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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Great Falls comes up short, falling 4-3 in season opener against Sheridan

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Score Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., September 6, 2024 — Hockey here we come!!! It has been a long six months since the Great Falls Americans were last on the ice for an official contest.

The 2024-25 season marks the 15th year of existence for the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) as they continue to be the only USA Hockey sanctioned Tier III junior hockey league in the United States. The Americans are one of eight teams that make up the NA3HL's Frontier Division.

Four Montana squads (Bozeman Ice Dogs, Butte Cobras, Helena Bighorns, and the Great Falls Americans), three teams from Wyoming (Yellowstone Quake, Gillette Wild and the Sheridan Hawks) and a single team from Rapid City, South Dakota (Badlands Sabres) will return to the division with no new franchises added.

The 2023-24 edition of the Great Falls Americans made the playoffs last March and fell to the eventual NA3HL national champions, the Helena Bighorns. The #1 Bighorns swept the #4 Americans on March 9, 2024, in the NA3HL Frontier Division (Best-of-3) Semi-Finals. Great Falls finished with 22 wins in 49 contests and fourth overall in the NA3HL Frontier Division standings. The #2 Gillette (WY) Wild and the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs also were playoff contenders. The Wild also won both games against the Ice Dogs that set up the Frontier Division Finals where the Ice Dogs were no match for the Bighorns. Helena and Gillette (Wild Card) each made the trek to St. Peters, Missouri in late March for the 2024 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Tournament. Gillette went 1-2 and Helena won the national title winning four straight games and slipped by the Northeast (MA) Generals, 2-1 in the championship game. [Click here](#) to see the full results/game summaries from last season.

The Great Falls Americans (0-1-0-0) played host to the Sheridan (WY) Hawks (1-0-0-0) during Friday's season opener for both clubs. Other Frontier Division action saw the Yellowstone (Cody, WY) Quake entertaining the Helena Bighorns at Riley Arena and the Gillette (WY) Wild traveling to Butte, Montana to

face the Irish. The Bozeman Ice Dogs won't see their first action on the ice until September 13th when they face off against the Americans inside Bozeman's Haynes Pavilion. The Badlands (SD) Sabres also will begin the 2024-25 campaign by hosting the Quake on September 13th.

Great Falls will have 14 familiar faces on the team to begin the new junior hockey league season including goaltender Kaden Rhyder, forwards Ty O'Bey, Zac Orwig, Blake Komrofske, Aiden Kennedy, Owen Kronk, Easton Kennedy, Sebe Perez, Cal Laggis, Caleb Gamboa and Garren Narvaez along with defenseman Ty Brander, Mason Kerr, and Garrett Driscoll. The rest of the roster will be comprised of newcomers looking to make an immediate impact on the team as the Americans hope to build on their playoff run from last year.

Greg Sears is now in his seventh season guiding the Americans along with second-year assistant coach Alex Leaf.

The Hawks are looking to improve on their sixth-place finish in the 2023-24 Frontier standings with a 19-24-2-2 record ahead of only the Butte Irish and Yellowstone (WY) Quake. Sheridan will have seven players (Kiefer Dunham, Josh Serino, Sean Harris, Daniel Shelden, Elijah White, Vlady Zubriichuk and John Simon) returning this season for head coach JJ Santagata.

Great Falls defeated Sheridan in each of their four meetings, outscoring their Wyoming foes, 21-8.

The Great Falls Americans kept up with the Sheridan (WY) Hawks throughout the game, but the Hawks scored the final goal with eight minutes remaining to secure the 4-3 victory in the first game of the 2024-25 season for both clubs. Sheridan spoiled Great Falls' home opener at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Friday evening. Vincent Leaf scored two goals (including the final goal) and had one assist for the winning team.

The Sheridan Hawks scored the lone goal in the first period. Minnesota native Cody Hogan recorded his first goal as a member of the Hawks off the stick of Charles Stow and Logan Sidlauskas with 7:52 remaining. Both teams combined for 20 shots-on-goal.

Both offenses got going in the middle stanza as Great Falls and Sheridan each hit the back of the net twice during the first eight minutes. Zac Orwig, a returner from last season, needed 11 seconds to even the contest with assistance from Garren Narvaez and Easton Kennedy. The Hawks broke the tie three minutes later on a goal by Iowa native Vincent Leaf, who added his first scoring tally set up by Zach Longnecker and Logan Hume. Ty O'Bey, one of the standouts for the Americans last season, registered his first goal with 14:27 remaining to even the score (2-2). Newcomer Fisher Hannesson and returning forward Cal Laggis each assisted on the Americans second goal of the period. Elijah White of Sheridan, one of seven returning players for the Hawks, put the biscuit in the basket for the go-ahead score midway through the second period. Zach Longnecker gathered his second assist while Vincent Leaf added his first helper after scoring the Hawks first goal of the period. The visitors from Wyoming accumulated 16 of the 29 shots.

Great Falls and Sheridan each scored once during the first 16 minutes of the third frame. Easton Kennedy tied the game with his first scoring drive of the 2024-25 season. Garren Narvaez earned his second assist while Zac Orwig was credited with his first (assist) with 16:56 remaining. Eight minutes after Kennedy's score, Vincent Leaf accrued his second goal of the game with Josh Serino and Elijah White each receiving their first assist of the season. The Hawks defense held up as they did not allow the home team to score for the final eight minutes.

Sheridan outshot Great Falls in each of the three periods to finish with 47. The American took 26 of their 35 shots after the first twenty minutes of action.

Vincent Leaf of the Hawks led both teams with two goals and one assist. Easton Kennedy and Zac Orwig scored one goal and dished out one assist apiece for Great Falls.

