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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Cremers hat trick powers Great Falls past Yellowstone on the final weekend of the season

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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CODY, Wyo., March 3, 2023 — The #6 Great Falls Americans (17-26-3-0) entered the final weekend of the 2022-23 NA3HL regular season with one goal in mind; pick up at least one victory on the road as they do not qualify for next week's next week's Fraser Cup Playoffs.

Great Falls made their only trip over to Cody, Wyoming this season on the last weekend of the season to challenge the #7 Yellowstone Quake (12-28-4-2), who also will not participate in the playoffs this season.

On two separate weekends (Sept. 3-4 and Oct. 14-15), Great Falls hosted Yellowstone and took three victories in their four meetings. The Americans outscored their Wyoming counterparts, 13-5 over those two weekends. On September 3, Great Falls let a 2-0 lead slip away in the third for a 3-2 loss ([game story](#)). In the fourth contest of the season, Great Falls redeemed themselves winning 6-1 as six different Americans saw the puck hit the back of the net ([game story](#)). Three weeks later (Oct. 14-15), the Quake returned to Great Falls and the American answered with two wins for the weekend sweep. The home team scored two goals in the second period to blank the Wyoming squad, 2-0 ([game story](#)) followed by a 3-1 victory on October 15. Both teams scored once over the first two periods and Great Falls got the last laugh with two third period lamplighters for their fourth consecutive victory ([game story](#)).

Four months later, the Americans and Quake tangled on the ice once again.

Ben Cremers scored three goals in the third period to power the #6 Great Falls Americans past the #7 Yellowstone Quake 5-2 for their seventh road win of the season on Friday night at Wyoming's Riley Arena. Great Falls lit up the lamp four times in the final stanza.

Great Falls took the first lead two minutes into the contest as Noah Osiowy's pass to Dawson Bunch proved to be successful in the net. Bunch's sixth goal and Osiowy's tenth assist gave the Montana visiting team the lead for seven minutes before the Quake responded to even the score. Blake Mitchell, a first-year player for coach Ryan Therost's squad, got in and around Great Falls netminder Jake Regan, who earlier this week was named as an Honorable Mention candidate for the NA3HL's Goaltender of the Month for February ([see story](#)), for the easy score. Mitchell's fifth goal and Brayson Bennett's 31st assist

came midway through the period. Teagan Scheurer also assisted. Later in the first, the Quake held a 2-1 lead as defenseman Branden Paine added his first goal of the season as Brayson Bennett collected his second assist (32nd overall) and Owen Schoonover delivered his first assist of the game (fourth overall) with six minutes remaining before the first intermission.

After both teams totaled a combined 35 shots in the first period, just 22 shots-on-goal were taken in the middle period that resulted in no goals being scored. Great Falls was whistled for two of three minor penalties in the period.

Americans forward Ben Cremers was not going to allow the home fans celebrate their 13th victory. Cremers, one of three players hailing from the state of Wisconsin, struck not once, not twice, but three times over Yellowstone goalie John Hughes in the third frame. His first goal arrived within the first three minutes with help from Garrett Weisenburger and Jack Metcalfe. After Jace Thompson recorded his 23rd tally six minutes later on a short-handed scoring drive assisted by Great Falls' top assist maker, Alex Leaf and Hunter Acker, Cremers offensive attack led to two more scoring opportunities before the time expired. Hunter Acker and Jace Thompson added the helpers for the Americans fourth score with 7:02 left and with 59 seconds to go Thompson and Leaf contributed their second assists of the contest on the third goal by Cremers to seal the victory.

The host team outshot Great Falls, 63-37 including 30-13 after the second intermission.

The NA3HL officials did not blow their whistle much in the second-to-last game of the regular season. Five minor penalties were issued between these two junior hockey squads. Great Falls and Yellowstone failed to convert their power play chances that could have made the final score much different.

Ben Cremers (three goals), Jace Thompson (one goal, two assists) and Alex Leaf and Hunter Acker (two assists each) led the Americans to their 17th overall victory of the year with one game remaining. Brayson Bennett set up both scoring drives for the Quake.

