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Great Falls Americans Press Release
Contact: Kevin Scott, GF Americans Public Relations Coordinator
Phone: (406) 403-8146

Dearing's third period goal helps Great Falls claim a 2-1 victory over Helena

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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HELENA, Mont., January 26, 2019 — The Great Falls Americans (31-7-0-1) have already clinched a playoff spot in the 2019 NA3HL Frontier Divisional semi-final round that will begin in March. The two home wins last weekend (5-4 overtime win against Helena and a convincing 8-2 win over the Missoula Jr. Bruins) sent the team to another playoff appearance.

Great Falls and Helena (Bighorns) go at it on the ice for the seventh time this season on Saturday evening as both teams have been in the top two spots in the Frontier Division of the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) all season long.

Great Falls hasn't had an easy time trying to defeat the Helena Bighorns (28-6-2-0) as they have only claimed three out of seven victories (3-3-0-1) including last Friday's (January 18th) exciting 5-4 win by the home team in overtime in Great Falls.

The Great Falls Americans, the #1 seed in the Frontier Division, edged the #2 seed Helena Bighorns 2-1 during Saturday night's NA3HL contest in Helena, Montana. Great Falls has now won the last two games between these two top squads. Cody Dearing scored the game-winning goal and netminder Drew Scites added 39 saves to his resume as the visiting team quieted the 770 fans at the Helena Ice Arena with the win.

Great Falls scored the only goal during the opening twenty minutes of action. Defenseman Nate Simpson got the puck in the net over Helena netminder Alexander Rogers with help from Ben Rinckey and Lindros Beard. Rinckey's 18th assist and Beard's 25th assist came with 13:04 on the clock. Both squads took many shot attempts but couldn't produce any goals with the Americans taking 10 of the 18 shots. The Americans and Bighorns committed four minor penalties apiece.

Both teams skated around in the middle period but failed to convert on any scoring opportunities. Helena took 20 shots against Great Falls goaltender Drew Scites and the visiting team had seven.

Ricards Groskops helped Helena even the score (1-1) seven minutes into the final period of regulation. The defenseman from Latvia had help from Elliot Plourde, who gathered his 23rd assist of the season.

The Americans offense managed to score once more. Cody Dearing converted the game-winning goal with 3:27 left in the junior hockey contest. Jens Juliussen and Payton McSharry created the assists on the power play scoring drive. The home team accumulated 12 of the 20 total shots in the third period.

The Bighorns out-shot the Americans in the last two periods (32-15) to end the sixty-minute contest with a 40-25 advantage. Great Falls converted the only power play of the night (1-for-8) during Dearing's game-winning drive. Helena came up empty in their seven power play chances.

Drew Scites was the victorious goaltender for Great Falls. The Minnesota netminder stopped 39 of the 40 shots while allowing one goal in the third frame. Alexander Rogers let two goals slip by him for the Bighorns. The California native recorded 23 saves in the loss.

Emotions ran high in this contest as Bighorns head coach Bob Richards and assistant coach Tommi Haikka were both disqualified late in the third period for abusing the officials.

NOTE: Cam McIntosh, one of the Great Falls Americans returning goaltenders, was traded to the Bozeman Ice Dogs earlier this week. The Great Falls native accumulated 57 saves (0.891 save percentage) in four appearance and a 1-1 record for the Americans.

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans will take on the Butte Cobras on Saturday, February 2, 2019 on the road in Butte, Montana. The puck will drop at 7:30PM at the Butte Community Ice Arena at 7:30PM in the Americans only game of the week.

CONTACT:

Greg Sears
Great Falls Americans Head Coach/General Manager
Cell Phone: 715-566-2811
Email: gsears@greatfallsamericans.com

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