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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Doyle's scores game-winning overtime tally to lift Great Falls past Butte for 12th win

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., November 27, 2020 — The Butte Cobras (1-12-1-0), the only team in the 31-team North American Hockey League (NA3HL) with just one victory, was the Great Falls Americans (12-1-0-0) opponent for Friday's post-Thanksgiving Day game.

The Cobras have struggled throughout the first two months of the season and have undergone many roster changes since the Great Falls Americans played them twice to begin the 2020-21 season on October 2-3, 2020. Since October 10th, Butte has added 15 players and lost seven including receiving a new forward (Zane Cluphf) via a trade with the Missoula Junior Bruins that occurred this week.

This week, Great Falls released two players, forward Nick Jensen, and goaltender Cecil Meredith, two Minnesota natives that did not see much action on the ice. The Americans added Aspen, Colorado native defenseman Connor Chesner to their roster.

Great Falls and Butte tangled on the ice in early October where the Americans outscored the Cobras 14-3 in both contests. The original schedule had the Americans traveling to the Butte Community Ice Center for both games, but some arena issues forced both games to be played in Great Falls. Butte served as the home team for the October 3rd game. The Americans won the season opener 6-2 and was led by Alex Jackson, who received a hat trick (3 goals) and goaltender Trever Mellen had 23 saves. The following evening, Great Falls netted eight goals and allowed one Cobra score. Micah Serino scored once and dished out two assists while goaltender Trever Mellen had 14 saves.

The Cobras first victory came on Wednesday (November 25th) when they needed overtime to get by the Bozeman Ice Dogs. The 6-5 win for Butte was played at the Helena Ice Arena in Helena, Montana with returning forward Nick Bradshaw securing the game-winning score 3:21 into the extra frame over Bozeman goaltender Brandon Keeney, Butte trailed Bozeman 4-1 late in the second period for the comeback win.

Great Falls was aiming for their twelfth win in 13 games on Friday while Butte was looking for their second victory of the season.

The top-ranked Great Falls Americans overcame two ties and one scoreless period to down the #8 Butte Cobras 3-2 in overtime. Daniel Crutcher and Harley Nyhuis scored two regulation goals while Connor Doyle provided the game-winning tally with seven seconds left in the extra frame to prevent a shootout. This was Great Falls' third win over the Butte junior hockey franchise this season.

The first stanza came and went with Great Falls and Butte each connecting for one successful scoring drive. It was the Montana connection of Billings native Patrick Crooks and Great Falls native Russ Rasmussen, who found Alaskan Daniel Crutcher for the open goal and his first score in his first year with the Americans. Meanwhile, Rasmussen and Crooks garnered their second assists. Butte evened up the score midway through the period when Helena native Quinn Nichols shot over Great Falls goaltender Vincent Marroni lit up the lamp thanks to help from Hunter Howe and Kyle Chambers on the power play drive. Marroni was playing his second game in two weeks after having played three contests with the squad last season. Great Falls had 19 of 31 shots-on-goal before the second period began.

There were 23 shots taken in the second period despite no goals being scored and no penalties being issued after the first intermission. The home team acquired 16 shots while limiting the visitors to just seven.

Sixteen minutes ticked off the clock in the third frame before the 1-1 tie was broken. Great Falls' Harley Nyhuis' sixth goal of the season came with a setup play by Bryson Fletcher and Henry Chavez. The Americans held a slight 2-1 lead for the next 2:44 before the Cobras struck back with the second tie of the game to send it to a five-minute overtime. Hunter Howe, who assisted on the first period scoring play, added his second goal for coach Chris Shadow's Butte team with 74 seconds remaining in regulation. Nick Bradshaw picked up his fifth assist while newcomer Randy Yeakley from Helena, Montana received his first assist in a Cobras uniform. After three periods, Great Falls doubled their shots against Butte, 49-23.

The Americans and Cobras were less than ten seconds (seven to be exact) from a shootout before Connor Doyle's game-winning score that sailed through the net over Butte netminder Tommy Near while the Cobras were down a man due to a tripping penalty in an empty arena that drew no applause except from the Great Falls bench. Cole Komarek and Alex Jackson assisted on the play that sent the Americans to their 12th win in 13 games this season. Jackson currently leads all Americans in assists with 14 and in points with 23.

After having 19 shots in the opening period, the offense produced an additional 35 more the rest of the way including five in the overtime for coach Greg Sears' winning team. Butte registered no more than seven after accumulating 12 before the first intermission.

Both teams were able to convert one of their power play chances into a goal. Penalties were called in the first, third and the overtime stanzas. A total of six penalties for 12 minutes were called by league officials during the two hour and twenty-seven-minute contest.

Vincent Marroni won his second game in two weeks as the netminder for the Americans. The second-year goaltender (2-0-0-0) accrued 30 saves while allowing one first and third period goal. The Michigan goalie now has 47 saves and allowed five goals in two appearances. Butte used two goaltenders including starter Mason Giordano and backup Tommy Near. Near took his first overtime loss after having

four regulation losses (0-4-1-0) to begin the season. Giordano recorded three saves in his short stint for Butte.

NOTE: In an effort to slow down the coronavirus pandemic in Cascade County, the Cascade County Health Board has imposed an order that did not allow spectators in the stands at the Great Falls Ice Plex for tonight's matchup with the Butte Cobras. This marks the second consecutive week this season that fans were not able to attend an NA3HL contest in Great Falls after allowing no more than 125 people prior to this weekend's home game.

NEXT CONTEST: The Missoula Junior Bruins will meet the Great Falls Americans for the third time in two weeks for a 7:30PM contest on Saturday, November 28th at the Great Falls Ice Plex with no spectators allowed.

Fans may also watch from anywhere on the NA3HL streaming service, [HockeyTV](#). HockeyTV is on a variety of different devices including some Smart TV's, Roku, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Android devices and web browsers including Google Chrome, FireFox and Safari with a paid subscription. [Click here](#) if you would like more information about subscribing to Hockey TV (All Access).

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