as they have a date with the Helena Bighorns (7-25-0) on Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup> with the game set to start at 7:30PM at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

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