



# BALDY'S PUCK DROP

Weekly E-Newsletter February 29, 2024

Dear Great Falls Americans Enthusiast:

Well, what a week! The Americans played their grittiest hockey of the season in must win situations and came away with 5 out of a possible 6 points, only losing in a shootout on Sunday afternoon. Ty O'Bey led the way Friday night with two power play goals and Garren Narvaez scored the game winner, with a blue collar assist from Cal Laggis who utilized his speed to win a race to the puck, with about 5:00 minutes left in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period. Saturday saw Dimitri Kuleshov take the lead with a hat trick (including another 185' empty net goal) in a 4-2 win. Kaden Ryhder backstopped both games and as a result earned "Player of the Week Honors" for the Frontier Division from the NA3HL. Finally, Sunday saw Garren Narvaez again coming up big with two 3<sup>rd</sup> period goals to erase a 2-0 deficit and secure a huge point in the standings.

Adversity? Yes, you could say they definitely faced some adversity. A minute into the game on Friday a Badlands shot that hit the cross bar was awarded a goal and a quick deficit to overcome. A minute after that, Ty Brander was checked excessively from behind into the boards. Ty had the wind severely knocked out of him with some back pain and some numbness, so every precaution was taken with a potential spinal cord injury and Ty was placed on a backboard by EMT's and escorted to the hospital by ambulance, causing a 30 minute delay. Fortunately, everything checked out well and Ty is planning on being available again this weekend. For those who were watching on NAHL TV, the play was not originally penalized, but the league reviewed the illegal hit and has imposed a four-game suspension to the Badlands player.



Saturday started off well enough with a trip to Mt. Rushmore. Ty O'Bey suffered a shoulder injury early in the first period, Aiden Kennedy was a beneficiary of a fluky incident where we had a skate blade slash his ear and was taken to the hospital in full gear to get 15 stitches to put his ear back together. The photo to the left is actually Aiden as he returned to the hotel at 10:45 PM. He left all his equipment on in hopes of being able to go back to the rink for the 3<sup>rd</sup> period. Luke Pizzey also took an illegal hit halfway through the 3<sup>rd</sup> period that caused his shoulder to pop out, but immediately went back in and played the remainder of the period unable to shoot or



pass with any authority. By the time Sunday came around, the squad was down six players and, yet, still found a way to eliminate a 2-0 deficit in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period to gain the valuable point. Rex rounded out the safe and happy bus ride home with a 12:30 AM arrival at the Ice Plex.



So, where does that leave us regarding the playoffs (other than our infirmarium pictured to the right at practice Tuesday)? We do expect to have 3-4 of the injured players available to us this weekend with a huge thanks to Chad Molen and his staff at Mountain View Physical Therapy who are the best at protecting our athletes while managing an aggressive return to play protocol. We are currently tied with Badlands for the final playoff spot with each team having two games remaining. We have our home and home with Butte and Badlands travels to Gillette for their final two games. We own the first three tie-breakers with Badlands, so two wins or one win and a Badlands loss clinches the



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playoff spot for the Americans. If we were to secure the final spot, we will be playing Helena in a best to three series with game 1 in Helena on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup>, game two in Great Falls on Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> and game 3 (if necessary) Sunday back in Helena. Tickets will become available for purchase online as soon as we secure the spot and we will also look at other ways to be able to provide advanced playoff tickets for our fans as we do expect a sellout. The more advanced tickets we can sell, the better we will be able to maximize the crowd with GFA fans.

Friday night is our final regular season home game, so there is a lot going on to keep track of. First, and foremost, it is "Billet Family Appreciation" night as it will be our opportunity to honor our very special Billet Families and thank them for all they do during the first intermission. For those who may not be familiar with the billet program, I want you to know how important a role they do play in making our players a part of our family and community. The billet families volunteer their home, their family and their hearts in hosting our players, who come from all over the world, and providing them a welcoming place to live. These folks have gone above and beyond in allowing our players to feel welcome within their homes and the community. A special thanks goes out to Kris Steichen for serving as our Billet Coordinator this season and to all our billet families. Please come on out to the game to help us show our appreciation as we honor them during the first Intermission.

