



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Great Falls Americans Press Release

Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator

Phone: (406) 403-8146

NA3HL Frontier Semi-Finals: Bighorns eliminate the Americans with 3-1 win to advance to the Frontier Finals

By Kevin Scott

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



GREAT FALLS, Mont., March 9, 2024 — The journey for the Great Falls Americans started at home on the weekend of September 8-9, 2023, with a pair of victories over the Yellowstone (WY) Quake and now the time has come for the 2023-24 NA3HL season to conclude.

Great Falls recorded 22 regular season victories including twelve wins at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The team waited until the final week of the regular season to officially clinch a playoff spot.

On Friday, March 8th, the Americans (22-25-0-2) met the top-ranked Helena Bighorns (46-2-1-0) at Steed Arena in Helena, Montana for Game 1 of the Frontier Division Semi-Finals. Helena had defeated the Americans eight straight times during the regular season. Helena's Ty Moore was the recipient of two goals as the Bighorns scored three in the first and another three in the second period for the 6-1 win. Sebe Perez made his tenth goal of the season for the Americans with Aaron Leaf and Zac Orwig assisting for the lone tally by the Americans ([game story](#)).

Great Falls was hoping to play at least one more game this season, but they needed to pull off a huge upset to force a Game 3 on Sunday night. Would the Americans do it?

The Great Falls Americans held a 1-0 lead after the first period before the Helena Bighorns racked up three consecutive goals for the 3-1 win in Game Two of the Frontier Division Semi-Finals on Saturday evening at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Helena Bighorns will meet the other semifinal division winner, the Gillette (WY) Wild in the Frontier Division Finals this week. Gillette also needed just two games (of their best-of-three series) against the Bozeman Ice Dogs to advance to the Frontier championship.

Neither team was able to successfully get the puck in the net during the first sixteen minutes of the first period until Great Falls' Aiden Kennedy made his eighth goal off the right side that went around Helena netminder Jesse Schindel with 3:02 left in the period. Despite taking four shots, Great Falls took a 1-0 advantage into the locker room. Helena attempted seventeen shots in the first twenty minutes of action.

Great Falls Americans defenseman Hayden Grabas was called for hooking that resulted in a penalty shot for the Bighorns with seven minutes remaining in the middle period. Helena's Jakob Losch went one-on-one with Americans netminder Kaden Ryhder and got the score to even the game (1-1). The Wisconsin forward was awarded his tenth goal of the season. The Bighorns broke the tie and took the lead when Finn Theriault scored on a breakaway goal with 1:37 left in the period. Ty Moore and Cai Robinson each assisted on the Bighorns second scoring play.

Great Falls trailed by one goal throughout the first 19 minutes of the third frame, but Braden Cunningham ensured the Bighorns victory by scoring on an empty net with 29 seconds left in the contest to send Helena to the NA3HL Frontier Division Finals. Mason Eggen and Gavin Barr assisted on the third goal for the visiting team.

The Bighorns took 17 shots in each period to end the contest with 51 shots-on-goal. Great Falls was held to 18 shots with 14 coming after the first stanza.

Both rivals combined for seven infractions that resulted in 12 minutes in the penalty box and four missed power play chances.

Jesse Schindel (19-0-1-0) was near perfection after the first period goal by the Americans was allowed. The Helena goaltender amassed 17 saves on 18 attempts for his second playoff win this season. Americans netminder Kaden Ryhder (14-12-0-1) was denied his fifteenth win this season. He finished his first season with Great Falls by swatting away 48 shots.

NOTES: During the first intermission, the Americans presented their annual "Mike Lewis Award" that best exemplifies the spirit, commitment and loyalty and a player that goes above and beyond to support his teammates. The award for the 2023-24 season went to Nathan Bring from Great Falls, Montana. Also, a shoutout went to Ty O'Bey, a forward from Ashland, Wisconsin who was the scoring leader for Great Falls with 30 goals and 24 assists (54 points). Congrats to Nathan and Ty.

The Americans want to thank all the billet (host) families, fans, and sponsors who have made the 2023-24 Great Falls Americans season possible. [Click here](#) to view all the sponsors and be sure to patronize them often. A special thanks to the Americans staff, players and NA3HL officials for an enjoyable season at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

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 Great Falls Americans 2023-24 NA3HL season has ended with the team finishing with a 22-25-0-2 record. The Americans said goodbye to “age-out” players, Nathan Bring, Alec Browning, Sam Duehlmeier and Aaron Leaf. We thank them for their contributions.

Meanwhile the Helena Bighorns will challenge the #2 Gillette (WY) Wild this week in the 2024 NA3HL Frontier Division Finals in a best-of-three series with the winner receiving an automatic berth to the [2024 NA3HL Fraser Cup \(National\) Championships](#) (March 20-24, 2024) in St. Peters, Missouri.

[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/>

