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Great Falls Americans Press Release
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Great Falls defeats Butte on the road in overtime in regular season finale

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Score Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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BUTTE, Mont., March 2, 2024 — This is the final weekend of junior hockey action as the 2023-24 NA3HL regular season winds down for the season.

Most of the teams in the five-division North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) ended their season on Saturday night but seven games are on the schedule for Sunday.

On Friday (March 1st), Great Falls defeated Butte, 5-2 at the Great Falls Ice Plex as the Americans celebrated “Billet Family Appreciation Night.” Ty O’Bey and Dmitri Kuleshov each scored two goals to lift the home team to a victory in their home finale. Toby Kerr and William Clark each had a successful scoring drive for the Irish ([game story](#)). The win by the Americans and a loss by the #5 Badlands (SD) Sabres (18-23-3-3) to the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (40-6-0-1) gave the Americans the fourth and final spot in the Frontier Division Semi-Finals where they will face the #1 Helena Bighorns (44-2-1-0) starting on Friday, March 8th in Helena, Montana for Game 1 of the Best-of-3 series. Great Falls will host Helena on Saturday, March 9th for Game 2 at 7:00PM (MST).

The Great Falls Americans finished in fourth place (out of eight teams) in the Frontier Division with a 22-23-0-2 overall record including twelve wins at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Americans finished off their final weekend of the regular season with a home-and-away series with the Butte Irish (16-29-2-0), who finished in seventh place and will not qualify for the playoffs this upcoming week.

The #4 Great Falls Americans let their 2-0 lead slip away in the third period as the #7 Butte Irish rallied to even the game at 2-2 at the end of regulation before the Americans scored the game-winning tally by Easton Kennedy in overtime for the 3-2 win in the regular season finale for both squads.

Both teams took 16 shots each, but the Great Falls Americans were the only team to put the biscuit in the basket during the opening period. Tariq Khan and Dmitri Kuleshov each added one assist on a successful scoring play by Aiden Kennedy with three minutes remaining.

Great Falls forward Alec Browning collected his second goal of the season late in the second period off the stick of Dmitri Kuleshov, who earned his second assist of the night. Cal Laggis also assisted for coach Greg Sears' squad.

The Americans had a two-goal advantage for the first fifteen minutes of the third period. The Irish would not go away easily as they scored twice during a forty second span to tie the game, 2-2 with Logan Grimbleby and Ryan Sikorski recording the scores to prevent the regulation loss. Weston Villers and Rye Vincent set up Grimbleby's score while Toby Kerr and Andrew Browe earned assists on Sikorski's game-tying opportunity.

In the five-minute extra period, the Americans took two minutes off the clock before Easton Kennedy's slapshot lit up the lamp for the game-winning tally with assistance from Aiden Kennedy and Hayden Grabas as the Americans head into postseason play on a two-game weekend sweep of the Irish.

Despite the 3-2 overtime win, the Americans were outshot by the Irish, 53-48.

On Friday, both teams combined for eight infractions but during Saturday's contest, things were more intense on the ice. A total of 22 penalties were called by the officials resulting in 94 minutes spent off the ice.

Butte ended their season with 16 wins with eight wins at home and eight victories on the road.

Noah Van Herik played in his eighth game for the Americans this season and earned his first victory (1-4-0-0) with a 51-save performance. Braylon Rogers (9-12-2-0), one of three players on the Irish roster who have aged out (along with forwards Nick Retine and Quinn Nichols) and won't return next season, made 45 saves in his final contest.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The #5 Badlands (SD) Sabres (19-22-3-3) were not happy they missed the 2024 Frontier Division playoffs but found a way to end their season on a happy note. Ian Vanelli had a hat trick (three goals) and teammate Brooks Roaldson had two goals as the Sabres edged the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (40-6-0-1), 7-6 inside Gillette's home arena on Saturday to close out their season. Isaac Young, Blake Biermaier, Matt Siems, Chase Hapka, Zach Lebens, and Cade Voge all scored goals for the Wild. In his second season with Badlands, Dawson Sellner (5-0-0-1) made 60 saves in his last start of the year. Meanwhile, Weston Gerke of Gillette (40 saves) suffered just his second setback (14-2-0-0) ([Box Score](#)).

Matthias Godfrey scored for the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (30-16-0-1) early in the first period before the top-ranked Helena Bighorns (44-2-1-0) scored five unanswered tallies for the 5-1 win in the last regular season home game. Both squads will head to the playoffs this week. Helena's Braden Cunningham led all scorers with two goals while Gavin Barr, Jack Lambert, and Carson Streich each had one for the winning side. Jesse Schindel finished the regular season with just one loss (17-0-0-1) for the Bighorns. He stopped 16 of the 17 shots sent his way in Saturday's finale. His counterpart, Matthew Ryyanen ended his first season with the Ice Dogs with a 19-12-0-1 record and made 53 saves on Saturday ([Box Score](#)).

Tanner Freed's three lamplighters (hat trick) and Makhai Sparks' two goals highlighted the dominating win for the #6 Sheridan (WY) Hawks (19-24-2-2) on Saturday night 10-0 victory over the #8 Yellowstone (WY) Quake (0-44-3-0). Aidan Knox started for the Hawks, but Zach Broxterman (7-12-1-2) rejected all nine shots in his final game of the 2023-24 season. John Hughes (0-16-2-0) had a busy night with another setback but not before accruing 77 saves ([Box Score](#)).

NOTES: The Americans are auctioning off a White (home) and Red (Away) jersey signed by the players and staff. The jersey auction through our partner, DASH will run until 9:00PM (MST) on Monday, March 4th. These will be only signed jerseys that will be offered so don't miss out on the opportunity to get some memorabilia. [Click here](#) for the auction.

Great Falls goaltender Kaden Ryhder received the Frontier Division Star of the Week and forward Dmitri Kuleshov received Honorable Mention honors for the weekly “NA3HL Stars of the Week” for the week ending February 25, 2024, for their play last week against the Badlands (SD) Sabres. [Click here](#) for more information.

Kaden Ryhder (Goaltender), Dmitri Kuleshov (Forward) and Garrett Driscoll (Defenseman) were named as Honorable Mention candidates for the NA3HL “Stars of the Month” for February 2024. [Click here](#) for more information.

This week, another episode of the “Americans Podcast with Jim Quick” was completed with his guest Luke Pizzey, a forward from Black Diamond, Washington. Quick has done thirteen 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 will begin postseason play this week. The Americans, who finished in fourth place in the Frontier Division, will challenge the #1 Helena Bighorns in the Frontier Division Semi-Finals starting on Friday evening (March 8th) at 7:05PM (MST) in Helena, Montana for Game 1 of the Best-of-3 series. Game Two will be in Great Falls at 7:00PM (MST) on Saturday, March 9th. Fans should get their tickets early as the team expects a sell-out crowd. Tickets can be purchased online by [clicking here](#). Game Three (if necessary) will take place inside the Bighorns home arena on Sunday, March 10th at 5:05PM (MST).

In the other Frontier Division Semi-Finals, the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild will meet the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs with that best-of-three series starting on Thursday, March 7th in Bozeman's Haynes Pavilion at 7:30PM (MST). Game Two and (if necessary) Game Three will be played in Gillette, Wyoming on Friday and Saturday, March 8-9th at 7:00PM (MST) each night. All postseason coverage can be found 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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