



BALDY'S PUCK DROP

Weekly E-Newsletter March 7, 2024

Dear Great Falls Americans Enthusiast:

The regular season has finished, and your Americans are playoff bound! They secured their ticket with an impressive win at home Friday night combined with a Badlands loss. Locking in the playoff birth Friday night allowed Coach to rest a few players to help them get healthy while the rest of the team played relaxed on Saturday and secured a 3-2 overtime win in Butte. Congratulations to Easton Kennedy in scoring his first goal with the Americans with the overtime winner and to Noah Van Herik for backstopping his first win with the Americans. All-in-all, it was a successful weekend with Dmitri Kuleshov being named NA3HL Frontier Division "Player of the Week" and Ty O'Bey earning



Honorable Mention recognition. Forward Dmitri Kuleshov, Defenseman Garrett Driscoll and Goaltender Kaden Rhyder also deserve accolades for their recognition as league-wide Honorable Mention Players for the month of February.

In the coming weeks, I will try to recap our first season as owner and will be thanking a whole bunch of



people/partners who have contributed to our success. I have learned a ton and am even more excited about the potential for the future for not only the Americans, but the hockey community in Great Falls. I will be sharing some of that vision with you as we wrap up Season 1 of "Baldy's Puck Drop" later this month. But, for now, I

want to focus on our team and the challenges they have this weekend.

I will start by emphasizing that win or lose, I am extremely proud of our players and staff and how they have embraced the culture we are trying to create on the ice and within the community. They have faced adversity along the way and have accepted all the challenges thrown at them – sometimes with success and sometimes with a learning experience. In doing so, they have grown as a team, and as young men, and have become better at both. I would be hard pressed to find a group from my 50+ years in hockey that has gelled as much as this group has the last month of the season. The pieces our staff have added has made our team better on the ice, in the dressing room and in the community.

The three-game play-off series will be a huge challenge for this young team and is one that they have welcomed with open arms. It will be a great experience for them to play in front of packed houses and a loud and intense atmosphere. Quite frankly, this is a big reason why they still pay to play the game and is what they have looked forward to all season. This group has embraced that and are getting healthy and will be well prepared. But, they will need to play their best hockey for 60 minutes and will need to create their own breaks. Their special teams will need to be perfect, their goaltending phenomenal and their execution of systems and compete level off the charts. That is what playoff hockey is about.



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And I have said this before, I do understand the desire for our fans to be able to compete with and beat Helena – they are our closest rivals. At the same time, we must be realistic is it is not a rivalry right now – they have won 20 + consecutive games between us and prior to that Great Falls won 18 or so straight games. It runs in cycles and our goal is to improve our program to the point where it does become a rivalry again where each game is a toss-up. Helena is not coming back down to us and we should not expect them to. We need to achieve their level and that is what we aim to do – but it will not happen overnight when our approach is to do things the right way. We hope you will be patient and enjoy the ride along the way. I lived this previously with my involvement at USA Hockey with the USA-Canada competitions at all levels – not that I had anything to do with flipping that narrative except in the officiating world. When I first started at USA Hockey, we couldn't beat Canada in a big game at any level. Now, look at the last 10-15 years and it has become a legitimate rivalry with each country winning their share of Gold Medals.

Helena is currently the 2nd ranked Tier III Junior Hockey team in the country (out of 162 teams). We are a respectable 54th and have improved over the last few weeks from the lower 60's. The computer model has Helena four goals better than us and for the most part, that has played out over our 8 games this season. That does not mean we have thrown in the towel and given up – it is also not an excuse. It is recognizing the challenge ahead of us and embracing the opportunity to do something special. It is playoff hockey and we have said from day one that you first have to get there – mission accomplished – and once you do anything can happen. We hope you will be at the Ice Plex Saturday night to support us along the way.



Because we are expecting a full house Saturday night with many Helena fans making the trip, we are encouraging our fans to purchase their tickets in advance so we can have as many of them there as possible. You can purchase advanced tickets at:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/gfamericans2024tickets/1178840> and we would also like to thank **Play It Again Sports** (Tuesday and Thursday) and **Teriyaki Madness** (Wednesday) for letting us sell advanced tickets while welcoming our fans into their stores. A few other quick notes for our game Saturday; regular season passes and VIP passes will be honored for the playoff game. However, regular season general admission tickets that were purchased or comped will not be valid for the playoff game as each playoff ticket will have a special mark on it. We need to be able to properly manage the attendance due to fire code restrictions, and in doing so only play-off specific advanced tickets along with the limited number of tickets we may be able to sell at the door will be honored for the game Saturday night.



Congratulations to Christopher Marroni (Grand Junction, CO) and Frances Fair (Pooley, GA) for providing the winning bids in our signed jersey auction. The next item available is a framed 8x10 team photo taken immediately after clinching their playoff berth and signed by the entire team. Price for pre-order is \$25 (plus shipping if outside the GF area) and you can access by

scanning the QR code or click on the web link below. We will be offering some other great items as our season winds down, so stay tuned to our fan activation site through DASH in the coming weeks for some end of the season special items.



www.winwithdash.com/gfamericans



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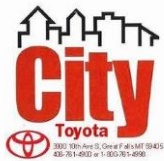
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Player Profile – #24 Callahan Laggis (Rhineland, WI) 5'8" 145 lbs. FOR - Shoots Right

Favorite Team: Detroit Red Wings **Favorite Player:** Henrik Zetterberg
Favorite Movie: Miracle on Ice **Favorite Actor/Actress:** Leonardo DiCaprio
Favorite Food: Spaghetti **Favorite Pre-Game Meal:** Spaghetti
Musical Group You Won't Miss in Concert: Def Leopard
Song or Artist Guaranteed to get you hyped: Shoot to Thrill
One Item you would bring with you to a deserted Island: Mini Sticks
Hobbies other than Hockey: Golf
Three People you would invite to Dinner: Patrick Kane, Alex DeBrincat,
 Dylan Larkin **College/University of Choice:** None
Like Most About Great Falls: The guys on the team!
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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| 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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