



BALDY'S PUCK DROP

Weekly E-Newsletter April 25, 2024

Dear Great Falls Americans Enthusiast:

I hope everyone's Spring has gone well and you have had a chance to unwind a bit and enjoy the weather. Although the season has ended and our players have all returned home to get away from the game for a bit, our coaching staff has remained busy scouting and travelling as we piece together our team for next season. They first traveled to the St. Louis Area to attend the Fraser Cup, along with coaching a player combine and supporting our players participating in the NA3HL Top Prospects Tournament. We will start there as Aiden Kennedy led Team Gold in scoring, including a late 3rd period game winner, and Goalkeeper Kayden Rhyder led all Goalkeepers in save percentage and goals against average. Forward Ty O'Bey and Defenseman Luke Pizzey also participated on the tournament winning Gold Team.

Alex and Greg scouted players participating in the NA3HL Combine at the same time and we would like to congratulate our neighbors to the South – The Helena Bighorns - for finishing off their very successful season with the Fraser Cup title! Helena is the first Frontier Division team to win the Fraser Cup, while Gillette also provided strong representation in losing to Helena in the semi-finals – a strong showing for our Frontier Division. The standard has been set for us to achieve those levels and is something we very much welcome from a competitive standpoint.

A week later, they travelled to Vegas for a couple of days of R& R and then the business of scouting the USA Hockey Tier I National Tournaments at the 18U and 16U levels. Greg then attended the Montana Amateur Hockey Association Player Development Camp in Bozeman to work with the players and identify potential prospects for our program now and in the future. Most recently, Greg and Alex attended the NAHL combine in Columbus, OH, where the NA3HL League meetings also took place. All these events provide an opportunity for our staff and our brand to get out front of prospective players and to build relationships with players and coaches.

All this work so far culminated with the Tender Signing deadline Tuesday of this week and the NA3HL Draft that took place yesterday. The Great Falls Americans signed 15 players to tenders for next season who will supplement our returning players to form a team we are very high on. The list of players tendered who are now part of our family are:

Name	Birth Year	Position	Home Town	Last Team
Richard Brody	06'	Forward	Houston, AK	Team Alaska 18U AAA
Joseph Buschmann	06'	Defenseman	Broomfield, CO	Monarch HS
Gavin Denis	06'	Forward	Rhinelander, WI	Rhinelander HS
Fisher Hannesson	05'	Defenseman	Fargo, ND	Fargo South/Stanley HS
Keegan Hanson	05'	Defenseman	Fargo, ND	Colorado Springs 18U AAA
Riley Hattan	08'	Forward	Kalamazoo, MI	Bigby Coffee AAA 15's
Macen Heisler	05'	Forward	Bottineau, ND	Bottineau/Rugby HS
Easton Kennedy	07'	Forward	Detroit Lakes, MN	Detroit Lakes HS
Owen Kronk	07'	Forward	Great Falls, MT	Great Falls Americans/MT Selects 16U
Logan Mese	06'	Forward	Kenai, AK	Team Alaska 18U AAA
Cole Molaski	06'	Forward	Bayport, WI	Bayport HS
Noah Osiowy	05'	Forward	Moose Jaw, SK	Regina Capitals
Owen Renfors	07'	Forward	Marquette, MI	Northeast Generals 16U
EJ Sanchez	08'	Forward	Great Falls, MT	Sioux Falls Power 15's
Carson Sears	08'	Defenseman	Great Falls, MT	Montana Selects 16U



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A tender is simply a commitment to the Great Falls Americans to play Tier III Junior hockey with us. Essentially, we now own their rights for this upcoming season, but they are still encouraged to try to make a team at the NAHL or Tier II levels. The 4-round league draft took place on Thursday with a total of 135 players being selected. The Americans did not have any draft picks this year as we had traded away our four picks as part of transactions that took place this past season. Just being honest, here, in that the draft is generally a crapshoot. Other than owning their rights, oftentimes there is no commitment and/or desire to play for the team that drafted any particular player. Coach Sears, and I happen to agree with him, philosophically believe it is hard to mandate to a player that he must play for a certain team in a pay-to-play league as the NA3HL. In many cases, the team may have never even watched the kid play or have never talked to them prior to drafting them. With that being said, we have never placed a huge emphasis on draft picks and have instead focused our attention tenders.

The next event coming up will be our Prospects Camp in Great Falls on May 4th and 5th. This is essentially an open tryout where 04'-08' birth years are eligible to participate and show off their skills to our staff. We are expecting about 25 players to participate – including some returning vets, some tendered players and some players from all over the northwest that we are excited to take a look at. Ice is 1:00-2:30 and 6:30-8:00 PM on Saturday and 10:00-11:30 AM on Sunday with the public welcome to attend. Later in May, Greg will attend the Northern Plains District Player Development Camp, Alex will attend a CCM Showcase in the Denver area and we will all attend the Air Force Academy Showcase in Colorado Springs in mid-June.

We will officially be launching our partnership with **Eagle Mount Therapeutic Recreation** with a very special “**Try Sled Hockey for Free**” event at the Ice Plex on Saturday, May 4th, from 10:00 AM-11:00 AM.

Everyone (including able-bodied individuals that would like to experience what it is like) is welcome to attend and learn more about what we are doing. Then look for more information over the summer months as we plan for a full season of supporting Sled Hockey Programming in Great Falls starting next Fall. I am also excited to include specific disabled hockey options within our partnership opportunities for next season. To learn more about the various Disabled Hockey Disciplines (wouldn't it be awesome to

include programming for all?), check out the Disabled page of USA Hockey here: [Disabled Hockey \(usahockey.com\)](http://Disabled Hockey (usahockey.com)).

The **Play It Again Sports** 3 vs. 3 FUN League is wrapping up next week and has provided



18 participants of all ages and skill levels a chance to play some informal pond hockey. The entire format is designed to have fun and allow those who have a passion for the sport to work on skills and do things without the burden of systems or the pressure of winning and losing. A special thanks to **Play It Again**

Sports for partnering with us on this new program.



Finally, put Saturday, August 17th, on your radar for the 2nd Annual Great Falls Americans Cornhole Extravaganza. The tournament will take place all day at **The Beacon Icehouse** and culminates with a live band on their backyard stage at 7:00 PM. Our first ever was a huge success and raised considerable funds for our new dressing room, so mark your calendars and plan to join us for a great day of food, drink, music, friends and cornhole!



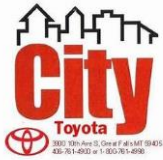
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Thank you for being a part of our family and we look forward to seeing you at the rink.

Matt Leaf
 Great Falls Americans HC Inc
 MattL.GFAmericans@gmail.com



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