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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Great Falls blanks Helena 3-0 to advance to Frontier Division Semi-Finals

By Kevin Scott

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|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Box Score | Game Sheet | League Scoreboard | Americans Team Statistics (Playoffs) |
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HELENA, Mont., March 7, 2020 — The 2020 Frontier Division Semi-Finals are now set for next week (March 12-15).

The #3 Great Falls Americans and the #4 Yellowstone (Cody, WY) Quake each won their best-of-three Frontier Division Play-In Series against the Helena Bighorns and the Gillette Wild, respectively in two games.

In Thursday's opening game, the Quake led 3-0 after two periods and held on for a 4-1 victory over the Wild in Gillette, Wyoming to take a 1-0 series lead. Game Two was on Friday night with the series played on the home ice of the Quake. Yellowstone and Gillette traded goals throughout the three periods with the Quake scoring the game-tying goal with 43 seconds left in the third stanza to send it to overtime tied at 3-3. Then nine minutes into the overtime, Yellowstone secured the game-winning score to eliminate a third game and send them to the Frontier Division Semi-Finals.



On Friday, the #3 Great Falls Americans began their series with the Helena Bighorns, who finished the regular season as the sixth seed and final spot of the Frontier Division playoffs. The Americans hosted the first game and racked up seven goals in the first 57 minutes before Helena got on the scoreboard to avoid the shutout. The Americans claimed a 7-1 victory.

The Great Falls Americans advanced to the 2020 Frontier Division Semi-Finals as they blanked the Helena Bighorns, 3-0 in Game 2 of the best-of-three Frontier Division Play-In Series on Saturday evening at the Helena Ice Arena in front of 823 fans. Brody Boyce, Kellen Harris, and Dylan Olson all scored for the visitors. Great Falls netminder Trever Mellen played perfectly in the net by swatting away all 31 shots.

The first 15 minutes of the first period was a defensive battle as neither team could register any goals. Brody Boyce found the back of the net for the second time in as many nights as Bryson Fletcher gathered

his second assist of the playoffs while Harley Nyhuis contributed his first to put the Americans on top, 1-0. Before the first intermission, Kellen Harris' shot towards the goal with 59 seconds remaining over Helena goaltender Ethan Racz was good to give Great Falls a two-score advantage. Jake Hayes and Tommy Janes provided the assists. Great Falls took 19 shots and held the Bighorns to 11. The only infraction was a minor penalty for tripping called on the Americans.

Dylan Olson needed 80 seconds into the middle period to register the third scoring drive for the third seeded team in the Frontier Division. Blake Nerney added his second assist of the postseason and Levi Mese acquired his first. Great Falls amassed 18 of the 23 shots in the period despite not scoring for the final 18:40 of the period. Great Falls was whistled for one of the three total second period penalties.

The Bighorns outshot the Americans 15-8 in the last stanza but both teams were denied any goals in the final period of regulation.

Four power play chances went unanswered in the contest. Eight of the sixteen infractions came in the third period with 32 minutes spent in the sin bin.



Trever Mellen proved he is among the best goaltender in the country. The Minnesota native recorded his third consecutive shutout (fifth overall) and helped the Americans defeat the Bighorns for the ninth time this season (9-0-1 record). He had 15 of his 31 saves in the third period.

Calgary Alberta goaltender Ethan Racz finished his final game as a member of the 2019-20 Helena Bighorns with 42 saves. He went 2-0 with the North American Hockey League's (NAHL) Northeast Generals (NAHL) and had six wins in nine games for the Bighorns.

In the next round of playoffs, the #2 Sheridan (WY) Hawks will host the #3 Great Falls Americans in a best-of-three Semi-Finals in the Frontier Division this upcoming week (March 12-15). The top-ranked Bozeman Ice Dogs will entertain the #4 Yellowstone (WY) Quake in the other semi-final round.

The two remaining squads will battle it out in the Division Finals for the automatic berth in the Fraser Cup National Tournament later this month after the Divisional Semi-Finals. Each round is a best-of-three format. The six-division champions from each division (Central, Coastal, Frontier, South, Northeast and West) will then head to the [2020 Fraser Cup National Tournament](#) held this year in Bensenville, Illinois on March 25-29. The national tournament includes two round-robin games for each team followed by two semifinals contests and the championship.

NEXT CONTEST: Later this week, the Great Falls Americans will know their schedule for the upcoming Frontier Division Semi-Finals that start March 12-15th. Please check back on the Great Falls Americans website for details. Great Falls will host one of the three potential games. [HockeyTV](#) is where fans can catch all the playoff action.

To view the 2020 Playoff format and the schedule for the 2020 Fraser Cup Championship tournament, please [click here](#).

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