



BALDY'S PUCK DROP

Weekly E-Newsletter March 19th, 2025

Dear Great Falls Americans Enthusiast:

Delivering a day early this week as we get out front of the NA3HL Division Finals which is starting tonight. I will start by saying you have to love playoff hockey! As we were decompressing in the dressing room after game three on Sunday afternoon, the coaching staff and I wondered in amazement on how NHL players can go through that for a solid two months of Stanley Cup Playoff Hockey to win the cup. It is not easy and we are extremely proud of our team and how they stepped up to play what is highly considered playoff hockey – which requires team defense, body aches and pains, mental toughness and 60-minutes of intensity.

For those who are not aware, we started the series with a disappointing effort in a 4-0 loss. Our team got outworked and played tentatively and that was reflected in the result. Hats off to Sheridan as they came to play and were competing at a very high level, which they did for all three games. Our challenge was to meet that level, and we did. We took care of business at home with a 4-2 win Friday night in front of a very vocal and supporting crowd. Full disclosure, there were a few fans that were challenged by our players prior to the game to “bring it” and they stepped up and created an enthusiastic atmosphere for the home team. We will need that again tonight!



So, that brings us to game three Sunday afternoon in Sheridan. Blayne Juszczak scored with a little under 7:00 left in the 2nd period for the only goal of the game and a 1-0 win for the Americans. When I talk about playoff hockey, it must be a team effort where all 21 players dressed gives it everything they have and puts their body on the line. Blayne is a 4th line skater who was not even in the line-up on Friday night, but he and his linemates were ready to go and provided the depth we know we have to be able to roll four lines and allow our top forwards to be fresh, sharp and give everything they have.

Defense is a team trait. It starts with strong goaltending, solid defenseman play with good gap control, winning races to the puck, and battles for the puck, and then moving the puck up to the forwards. Forwards start with a strong backcheck and then provide puck support when the defense wins their battle. It involves blocking shots and making smart plays with and without the puck. There are two stats I want to share with you that, ultimately, decided the series and demonstrates the effort our entire team put into the wins. Over the last two games, we out “quality chanced” (a quality chance is a shot taken between the face-off spots in front of the goal) Sheridan by a combined 23-12. Even more impressive is over the course of the last two games, the Americans blocked 44 shots versus 12 for Sheridan. That is 44 shots over the course of two games that never even reached our goaltender. That is playoff hockey and is the type of effort that will be needed to move forward.

Another unique thing about hockey is the post series handshake. Just like the NHL, all levels of hockey have a respect for the game and the opponent where even after beating the “you know what” out of each other for “x” number of games, at the end you show respect and look your opponent in the eye with a firm handshake and even a hug. Another thing to love about our game.



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Friday's home game provided us an opportunity to present the 2025 Mike Lewis Award. Mike Lewis was an avid hockey fan and player who suffered an injury while playing his senior year in High School. Mike remained a huge fan of the Americans and passed away suddenly of natural causes in September 2021. In memory of Mike, his family presents an award each season to an Americans player that best exemplifies Mike's spirit, commitment and loyalty. This award is given to a player that shares the passion for the game and goes above and beyond to support his teammates both on and off the ice. Previous winners include Micah Serino in 2022 and Assistant Coaches Alex Leaf in 2023 and Nathan Bring in 2024. This year's recipient, as chosen by the coaching staff is Ashland, Wisconsin native Ty O'Bey. Ty has served as an assistant Captain and has led the team in scoring with 31 goals and 36 assists in 46 games – good for 9th in the NA3HL. The award was presented to Ty during the first intermission by Head Coach Greg Sears. The Americans would like to thank the Lewis family for keeping Mike's memory alive through this award.



The next step is the Frontier Division Finals versus the Helena Bighorns. Helena defeated Badlands in a three-game series that concluded on Saturday night. Helena has established the standard for the division the last four years and are the defending Fraser Cup Champions. We played Helena eight times this season and ended with 2 wins, 3 losses, 2 overtime losses and one shootout loss. Six of the eight games were one goal games (including one empty net goal). It should be a great series as we feel we match up well and the bottom line is they have accomplished what we have set out to achieve and our goal has been to reach their level of success. We will find out if we are successful in the next four days. The other interesting note here is that Helena has already qualified for the Fraser Cup as their regular season record has put them in position to guarantee the Wild Card, entry even if they were to lose the series.



110 NW Bypass
406-551-9464

Official Watch Party



Versus



Friday, March 21st - 7:05 PM
WATCH LIVE!

After our home game on Wednesday night, the series will continue with game 2 in Helena on Friday Night. Game 3, if necessary, is also set for Helena on Saturday night. Our official Watch Party will take place at **Buffalo Wild Wings** for all remaining games this season. The winner of the series will be the Frontier Division Champions and will advance to the Fraser Cup in St. Louis next week. Stay tuned to our website and social media accounts for the latest playoff information.

As we enter our final home game of the season, I would be remiss to not take the opportunity to thank all of those who support us behind the scenes during the season. This includes the folks at Advanced Litho Printing who put together and print the game program inserts – oftentimes with very little lead time – and all our game day staff. Our off-ice officials, led by Nathan Moss are widely recognized as the best in the league and allow our home games to run without a hitch. Brian on the microphone with the game script is a pro and works effortlessly with Krista as our music guru. The Ice Plex staff provides the best ice in the league and helps maintain a safe game-day environment for everyone who walks into the rink. Kayleigh on tickets, Paula at the beer garden, Kayla with our merchandise store and Alanna, Kailey and James going wherever we need them make my job 1000% easier on game days and do a great job with our fans. Finally, thank you to our community partners and our fans for their unwavering support.



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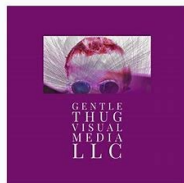
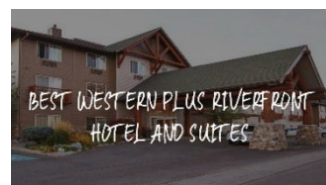
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Here are the upcoming events for you to mark your calendars:

- March 19th – Game 1 of Division Final Series versus Helena. 7:05 PM at the Ice Plex.
- March 21st – Game 2 of the Division Final Series versus Helena. At Helena 7:05 PM. Join other fans at the Official Watch Party at **Buffalo Wild Wings**.
- March 22nd – Game 3 (If Necessary) of the Division Final Series versus Helena. At Helena 7:05 PM. Join other fans at the Official Watch Party at **Buffalo Wild Wings**.
- March 26th-30th – Fraser Cup Finals in St. Louis, MO.
- April 9th – Great Falls Sports Foundation Mixer at the Four Seasons arena. 5:30-8:00 PM with proceeds going towards the IcePlex for continued improvements. Contact Matt for individual tickets or a Table of 10.
- June 20-22 – Great Falls Americans Prospects Camp.

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



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Tilleraas Landscape & Nursery
Red's Powersports*
Murphy Law
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Mountain Title Company*
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Thank you for being a part of our hockey family!

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