



Logan Schermele of the Great Falls Americans, left, works against Bozeman forward Paul Roefaro Friday night at the IcePlex. TRIBUNE PHOTO/RYAN HALL

# Americans fall in opener

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Hockey returned to Great Falls for the first time in eight seasons on Friday, though it didn't quite go the way hometown fans might have hoped.

The Great Falls Americans, a Tier III Junior A American West Hockey League expansion team, lost their franchise opener 4-1 to the visiting Bozeman Icedogs on Friday at the Great Falls IcePlex in front of a full house of fans that spilled out of the stands to standing room only along the glass.

The Icedogs used a three-goal second period to open up a lead that proved insurmountable and Great Falls native Dalton Garton scored the final goal for Bozeman in the third period. "I think it was pretty big, just as their home opener, their inaugural season this year," said



**Bozeman 4**

**Great Falls 1**

Next up:  
Americans vs.  
Helena, tonight at  
7:30, Great Falls  
IcePlex

Garton, who played for the Americans high school team and is a graduate of C.M. Russell High. "Just to come into their house and beat them is pretty big for us."

Coach Matt Frank's young Americans squad features 10 players still in high school, about double the number of most teams in the six-team AWHL. After playing a scoreless first period, Frank attributed part of his team's second-period lapse to its youth.

"I think our guys got too comfortable," said Frank, a former Icedogs player himself. "We had a pretty decent first period and obviously the young kids thought they were in the game. A team that has a little more veteran players like Bozeman is going to take advantage of that and they did."

See **AMERICANS, 25**

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Sun, Jan 2, 2022

# Americans

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The Icedogs drew first blood in the second period while on a power play. Brady Heffner tallied the first goal with 13:35 to play in the period off of assists from Eli Bowman and Paul Roefaro.

Kyle Bernard gave Bozeman a two-goal cushion with 10:12 remaining off assists from Connell Totten and Erik

Eliasson.

"We came out as we should with a full, packed house on opening night," Frank said. "But then Bozeman definitely took it to us. Our young guys kind of took a step back and were spectators for probably about 16, 17 minutes in that second period."

The Americans saw their best chance to score late in the second period when a pair of penalties forced the Icedogs to play two men down for

about a minute and a half.

Great Falls was unable to capitalize, however, and Roefaro made it 3-0 with 2:46 to play in the period with assists from Cody Blom and Anthony Militello.

"(It was) very disappointing," Frank said of not scoring on the power play. "Those are opportunities you have to take advantage of. That's something we actually work on in practice quite a bit, so it's frustrating to not capitalize,

but I think we had some pretty good chances there."

Atlanta native Jordan Landwehr scored the first goal in Americans history at the 14:22 mark of the third period off assists from a pair of Montana natives, Dylan Anderson (Great Falls) and Sawyer Jacobson (Roberts).

"It's a good feeling," Frank said. "We finally executed our power play, how we draw it up, and it was good to see the puck in the back of the net and see

the crowd go wild."

Garton, whose goal came with 4:24 to play in the contest, broke into a broad smile amid cheers from the Bozeman fans. Bernard and Zane Baragree of Billings picked up assists.

"It was awesome," said Garton, who was greeted by Great Falls fans outside the Bozeman locker room. "I'm glad we won."

Each team finished with 35 shots on goal. Americans goaltender Andrew Alberda, a

Bozeman native, have 31 saves while Icedogs goaltender Militello had 34 saves

The Icedogs (1-0) play host to the Missoula Maulers on Saturday. The Americans (0-1) will play host to Helena, which won the Tier III Junior A national title last season.

Bozeman	0	3	1	4
Great Falls	0	0	1	1
Second period				
B - Brady Heffner (Eli Bowman, Paul Roefaro), 13:35				
B - Kyle Bernard (Erik Eliasson, Connell Totten), 10:12				
B - Roefaro (Cody Blom, Anthony Militello), 2:46				
Third period				
GF - Jordan Landwehr (Dylan Anderson, Sawyer Jacobson), 14:22				
B - Dalton Garton (Bernard, Zane Baragree), 4:29				



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