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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Helena wins fourth straight game against Great Falls in 4-1 win

By Kevin Scott

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., December 30, 2022 — Before 2022 ends and we ring in (the year) 2023, the #5 Great Falls Americans (13-15-1-0) has some unfinished business that they needed to address against their closest rival, the #2 Helena Bighorns (21-7-1-1). Great Falls and Helena are separated by 90 miles via Interstate 15.

The Americans and Bighorns collide on the ice for the final time this season at the Great Falls Ice Plex on December 30-31, but they do have three additional games scheduled for the Helena Ice Arena on January 13th and January 27th-28th.

Great Falls, coached by Greg Sears, enters Friday's fourth matchup against the #2 ranked team in the Frontier Division with an 0-3-0-0 record with two losses in Great Falls. The first one came on September 16th ([6-2 setback](#)) and another [5-0 shutout](#) occurred on September 30th. Helena's offense also denied any goal-scoring for Great Falls in a [3-0 blanking](#) on November 23rd in Montana's capital city.

Coming off last week's 2022 NA3HL Showcase (December 18-20) in Blaine, Minnesota where each team played three games against other NA3HL divisions that had similar records as of December 1st, the Americans, and Bighorns each won two of their three contests. The fifth ranked team in the NA3HL's Frontier Division defeated the Wisconsin-based Wausau Cyclones, [3-2](#) on the first day followed by a [2-0](#) loss to the New Ulm (Minnesota) Steel on Day 2 and blanked the El Paso (TX) Rhinos, [2-0](#) to close out the three-day tournament that had many college scouts in attendance. Meanwhile, Helena also went 2-1-0-0 with wins over the Texas Brahmas (3-0) and Norwegian (Connecticut) Sea Captains, 6-2 but fell on the first day against Wisconsin's Oregon Tradesmen, 3-1.

Since their third meeting on November 23, Great Falls is 4-4-1-0 including two wins at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Americans fell twice to the Sheridan (WY) Hawks (18-11-1-0, 3rd in Frontier) during Thanksgiving Weekend (Nov. 25-26) at home followed by a weekend split to the Badlands (SD) Sabres

(8-18-2-2, 8th in Frontier) and one victory and one overtime loss in Sheridan, Wyoming to the Hawks during the first two weeks of December. Great Falls went 2-1 at the NA3HL Showcase (see above). As for the Bighorns, coached by Scott Cunningham, they won five of their eight games including two (wins) at the Showcase Tournament. Helena went 2-1 against the Butte Cobras (14-14-1-0, 4th in Frontier) and split with the top-ranked team in the Frontier Division, the Gillette (WY) Wild (24-3-1-2, 1st in Frontier) before the Minnesota tournament.

Would the home fans at the Great Falls Ice Plex see their team pick up their first win against Helena on Friday?

The #2 Helena Bighorns downed the #5 Great Falls Americans, 4-1 during their fourth head-to-head meeting of the season during Friday's NA3HL junior hockey action at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Helena led 2-0 after the first period and never trailed to go 4-0 against Great Falls on the season.

Helena forwards Edvin Astrom and Andrew Deskin lifted the visiting Bighorns to a two-goal lead over Great Falls after the first twenty minutes of action during the Americans first home game in a month. TJ Norris' pass to Edvin Astrom, who lit up the lamp three minutes into the contest, gave the second-ranked team in the Frontier Division the early advantage. Mason Eggen picked up the secondary assist. Andrew Deskin followed Moore's goal 8:37 later with his 12th goal of the season with assists going to Owen Ramsey and Joe Feamster. The fans at the Great Falls Ice Plex saw the Bighorns outshoot the Americans, 19-5.

The Americans came out of the locker room after the first period ready to go as Garrett Weisenburger (fifth goal) needed just 11 seconds to score the Americans first goal of the game off the stick of Ben Cremers, who made his eleventh assist. Helena's Zach Turner scored the third goal for the visiting Montana team with 3:55 on a short-handed play that went unassisted. Great Falls took 12 of the 28 second period shots-on-goal but trailed 3-1 before the second intermission.