We will also celebrate "Fan Appreciation Night" with prizes to be handed out to select fans throughout the game and a 30-40% discount on all items at our merchandise store during the game. Look for the players to be available to sign items after the game, as well, and do not forget to join us at P. Gibson's after the game for our final post-game gathering of the regular season.

Finally, Friday night will be the last regular season home game for four of our players and this is always a bitter-sweet moment, but it will have some special meaning for me this year. Congratulations to Great Falls native, Nathan Bring, our spotlight player this week, Alec Browning, plus Captains Sam Duehlmeier and Aaron Leaf who have each played over 100 games for the Americans over the past three seasons. And yes, I am not afraid to say that watching my son participate in this sort of thing while knowing the blood, sweat and tears he has put into this game over the past 16 years will be an emotional evening for Dad. Just another reason to come on out to the game and wish these amazing young men the best in their future endeavors. Thank you to **City Toyota** for making Friday night possible as our presenting partner and **Life in Bloom Floral and Gift Boutique** for providing the flowers for our billet moms.

Saturday finds us in Butte for our regular season finale – be sure to check out our official watch party at **The Stadium Sports Bar and Casino!** And if looking for something to do during the day Saturday, stop by the Ice Plex and check out our Figure Skating partners as they host the Great Falls Open Figure Skating Competition. Good luck to all our local skaters!



Our fan appreciation Jersey Auction through our partner DASH is live as we auction off both a home White and away Red Jersey signed by the players and staff. **This will be the only signed jerseys that will be offered, so do not miss out on the one chance to obtain some special memorabilia.** The auction will run until 9:00 PM on Monday – don't get left behind on this one!



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**Player Profile – #15 Alec Browning (LaCrosse, Wi) 6’0” 170 lbs. FOR - Shoots Right**

**Favorite Team:** Chicago Blackhawks **Favorite Player:** Patrick Kane

**Favorite Movie:** Step Brothers **Favorite Actor/Actress:** Will Ferrell

**Favorite Food:** Pasta **Favorite Pre-Game Meal:** Pasta

**Musical Group You Won't Miss in Concert:** Panic at the Disco

**Song or Artist Guaranteed to get you hyped:** Low Down – Lil Baby

**One Item you would bring with you to a deserted Island:** Green Gatorade

**Hobbies other than Hockey:** Baseball, Poker, Friends

**Three People you would invite to Dinner:** Wayne Gretzky, Donald Trump, Sean O'Malley

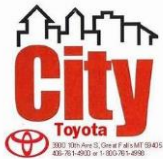
**College/University of Choice:** Harvard University

**Like Most About Great Falls:** The people and the scenery!

**How would you define a successful season:** Winning the Fraser Cup!



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



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| Century Gaming    | Great Falls Hospital & Clinic | Anderson Glass-Door    | Point S Tire & Auto Service             |
| 2 J's Complex     | Borries Italian Supper Club   | Murphy Law Office      | Stadium Sports Bar & Casino             |
| Heidelberg Lounge | Treasure State Eyecare        | Craftmaster Cabinets   | Floors and More Abbey Carpets           |
| Tuttle Tile       | Teriyaki Madness              | Central MT Lock & Safe | 3D International Restaurant             |
| Jersey Mike's     | Noble's West Side Liquor      | Annie's Taphouse       | Hotel Avron-Celtic Cowboy               |
| Scheel's          | Croxford Funeral Home         | Big Sky Laboratory     | AllState- Tammy Quintrell-Stubbs        |
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| Stockman Bank     | SpringHill Suites by Marriott | Central Avenue Meats   | Todd Neighbor at Comparion Insurance    |
| Fuddrucker's      | Play It Again Sports          | The Beacon IceHouse    | Nate and Renae Weisenburger             |
| Life in Bloom     | Comparion Insurance           | United Materials       | Fox Sports Radio, Q 106, 104.9 The Wolf |
| Hampton Inn       | Traynor Capital               | Bravera Bank           | Discount Meats                          |
| KFBB              | Cascade Electric              |                        |   |

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

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