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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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## **Great Falls tops Badlands, 4-2; reclaims the fourth spot in Frontier Division**

**By Kevin Scott**

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| <a href="#">Box Score</a> | <a href="#">Score Sheet</a> | <a href="#">League Scoreboard</a> | <a href="#">Americans Team Statistics</a> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|



RAPID CITY, S.D., February 8, 2024 — The #5 Badlands (SD) Sabres (15-17-3-3) and the #4 Great Falls Americans (18-18-0-1) have only had two prior encounters before Thursday's NA3HL contest in Rapid City, South Dakota.

In Great Falls on the weekend of September 29-30, which was the fifth and sixth games of the 2023-24 season for the Americans, Great Falls played host to Badlands in a pair of games in which each team came out on top once. The Americans edged the Sabres, 4-3 on September 29th. Both teams were tied (2-2) after the first forty minutes before Great Falls outscored Badlands 2-1 during the final period of regulation ([game story](#)). On the final day of September, the Sabres avenged their loss the night before and defeated the home team, 3-1. Americans standout Dmitri Kuleshov added a first period tally, but Badlands offense scored three unanswered over the final two periods for the weekend split ([game story](#)).

Sebe Perez and Dmitri Kuleshov combined to score all four goals as the Great Falls Americans picked up a much-needed 4-2 road victory over the Badlands (SD) Sabres during Thursday's NA3HL action at the Roosevelt Park Ice Arena in Rapid City, South Dakota. Cal Laggis assisted on two scoring plays for Great Falls.

A pass from Ty O'Bey and Cal Laggis to an open Sebe Perez put the Americans ahead 1-0 4:53 into the opening period. Both offenses combined for 22 shots-on-goal but only the goal by Perez was successful. Each team had two unsuccessful power play opportunities.

After the first intermission, Dmitri Kuleshov scored quickly (30 seconds) to increase the lead to 2-0. His 24<sup>th</sup> season goal was assisted by Hayden Grabas and newcomer Garren Narvaez. Sebe Perez collected his second score of the game with 5:25 remaining with Zac Orwig and Cal Laggis assisting. Zach Vockler prevented the shutout for the Sabres when he scored with eight seconds left with Ian Vanelli and Dylan Woolstenhulme setting up the first scoring drive for the host team. Each squad acquired 14 shots.

The Sabres pulled to within one goal (3-2) two minutes into the final period when Brooks Roaldson put the puck into the goal. The Americans put the finishing touches on their 18<sup>th</sup> victory of the season when Dmitri Kuleshov put the biscuit in the basket for the second time tonight on an empty net score with 18 seconds left in the contest. Luke Pizzey and Garrett Driscoll helped ensure the victory with their assistance.

Eight minor penalties dotted the scoring summary sheet after Thursday contest concluded. The Americans recorded three minors and went 1-for-4 on their power play opportunities. The Sabres were whistled for five minors while scoring on one of their three power play chances.

Badlands outshot the visiting team, 13-6, in the third frame to end the night with 37 saves. Great Falls amassed 26 of their 32 saves before the second intermission.

Kaden Ryhder won his first game in the month of February (11-9-0-1) by stopping 35 shots and allowing one second and third period score by the opposition. Badlands netminders Easton Eriksmoen (28 saves) and Hunter Oger both saw action, but Eriksmoen was credited with his eighth regulation loss (9-8-1-0).

When the Americans lost both games to the Helena Bighorns (36-2-0-0) last week, Badlands easily defeated the winless Yellowstone (WY) Quake (0-36-3-0) and overtook the Montana team for fourth place in the Frontier Division standings. After Friday's victory over the South Dakota NA3HL franchise, Great Falls is back in fourth place (at least for the time being).

The win also gave Great Falls Americans Head Coach Greg Sears is 300th career junior hockey win.

**FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE:** No other Frontier Division games were played tonight.

**NOTES:** Forward Dmitri Kuleshov and goaltender Kaden Ryhder received Honorable Mention honors for the weekly "NA3HL Stars of the Week" for the week ending February 4, 2024, for their play last week against the Helena Bighorns. [Click here](#) for more information.

In this week's "Baldy's Puck Drop" Newsletter, Americans team owner Matt Leaf has a player profile of Austin Trout, a special Valentine's Day auction and a quick recap of two-game series last weekend against the Helena Bighorns and we welcome new netminder Anyon Bennett, who comes from the Granite City Lumberjacks to the team. Check out the newsletter for more information. [Click here](#) to view this past week's newsletter and all the weekly "Baldy's Puck Drop" Newsletters.

Be sure to check out Staradio's Weekly Interview with Greg Sears hosted by Troy Mellinger. The short radio interview gives a recap of last weekend's home and road games against the Helena Bighorns. Listen live every Monday throughout the season at 12:20PM (MST) on **FOX SPORTS RADIO (98.3FM/1400AM)** and on **Q106.1 FM** on Wednesday mornings at 10:00AM (MST). To listen to this interview and the previous others from the 2023-24 season, please [click here](#).

This week, another episode of the "Americans Podcast with Jim Quick" was completed with his guest being goaltender Kaden Ryhder. Quick has done eleven podcasts this year featuring the history of the Americans, interviews with former American and now Associate Coach, Alex Leaf, and some current players. Fans can listen to the full podcasts by [clicking here](#).



The NA3HL released their all-new and updated App this week for the App Store and Google Play. Download and set your favorite team to the Great Falls Americans today and stay up to date with the NA3HL. [Click here](#) to download from the App Store (Apple) or [click here](#) to download from the Google Play Store (Android).

Check out all the Americans photos throughout the season including some 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](http://www.greatfallsamericans.com) for all your updated news, game summaries, rosters, photo galleries, etc.

**NEXT CONTEST:** The Americans will leave Rapid City, South Dakota for a two-game series against #2 Gillette (WY) Wild on Friday and Saturday, February 9-10, The puck drops both nights at 7:05PM (MST) live from the Spirit Hall Ice Arena in Gillette, Wyoming on [NAHLTV](#). To learn more about how to watch the Americans in action on NAHL TV, please [click here](#).

Badlands will make the trek to Bozeman, Montana for a two-game series against the Bozeman Ice Dogs at 7:30PM (MST) on Friday and Saturday (Feb. 9-10) live from Haynes Pavilion.

The Great Falls Ice Plex will be the venue for the Americans and Helena Bighorns on Wednesday, February 14 (Happy Valentine's Day) and Friday, February 16. The Valentine's contest will start at 7:00PM (MST) and Friday's will begin at 12:00PM (MST) ([see article](#)).

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

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