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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

**Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator**

**Phone: (406) 403-8146**

**Americans season ends with a loss to the Yellowstone Quake**

**By Kevin Scott**

<a href="#">Box Score</a>	<a href="#">Game Sheet</a>	<a href="#">League Scoreboard</a>	<a href="#">Americans Team Statistics</a>
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CODY, Wyo., March 4, 2023 — The Great Falls Americans (17-27-3-0) finished off the regular season on Saturday night on the road against the Cody, Wyoming-based Yellowstone Quake (13-28-4-2). The season ends for the #7 Yellowstone Quake as well as only the top four teams in the Frontier Division (Helena Bighorns, Gillette Wild, Sheridan Hawks, and Butte Cobras) qualified for a playoff run this season. Other missing notables include the #5 Bozeman Ice Dogs and #8 Badlands (SD) Sabres.

The #6 Americans will be absent for postseason play for the first time since the 2012-13 season when the Great Falls Americans played in the American West Hockey League (AWHL).

Great Falls successfully defeated Yellowstone in four of their previous five matchups including a 5-2 victory on Friday night where Americans forward Ben Cremers had three goals ([game story](#)).

Could Great Falls earn the weekend sweep and slip off into the offseason on a positive note?

The #7 Yellowstone Quake scored three consecutive third period goals to pick up a 4-1 victory over the #6 Great Falls Americans during the season finale for both squads on Saturday in Cody, Wyoming. Ryan Hiles, Wyatt O'Donoghue, Cole Whitman, and Brayson Bennett all saw the lamp light up behind the net for the Quake. Wes Weisenburger recorded the single score for Great Falls in the second stanza.

A quiet first period came and went with no scoring and five combined minor penalties awarded between the Americans and Quake. Yellowstone took 16 shots and Great Falls finished the first stanza with nine.

The second period saw both teams accumulate one goal while the opposing team was in the sin bin. Wes Weisenburger needed 7:37 to score the first goal of the contest as Jace Thompson and Garrett Weisenburger collected the assists. Yellowstone rallied and evened the score with eleven seconds before the second intermission as Ryan Hiles netted his fifth goal that was set up by Wyatt O'Donoghue and Branden Paine. Great Falls attempted twice as many shots (20) than they had in the first (9) twenty minutes of play.

Three minutes into the third period, the Quake scored the first of their three consecutive scoring drives with Wyatt O'Donoghue getting the go-ahead score with assists going to Derrand Wilcox and Joey Good. Cole Whitman garnered his first goal of the season in the season finale for the home team eight minutes after O'Donoghue's score. The 3-1 lead with 8:28 remaining was made possible by a pair of forwards Ryan Hiles and Zac Orwig. Later in the final period of the 2022-23 season, Brayson Bennett ensured that any possible comeback by Great Falls would not happen when he tallied his eighth goal off the stick of Teagan Scheurer for the three-goal advantage (4-1).

Yellowstone had a team-high of 21 shots in the third period after combining for 33 during the first two periods. The Americans managed 20 shots in the second period to finish with 38.

The two Frontier Division foes accrued 15 total minor penalties that resulted in 30 minutes of penalty time spent off the ice and both took advantage by scoring on one power play apiece.

Sweden native Edvin Falkenstrom allowed one second period goal but otherwise, played a flawless game as he redirected 37 of the 38 shots sent his way for his sixth win (6-12-2-1). Ryan Stowe (4-8-2-0) was denied his fifth win in his first season with Great Falls. A night after acquiring 61 shots in a 5-2 win, he stopped 50 shots while allowing four goals on Saturday.

Jace Thompson and Alex Leaf were the team leaders for coach Greg Sears' squad after 47 games. Thompson, who calls Valley City, North Dakota, led the team in goals scored (23) and points (47) while Alex Leaf of Colorado Springs, Colorado was the team assist maker with 35. Leaf and Russ Rasmussen were the only two players on the Americans roster to play in all 47 games this year.

Nick Cofer and Brayson Bennett led the Yellowstone Quake this season. Cofer had a team-high of 16 goals scored and Bennett had the most assists with 32 and most points (40) for coach Ryan Theros.

