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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Boyce's first period goal gives Great Falls their 23rd victory and moves them to first place

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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HELENA, Mont., December 31, 2019 — The Great Falls Americans (23-3-4) and tonight's opponent, the Helena Bighorns (5-25) will play once more before they ring in the New Year.

Already this season, Great Falls and Helena have played five times with three of them coming in front of the Americans home fans at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Americans are 4-0-1 in the previous contests. Great Falls scored nine goals and allowed one in their two early November meetings in Helena.

Their lone setback came in the middle of October in an exciting game at home. Great Falls led 3-2 in the third frame, but the Bighorns came back to score the game-tying goal with 5:36 remaining to send it into an extra period. Helena picked up the game-winning goal two minutes into the five-minute period to claim their only victory so far against the Americans. Goaltender Trevor Mellen recorded 33 saves in the overtime loss.

In the five contests, Great Falls acquired 21 of the 30 total goals scores against their fierce interstate rivals.

The Great Falls Americans closed out 2019 with a one-goal victory over the Helena Bighorns on New Year's Eve at the Helena Ice Arena during Tuesday evening's junior hockey action. All that was needed was one scoring opportunity by forward Brody Boyce near the end of the first period that proved to be the game-winning score for Great Falls. Henry Chavez and Harley Nyhuis received the assists to give the visiting team a 1-0 win.

Great Falls Americans lit up the lamp first when Henry Chavez scooted the puck to Brody Boyce for the game's only score in the first stanza. Henry Chavez collected his seventh assist while Brody Boyce successfully made his 13th goal. The secondary assist went to Harley Nyhuis, who added his tenth of the season. Great Falls controlled the puck for most of the twenty-minute penalty-free period as they attempted 15 shots while Helena took just three shots.

For the second straight period, both NA3HL squads took 18 combined shots with Great Falls and Helena each tallying nine. Neither team was able to register any goals before the second intermission. Great Falls and Helena each had one minor penalty in the fast-paced period.

The final frame saw the Americans and Bighorns try to get the puck between the pipes. Great Falls goaltender Viktor Wennberg and Helena's Rylan Labrie both played a perfect period by not allowing their opponent's offense to strike. Great Falls held an 18-8 advantage on shot attempts in the final period of regulation.

Seven of the nine penalties came in the third period. The Bighorns spent 18 minutes in the sin bin while Great Falls had two players (Tommy Janes and Logan Rachow) pick up two minor penalties apiece accounting for eight minutes in the penalty box. The three power play chances by the Americans and Bighorns went unanswered.

The win by Great Falls gave Americans netminder Viktor Wennberg his 16th win in 19 appearances this season with one of those losses coming in an overtime loss to the Sheridan (WY) Hawks in November. The top goalie for coach Greg Sears' squad has a 1.51 Goals-Against-Average (GAA) and ranks second in the league to the Rochester Grizzlies' Mathias Backstrom, who has a 1.28 GAA as of tonight. Wennberg swatted away all 20 shots. Helena's Rylan Labrie achieved 41 saves but the Lethbridge, Alberta goalie fell for the 13th time in 15 contests for Bob Richards' team.

NOTE: The one-goal win for second-place Great Falls and a 4-3 shootout loss by the Bozeman Ice Dogs, who led the Frontier Division standings for most of the season, propels the Americans to the top spot for the moment in the standings. Bozeman (24-5-0-1) maintained a 3-1 lead after the opening period but the #5 Yellowstone (WY) Quake (11-16-2-1) scored once in each of the final two periods and held the Ice Dogs offense scoreless to send the contest into the extra period. The five-minute extra period ended without a sudden death score, so a shootout was needed to declare a winner. Yellowstone's Dylan Rumpke was the only player from either team to get the puck in the net. ([Click here](#) to view the box score).

NEXT CONTEST: The Gillette (Wyoming) Wild will host the Great Falls Americans at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena on Friday and Saturday (January 3-4th). Great Falls is 3-1-0 against Gillette this season. Both games will see the puck drop at 7:05PM and fans can catch all of the action from Wyoming each night on [HockeyTV](#).

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