



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Great Falls Americans Press Release

Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator

Phone: (406) 403-8146

NA3HL Frontier Semi-Finals: Americans fall to the Bighorns; on brink of elimination from playoffs

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Score Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
---------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------------	---



HELENA, Mont., March 8, 2024 — With the 2023-24 NA3HL regular season ending last weekend, it is now time for postseason play in the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL).

The top four finishers in the NA3HL in each of the five divisions spread across the United States qualify for the Divisional Playoffs beginning with the Semi-Final round this week and Finals round next week with the winner of the Finals in each division (plus one wild card team) making the trip to the [2024 NA3HL Fraser Cup \(National\) Championships](#) slated to start on March 20-24, 2024, in St. Peters, Missouri in conjunction with the [2024 Top Prospects Tournament](#).

The Frontier Division Semi-Final round features the #4 Great Falls Americans (22-24-0-2) against the #1 Helena Bighorns (45-2-1-0) and the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (30-18-0-1) challenging the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (42-6-0-1) in a best-of-three series with the winning teams facing off in the Frontier Division Finals next week.

On Thursday (March 7th), the Bozeman Ice Dogs hosted the Gillette Wild inside Haynes Pavilion in Bozeman, Montana for Game 1 of the Frontier Division Semifinals. Playing in an unfriendly environment did not stop Gillette's offense and made their offense spark in a 15-2 rout over Bozeman. A trio of Wild players scored nine of the 15 goals (Isaac Young, four goals, Adam Severson, three goals, and Tay Kurpius, two goals). The Wyoming club led 6-0 after the first period as Bozeman's Casey Sturm recorded his ninth goal this season to stop the shutout early in the middle period. Six more scoring drives would occur before the second intermission. Magnus Lowham added the second score for the Ice Dogs midway through the final period. The deficit was too much to overcome with the Wild contributing three more goals before the final horn sounded. Cole Wheaton (15-4-0-1) was perfect in the net in the first stanza before allowing one goal in the second and third frames to finish with 26 saves. The Ice Dogs utilized both Matthew Ryyanen and Isaac Weatherford. Both goalies combined for 55 saves with Weatherford taking over in the second period for Ryyanen ([Box Score](#)).

Great Falls went 0-8-0-0 during the regular season against the Bighorns but still managed to pick up twelve victories on home ice and managed to get by the #5 Badlands (SD) Sabres (19-22-3-3) during the last week of the regular season to claim the fourth and final playoff spot.

Meanwhile, Helena's three losses came against the second-ranked Gillette (WY) Wild. They remained perfect at their home venue (Steed Arena) with 24 victories.

Great Falls was looking at trying to pull off an upset on Friday inside Steed Arena.

Ty Moore scored two goals and Mason Eggen, Trey Pareja, and Jason Hammett each assisted on two scoring plays as the top-ranked Helena Bighorns moved one game closer to eliminating the #4 Great Falls Americans during Game 1 of the 2024 NA3HL Frontier Division Semi-Finals on Friday night in Helena, Montana. The Bighorns scored all six goals before the second intermission while allowing one Great Falls score in the 6-1 victory. Sebe Perez of the Americans scored with 47 seconds remaining in the middle period to deny the home team a shutout.

Ty Moore scored the first of his two goals in the first stanza. Garrett Bogan and Finn Theriault also made successful scoring drives for the top team in the Frontier Division. The Bighorns came away with 20 of the 27 shots-on-goal before the first intermission to lead 3-0. Trey Pareja made two assists while Jason Hammett, Joe Feamster, Tim Mattingly, and Cam Young set up scoring opportunities.

The Bighorns offense tacked on three more goals in the middle period. Braden Cunningham, Ty Moore, and Tim Mattingly all saw the puck go in the net. Five players each added assists to their resume including Mason Eggen (two assists), Dylan Cunningham, Gavin Barr, Trey Pareja and Jason Hammett. The six-goal advantage would stay that way until the last 47 seconds of the second when Sebe Perez answered with his tenth goal of the season with assistance coming from Aaron Leaf and Zac Orwig.

Neither squad was able to put the biscuit in the basket in the third frame. Helena accounted for eighteen shots while Great Falls had seven.

The Bighorns attempted over 20 shots in the first and second periods to finish with 62. The Americans had 15 of their 22 prior to the second intermission.

Braden Cunningham's first goal in the second period was the only goal scored on a power play opportunity. Helena went 1-for-three with five minor infractions. The visiting team had four missed power play chances and four minor penalties.

Jesse Schindel accrued his 18th win of the season (18-0-1-0) by swatting away 21 shots by Great Falls' offense. Kaden Ryhder (14-11-0-1) started and made 38 saves in forty minutes before backup Anyon Bennett took over and redirected all eighteen shots for the Americans.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE (Game 2, Frontier Division Semifinals): Gillette Wild's Isaac Young had a repeat performance from Thursday's Game 1 against the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (30-18-0-1) on Friday as he delivered four goals for the second consecutive night in leading the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild (42-6-0-1) to a series clinching 7-4 win in Game 2 of the best-of-three Frontier Division Semifinals. Dominik Hauer scored the first two goals for the Ice Dogs and Bodie Shepardson and Bryce Sturm each had one tally apiece in the season ending loss for the Ice Dogs. Cole Wheaton, who is now 16-4-0-1 on the season and 2-0 in the playoffs, finished with 33 saves. Matthew Ryyanen started for Bozeman, but it was former Great Falls American goalie Ryan Stowe who was busy in the net by redirecting 70 shots in his second contest. Bozeman ended their season with 30 wins, 18 regulation losses, and one shootout setback ([Box Score](#)). The Wild will await the winner of the Helena Bighorns and Great Falls Americans

game for next week's 2024 Frontier Division Finals with that best-of-three winner going to the Fraser Cup National Tournament in two weeks.

NOTES: After goaltender Kaden Ryhder received the Frontier Division Star of the Week two weeks ago, Americans forward Dmitri Kuleshov received the top award for his play against the Butte Irish for the week ending, March 3rd. Teammate Ty O'Bey received Honorable Mention honors this 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 Callhan Laggis, sponsor information, and another auction item up for bid. [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 games against the Butte Irish and previews the playoffs. 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](#).



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.

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

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans will get to play with their home fans in attendance for Saturday's Game 2 of the Frontier Division Semi-Finals. The Americans will entertain the #1 Bighorns starting at 7:00PM (MST) on Saturday, March 9th at the Great Falls Ice Plex. If Great Falls does win, a decisive Game Three will be on Sunday, March 10th in Helena at 5:05PM (MST). 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.

CONTACT:

Greg Sears
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811
Email: gsears@gfamericans.com

Visit our website: <http://www.greatfallsamericans.com>
Join Us on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/greatfalls.americanshockey>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gfamericans>

North American 3 Hockey League: <http://www.na3hl.com/>

