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Great Falls Americans Press Release
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Americans prevent the weekend sweep by the Quake with 4-3 overtime win

By Kevin Scott

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CODY, Wyo., September 11, 2021 — The Great Falls Americans (1-1-0-0) and the Yellowstone Quake (1-0-1-0) battled it out on the ice on Friday night in the debut for both squads as the 2021-22 season began.

The host team racked up two goals in the first period and one in the second period to pull ahead 3-0 before the Americans trimmed Yellowstone's lead to just one (3-2) before the second intermission during Friday night's opener. Micah Serino and Henry Fusco chipped in the second period goals for Great Falls. Cole Whitman, Keegan Ferguson, and Brandon Kididis all scored for the Quake. Thomas Gazich's score midway through the third tied the contest at 3-3 but the Quake got the last say and scored twice to win 5-3.

On Saturday, Great Falls was trying to earn the weekend split with a victory. Would the Americans be able to bounce back from their setback?

Thomas Gazich made his second goal of the season count as he produced the lone goal in overtime to help the Great Falls Americans earn the weekend split over the Yellowstone Quake on Saturday night in Cody, Wyoming. Great Falls fell behind 3-1 in the third period but scored twice in the last six minutes of regulation and once in the five-minute extra period to prevent the Quake from the series sweep.

Both teams combined for 25 shots during the first period but neither team's offense could produce any goals. The first twenty minutes went scoreless.

The middle period saw each squad light up the lamp once during the first 8:36. Yellowstone struck first as Brandon Kididis contributed his first assist of the season while teammate Cameron Deforest added his third when Keegan Ferguson successfully got the puck around Great Falls goaltender Zac Hattan with 16:39 remaining before the second intermission. Minnesota native Noel Rahn found an open Jackson Henningsgard to tie the contest at 1-1 before the third frame for head coach Greg Sears' team. Rahn accrued his first assist in a Great Falls uniform while Henningsgard put the biscuit in the basket for his

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first score of the season as a returning player. Yellowstone held a 29-25 shots-on-goal advantage as the first two periods ended. Both goals were made possible by each team converting their power play opportunities.

In the third period, the home team needed just 49 seconds to break the tie (2-1). Brandon Kididis scored his second goal in as many games when forwards Jack Harris assisted for the fourth time in two games and Gabe Huntley added his first. All three Yellowstone contributors made contributions during the 2020-21 season. Eight minutes later, the Quake erupted for their third scoring drive when Cameron Deforest was the recipient of his second goal of the weekend with assistance from Evan Richards and Gabe Huntley. Great Falls trailed 3-1 but mounted a comeback by scoring two goals in two minutes to send the junior hockey contest to an extra period to decide a winner. Aaron Leaf of Colorado Springs, Colorado registered his first tally with 5:48 remaining followed by Alaska native converting the game-tying goal with 3:40 left on the clock. Newcomer Petr Van Voorhis and Thomas Gazich earned the assists.

The two competitive NA3HL teams participated in their first overtime period of the season. The Americans needed just 21 seconds to pick up their first win of the season as Thomas Gazich sailed the puck over Yellowstone netminder Cole Eastman for the game-winning score. Hunter Maschke and AJ Benit set up the play.

The visiting squad outshot the home team 21-7 over the third period and overtime to finish the game with 46. Yellowstone took half of their 36 shots during the middle period.

In the weekend finale, Great Falls and Yellowstone each committed ten infractions with the biggest difference coming with the Americans spending 41 minutes while Yellowstone added 28 minutes in the penalty box. Only three of the game's 13 power play chances were converted to scoring opportunities.

Different goaltenders made their season debuts with Great Falls' Zac Hattan and Yellowstone's Cole Eastman getting the starting nods for their respective teams. Hattan started his first game in his second season with Great Falls by posting a win along with 33 saves. Cole Eastman of Wenatchee, Washington, made his first appearance in a Quake uniform but fell short of the win by allowing two scores in the third stanza followed by a game-winning tally early in the overtime. He stopped 42 of the 46 shots he encountered by Great Falls' offense.

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans will play just one game in the second week of NA3HL competition when they make the trek down to Bozeman, Montana on Saturday, September 18th to Haynes Pavilion where they will face the Bozeman Ice Dogs in their first meeting of the season Game time is set for 7:30PM (MST).

Yellowstone will make the jaunt over to Gillette, Wyoming to face the Wild for a two-game series on Friday and Saturday (September 17th and 18th). Their first road test starts at 7:05PM from the Spirit Hall Ice Arena.

NOTE: Due to leaky cooling pipes underneath the ice at the Great Falls Ice Plex, the Great Falls Americans may not be able to host their home opener against Gillette on September 24th and 25th if the repairs aren't made by then (**see story**). Please check back on the Great Falls Americans website for more details when available.

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