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Great Falls Americans Press Release
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Americans secure 20th win of the season by defeating Gillette, 6-1

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GILLETTE, Wyo., January 1, 2016 — The Great Falls Americans (20-6-2) have held the top spot in the Frontier Division of the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) since the season started in September.

Nothing has changed to this point.

Prior to this game, the Americans have won three of their four contests including two road wins in Gillette, Wyoming against the Gillette Wild. Their only loss to the Wild (14-12) came at home in November where they fell 4-2.

Great Falls hasn't played since December 19th at the NA3HL Showcase Tournament where they lost to the Toledo (OH) Cherokee 3-2 in overtime on the final day of the three-day tournament. They went 1-0-2 at this year's tournament in Blaine, Minnesota. Meanwhile, the fifth place Wild fell to the second place Yellowstone Quake on Thursday night, New Year's Eve, 8-6.

After a slow start by both teams, the Great Falls Americans offense lit up the scoreboard by scoring five goals in the third period to defeat the Gillette Wild 6-1 on Friday night at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena with 498 fans in attendance. Great Falls picked up their twentieth win of the season and snapped a two-game losing streak after back-to-back overtime 3-2 losses at the NA3HL Showcase in December to the Toledo (Ohio) Cherokee and a squad made up of members of the East team from the NA3EHL (North American 3 Eastern Hockey League).

During the opening period, both teams battled hard but no points would go on the scoreboard until the final 5:31 when Tanner Congdon and Miles Giorgione set up the game's first score on a power play to Latvia native Ricards Bernhards to give the Americans a 1-0 advantage. Bernhards scored his thirteenth goal of the season while Congdon grabbed his 21st assist of the season and remains the team leader in that category. Great Falls produced ten of the nineteen shots during the first twenty minutes.

After a scoreless middle period, Great Falls opened up the final period of regulation with a pair of goals in a 29 second span during the first three minutes. After getting an assist in the first period, Tanner Congdon tallied on the second goal for the visiting team from Montana with 17:33 on the clock. Ricards Bernhards and Jesse Johnson registered the assists. Blake Miller gave the Americans a three goal lead (3-0) soon after Congdon's goal. Malachi Bushey and Great Falls native Connor Barta provided the assists. Josh Larson secured his ninth goal of the season later in the period with help from teammates Tanner Congdon and Reed Link. Stevan Goran added another score during the Americans scoring drive. Adam Apangalook had his first assist of the night and Congdon picked up his third. Ricards Bernhards registered his second goal (first of the period) of the NA3HL contest midway through the final stanza. Alaska product Miles Giorgione chipped in his second assist while veteran Wade Wylie was credited with his first.

The Americans would hold a 6-0 lead before the Gillette would get on the scoreboard. The host team avoided the shutout as Alex King got the puck by Americans goaltender Jake Stephan with seven minutes remaining. The successful power play opportunity was assisted by Tyler Tennant and Brett Kramer.

The game saw thirteen total penalties along with 37 minutes of penalty time. Great Falls went 2-for-5 on the power play with Ricards Bernhards and Tanner Congdon taking advantage of the scoring drives on the penalties. Gillette's lone goal by Alex King near the end of the third period was also via a power play opportunity and the Wild finished 1-for-5.

Jake Stephan was near perfection between the pipes as the Great Falls goaltender finished with 30 saves while allowing one goal. Gillette's Alex Feese faced a determined Great Falls offense who racked up five goals in the final period. He ended his night with 27 saves in the loss.

NEXT CONTEST: The Americans will stay in Gillette, Wyoming for the second game of a two game road series against the Wild. Game time on Saturday, January 2 is set for 7:00PM at the Spirit Hall Ice Arena.

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