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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Great Falls overcomes early deficit to derail Bozeman

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., December 14, 2018 — In the three-month old season in the NA3HL's Frontier Division, the #2 Great Falls Americans (20-5-0-1) have only faced off with the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (15-8-3-0) twice. In both wins by Great Falls, the Americans scored five goals in each contest while allowing no more than 3 goals to be scored by the Ice Dogs.

Great Falls, who has been in second place for most of the 2018-19 season, is 2-1 in the month of December (before tonight's contest). They downed Missoula (Jr. Bruins) and Butte (Cobras) on the road but lost last Saturday to the #1 Helena Bighorns, 4-1 after a 1-1 tie after two periods.

Since their last meeting on November 10th, the Bozeman Ice Dogs have been impressive by winning eight of nine games with a loss to Missoula in overtime on Thanksgiving weekend. Since then, they have been on a 4-game winning streak including a 5-2 upset of the top-ranked Helena Bighorns two weeks ago.

Great Falls and Bozeman are the only teams in the Frontier Division playing tonight before the prestigious Showcase tournament starts on Sunday in Minnesota.

Payton McSharry scored two goals and assisted on two more while Great Falls netminder Drew Scites accumulated 33 saves as second-place Great Falls overcame a slow start to derail the third-place Bozeman Ice Dogs, 5-2 in Great Falls' only home game of December on Friday evening at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

Despite Bozeman putting up 10 shots while the home team accounted for 20 during the first period, Bozeman took a 1-0 lead into the locker room with a goal produced by Croatia native Dominic Canic, who made his 13th goal of the season. Hazen and Luke McKay each picked up one assist on the scoring drive.

Great Falls responded in the following period as Payton McSharry and Hendrik Robel provided the assists on Cody Dearing's eighth goal while the Americans were on a power play. The game became tied with 14:38 left in the middle stanza. Robel, who is from Berlin, Germany, played in his first contest with Great Falls tonight. The Ice Dogs bounced back and regain the lead nine minutes later. Dominic Canic recorded his 49th assist and Luke McKay tallied his eighth when they found Hazen McKay for the score over Great Falls goalie Drew Scites. Hazen McKay registered his 38th goal for coach Elliot Bates' squad. The Americans battled back to even the score (2-2) before the second intermission. Forward Jens Juliussen secured the game-tying scoring opportunity with help from Cody Dearing and Payton McSharry with 2:48 on the clock. Great Falls added 19 shots in the period while the visiting team attempted 11. Both teams committed three penalties in 40 minutes.

Americans standout Payton McSharry drove the lane and successfully got the puck around Bozeman netminder Mikael Levokari to break the tie early in the third period and give Great Falls the lead for the first time in the contest. McSharry scored his 24th goal on the unassisted play. The host team buried their fourth goal as Payton McSharry scored his second goal of the period with five minutes left to give the Americans a 4-2 cushion. Justin Ohnstad and Cody Dearing gathered the assists on the second successful scoring drive. Great Falls would tack on one final goal with 75 seconds to go as Levi Mese found the back of the net off the stick of Garrett Peters. Luke Richesin also was credited with the assist on Mese's score.

The win gave the 956 spectators watching the Americans play their only home game in December a FREE coupon for Big Macs at McDonald's for Friday Night's "We Win, You Win" McDonald's Night at the Great Falls Ice Plex.

Great Falls out-shot Bozeman in each of the three periods to finish with 56. Bozeman made 14 of their 35 total shots in the final stanza.

The six penalties by the Americans resulted in 12 minutes of time spent in the penalty box. They converted on two of their three power play chances. Bozeman made five minor penalties with 10 minutes of penalty box. The Ice Dogs came up empty in their four power play opportunities.

Drew Scites made 33 stops for coach Greg Sears' twenty-win squad. The Minnesota native allowed one goal in each of the first two periods but was spotless in the final period. Mikael Levokari, Bozeman's goaltender from Finland, failed to pick up the win after letting Great Falls score four consecutive goals including the final two in the last five minutes of regulation.

NEXT CONTEST: After a travel day on Saturday, December 15th to Blaine, Minnesota for the three-day 2018 NA3HL Showcase Tournament against other division foes, Great Falls plays in three games beginning on Sunday, December 16th when they take on Louisiana Drillers at 12PM (MST) (South Division, Lafayette, Louisiana) followed by Monday's contest against the Skylands Kings at 12:15PM (MST) (Northeast Division, Stockholm, NJ) and the final day of the tournament on Tuesday against the Northeast Generals at 8:00AM (MST) (Coastal Division, Attleboro, MA). For the complete tournament schedule and information, please [click here](#).

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