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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**Missoula spoils the New Year for the Americans in overtime**

**By Kevin Scott**

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., January 1, 2021 — The #3 Missoula Junior Bruins (12-6-2-0) are one of three teams to have success against the second-place squad in the Frontier Division, the Great Falls Americans (15-5-1-0). The Helena Bighorns and the Bruins bested the Americans twice and the Wyoming-based Gillette Wild scooped up one win.

Tonight, the Great Falls Americans played host to the Junior Bruins for the fourth time (including one road game against the Bruins in Helena) this season. Great Falls is 2-2-0-0 midway through the 2020-21 season with two months remaining in the regular season against Missoula in 2020. Due to strict COVID-19 set by the Missoula County Health Department, the Bruins have not had many home contests and have played their home games in a different venue in a different city. They played their first three games at their home arena, the Glacier Ice Rink but since then have had to play in a different environment.

Rookie Alex Jackson and returning forward Jake Hayes have been leading the way for the Americans this season. Jackson, a Wisconsin native, leads the team in goals (13), assists (18), and points scored (31) while Hayes, from Alaska, has 11 goals and 19 assists for 30 points. Goaltender Trevor Mellen continues to lead all goaltending units for Great Falls with a 13-3-0-0 record. The netminder from Minnesota has 512 saves (545 shots against), a 2.16 Goals Against Average (GAA), and a 0.936 save percentage for coach Greg Sears.

Meanwhile, newcomer Liam Bland is the team leader for the Bruins. The Colorado product leads the team in all three categories (goals, assists, and points scored) with 46 points (23 goals, 23 assists) for Emerson Etem's squad. Maxim Currie, from St. Albert, Alberta is the top goalie for Missoula with seven wins in 11 appearances. He has 396 saves (428 shots against), 2.83 GAA along with a 0/925 save percentage.

Would Great Falls start 2021 with a third win against the Bruins?

Forward Liam Bland scored twice and had an assist as the Missoula Junior Bruins held on for a 5-4 upset win in overtime against the Americans in Great Falls on New Year's Night. Great Falls tied the contest with 14 seconds left in regulation to send it to the extra frame but Bland's game-winning score 16 seconds into the five-minute extra period sealed the victory. Missoula moved from the fourth spot to a two-way tie for third place with the Gillette (WY) Wild. The top-ranked Sheridan (WY) Hawks defeated the Wild, 6-3 to force the Wild into a tie for third place with the Bruins. Great Falls is now in second place behind Sheridan.

The Great Falls Americans had many scoring chances but only one goal was successful as they took a one goal lead into the first intermission. Alex Jackson and Jake Hayes got the puck to Cole Komarek for the tally for Great Falls on the power play. Komarek scored his ninth goal midway through the stanza. The home team racked up 18 shots while Missoula ended the period with 8.

The Bruins erased their one-goal deficit in the middle period. Gavin Tritt and Kade Levins, both from Spokane, Washington, lit up the lamp to give Missoula their first advantage. Owen Miley, Gabe Gifford, Ian McIntosh, and Cayce Balk chipped in the assists. Before the period expired, Great Falls' Micah Serino evened up the score with five minutes remaining with Bryson Fletcher and Jake Hayes getting credit for the assists. The Americans created 13 of the 23 total assists before the third period.

The third period went back and forth with each team tallying two goals. Liam Bland wasted just 34 seconds of the third period to help the Bruins reclaim the lead as his shot sailed over Americans goalie Ben Mansivais for the third goal of the contest for the visiting Montana team. Owen Miley received his second assist of the game. Minutes later, Bryson Fletcher tied up the game for Great Falls as Micah Serino had his first assist of the night and Jake Hayes collected his third. Owen Miley provided the go-ahead goal with under ten minutes remaining. Miley's eighth goal of the year put the Bruins back in front, 4-3. The power play goal was assisted by Gabe Gifford and Liam Bland while Great Falls was down a man due to a penalty. Missoula was within 14 seconds of claiming a regulation victory until Bryson Fletcher and AJ Benit set up Alex Jackson for the game-tying score to send it to an extra five-minute overtime. After sixty minutes, Great Falls outshot Missoula, 49-29.

Liam Bland's provided the game-winning score during the first 16 seconds of overtime. His team-leading 23<sup>rd</sup> goal was made possible by teammates Owen Miley and Pablo Frank.

The Americans lost for just the sixth time this season despite out-shooting their in-state rivals, 50-30.

The Americans and Bruins each converted two of their power play chances into successful scoring drives. Missoula was whistled for 11 penalties that resulted in 22 minutes of penalty time. Great Falls had five infractions called on them with ten minutes spent in the sin bin.

Will Hayes ran his record to 3-1-0-0 for Missoula. The Maine netminder played the entire contest stopping 46 of the 50 shots sent his way. Ben Monsivais, playing in his second game for Great Falls, took his first (overtime) loss since joining the team in the middle of December. He finished with 25 saves.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Great Falls Americans will host the Helena Bighorns on Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30PM (MST) from the Great Falls Ice Plex to conclude their three straight home contests. Meanwhile, the Missoula Junior Bruins will be returning to Great Falls for a 11:30AM (MST) showdown with the Americans on Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>.

[HockeyTV](#), which can be found on a variety of devices including some Smart TV's, Roku, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Android devices, and web browsers including Google Chrome, FireFox and Safari, airs all home and away games for each team in the North American 3 Hockey League with a paid subscription.

[Click here](#) if you would like more information about subscribing to Hockey TV (All Access). This is the only way fans can view the games since spectators are still not yet allowed into the home games in Great Falls due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place by the Cascade County Health Board.

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