**NOTES:** As the season comes to an end for the Americans, they would like to thank the fans, billet (host) families, player families, and sponsors for all the support during the 2022-23 NA3HL junior hockey season.

I would like to thank the following for making the season possible including team owners Rob and Kandi Rasmussen, Coach Greg Sears and his assistants Matt Leaf and Trever Mellen, Patrick Holtzmann (Billet Coordinator), Kevin and Krista Smith, Rex Rigor (bus driver), the staff at Mountain View Physical Therapy and the Great Falls Ice Plex as well as all of the on-ice and off-ice NA3HL game officials, Justin Latham (Hockey TV Play-By-Play Announcer) and cameramen, photographer Dustin Bauer and the Great Falls Americans Booster Club for an outstanding season.

**FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE:** Three of the top four seeds in the NA3HL's Frontier Division were victorious in their regular season finales on Saturday evening.

The #1 Helena Bighorns (36 -8-1-2) jumped out to a three-goal lead after two periods thanks to Joe Feamster's hat trick that sparked the Bighorns to a 5-1 win over their rivals, the #4 Butte Cobras (25-20-1-1) at the Helena Ice Arena in Helena, Montana. Camden Cunningham and Harlan Wojtusik set up two scoring drives for their 36th win in 47 games as the NA3HL regular season wound down. Luke Schleusner scored off of a pass by Caelin Chinery in the third frame for Butte. Keaton French, the Fairbanks, Alaska netminder for Helena, ran his record to 7-1-0-0 in nine appearances after starting the season with the NA3HL's Minnesota Loons (6-12-0-0). He made 21 saves tonight. Nikolai Wallery (1-3-1-1) played the first 27 minutes to finish his last contest in the regular season with 21 saves. Caleb Cross also saw action for the Cobras, and he had 40 saves in 33 minutes ([box score](#)).

After Bozeman Ice Dog forward Owen House scored within the first 64 second of the game, the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (36-8-1-2) scored eight unanswered goals throughout the rest of the game to easily show why they are one of the top teams in the North American 3 Hockey League by posting an 8-1 win over the #5 Bozeman Ice Dogs (23-23-0-1), who missed out on the playoffs this week. Alec Waller and Anthony Foster were responsible for half of the Wild's goals. Jake Turek (12-4-1-1) tallied 28 saves for the playoff bound Wyoming squad. Turek's counterpart, Axel Rosenlund finished the season with a 7-8-0-0 record including two losses while with the Minnesota Loons to start the season. The Minnesota goalie

amassed 70 saves in the season ender for the Ice Dogs ([box score](#)).

Makhai Sparks scored twice against the #8 Badlands (SD) Sabres (11-31-2-3) and goaltender Patric Loeffler (12-10-0-0) gathered 36 saves as the #3 Sheridan (WY) Hawks survived a scare against the Sabres on Saturday. Sheridan's 4-3 win gave them a regular season record of 27-18-2-0 after 47 contests. Peyton Wilson scored two third period lamplighters and teammate Hunter Walla added one in the loss. A 57-save performance was not enough for Sabres netminder Zach Broxterman, who ended his second season with Badlands with a 4-21-0-1 record after winning six games (6-2-0-1) during the 2021-22 season ([box score](#)).

The Bozeman Ice Dogs, Great Falls Americans, Yellowstone (WY) Quake and the Badlands (SD) Sabres all finished 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 finished on Saturday before awaiting postseason play next week in the 2023 NA3HL Fraser Cup Playoffs.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Great Falls Americans along with the Bozeman Ice Dogs, Yellowstone Quake and the Badlands (SD) Sabres had their season conclude tonight while the #1 Helena Bighorns, #2 Gillette Wild, #3 Sheridan Hawks, and the #4 Butte Cobras will play in the 2023 NA3HL Fraser Cup Playoffs this upcoming week.

Catch the 2023-24 Great Falls Americans Junior A Hockey team in action starting in September 2023.

**CONTACT:**

**Greg Sears**  
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager  
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811  
Email: [gsears@greatfallsamericans.com](mailto:gsears@greatfallsamericans.com)



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