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Great Falls Americans Press Release
Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator
Phone: (406) 403-8146

Americans down the Bruins 2-1 to remain in second place in Frontier Division

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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MISSOULA, Mont., February 26, 2021 — The #2 Great Falls Americans (21-11-2-0, 44 pts.) and the #3 Missoula Junior Bruins (19-13-2-0, 40 pts.) have yet to officially qualify for the playoffs in April but are sitting in a solid position to do so. Great Falls led by two points (42-40) entering tonight's contest while the #4 Gillette (WY) Wild (19-13-1-1, 40 pts.) are also in the hunt for a postseason run with about one month remaining in the 2020-21 NA3HL junior hockey season. The #1 team, the Sheridan Hawks will be the top seed as they have only one setback (29-1-0-0)

this season.

In their six head-to-head meetings, Great Falls won the first two meetings by the identical scores of 4-2 but have since gone 0-3-1 since November 21st with all but one of the games at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Until recently, due to high COVID-19 cases in Missoula County, the Junior Bruins have spent most of their season playing their "home" games away from the Glacier Ice Rink on other Montana rinks.

The Americans, who have won four of their last five games, are led by forwards Jake Hayes (16 goals, 23 assists) and Alex Jackson (16 goals, 21 assists) along with top goaltender Trevor Mellen, who has 16 wins in 24 games played for coach Greg Sears' second-ranked squad in the Frontier Division. Mellen also has 293 saves along with a save percentage of 0.934.

Meanwhile, the Junior Bruins are paced by Liam Bland, second in the league in points scored with 69 and one spot behind the Sheridan Hawks' Jacob Cummings with 93 points, has scored 33 goals and dished out 36 assists while teammate Pablo Frank has accrued 52 points (25 goals, 27 assists) for first-year head coach Emerson Etem's team. Goaltender Maxim Currie responded in the net with a 12-9-0-0 record and 782 saves and a save percentage of 0.921.

Both squads were looking to climb up the NA3HL Frontier Division standings tonight. Which team's offense rose to the challenge?

The #2 Great Falls Americans escaped with their tenth road victory of the season as they scored twice in the second period to hold on for a 2-1 victory over the third-ranked Missoula Junior Bruins in a defensive battle during Friday's action at the Glacier Ice Rink.

The first stanza was uneventful as three minor penalties were issued and a total of 22 shots were attempted on goal during the scoreless opening period.

Just 15 seconds into the middle period, Missoula's Shane Dotto successfully scored his sixth goal of the season with Trevor Prince (34th assist) and Ian McIntosh (15th assist) setting up the first scoring drive of the contest. Great Falls' offense got going four minutes later when Hunter Maschke found the back of the net. The Kalamazoo, Michigan native recorded this third goal for Great Falls (8th overall) with 15:31 remaining to even the score (1-1). Kellen Harris (14th) and Tommy Janes (15th) each received an assist. The marquee game would remain that way for an additional 14 minutes before Kobe Pane's pass to an open Jackson Henningsgard would break the tie for the visitors from Great Falls before the second intermission. The Americans outshot the Junior Bruins 28-24 before the third frame.

Great Falls and Missoula's offense struggled in the third period with just thirteen combined shots being taken with no goals being awarded.

The battle for the second and third spots in the Frontier Division saw just nine stoppages of play that resulted in 18 minutes of time spent in the penalty box. Nine total power play opportunities were squandered.

Early in the second period, Great Falls netminder Ben Winkler let one goal get past him but the first and third periods he was perfect between the pipes and finished with 31 saves. Winkler, the Illinois product, is now 3-0-0-0 on the season for the Americans after being added to the roster on January 28th.

Maxim Currie, from St. Albert, Alberta, Canada, fell for the ninth time this season (12-9-0-0), as his only blemishes on the night were two goals made in the middle period by Great Falls' Hunter Maschke and Jackson Henningsgard. Currie ended the contest with 31 saves in 60 minutes of action on the ice.

NOTES: Thomas Gazich, a forward from Minnetonka, Minnesota, suited up for his first contest as a member of the Great Falls Americans tonight after playing one game for the Willmar (Minnesota) WarHawks of the NA3HL's West Division.

Due to some technical difficulties on Friday, the game was not streamed online by HockeyTV.

Also, the #5 Helena Bighorns (15-16-1-0) game against the #8 Butte Cobras (6-24-3-1) was postponed after an hour and 40-minute delay due to bad ice conditions at the Butte Community Ice Center on Friday night. The game will be made up at a later date.

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans will play their regular season home finale on Saturday, February 27th when the #5 Helena Bighorns (15-16-1-0) come to town for their sixth meeting with Great Falls taking three wins this season (3-2-0-0). Since the COVID-19 restrictions have been eased up in Cascade County, many spectators (up to 750 fans) are expected to be at the Great Falls Ice Plex, and they are encouraged to be there early as seats will fill up fast for the 7:30PM (MST) rivalry contest. Fans are also encouraged to view the game on the NA3HL streaming platform, [HockeyTV](#).

CONTACT:

Greg Sears
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811
Email: gsears@greatfallsamericans.com

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