



BALDY'S PUCK DROP

Weekly E-Newsletter February 8, 2024

Dear Great Falls Americans Enthusiast:

I'll start this week's edition with a quick recap of the weekend. Although the scores were not what we had hoped for, the effort and the learning experience to continue our drive forward were all positives as we head into our busiest stretch of the season with 9 games in 18 days all against teams that are either secure in their playoff position or we are competing with for the final playoff spot. It also includes two trips to our farthest division opponents. This is what we play the games for and is where we would want to be at the start of the season – in position to earn a playoff spot and then make a serious playoff run. We still very much control our own destiny with 11 games to play and the team, and staff, feel good about the opportunity with moral being good with a group of kids that get along very well. With the travel, the pressure and the intensity they will face in the coming weeks, team chemistry cannot be undervalued and this team is about as good as it gets. We are excited to have you along for the ride! Let's also recognize Dmitri Kuleshov and Kayden Rhyder for earning Honorable Mention Players of the Week honors from the league.

Helena is a really good team – there I said it and I know it is not what some of our most loyal diehard fans want to hear. They are skilled, work hard and extremely “systems” oriented and disciplined within their systems. When they stay out of the penalty box (which is likely their biggest weakness) they can be a really good veteran hockey team. I mentioned several times early in the season how young the Americans are and for comparison purposes, Helena has 13 age-out 2003 birth year players while we have only three. Let me be clear, that is not an excuse, it is simply stating the obvious in that they should be better with more maturity and experience. At the same time, there are some cultural differences in how we like to model our teams and the expectations that we establish with our players and fans. Neither model is necessarily better than the other as it really boils down to what our priorities are. Our staff, and myself, feel strongly that our primary objectives are player development – both on and off the ice – along with creating a culture that sets our players up for life success. We will always strive to be honest, fair and attempt to do what is right for the players that have entrusted their development with us. Will we be perfect? Not likely, but the commitment will always be there.

There is also a business side to this level and that is not always the easiest part. For those who have followed along all season, you will notice that some players will come and go through trades throughout the season. In some cases, the player(s) has actually asked for a trade for a variety of reasons which may include they want to be closer to home, they would like more playing time or they simply do not get along with the coach/or teammates and do not fit in.

The trade deadline for Junior Hockey was Tuesday evening and rosters are frozen with 25 players for the remainder of the season. The trades we executed this past week involved players that were simply not happy and other players who the coaching staff was up front with and informed them they were not going to be on our 25-player roster, so we offered them an opportunity to be traded where they can be protected and have a chance to play. We do not hold players hostage and I am happy to report that there are players who still want to stay and practice with the team even though they may not be on our 25-player roster. When a trade is made, we will oftentimes get player(s) back that we feel will make our team better or we may get draft pick(s) or “Tender(s)” (A tender is a contract that we can offer players to protect their rights for next season without being on our 25-player roster – it can be a recruiting tool or a tool to protect a younger player that is



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definitely in your plans, but is not on the 25 player roster) and in some cases cash and/or a combination of any or all of those. It really is a time of year when our coaching staff has to be creative, but honest, in relying on their scouting and their instincts to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together to finish strong AND build for the future.



The team left after an early morning skate on Wednesday heading to Rapid City to face Badlands Thursday night and then move on to Gillette for Friday and Saturday night games. All three games are set for a 7:00 PM puck drop and we encourage all our fans to attend our official watch party for the games at the **Stadium Sports Bar and Casino**. We then return home for our special Valentine's night game versus Helena at 7:00 PM followed by a 12:00 Noon matinee next Friday versus Helena. The Friday afternoon game is a result of not having ice available that evening at the Ice Plex. We are attempting to make the best of the situation, though, as since there is no school that day, we have partnered with **Benefis Health** to invite all K-8 students to attend the game for free through their Wednesday envelope distribution by the school district. We would love to be able to pack the Ice Plex with several hundred kids and introduce them to our great game.

Let's give a warm welcome to our newest addition, Goalkeeper Anyon Bennett, who comes to us from perennial powerhouse Granite City from the West Division. We are happy to have Anyon (Originally from Fargo, ND and has also spent 3 seasons with the Phoenix JR Coyotes U16 and U18 teams) onboard and look forward to getting him on the ice this weekend.

Congratulations to Nicolas Perez (Tucson, AZ), Sebe's Father, for winning the Mystery Box #2 raffle. We had 77 entries and Nicolas' name was drawn to win a GFA portable blanket, scarf, Baldy Polo, travel mug, baseball hat and a signed puck by none other than #9 Sebe Perez. Thank you to all who supported this activation - we very much appreciate your support of the Americans.

Our very special **Valentine's Day Auction** is now live and will run through Monday evening the 12th. We have enlisted the support of our partners

Life in Bloom Floral and Gift Boutique, She Bare Wax & Sugar Boutique and Central Avenue Meats to put together three amazing

Valentine's Day packages that we will auction off prior to our Valentine's Day home game. Each package has a specific theme and will

include products from our partners, Americans' merchandise and two VIP Tickets to the Valentine's

Night game versus Helena. Oh yea – our friends from **Comparion Insurance** have also sweetened the pot with \$50 gift certificates from local restaurants to each package. All three packages will be surprised delivered to the winner's special person by **Baldy** on Valentine's Day! You can access the auction by scanning the QR code!

Don't miss out on your chance to surprise your loved one on this special day and continue to support the Great Falls Americans! Look for additional special offers in the coming weeks as we make our playoff run!



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Player Profile – #19 Austin Trout (Troy, ID) 5'11" 170 lbs. FOR- Shoots Right

Favorite Team: Arizona Coyotes **Favorite Player:** Auston Matthews

Favorite Movie: Happy Gilmore **Favorite Actor/Actress:** Adam Sandler

Favorite Food: Steak **Favorite Pre-Game Meal:** Chipotle

Musical Group You Won't Miss in Concert: AC/DC

Song or Artist Guaranteed to get you hyped: Lil Baby

One Item you would bring with you to a deserted Island: Shoes

Hobbies other than Hockey: Golf

Three People you would invite to Dinner: Tom Brady, Adam Sandler, LeBron James

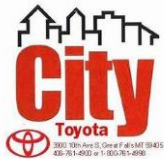
College/University of Choice: Boise State University

Like Most About Great Falls: I really enjoy the team and the people of Great Falls!

How would you define a successful season: A person who enjoys their life!



Thank you to all our existing **Eagle's Nest, Diamond and Platinum Level** partners for their continued support.



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Thank you for being a part of our family and we look forward to seeing you at the rink.

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