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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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AMERICANS WIN!! Cowden's overtime goal keeps Great Falls atop Frontier Division

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., January 18, 2019 — It's that time again!!! When the two best teams (record-wise) face off against one another again.

For the sixth time this season, the Great Falls Americans (29-7-0-1), the top ranked squad in the NA3HL's Frontier Division, challenged the #2 Helena Bighorns (27-5-2-0), who have had the top spot for most of the season until recently. Great Falls has had a difficult time this year picking up wins (2-3-0-1 record) against the Bighorns. The Americans have claimed just one victory (October 26th 8-3 home victory) before tonight's contest.

In November, the Americans of head coach Greg Sears took the Bighorns to a shootout before falling 5-4. That was the closest contest with the other four meetings a 3-or-more-goal difference.

Tonight's contest will be the last regular season home game for Great Falls between these two rivals. Great Falls will play in the Capital City two more times (January 26th and March 1st) before the regular season concludes.

Trent Cowden's game-winning score against the second place Helena Bighorns in overtime helped the Great Falls Americans hockey team maintain their first place standing in the Frontier Division of the North American 3 Hockey League on Friday night. The 5-4 victory over Helena was just the second time Great Falls tasted victory over the Bighorns this season.

The Bighorns opened the scoring late in the first period. The game was scoreless for the first 16 minutes before Helena put the biscuit in the basket. Ricards Groskops, a defenseman from Latvia, scored delivered by forwards Ty Niskanen and Hayden Seitz. Before the end of the period, Great Falls gave the home crowd of 1,156 something to cheer about as Jens Juliussen recorded his 52nd assist when his pass to Nate Simpson helped the Americans even the score at 1-1 while Helena was down a man due to a penalty. Trent Cowden also had an assist on the Americans first scoring drive of the game. Simpson of Claremont, California found the back of the net for the fifth time with 1:08 left of the stanza. Helena took

18 shots and Great Falls had 13 after the opening 20 minutes of action. Each team committed four penalties resulting in eight minutes in the penalty box during the period.

The tie was broken just 48 seconds into the middle period. Helena native Justin Sullivan and Alaska's Valary Dietz delivered the puck to Darren Donovan for the score around Great Falls starting goaltender Drew Scites to put the visiting team back on top, 2-1. Two minutes later, the game was tied for the second time in as many periods. Payton McSharry and Cody Dearing assisted on Jens Juliussen's 19th goal of the season on the power play for Great Falls. The home team responded by scoring two goals in a two-minute span. Payton McSharry and Dylan Olson each collected a goal with help provided by Jens Juliussen, Lindros Beard, Brody Boyce and Garrett Peters. Helena cut into the Americans lead by adding a score before the second intermission. Ricards Groskops chipped in his second goal and Hayden Seitz and Justin Sullivan each produced their second assist for coach Bob Richards' team.

Both teams played aggressively during the final frame. The game remained tied for the first 19:57 and that is when a last second shot attempt by the Bighorns proved to be successful. Elliot Plourde waited until the final seconds to get his first goal of the game (34th of the season) off the stick of Ricards Groskops and Porter Tirrill to send the game into a five-minute overtime.

The final seconds were ticking off in overtime before Trent Cowden shot from Jack Olson lit up the lamp for the game-winning scoring drive for Great Falls. Olson achieved his 25th assist in 37 appearances.

The Bighorns out-shot the Americans in each of the three periods and overtime, 37-36. In the extra period, Great Falls held a 5-4 advantage.

Both NA3HL clubs took advantage of power play opportunities with each team picking up two of their goals while the other team was down a man.

Great Falls was called for 11 minor penalties with one major penalty coming in the third stanza. Helena finished with eight total infractions.

Drew Scites 15th win of the season and had 27 of his 47 total saves before the third period. Scites played the full 64:53 in the net for the winning squad. Netminder Carver Thompson lost for just the fourth time in 11 games for the Bighorns. The Laurel, Montana product ended his night with 36 saves.

NOTE: The Electric City Heat softball team from Great Falls was selling 50/50 tickets at the game with proceeds benefitting their softball organization.

NEXT CONTEST: Great Falls entertains the Missoula Junior Bruins for the final time this season on Saturday, January 19th. The Great Falls Ice Plex is the site of the NA3HL hockey contest slated to begin at 7:30PM.

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