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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**McKenna's two goals powers Sheridan over Great Falls, 3-2**

**By Kevin Scott**

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SHERIDAN, Wyo., November 11, 2022 — A week after having an unexpected bye week, the #5 Great Falls Americans (8-7-0-0) were ready to hit the ice for just their third road trip of the season. They traveled to Butte, Montana on October 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> to face the #3 Butte Cobras (8-8-1-0) but have played at the Great Falls Ice Plex for 12 of their previous 14 games this season.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, Great Falls was supposed to make the 90-mile trip to Helena, Montana to face the #2 Helena Bighorns (13-3-0-1) but hours before their scheduled meeting, the game was called off because of not enough NA3HL referees available so both squads are expected to make up their postponed meeting later.

During the second Friday in November, the Americans made the trek to Sheridan, Wyoming for a two-game matchup with the #4 Sheridan Hawks. Neither NA3HL squad has faced each other before tonight.

Sheridan, under head coach Chad Bailey boasts a 8-8-1-0 record with sweeps over the #7 Badlands Sabres and the #8 Bozeman Ice Dogs (2-0), split two games with the #6 Yellowstone Quake (1-1), lost to Butte once in regulation and an overtime loss (0-1-1), while going 0.500 against the #2 Helena Bighorns in four contests (2-2) and coming up short in four games to the top-ranked Gillette (WY) Wild (15-1-0-1), one of their two other Wyoming rivals. Makhai Sparks, who played in four playoff games with the Bozeman Ice Dogs last season, leads the team in goals scored (16) and most points (30). Maryland native Parker Norling is the top assist maker with 17.

Most of the Americans wins, six of their eight victories leading up to tonight's showdown with the Hawks, came from the Butte Cobras and the Yellowstone Quake (6-9-1-1), who they defeated in three of their four meetings. Great Falls also stole two games from the South Dakota-based Badlands Sabres (5-9-2-1) and are a combined 0-4 against the top two teams in the Frontier Division, the #1 Gillette Wild and the #2

Helena Bighorns. The Americans, under fifth year head coach Greg Sears, have yet to challenge the #8 Bozeman Ice Dogs this year but they will get their chance in Great Falls on January 14<sup>th</sup>. A pair of newcomers, William Fallman is leading the team with 7 goals while Alex Leaf has registered 14 assists and 17 points scored to lead in both categories.

After splitting two away contests with the Cobras, Great Falls was trying to pick up their second road game victory.

Ryan McKenna scored two goals and Makhai Sparks added another as the fourth-ranked Sheridan (WY) Hawks won their first game in the month of November and snapped their two-game skid by downing the #5 Great Falls Americans, 3-2 during Friday's NA3HL action from Sheridan, Wyoming. Alex Leaf sparked the Americans with two tallies.

Starting goaltenders Josh Koziol (Great Falls) and Patric Loeffler (Sheridan) kept all the pucks out of the net during the first twenty minutes of action. Both netminders combined to stop all 25 shots in the scoreless period.

The following period saw each team come away with a goal. Great Falls defenseman Alex Leaf picked up his second goal as a member of the Americans Junior A hockey team off the stick of teammate William Fallman, whose ninth assist came on a power play that gave the visiting Montana team the early 1-0 advantage with 5:19 remaining. Sheridan evened up the contest 22 seconds later when Ryan McKenna's tenth goal came with an assist from Tie Schumacher and Josh Humphreys. Both teams skated the rest of the time off the clock. The host team outshot Great Falls 20-15 in the period and held a 36-24 advantage after two periods of play.

Ryan McKenna scored the second goal of the night for the Hawks late in third stanza. The Spokane, Washington native's scoring drive broke the tie with under five minutes left in regulation. Josh Humphreys, also from Spokane, chipped in his eighth assist and Tie Schumacher added his seventh. Three minutes later, Wyoming ensured their victory when Makhai Sparks' shot sailed over Great Falls goalie Josh Koziol for his 16<sup>th</sup> goal in 16 appearances for a two-goal lead (3-1). McCaffrey Billings and Wyatt Noble, two standouts from last season, set up the Hawks third scoring drive. Alex Leaf accrued his second goal for Great Falls (third overall) 22 seconds later to cut into the deficit, but the visitors could not find a way to score again in the last 83 seconds to even the score and send it to an extra frame. Silas Hughes earned the assist.

