



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

**Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator  
Phone: (406) 403-8146**

**Gazich and Fletcher guide the Americans to victory over the Sabres**

**By Kevin Scott**

<a href="#">Box Score</a>	<a href="#">Game Sheet</a>	<a href="#">League Scoreboard</a>	<a href="#">Americans Team Statistics</a>
---------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------------	---



GREAT FALLS, Mont., January 22, 2022 — Four wins and one loss is what the #4 Great Falls Americans (18-13-3-2) record was against the #6 Badlands (SD) Sabres (15-19-1-0) entering their final matchup of the 2021-22 season on Saturday evening in Great Falls. The Sabres are nearing the end of their first season in the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) while Great Falls is finishing their eighth season in the 34-team league.

In case you missed it, the Americans held a 4-1 advantage after two periods on Friday night before the Sabres quickly erased it and evened the score during the first 8:21 of the third. The home fans at the Great Falls Ice Plex were uneasy and were thinking the contest might see an overtime until forward Thomas Gazich stepped up and got the puck in the net for his 17<sup>th</sup> goal of the year in a scoring play that was set up by Silas Hughes and Tyler Sunagel with 1:30 remaining. After Badlands allowed the goal, they pulled goaltender Brooks McLean so they could get another player on the ice. That plan backfired when the Americans added their sixth goal with 57 seconds to go as Bryson Fletcher captured his first goal of the season in the empty net to cap the night off for the Americans ([game story](#)).

Thomas Gazich and Bryson Fletcher combined for four goals and four assists as the #4 Great Falls Americans won their third straight game by outlasting the #6 Badlands (SD) Sabres, 7-3 in front of 536 faithful spectators in attendance at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Saturday night. Americans goaltender Ben Winkler stopped 48 shots for his fourth win of the season.

The Americans accumulated two goals midway through the first period to take the early lead. Bryson Fletcher and Thomas Gazich each responded for the Americans with one goal each. Fletcher's score (his second of the weekend) came with assistance from Silas Hughes and Thomas Gazich with 14 minutes left in the stanza while the Sabres spent time in the penalty box. Three minutes later, Thomas Gazich netted his 18<sup>th</sup> score of the season with helpers from Jackson Henningsgard and Bryson Fletcher. The Sabres responded with under two minutes to go before the first intermission when Sabres forward Teddy Wilebski accrued his first goal of his career with assists coming from Zach Vockler and Cade Hesse.

Hesse joined the South Dakota team this week and earned his first assist while Wilebski was added to the team on December 31st. Vockler, from Sioux Falls, SD, leads the team in points with 44 and goals scored (18). The offense came through Great Falls as they maintained control of the puck throughout with the Americans taking forty shots while Badlands managed five shots-on-goal.

The Americans offense continued to produce (three) goals coming out of the first intermission. Bryson Fletcher scored his second goal of the night along with one goal apiece by Silas Hughes and Blake Nerney. Jackson Henningsgard, Thomas Gazich and Tyler Sunagel gathered their second assists of the night and Petr Van Voorhis and Sam Duelmier also set up scoring plays for the home team. Great Falls led 5-1 heading into the third frame. Badlands outshot Great Falls 24-21 in the period despite not getting on the scoreboard.

In the final period, Great Falls scored twice in 90 seconds with the Sabres also tallying one during that span. Jackson Henningsgard registered his first goal of the game and Thomas Gazich buried his second. Blake Nerney and Bryson Fletcher added to their stat sheets by supplying their second assists and Tyler Sunagel added his third. Micah Serino and Garrett Weisenburger garnered an assist in the period. Newcomer Teddy Wilebski delivered his second goal of the contest with forwards Brady Ridnour and Derrick Brown contributing to the Sabres score. The Americans defense allowed one more goal before time expired. A Cole Sykes pass to an open Brady Ridnour gave the visiting team their third and final goal in the final 83 seconds in the last head-to-head meeting between these two clubs in the regular season.

Great Falls acquired half of their shots-on-goal in the first twenty minutes with Great Falls ending the night with 80. Badlands offense stepped up after the first stanza and took 46 of their 51 in the second and third periods.

Each team racked up four minor infractions with eight minutes spent in the penalty box. Great Falls turned two of their power plays (2-for-4) into goals including Bryson Fletcher's opening goal in the first and the Americans first score of the third period by Jackson Henningsgard. The Sabres had four power play opportunities go unanswered.

The Americans, who won their 18<sup>th</sup> game of the 2021-22 season, were led by five players. Bryson Fletcher and Thomas Gazich rang up four points (2 goals, 2 assists) each. Blake Nerney and Jackson Henningsgard finished with three points (1 goal, 2 assists), and Tyler Sunagel came away with three helpers. Badlands had two leaders in Teddy Wilebski (2 goals) and Brady Ridnour with a goal and an assist as they were swept in the weekend series by Great Falls.

Illinois product Ben Winkler played for the first time in a month amassed 48 saves and improved his record to 4-3-1-0 in nine appearances this season. Winkler had 18 saves in December's NA3HL Showcase Tournament in Blaine, Minnesota in the Americans 6-2 decision over the New Jersey Titans of the NA3HL's East Division ([game story](#)). In his first season with Great Falls (2020-21), he had five wins in five appearances.

Meanwhile, Brooks McLean fell to 0-2 after two games against Great Falls this weekend. The Alaskan netminder swatted away 73 of the 80 shots that the Americans offense sent his way. For the season, he dropped his record to 2-7-0-0 in 11 games.

**NOTE:** Sunday's contest between the #4 Great Falls Americans (18-13-3-2, 41 points) and #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (19-13-3-1, 42 points) will have an impact in the NA3HL Frontier Division standings. If Great Falls wins, they will be in third place and Bozeman will move down to fourth.

**FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE:** With the Butte Cobras and Sheridan (WY) Hawks having the night off, the Frontier Division had three games on the slate on Saturday night. The top two teams in the Frontier Division (#1 Gillette Wild and the #2 Helena Bighorns) easily won their games against the Yellowstone (WY) Quake and Bozeman Ice Dogs, respectively. Gillette scored nine goals and held Yellowstone to one in a 9-1 romp at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena in Wyoming ([box score](#)). Helena scored four goals in the first and three in the second to blank the Ice Dogs, 7-0 at home ([box score](#)).

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Great Falls Americans will make a trip to Bozeman, Montana on Sunday, January 23 for a makeup game from January 9th. Great Falls and the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs game can be seen on [HockeyTV](#) starting at 4:00PM (MST) from Haynes Pavilion.

The next home game for the Americans will be on Friday, January 28<sup>th</sup> when they host the #2 Helena Bighorns for a 7:30PM (MST) showdown at the Great Falls Ice Plex. This will be the final home game against the Bighorns, but they will travel to Helena four more times before the end of February.

**CONTACT:**

**Greg Sears**  
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager  
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811  
Email: [gsears@greatfallsamericans.com](mailto:gsears@greatfallsamericans.com)

Visit our website: <http://www.gfamericans.com>  
Join Us on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/greatfalls.americanshockey>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gfamericans>

North American 3 Hockey League: <http://www.na3hl.com/>

