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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Helena slips by Great Falls, 3-1 to avoid third loss

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Score Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., February 2, 2024 — It is the start of rivalry week for the Great Falls Americans Junior A hockey team. The Helena Bighorns, the Americans closest and most fierce rival, is playing a two-game series with them this weekend with one game in Great Falls and another in Helena, Montana.

Great Falls and Helena played three games in November with the Bighorns taking all three of them by a combined score of 20-4. To see the game summaries of the rivalry as well as how the Americans have fared this season, please [click here](#).

Helena is one of the top NA3HL junior programs this season with a record of 35-2 under Bighorns head coach Damon Hanson. Both losses came against the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild during the weekend of October 27-28. The Bighorns are on a 22-game winning streak from November through January. Dylan and Braden Cunningham lead the top-ranked Helena squad. Braden leads Helena in scoring (31 goals) and Dylan has the most assists (40) and most points (52).

Meanwhile, Great Falls (17-17-0-1) snapped their seven-game skid on Saturday when they defeated the Bozeman Ice Dogs, 5-1 on the road ([game story](#)). Great Falls coach Greg Sears added a milestone to his coaching resume with his 300th career junior hockey victory. The Americans, currently fourth in the NA3HL Frontier Division standings, are led by Ty O'Bey with 23 goals and 44 total points and Dmitri Kuleshov with 22 goals. Aaron James has piled up 25 assists for head coach Greg Sears after 35 games.

After tonight's game, the Great Falls and Helena will tangle four more times on the ice in February with each team hosting twice. The Great Falls Ice Plex will play host to the Bighorns on February 14th and 16th while Steed Arena will be the site for the showdown on February 3rd and 17th.

The Americans were looking to hand Helena their third loss on Friday night. Would they be able to pull off the upset in Great Falls and give coach Greg Sears his 300th career junior hockey win?

The #1 Helena Bighorns pulled away in the third period from the #4 Great Falls Americans to earn a hard-fought 3-1 win to avoid their third setback of the season in front of a loud and boisterous crowd at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Friday night. Most of the scoring came in the final period of regulation.

Borries Italian Supper Club was the sponsor for tonight's contest.

Both defenses denied any goals by the opposing offense during the first stanza. The Bighorns had 17 of the 23 shots-on-goal and each team was unsuccessful on their one power play attempt.

Gavin Barr of the Bighorns was the recipient of the game's first goal with Jason Hammett and Braden Cunningham assisting for the early 1-0 advantage. Barr's scoring drive came with 12:20 remaining in the middle period. Both defenses held up for the rest of the period despite many attempts on the offensive end by both squads. Great Falls was held to seven shots while Helena made 22.

Great Falls gave the home crowd something to cheer for when Aiden Kennedy's pass to Dmitri Kuleshov for the lamplighter to even the score (1-1) five minutes into the third period. The goal came while the Bighorns were in the sin bin. The top-ranked team in the Frontier Division broke the tie with 2:51 left in regulation when Braden Cunningham scored his 32nd goal for Helena with the game-winning scoring drive set up by Gavin Barr and Cai Robinson. The Bighorns added another goal before time expired when the Americans took out goaltender Kaden Ryder in favor of having an extra attacker on the ice. The empty net score came with under one minute remaining by Finn Theriault. Jason Hammett collected his second assist of the night for coach Damon Hanson's squad.

The Bighorns limited the Americans to 21 shots in sixty minutes. Helena gathered 17 shots in the first and third periods to finish with 56.

Great Falls' one and only score in the third period came as a result of the Bighorns being in the penalty box. The host team went 1-for-4 and Great Falls' defense negated the three power play opportunities by Helena. Seven minor penalties dotted the score sheet before the final buzzer.

Alex Lamont (12-1-0-0) accumulated his second victory against Great Falls. The Minnesota goalie stopped 20 shots for the winning side. Kaden Ryhder is now 10-8-0-1 after suffering his third loss to the Bighorns. He redirected 38 of the 40 shots sent by Helena's offense.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The #8 Yellowstone (WY) Quake (0-35-3-0) continue to wait for their first victory. The #6 Badlands (SD) Sabres (14-16-3-3) won their 14th game of the season by blanking the Quake 8-0 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Aden Cobbs scored half (four) of the Sabres eight goals over the final two periods. Peyton Wilson added two goals for Badlands. Badlands outshot Yellowstone, 57-14. Hunter Oger's two victories (2-7-1-1) have come against the Quake as he finished with 14 saves. John Hughes (0-13-2-0) suffered his 15th loss in twenty games and had 40 saves in 54 minutes. Otto Reinhart also saw action in the goal for the visiting squad ([Box Score](#)).

The #5 Sheridan (WY) Hawks (15-19-2-2) gave the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (33-4-0-1) all they could handle but, in the end, the Wild took a 4-3 win in a shootout. Wylee Gladen scored one regulation goal and had the game-winning score in the shootout to win the battle of the Wyoming NA3HL teams. Both squads scored two goals after the first two periods and needed a shootout to declare a winner. Ty Karpus recorded a goal in the first period for Gillette. Kyler Couture and Makhai Sparks each scored four minutes apart in the middle period for the Hawks. Cole Wheaton (11-3-0-1) took the victory by redirecting 33 shots

for Gillette. Zach Broxterman (5-10-1-2) played 63 minutes and ended the contest with 41 saves in his second shootout loss of the season ([Box Score](#)).

Bodie Shepardson, Matthias Godfrey, Bryce Sturm and Mason Czarnecki all scored to help the third-ranked Bozeman Ice Dogs (23-14-0-1) escape with a 4-3 decision over the #7 Butte Irish (14-23-1-0) at Haynes Pavilion on Friday evening. Carson Streich and Andrew Browe added a goal in the middle period while Kazden Stineff put one in the net for Butte in the third. The Ice Dogs received a 40-save performance by Matthew Ryyanen (15-11-0-1). Braylon Rogers of the Irish (9-10-1-0) stopped 30 of 34 shots sent his way ([Box Score](#)).

NOTES: Forwards Ty O'Bey and Dmitri Kuleshov received Honorable Mention honors for the weekly "NA3HL Stars of the Week" for the week ending January 28, 2024, for their play last week against the Bozeman Ice Dogs. Great Falls went 1-1 against Bozeman. O'Bey had four goals over two games and Kuleshov earned four weekend assists. [Click here](#) for more information.

The NA3HL also announced their "Stars of the Month" for January and three Americans were honored including Ty O'Bey (Forward – Honorable Mention), Phil Harrell (Defenseman – Honorable Mention) and Kaden Ryhder (Goaltender) as an Honorable Mention nominee. [Click here](#) for the full story.

In this week's "Baldy's Puck Drop" Newsletter, Americans team owner Matt Leaf has a player profile of Nathan Bring, another "mystery box" promotion and a special Valentine's Day auction. 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 road games against the Bozeman Ice Dogs and previews the two-game series 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 defenseman Spencer Schipferling. Quick has done ten 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 for all your updated news, game summaries, rosters, photo galleries, etc.

NEXT CONTEST: Great Falls and Helena will duel on the ice for the fifth time this season when the Bighorns serve as the home team for Saturday's (February 3) matchup inside Helena's Steed Arena. The 7:05PM (MST) start can be seen live on [NAHLTV](#). To learn more about how to watch the Americans in action on NAHL TV, please [click here](#).

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

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