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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**NA3HL Frontier Finals: Sheridan secures Game 1 win over Great Falls, 4-1**

**By Kevin Scott**

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., April 8, 2021 — And then there were two (teams) remaining in the Frontier Division of the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL).

After the first round where the top four in the regular season team standings that ended two weeks ago met in the NA3HL Frontier Division Semi-Finals last week, the top two seeds (#1 Sheridan Hawks and the #2 Great Falls Americans) downed their opponents to advance to the Finals this week.

The #1 Sheridan Hawks based out of Sheridan, Wyoming, boasted a 39-1-0-0 regular season record after falling in the second game of the season to the Bozeman Ice Dogs, 3-2 back on October 3rd, reeled off 37 consecutive wins to become the top-ranked squad in the entire North American 3 Hockey League. The Hawks needed just two games to sweep the #4 Missoula Junior Bruins last weekend in Wyoming. Last Friday (April 2<sup>nd</sup>), Sheridan defeated the Bruins 4-2 in a closer-than-anticipated contest and then earned the sweep and the series in dominating fashion by posting a 10-1 romp in the final game for Missoula, who will not be a part of the junior hockey circuit next season due to ongoing challenges with the rink management at the Glacier Ice Rink ([see story](#)).

Meanwhile, the Great Falls Americans won 27 out of their 40 contests this season that included the first eleven victories of the 2020-21 season before falling 4-3 to Missoula on November 21<sup>st</sup>. During last weekend's Frontier Division Semi-Finals, the Gillette (WY) Wild gave the Americans all they had but, in the end, Great Falls prevailed in three contests. Great Falls scored just two goals each during those three games. Great Falls earned 2-0 shutouts in Game 1 and Game 3 but lost in overtime 3-2 in Game 2. Goaltender Trever Mellen accrued 93 saves in his two wins. Micah Serino led all members of the Americans in playoff scoring with two goals.

How did these two Montana-Wyoming rivals do in their four regular season meetings? Great Falls was bested in all four matchups by Sheridan in back-to-back weekends in the middle of January (8-9, 15-16). The Hawks' dominating offense outscored the Americans 26-8 with the closest setback (4-3 loss at the Great Falls Ice Plex) on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Tonight, Great Falls was looking for revenge and a possible upset with Game 1 of the Frontier Division Finals taking place on their home ice at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

Nathan Gilleshammer scored half of the goals while Simon Herz added one goal and dished out two assists as the top-ranked Sheridan (WY) Hawks led 3-0 in the second period before topping the #2 Great Falls Americans 4-1 during Game 1 of the 2021 NA3HL Frontier Division Finals at the Great Falls Ice Plex

in Great Falls, Montana on Thursday evening. Micah Serino chipped in the goal for Great Falls. The Americans will need to win Game 2 to force a Game 3 and a chance to earn a spot in the 2021 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Tournament next week in St. Peters, Missouri.



Sheridan struck first but it took 9:30 for the visiting Wyoming team to rack up the first and only goal of the first stanza. Colorado native Simon Herz added his first playoff goal of the season thanks to assistance from teammates Justin Schwartzmiller and Nick Wieben. Wieben earned his third assist of the playoffs for the Hawks. Each team had one unsuccessful power play and both squads combined for 23 shots-on-goal.

Nick Wieben and Nathan Gilleshammer pushed the Hawks ahead by three goals (3-0) 12:47 into the middle period. After scoring the lone goal in the first period, Simon Herz assisted on both scoring plays and Logan Syrup accrued his third assist of the playoffs. The Americans drought ended with ten seconds remaining as Micah Serino scored off a pass from Bryson Fletcher and Jackson Henningsgard. Henningsgard scored his second playoff tally while Fletcher and Serino garnered their second assists of the postseason while the Hawks were down a man (penalty). Sheridan led in the shots-on-goal category (25-20) after the first forty minutes of action.

The Hawks added an extra goal to make it 4-1 with 95 seconds remaining in the third and final frame. Nathan Gilleshammer recorded the fourth score on the short-handed scoring drive.

Despite the three-goal difference, the shots were close with Sheridan gathering 33 of the 64 shots-on-goal.

Great Falls committed two minor infractions with four minutes spent in the penalty box. The visiting Hawks acquired eight minor penalties that resulted in 16 minutes in the sin bin with most of them coming in the last period.

With the series shifting to Sheridan, goaltender Trevor Mellen played for the final time in front of the home crowd, and he contributed 29 saves. Mellen currently has 33 wins and 1,694 saves in his two-year career with Great Falls.

Sheridan netminder Christian Wong-Ramos continued his undefeated record with his 13<sup>th</sup> win for the Hawks with three coming in the playoffs after also seeing time with the NA3HL's Texas RoadRunners and the NAHL's New Mexico Ice Wolves. He stopped 30 of the 31 shots on Thursday night against Great Falls' offense.

**NOTES:** Former Great Falls Americans Head Coach and General Manager, Jeff Heimel (2012-19), who now is the head coach for the University of Providence Argonauts in Great Falls, MT was in attendance doing some scouting before his squad heads to Bismarck, North Dakota for the 2021 American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II National Tournament as the #9 seed.

**NEXT CONTEST:** Great Falls and Sheridan will quickly head back to Sheridan, WY for Game 2 (Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:30PM, Whitney Rink in the M&M's Center). If Great Falls were to win Game 2, the third and decisive winner-take-all game three will be on Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM. [HockeyTV](#) will stream the games this week as they have done all season long.

The five-division (Central, East, Frontier, South and West) winners plus a wild card team that has the highest winning percentage that loses in the Divisional Finals will head to the [2021 Fraser Cup \(National\) Tournament](#) this year held at the St. Peters Rec Plex in St. Peters, Missouri on April 15-19<sup>th</sup>. The national tournament includes two round-robin contests for each of the six teams followed by two semi-finals and the championship contests.

The Fraser Cup will also coincide with this year's [Top Prospects Tournament](#) that will take place on Sunday and Monday (April 18-19). Schedules and rosters have not been announced by the league yet for the Top Prospects Tournament. Please [click here](#) for more information about the playoff format, Top Prospects Tourney, and the upcoming NA3HL Draft on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

To view the 2021 Playoff schedules for the 2021 Fraser Cup Championship tournament and the Top Prospects Tournament being played in Missouri, please [click here](#). [HockeyTV](#) provides the full coverage of playoff action.

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