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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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NA3HL Showcase: Louisiana Drillers down the Americans in tournament finale, 5-1

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Score Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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BLAINE, Minn., December 19, 2023 — On the final day of the three-day NA3HL Showcase, the Great Falls Americans (16-12-0-0, 4th in Frontier) hosted the Louisiana Drillers (15-12-0-0, 6th in South Division) as the [2023 NA3HL Showcase Tournament](#) came to an end on Tuesday at the NSC Super Rink in Blaine, Minnesota.

The New Jersey Titans (14-13-1-1, 3rd in East Division), Alexandria (MN) Blizzard (17-5-1-1, 3rd in West Division) and concluded the tournament with a contest against the Louisiana Drillers (15-12-0-0, 6th in South Division). Great Falls edged the Titans on Sunday, 2-1 ([game story](#)) but fell to the Blizzard on Monday, 3-1 ([game story](#)).

As for the Drillers, who call Lafayette, Louisiana home, they started the tournament on Sunday by downing the Peoria (IL) Mustangs, 5-3 with Jake Bergstrom, Johnathon Berndt, Brendan Johnson, and Casper Rys Sakrisvold scoring two goals for coach Alex Dumas' squad. Goaltender William Carney had 36 saves in the win. On Monday, Louisiana had a tough time on the offensive end as the Iowa-based Mason City Toros cruised to an 8-2 win. Jake Bergstrom and Johnathon Berndt received the goals for the Drillers. Jakob Barcelona and William Carney combined for 13 saves with Barcelona getting the loss on the score sheet.

The Drillers and Americans have faced each other prior to this tournament. During the 2018 NA3HL Showcase, Louisiana blanked Great Falls, 3-0. [Click here](#) for the game story from that contest.



The Louisiana Drillers built a 4-0 advantage through the first 51 minutes of the contest against the Great Falls Americans as they took a 5-1 victory over Great Falls to end their 2023 NA3HL Showcase Tournament on Tuesday with a 2-1 record. Great Falls, who fell to 1-2 at the prestigious tournament, had one successful scoring drive by Dmitri Kuleshov to prevent the shutout. Both squads combined for 43 shots-on-goal after the first two periods.

A pass from Johnathon Berndt to Jake Bergstrom gave the visiting Louisiana squad on the scoreboard first twelve minutes into the first frame. Jaxon Nault, Colton Sebastian, and Jake Bergstrom gathered the assists.

Roman Vitolo and Brody Neish each answered for the Drillers in the middle period as they each buried the puck in the net seven minutes apart.

After a Jaxon Nault score from a pass by Cheeno Gryska early in the third period, Great Falls' offense got their first score from Dmitri Kuleshov off the stick of teammate Aaron James. Kuleshov now has 22 goals and Aaron James has made 21 assists on the season. Great Falls failed to produce any more goals for the final 11:41. Charlie Benisch tallied his first score of the year for the Drillers with under two minutes remaining to secure the victory.

The Drillers edged the Americans (32-31) in the shots-on-goal category.

The teams combined for 14 infractions, and each went 0-for-4 on power play during the sixty-minute affair.

Daegon Love (Louisiana) is now 3-2-0-0 in five games (including 1-0 at the tournament) with the Drillers. The Alaska netminder was perfect for two periods and finished with 31 saves. Noah Van Herik (0-1-0-0) made his debut in the net for the Americans and recorded 27 saves in the loss.

Fans can view the full tournament box scores here for [Sunday](#), [Monday](#), and [Tuesday](#) of the NA3HL Showcase tournament. View the press release from the third and final day by [clicking here](#).

Great Falls will now turn their attention back to the Frontier Division for the final three months of competition.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE AT NA3HL SHOWCASE: Here are the following daily game recaps from the Frontier Division teams during the final day (Tuesday) at the 2023 NA3HL Showcase.

The eight-team Frontier Division had success this weekend gathering 14 victories, 8 regulation losses, and two setbacks in overtime including Sunday and Monday where they went 5-2-1-0.

Tim Mattingly accumulated two goals for the Helena Bighorns (24-2-0-0, 2nd in Frontier) as the Bighorns claimed a 5-1 decision over the Norwich (CT) Sea Captains (16-11-1-1, 2nd in East) on Tuesday. Owen Ramsey, Jason Hammett, and Jack Lambert also scored. Blake Alexander scored the lone goal for the Sea Captains in the middle period. Malik Johnson (7-0-0-0) made 28 saves as he saw his first and only action at the tournament for Helena. Norwich goalie Peter Alfano (2-2-0-0) ended the game with 33 saves ([Box Score](#)).

The Badlands (SD) Sabres (10-12-3-2, 5th in Frontier) utilized offensive scoring from Benjamin Larson, Mason Witt, Hunter Walla, and Jack Walters to defeat the Mason City (IA) Toros (14-13-2-0, 4th in West), 4-1 on the final day of the tournament. The Toros got in the scoring column with a goal by Miles Berg. Dakota Jahnke (2-1-1-1) created 28 saves for the Sabres with his first win at the Showcase. Mason City netminder Devin Peck played in all three contests in Minnesota and ended the tournament with two wins and one loss as his record dropped to 6-7-1-0. ([Box Score](#)).

Seth Dragojevic and Kade Brayman teamed up to score four of the five goals for the Mid Cities (TX) Jr. Stars (5-24-0-0, 7th in South) as they outlasted the Yellowstone (WY) Quake (0-25-2-0, 8th in Frontier), 5-3

in Tuesday's matchup between the South and Frontier Divisions. Zach Orwig, John Kotsilidis and Troy Czapar put the puck in the net for the winless Quake. Jon Sanchez (1-0-0-0) rejected 30 of the 33 shots he faced from Yellowstone to help the Stars win. Ben Delisi (0-5-0-0) fell for the fifth time in the net but still managed to gather 44 saves ([Box Score](#)).

