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Great Falls Americans Press Release
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Great Falls scores early and often to blank the Ice Dogs in regular season finale

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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BOZEMAN, Mont., March 10, 2018 — The final day of the 2017-18 regular season for the Frontier Division in the NA3HL has concluded.

The Great Falls Americans (34-11-2) easily dominated the entire contest against the Bozeman Ice Dogs on the road at Haynes Pavilion in Bozeman, Montana. Great Falls scored three goals in the first, four in the second and added one in the third to down the Ice Dogs, 8-0.

Great Falls led the Bozeman Ice Dogs 2-0 after the opening seven minutes of action. Payton McSharry scored one of the three total power play goals during the first period as Michael Fary assisted. Michael Houlihan scored the second goal for the Americans. His first of two goals of the night came with assistance from Matt Janke and Weston Goodman. Matt Janke netted the last goal of the period with 2:55 left on the clock before the first intermission. Dustin Truex and Kody Thomas set up the offensive score. The offensive attack by Great Falls came out in full force by domination the shots, 21-9.

Great Falls tallied four goals in an eight-minute span during the middle stanza. Michael Houlihan scored his second midway through the period along with Noel Parker, Great Falls native Braxton Lorenz, and Dustin Truex also found ways to get the puck in the net for the visiting Americans team. Weston Goodman led the way in assists in the period for coach Jeff Heimel's team with three, followed by Matt Janke, Kody Thomas, and Dustin Truex with two and Tanner Rath also assisted. Great Falls continued to create the assists by racking up 24 while Bozeman attempted seven.

Great Falls cruised to a 7-0 lead until the final minutes when Ben Rinkey lit up the lamp for the final time in the regular season. His seventh goal was made possible by teammates Braxton Lorenz and Michael Houlihan.

After taking 24 shots in the final two periods, Great Falls ended the sixty-minute contest with 69. Bozeman registered nine in the first period to finish with 24.

The playoff-bound Americans committed three penalties (including two in the final frame) that resulted in six minutes in the penalty box. The Ice Dogs spent lots of minutes (33) in the sin bin as they were whistled for six penalties. Great Falls scored goals on 60% of their power play chances (3-for-5). Bozeman misfired on their two opportunities while Great Falls was down a man.

Bryan Sharp was unstoppable in the goal for the Americans. He acquired 24 saves in 59 minutes of action. Tait Carlson got the start and the loss for Bozeman but relinquished his duties to backup Carver Thompson, who had 27 of the 61 saves for the Ice Dogs in their season finale.

NOTES: The Great Falls Americans had the third best attendance in the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) for the second consecutive season. The Americans saw an average of 739 fans per contest attend their 24 home games at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The North Iowa Bulls and the Alexandria Blizzard (MN) were just ahead of them in attendance. The Gillette Wild, Missoula Jr. Bruins, Helena Bighorns and Yellowstone Quaker were in top 16 in attendance.

Great Falls (34-11-2-0, 70 pts.) finished the regular season in second place behind defending Frontier Division champion, the Yellowstone Quake (35-7-3-2, 75 pts.). The Helena Bighorns (30-13-4-0, 64 pts.) are the No. 3 seed after handing the Missoula Jr. Bruins a 9-2 defeat in Missoula, Montana tonight to close out their regular season. A distant fourth and final playoff team in the Frontier Division is the Gillette Wild (21-21-3-2, 47 pts.). They fell to their rivals, the Yellowstone Quake last night, 13-4.

The following is the 2018 NA3HL Frontier Division Semi-Final schedules (Best-of-3) for the first two games. A To-Be-Announced third game may be needed if one team doesn't win both games. The two divisional semi-final winners advance to the Frontier Division Finals in two weeks for a chance to go to the 2018 Fraser Cup National Tournament in Romeoville, Illinois (March 27-31).

Friday, March 16th

- Game 1: (4) Gillette Wild @ (1) Yellowstone Quake, 7:30PM, Riley Arena, Cody, WY
- Game 1: (3) Helena Bighorns @ (2) Great Falls Americans: 7:30PM, Great Falls Ice Plex, Great Falls, MT

Saturday, March 17th

- Game 2: (1) Yellowstone Quake @ (4) Gillette Wild, 7:05PM, Spirit Hall Ice Arena, Gillette, WY
- Game 2: (2) Great Falls Americans @ (3) Helena Bighorns: 7:05PM, Great Falls Ice Plex, Great Falls, MT

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans will host Game 1 of the best-of-three Frontier Divisional Semi-Finals on Friday, March 16th at 7:30PM at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The Helena Bighorns will entertain Great Falls the following night (March 17th) with game time set for 7:05PM from the Helena Ice Arena. Depending on the outcome, Game Three may not be necessary. To view the 2018 Playoff format and the schedule for the 2018 Fraser Cup Championship tournament, please [click here](#).

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