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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Americans score two late goals to prevent upset bid by the Sabres

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., January 21, 2022 — The #4 Great Falls Americans (17-13-3-2) and the #6 Badlands (SD) Sabres (15-18-1-0) have played each other four times this season with the Americans coming out on top in three of them to the newest member of the NA3HL's Frontier Division.

During the weekend of November 26-27 in their first encounter that took place at the Great Falls Ice Plex, Great Falls earned the weekend split against their only South Dakota opponent. The Sabres surprised the Americans in the opening game, 4-2. Both squads scored once in the first two periods before the Sabres scored two unanswered goals to pull out the win. Kael Delzer (2 goals, 1 assist) and Zach Vockler (1 goal, 2 assists) led the way with three points each for Badlands while former Missoula Junior Bruins goalie Maxim Currie had 63 saves. Great Falls' Daniel Crutcher scored both goals for Great Falls and netminder Zac Hattan acquired 40 saves ([game story](#)). The Americans bounced back and took a 7-3 win the following evening. Hunter Maschke (2 goals, 1 assist) and Micah Serino had 1 goal and two assists to help the Americans to victory. Vockler and Delzer each score one goal and one assist ([game story](#)).

One week later (December 3-4), Great Falls made the trek to Rapid City, South Dakota for their first trip to the state to face the Sabres. Daniel Crutcher, Thomas Gazich, Micah Serino and Billings, Montana native Patrick Crooks helped Great Falls win 4-2. Denim Young and Derrick Brown scored the goals for South Dakota ([game story](#)). The Americans claimed the weekend sweep by surviving an upset bid by the home team (7-6). Great Falls led 5-2 after two periods before being outscored 4-2 in the third. Micah Serino and Tyler Sunagel combined for four goals in the narrow victory for Great Falls. Carter Johnson scored twice for Badlands ([game story](#)).

Great Falls has gone 3-4-1-1 in the nine games since December 4 while Badlands has won seven of their last eleven games, they have played in. The American are led by a trio of players with Jackson Henningsgard (14 goals, 24 assists) leading the way with 37 points followed by Micah Serino with 18

goals and 17 assists. AJ Benit leads Coach Greg Sears' squad with 17 assists. Meanwhile, Zach Vockler leads the Sabres with 18 goals and 25 assists.

The Americans and Sabres play their final regular season contests against each other starting with Friday's contest in Great Falls. Would Great Falls' offense help deliver their fourth win, or would Badlands steal a win in Montana?

The #4 Great Falls Americans avoided an upset by scoring two late goals with under 90 seconds remaining in regulation to defeat the #6 Badlands (SD) Sabres, 6-4 during NA3HL junior hockey action at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Friday evening. Great Falls was out in front 4-1 before the third period began.

It took ten minutes before the Americans found their offensive rhythm when they rang up three consecutive goals in 77 seconds. Daniel Crutcher (15 goals), Thomas Gazich (16 goals), and Joshua Serino (3) all added to their scoring totals with one goal apiece. Six different Great Falls players helped make the three goals possible including Aaron Leaf (7th assist), Micah Serino (17th assist), Garrett Weisenburger (14th assist), Blake Nerney (2nd assist), Henry Fusco (15th assist), and Jay Alford (14th assist). As the first period concluded, Great Falls' offense took charge and exploded for 23 shots while limiting Badlands to seven. The host team could not connect on their two power play chances.

Great Falls ran two minutes off the clock to start the second period and found themselves out in front 4-0 thanks to a pass by Bryson Fletcher and Jay Alford to Jackson Henningsgard for his 14th goal of the year over Sabres goalie Brooks McLean. The Sabres successfully converted their first goal four minutes after the Americans scored. Iowa native Carter Johnson made sure the visiting team would not be shutout as his unassisted tally came with 13:27 remaining. A penalty by the home team prevented them from getting their fifth goal with 8:44 on the clock. The Americans led 4-1 after the second period and the shots were much closer with the Americans gathering 21 of the 41 shot attempts. The second stanza also saw 28 minutes of penalty time alone between these two clubs as the game got physical but neither team could not take advantage of the five power play opportunities that were presented.

The Sabres fought back and scored twice in a four-minute span to cut their deficit to one (4-3) to open the third frame. Keagon Holloway and Seth Stock were the recipients of the scoring opportunities with assists on Holloway's goal with 16:39 left going to Seth Stock and Utin Lightning while Stock's score came with helpers from Carter Johnson and Cole Sykes 52 seconds later. Zach Vockler tied up the game for the Sabres third straight goal of the period. Levi Knight and Denim Young assisted on the game-tying goal eight minutes into the third. Great Falls made the home crowd wait in anticipation as the Americans scored twice in the final 90 seconds to capture their 17th win of the season and tenth on home ice. Thomas Gazich scored his second goal of the game (17th overall) and utilized his skills to get by the Badlands defenders to break the tie for the Americans with 90 seconds left. Two players (Silas Hughes and Tyler Sunagel) set up the game-winning goal. Badlands pulled their goaltender after Gazich's goal moments earlier to get another offensive player on the ice. After assisting on a second period goal, Bryson Fletcher came away with his first goal of the season via an empty net with under a minute to go to ensure the win for the host squad. Blake Nerney assisted for the third time in his five games with the Americans after playing the previous three seasons for coach Greg Sears' team.

The Americans scored six goals on 70 shots with 26 coming after the second intermission. After a slow start, the Sabres combined for 34 of their 41 shots after the first period.

The second period saw two major penalties with two ejections for fighting. Those two penalties accounted

for ten of the 34 minutes of penalty time on 14 infractions. Both teams came up empty on their (eight total) power plays.

Will Simpson picked up his second victory in three games by stopping 37 of the 41 shots from getting past him in the net. Simpson, one of seven players on the team from Alaska, won for the seventh time in 14 appearances (7-5-0-2). Simpson's counterpart, Brooks McLean, also from Alaska, allowed the first three goals of the game, added 64 saves to his resume total. He has struggled this season with wins in two of his ten games played (2-6-0-0).

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The #1 Gillette (WY) Wild (32-3-1-0, 65 pts.) and the #2 Helena Bighorns (31-2-2-0, 64 pts.) have officially clinched playoff berths for the 2022 NA3HL Playoffs set to begin in March. Both teams won in their home arenas on Friday. Gillette needed three goals to fend off the Yellowstone Quake ([box score](#)) and the Bighorns won by five goals (7-2) over the Butte Cobras at the Helena Ice Arena ([box score](#)). The Bozeman Ice Dogs and Sheridan (WY) Hawks both sat idle.

NOTES: It was recently announced that Great Falls will make-up their two games from the weekend of December 8-9 against the Helena Bighorns and Bozeman Ice Dogs, respectively. On Sunday, January 23, the Great Falls will travel to Haynes Pavilion in Bozeman, Montana to face the Ice Dogs at 4:00PM (MST). Great Falls and Helena will meet in the regular season finale on Sunday, February 27th with the puck set to drop at 4:00PM (MST) from the Helena Ice Arena.

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans and Sabres will meet for the sixth and final time this season with a 7:30PM (MST) contest at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Saturday, January 22nd. [HockeyTV](#), the NA3HL's streaming service, provides the coverage with Megan Lewis doing the play-by-play and commentary.

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