The Butte Irish (9-18-0-0, 7th in Frontier) scored first but the Atlanta Capitals (15-10-1-1, 5th in South) tossed in four consecutive goals to deliver a 5-2 victory for the Georgia squad. Toby Kerr scored in the first period for the 1-0 lead, but Anthony O'Neil scored the first of his two goals in the first period and teammates Brett Phillips and Isaac Fuller added one each in the second and Aidan Besedic and Anthony O'Neil scored on two other scoring drives in the third frame. Butte's Patrick Crooks netted a goal in the final period, but the comeback bid fell short for the Irish. The winning goalie was Austin Durkop (26 saves) who won his fifth game (5-2-0-0) including two in the tournament. Braylon Rogers (41 saves) went 1-2 this weekend and is now 5-7-0-0 overall for the Irish ([Box Score](#)).

The Bozeman Ice Dogs (17-11-0-1, 3rd in Frontier) jumped ahead of the Great Falls Americans this weekend by claiming three victories at the Showcase tournament in Minnesota. On Tuesday, Bozeman needed two goals for the 2-0 shutout win over the New Hampshire Jr. Mountain Kings (7-21-1-0, 5th in East). Bozeman's Spencer Wilkinson assisted on both scoring opportunities for the Ice Dogs including a second period score by Chris Porciuncula and a third period lamplighter for Mason Czarnecki. Matthew Ryyanen (12-9-0-1) went 2-0 this weekend including a 19-save performance against the Mountain Kings ([Box Score](#)).

The Gillette (WY) Wild, the Frontier Division's top team with a record of 26-2-0-1, only managed to score one third period goal against the New Mexico Ice Wolves (21-6-1-0, 1st in South), the top team in the South Division, on Tuesday. The result was a rare 3-1 setback and only their third overall loss this season after 29 contests. Ian Mohr and Jack Arnold each added one goal in the first period and Makato Sudoh made his first score this season with the Ice Wolves with under a minute remaining in the final frame. Isaac Young (Gillette) was able to put the biscuit in the basket for Wyoming. Owen Zenon won the battle in the net with his 29 saves to improve his record to 11-1-0-0 for New Mexico. Meanwhile, Gillette's Cole Wheaton (9-2-0-1) redirected 21 of the 23 shots by the Ice Wolves offense in his third loss ([Box Score](#)).

The Sheridan Hawks (11-16-1-1, 6th in Frontier) offense did all their scoring in the first twenty minutes of their game with the Danbury (CT) Jr. Hat Tricks (7-21-1-0, 5th in East). Sheridan received scores from Tanner Freed, Bowen Lopez, Jackson LeBrasseur, and William Clark. Former Great Falls American Walker Montgomery earned two assists. Lucas Nafe and Eryk Fancher scored for Danbury. Tyler Ouren (4-3-0-0) saw action in the net for the first time in Minnesota this weekend for the Hawks. He allowed two goals in 31 attempts for his fourth overall victory of the year. Markus Paltauf got the start in the first period but struggled as he allowed four Sheridan goals and was replaced by Chris Panza for the remainder of the game. Paltauf (1-4-0-0) and Panza combined for 33 saves to close out the tournament ([Box Score](#)).

NOTES: The Americans had two players receive Honorable Mention honors for the weekly "NA3HL Stars of the Week" for the week ending December 10, 2023. Forward Cade Bendigo and defenseman Ty Brander were the honorees for Great Falls for their play against the Yellowstone (WY) Quake on the road last week. [Click here](#) for more information.

In this week's "Baldy's Puck Drop" Newsletter, Americans team owner Matt Leaf has a player profile of forward Zac Orwig, Americans travel plans to the NA3HL Showcase, sponsor information, and recognition of Cade Bendigo and Ty Brander as Honorable Mention "Stars of the Week" honors in the NA3HL from

this past week. [Click here](#) to view this past week's newsletter and all the weekly "Baldy's Puck Drop" Newsletters.

Check out all the Americans photos throughout the season with many of the game action photos taken by Americans photographer, Dustin Bauer. [Click here](#) to view all the photos from the 2023-24 season.



[Click here](#) to view the Americans online team store that features a variety of different souvenirs to purchase. A store is available at all home games. Fans can also buy game day tickets on the website prior to the game by [clicking here](#).

Please check out the Americans website at www.greatfallsamericans.com for all your updated news, game summaries, rosters, photo galleries, etc.

AMERICANS WATCH PARTY: The Stadium Bar and Casino, located at 1121 5th Street South in Great Falls, hosts the "Americans Watch Party" this season when the Americans are on the road. Fans are invited to get food and drinks and watch the game.

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans will be off for sixteen days before their contest in January 2024. Great Falls finished 2023 with 16 victories and 12 regulation losses in 28 games. The Americans next game will be the weekend of January 5-6 when they travel to Butte, Montana for two games against the Butte Irish live at 7:30PM (MST) from the Butte Community Ice Center.

The Americans next home date is set for Friday (January 12) and Saturday (January 13) when the Bozeman Ice Dogs come to the Great Falls Ice Plex each night starting at 7:00PM (MST) at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

[NAHLTV](#) is the place to catch all the Great Falls Americans contests all season long. [Click here](#) to learn more about how to watch any of the Americans NA3HL junior hockey games on NAHL TV during the 2023-24 season.

[Click here](#) for the 2023-24 Great Falls Americans schedule and results.

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