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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Americans come up short in 5-3 decision over the Ice Dogs; Koliha made a hat trick in win

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., February 24, 2023 — The Great Falls Americans (15-26-3-0), ranked sixth in the NA3HL's Frontier Division, will wrap up their 2022-23 home schedule at the Great Falls Ice Plex this weekend with a pair of games against the fifth-ranked Bozeman Ice Dogs (23-20-0-1). Great Falls will end their 2022-23 road schedule and their season on March 3-4 against the Yellowstone (Cody, WY) Quake.

How are the Americans doing against the Ice Dogs this season? All four games came in the months of January and February with Great Falls posting one victory (at home), one home loss, one overtime road loss and one road (regulation) loss. [Click here](#) to view the full results from their games with the Ice Dogs and their entire season.

Bozeman Ice Dogs forward Braden Koliha scored a hat trick (three goals) to lead the #5 Bozeman Ice Dogs past the #6 Great Falls Americans, 5-3 during Friday's North American 3 Hockey League's Frontier Division contest at the Great Falls Ice Plex. This was the Americans first home game since January 21st when the Ice Dogs came to town.

A single goal by Bozeman's Bodie Shepardson was the only successful scoring drive of the first period. Shepardson, a native of Livingston, Montana, and the leading scorer for the Ice Dogs, made his 27th score of the season off a pass from Chris Porciuncula and Spencer Wilkinson with 7:42 remaining in the period. Great Falls managed 13 of the 33 shots before the first intermission but could not capitalize on any of their three power play chances while the Ice Dogs were in the sin bin.

The Ice Dogs came out of intermission with their second goal of the game within the first 57 seconds of the second stanza. Casey Sturm collected his ninth assist on the Dominik Hauer lamplighter (19th goal) for the 2-0 advantage. Five minutes later, the Americans got in the scoring column as Jack Metcalfe with help from Hunter Acker and Alex Leaf, cut the home team's deficit to 2-1. Bozeman forward Braden Koliha put the Ice Dogs lead back to two goals (3-1) with eleven minutes on the clock. Casey Sturm created his tenth assist and Bryce Sturm added his 18th while Great Falls was in the penalty box. Before the middle frame concluded, Ben Cremers chipped in his tenth goal with assistance from Jace Thompson and Wes Weisenburger with four minutes left before the second intermission.

A controversial goal ended the period by Bozeman when it appeared that Braden Koliha threw the puck in the net with his hand (and not with his stick) with 20 seconds to go. Dominik Hauer and Bryce Sturm assisted on the fourth goal for the visitors.

Braden Koliha scored his third goal for a hat trick three minutes into the final period of regulation to take the 5-2 lead over Great Falls. Bryce Sturm received his third assist (20th overall) and Casey Sturm captured his third (assist) on Bozeman's second successful power play opportunity. The Americans attempted a comeback but came up short. Colter Barnett scored his first goal as a member of the Americans with helpers from Russ Rasmussen and Sterling Amdahl with three minutes left.

Over the final two periods, Great Falls outshot Bozeman, 37-24 to finish with 50 shots-on-goal.

The host team committed two minor penalties (four minutes in the sin bin) throughout the sixty-minute junior hockey contest. Six unanswered power play chances went unanswered for the Americans. The difference on the scoreboard occurred when the Ice Dogs racked up two goals on two power play opportunities. Nine penalties were called on Bozeman that resulted in 52 minutes spent away from the ice.

Sean Smer won his second game against the Americans this season to improve to 6-4-0-1 as he accumulated 47 saves in 50 attempts. Americans goaltender Ryan Stowe saw his record drop to 3-7-2-0 but still was able to deliver 39 saves in the loss.

Great Falls has just one victory in five contests against Bozeman, 1-3-1-0 with one head-to-head meeting left.

NOTES: Among those in attendance at tonight's contest was former Great Falls Americans owner Jim Keough and former Great Falls Americans Head Coach and General Manager, Jeff Heimel.

Two members of the Great Falls Figure Skating Club performed during the first intermission.

Alex Leaf, Great Falls' team leader in assists (32), was named "The Mike Lewis Most Valuable Player" during an on-ice presentation during the second intermission.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: Even though the #2 Gillette Wild (33-8-1-2) was ranked No. 1 in the Frontier Division for most of the season, it was the #1 Helena Bighorns (35-7-1-1) who have come up victorious in four of their five matchups. Camden Cunningham scored once in each of the first two periods to hang on to blank the Wild, 2-0 in a low-scoring affair. Tyler Bloom and Padraic Whited assisted. Keaton French is now 6-0-0-0 in the net against the Wyoming club. Jake Turek of Gillette fell for just the fifth time in regulation (11-4-1-0) by acquiring 41 saves ([box score](#)). Both squads have already qualified for postseason play in two weeks.

The Butte Cobras (23-19-1-1) maintained their fourth place standing in the NA3HL Frontier Division standings with a dominating 8-1 win over the #8 Badlands (SD) Sabres (11-28-2-3) during Friday's matchup at the Butte Community Ice Center. Patrick Crooks scored three goals and teammate Luke Schleusner added two goals and two assists for their 23rd win of the season. Dominic Powilatis second period goal for Badlands was all that got by Butte netminder Caleb Cross, who stopped 40 of 41 shots made by the Sabres. Dawson Sellner (35 saves) and Zach Broxterman (16 saves) both had goaltending duties for South Dakota. Sellner now has two losses in two appearances ([box score](#)).

The Sheridan (WY) Hawks (24-18-2-0) looked closer to making the playoffs in March by obtaining a 4-1 decision over the Yellowstone (WY) Quake (12-26-4-2) on Friday. Each team recorded one goal over the first two periods, but the Hawks outscored the Quake, 3-0 in the third with scoring efforts from Makhai Sparks, Ryan McKenna, and Teejay Torgrimson. Caleb Murray had one score in the opening period. Yellowstone's PJ Comose tallied a goal early in the middle period. Sheridan goalie Jack Wood won for the sixth time in 13 games (6-5-0-0) by stopping 40 shots. A 48-save effort was made by Edwin Falkenstrom (5-12-2-1) in his second season with the Quake ([box score](#)).

NEXT CONTEST: The final opportunity for the home fans of the Great Falls Americans to see their team in action during the 2022-23 season will occur on Saturday, February 25, 2023, with a 7:30PM (MST) date with the Bozeman Ice Dogs. This night will also be Billet Family Appreciation Night where host

families and the players that have stayed with them will be introduced on the ice between the second and third periods. [HockeyTV](#) will provide the coverage with Justin Latham on the call.

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