Ryan Stowe (Great Falls) and John Hughes (Yellowstone) started and finished the game with their respective teams. Stowe stopped 61 of 63 shots for his fourth win (4-7-2-0) in his first season with the Americans. Meanwhile, Hughes (4-11-1-1) earned 32 saves and allowed four third periods goals for his 11th regulation loss in his 18th appearance for Wyoming.

NOTES: Earlier this week, the NA3HL handed out their weekly Stars of the Week (SOTW) ending February 26, 2023, and their Stars of the Month (SOTM) honors for February and Great Falls netminder Jake Regan was listed as an Honorable Mention (HM) for both awards. Forward Jace Thompson and defenseman Alex Leaf were HM for their play last week against the Bozeman Ice Dogs. Garrett Weisenburger was also named to the weekly honors. [Click here](#) to view the league press releases for the SOTW and [click here](#) for the SOTM honors.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The #4 Butte Cobras (25-19-1-1) have officially clinched a playoff berth after Friday's game was completed. After Friday's performances, the top-seeded Helena Bighorns and second-seed Gillette (WY) Wild each have identical 35-8-1-2 records. The Sheridan (WY) Hawks are already in the playoffs as well with a 26-18-2-0 record. Butte is five points ahead (52-47) of #5 Bozeman Ice Dogs (23-22-0-1) for the final spot in the Fraser Cup Playoffs that start on March 9th.

The No. 4 Butte Cobras held a 4-2 advantage over the No. 1 Helena Bighorns early in the third period before Helena responded with two goals to send the contest to an overtime where neither team hit the back of the net. The Cobras broke the 4-4 tie in the shootout as Patrick Crooks, Luke Schleusner, and Tamer Billman collected the goals for the Cobras stunning win that delighted the fans inside the Butte Community Ice Center. Patrick Crooks led the winning side with two goals and one assist. Caleb Cross made 61 saves for his 20th victory after having just ten wins last season for Butte. Camden Cunningham, Lyndon Orr, Tyler Alldredge and Derek Russell each sparked the Bighorns with goals ([box score](#)).

The #2 Gillette Wild had a narrow 2-1 lead over the #5 Bozeman Ice Dogs before the second intermission and hung on to outscore the Ice Dogs, 3-0 over the final twenty minutes for their 35th victory in 46 games. Jace Johnson, Cade Voge, Ryan Hipsag, Sky Solig and former Great Falls American Tyler Sunagel made

the scores for the Wild. Bozeman's lone goal came in the second period by Bodie Shepardson 15 minutes into the stanza. Cole Wheaton won for the 15th time in 19 contests as the Calgary, Alberta native wound up with 36 saves. Sean Smer fell to 0-3 against Gillette this season and 6-5-0-1 overall but not before picking up 59 saves in the 5-1 setback ([box score](#)).

Caleb Murray acquired his first hat trick of the season as a member of the Sheridan (WY) Hawks as they delivered their 26th win with an easy 6-2 victory over the #8 Badlands Sabres, out of Rapid City, South Dakota during Friday's NA3HL action at Whitney Rink in the M&M's Center in Sheridan, Wyoming. Wyatt Noble and Ryan McKenna each scored once and assisted on one goal for the playoff bound Hawks. Carter Johnson was the best player for the Sabres as he secured both scores. Christian Crutcher, who spent the past two seasons with the Great Falls Americans appearing in 14 games, scored his first goal in his first game with the Hawks after joining the team this week. Jack Wood (Sheridan) was the winning netminder as the swatted away 21 shots taken by Badlands as he improved his record to 7-5-0-0 on the season. Badlands goalie Zach Broxterman (4-20-1-3) amassed 34 saves in another loss ([box score](#)).

The Bozeman Ice Dogs, Great Falls Americans, Yellowstone (WY) Quake and the Badlands (SD) Sabres all finish their 2022-23 campaigns on Saturday before they start their off-season. The Helena Bighorns, Gillette (WY) Wild, the Sheridan (WY) Hawks and the Butte Cobras also finish on Saturday before awaiting postseason play next week in the 2023 NA3HL Fraser Cup Playoffs.

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans and Quake will end their 2022-23 NA3HL campaigns with one more matchup on Saturday, March 4, 2023. The action can be seen live on [HockeyTV](#) starting at 7:05PM (MST) from Riley Arena in Cody, Wyoming.

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