Ryan McKenna (Sheridan) and Alex Leaf (Great Falls) scored two goals apiece to lead their respective teams. Sheridan's Tie Schumacher and Josh Humphrey's assisted on two of the three goals for the home team.

Both teams committed four (minor) infractions that resulted in eight minutes of penalty time. Alex Leaf's first score in the middle period was the only goal that came while the opposing team was down a man (penalty). Great Falls finished 1-for-4 on the power play. Sheridan could not connect on any of their four power play chances.

Patric Loeffler improved his record to 3-2-0-0 in seven appearances. The Rogers, Minnesota native swatted away 34 of the 36 shots he encountered by the Americans offense. Josh Koziol (5-5-0-0) finished with 55 saves in his second road loss of the season for the Americans.



**NOTES:** The Great Falls Americans recently lost one of their players from the 2017-18 season when Tanner Rath passed away unexpectedly at his home in Anchorage, Alaska on November 3, 2022. Rath, the 23-year-old forward, played in 42 regular season games and had two playoff appearances while scoring 14 goals and dishing out 19 assists in his one season with the NA3HL club. [Click here](#) to view his stats with Great Falls. His funeral in Alaska was today (November 11<sup>th</sup>). His obituary can be found by [clicking here](#). Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Rath family.

Also, the Great Falls Americans were scheduled to travel to Helena, Montana on Saturday, November 5th for a single game against the Helena Bighorns but the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) had to postpone the rivalry contest due to a shortage of referees and will be rescheduled for a later date.

**FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE:** The #1 Gillette Wild had their offense evaluated as they needed an overtime to pick up their 15<sup>th</sup> victory of the season over the #7 Badlands (SD) Sabres in front of 887 fans at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena in Gillette, Wyoming. Anthony Foster provided the overtime goal two minutes into the extra frame. Johan Palmqvist and Jace Johnson had two helpers apiece. Cole Wheaton had 22 saves for the winners. Dawson Wirth and Izaiah Phillips each registered goals for the Sabres. Despite 66 saves, Brady Devries was credited with the loss ([box score](#)).

The #6 Yellowstone Quake received goals from Ben Carlson, Donovan Knuckles and Zac Orwig to earn the 3-0 shutout win on home ice against the #3 Butte Cobras on Friday night. Edwin Falkenstrom's fourth victory occurred when he redirected all 31 shots. Caleb Cross had 26 saves in the net for the Butte Cobras ([box score](#)).

The #2 Helena Bighorns scored both of their goals before the second intermission and held off the #8 Bozeman Ice Dogs, 2-1 inside Bozeman's Haynes Pavilion on Friday. Neither team could turn their combined 17 third period shots into successful scoring drives. Gabe Swanson now had eight wins in nine games for the Bighorns including four against the Ice Dogs this season. Bozeman's Cam Milewski continued to struggle in the net had 33 saves in his tenth setback. Bryce Sturm put in his first career goal as a member of the Ice Dogs in the middle period ([box score](#)).

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Great Falls Americans will stay in Sheridan, Wyoming for their second game of the weekend against the Hawks on Saturday evening. The Americans and Hawks will tangle on the ice at 7:30PM live on [HockeyTV](#) on Saturday, November 12, 2022, from Whitney Rink in the M&M's Center.

Great Falls returns to the friendly confines of the Great Falls Ice Plex to finish out the month of November with two games against the Gillette Wild (Nov. 18-19) followed by a Thanksgiving weekend that brings the Sheridan Hawks to town (Nov. 25-26). All four contests start at 7:30PM (MST).

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