John Simon (1-0), the only returning goaltender from last season for Sheridan, stopped all nine first period shots before allowing three goals by Great Falls. The Fargo, North Dakota standout finished with 32 saves. Kaden Rhyder (0-1) ended his first game in his second season with the Americans by swatting away 43 shots in the loss.

FRONTIER DIVISION UPDATE: The Helena Bighorns (1-0-0-0) continued to impress after winning the 2024 NA3HL Fraser Cup National Championship last season as they blanked the Yellowstone (WY) Quake (0-1-0-0), 6-0 on the road during Friday's season opener. Six different Bighorn players each lit up the lamp including Finn Theriault, Austin Uecker, Warren Ryser, Owen Gruener, Trey Pareja and Clint Isakson. Tyler Miller (Helena) was perfect in the net, stopping all ten shots for his first win with the Bighorns (1-0). Matthew Neeser (0-1-0-0) made 72 saves for Yellowstone ([Box Score](#)).

The Butte Irish (1-0-0-0) outscored the visiting Gillette (WY) Wild (0-1-0-0), 3-1 in the second period as they gave the home fans at the Butte Community Ice Center something to cheer about as they defeated Gillette, 5-3 behind a solid effort from Weston Villers who acquired two goals and one assist for Butte. Teammate Andrew Browe assisted on four of the six Irish scoring drives. Gillette scored once in each of the periods with Beau Delich, Hudson Fisher, and Rocco Corl each putting the puck in the net. Tim Nanson (1-0-0-0) made his first start for Butte and gathered 26 saves in sixty minutes for his first win. Josh Bieniewicz (0-1-0-0) allowed five goals but still stopped 22 shots ([Box Score](#)).

NOTES: Season Two of the **"Americans Podcast with Jim Quick"** premiered this week (September 5, 2024) with his first guest of the season, Cole Molaski, a forward from Suamico, Wisconsin, who is in his first season with Great Falls. [Click here](#) to learn more about the podcast with Cole. Each podcast will feature one American player as we get to know the team this season. Jim completed 13 episodes during his first season. Fans can listen to the full podcasts from Seasons One and Two by [clicking here](#).

AMERICANS PHOTOGRAPHER: Look for game photos from all of the home games from Michael Noel, the Americans Official Photographer by [clicking here](#).

AMERICANS E-NEWSLETTERS: The Americans have two email newsletters for fans to receive in their inbox this season. Kevin Scott, the Americans Media Coordinator, has a newsletter that you can get on Sunday's during the regular season filled with game summaries, press releases, links, schedule, etc. [Click here](#) to subscribe (if you haven't already).

Americans Owner Matt Leaf creates and sends out a weekly email called "Baldy's Puck Drop" that features team news, player profile, sponsor information and lots of other tidbits relating to Americans hockey that is published on Thursday mornings. [Click here](#) to receive the weekly newsletter (if you haven't already).



NA3HL MOBILE APP: If you haven't already, download the NA3HL App available at the App Store and Google Play. Fans can 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).

2024-25 PHOTOS: Check out all the Americans photos throughout the season including some taken by Americans photographer, Michael Noel and Gentle Thug's Tim Ljunggren. [Click here](#) to view all the photos from the 2024-25 season.



AMERICANS TEAM STORE: [Click here](#) to view the Americans online team store that features a variety of different souvenirs to purchase. A store is available at all home games. **AMERICANS GAME TICKETS ONLINE:** Fans can also buy game day tickets on the website prior to the game by [clicking here](#).

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

UPCOMING EVENTS: GFA Booster Club Tailgate Party: Saturday, September 7th 5:00 PM The Booster Club Tailgate Party will begin at 5:00PM prior to our 7:05 PM game versus Sheridan. The band "After Five" will be performing live in the back of the arena outside. Booster Club will provide food and drinks for purchase.

"Skills and Drills sessions": Monday, September 9th: Americans open their pre-season youth "Skills and Drills" sessions running for two weeks. Our players and staff have partnered with the University of Providence to provide these high-intensity skills-based practices for about 40 youth players of all ages.

Big Sky Harley Davidson "Meet & Greet": Thursday, September 12th Americans will have a Meet & Greet at Big Sky Harley Davidson on 10th Avenue South from **2PM-5PM**. Come meet the team!!!

Americans launch their "Sled Hockey Program" with Eagle Mount Therapeutic Recreation on Thursday, September 12th. The ice session starts at 5:00 PM and will involve our players working with these athletes to hone their skills and enjoy the sport. These will run the next three Thursdays before we get into a slightly different schedule in October. We can always use volunteers to assist with equipment and getting players on and off the ice, if available.

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans will play three different teams during the month of September including four at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Great Falls and Sheridan will tangle again on the ice on Saturday, September 7th with the puck dropping at 7:00PM (MST) inside the Great Falls Ice Plex. Fans that are unable to attend in person can catch the action on the NA3HL's new streaming service, [NAHLTV](#). Ryan Siders returns for his second season as the Americans "Play-By-Play" announcer for all home games.

Before Saturday's contest, the Americans will have a Tailgate Party at the Great Falls Ice Plex at 5:00PM. Come join the fun, get some food, and visit before the doors open at 6:00PM.

[P. Gibson's Sports Grill and Casino](#) (1600 Fox Farm Road) is the place to be after Friday and Saturday night home games where the Americans invite their fans and supporters to their post-game dinner.

[Buffalo Wild Wings](#), located at 17 Northwest Bypass in Great Falls, hosts the "Americans Watch Party" this season when the Americans are on the road. Fans are invited to get food and drinks and watch the game.

[NAHLTV](#) is the NA3HL's new streaming platform and is the place to catch all the action for fans that are unable to attend the home and away games this season. [Click here](#) to learn more about how to view any of the Americans home and away contests.

[Click here](#) for the 2024-25 Great Falls Americans schedule and results.

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