The Bighorns led 3-1 until the final 2:25 when Garrett Bogan and Zach Turner found Tyler Alldredge racing towards the empty net for the final scoring tally of the game. Before the lone scoring drive of the third frame, the Americans pulled starting goalie Jake Regan for an extra player on the ice.

Great Falls' 16th setback of the season occurred after being outshot during each of the three regulation periods. The visiting team attempted 21 more shots (48-27) than the home team.

Both Montana NA3HL squads played a penalty-free first period before being whistled for three (minor) infractions apiece over the last two periods. Six combined power play opportunities went unanswered.

Helena netminder Marek Andres won his eighth game (8-3-0-0) since being added to the Bighorns roster on November 11th. Andres, one of five players on the roster from Canada, completed his night with 26 saves. Jake Regan, who fell for the second time in five appearances (1-2-0-0) for the Americans, registered 44 saves in 58 minutes of action. Jake Regan is likely to see more action with the departure of Josh Koziol, who decided to attend a college in Minnesota for the second semester beginning in January (see below).

NOTES: Earlier this week, the Americans announced that Great Falls Americans goaltender Josh Koziol would be leaving the Americans immediately to join the college ranks at Augsburg University located in Minneapolis, Minnesota for the Auggies men's hockey team that competes at the NCAA Division III level

starting in January 2023. We thank Josh for being a member of the Americans this season and wish him the best with his new team. [Click here](#) to view the press release.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The #1 Gillette (WY) Wild (24-3-1-2) won their fifth game in December by scoring the first four goals of the game enroute to an 8-4 victory over the third-ranked and Wyoming rival, Sheridan (WY) Hawks (18-11-1-0). Sky Solig scored twice and provided one assist while teammate Ryan Jordan had one third period successful scoring drive and set up two scoring plays for the Wild. Ryan McKenna scored one second period goal and a pair of third period scores for a hat trick for the Hawks. Cole Wheaton added another win to his resume by stopping 32 of 36 shots. Meanwhile, Patric Loeffler accrued 41 saves for Sheridan ([box score](#)).

Braden Koliha scored two goals including the game winner in the third period and teammate Owen House assisted on both of Koliha's goals as the sixth-ranked Bozeman Ice Dogs (12-17-0-1) escaped with a 3-2 road victory over the #8 Badlands (SD) Sabres (8-18-2-2) on Friday evening at the Roosevelt Park Ice Arena. AJ Petrotto and Peyton Wilson chipped in the goals for the Sabres. Bozeman netminder Cam Milewski accumulated 27 saves for the win while his counterpart, Brady Devries finished with 28 saves in the loss ([box score](#)).

The #7 Yellowstone (WY) Quake (10-16-3-1) needed one goal to edge the #4 Butte Cobras (14-14-1-0) in a mild NA3HL Frontier Division upset on home ice in Cody, Wyoming on Friday. Joey Good produced his fourth goal of the season during the first three minutes of the third stanza that proved to be the game-winner despite a combined 90 shots-on-goal between these two opponents. Derrand Wilcox and Wyatt O'Donoghue set up Good's scoring drive. John Hughes played a flawless game in the net for Yellowstone by swatting away all 50 shots. Caleb Cross allowed one goal for Butte but still finished with 39 saves ([box score](#)).

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans last home game against the Bighorns is set for New Year's Eve on Saturday, December 31st with a 7:30PM (MST) start time at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Americans will face Helena three more times in January at the Helena Ice Arena on January 13th, January 27th, and January 28th.

Great Falls has four remaining home games that take place in January and February against the #6 Bozeman Ice Dogs (11-17-0-1) and 13 road contests.

[HockeyTV](#), the NA3HL's streaming service, will stream the remaining contests in the regular season and playoffs and February's (7-8) 2022 Top Prospects Tournament taking place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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