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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Americans hockey pushes win streak to 16 with 3-1 win at Bozeman

By Kevin Scott

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| Box Score | Game Sheet | League Scoreboard | Americans Team Statistics |
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BOZEMAN, Mont., February 22, 2019 — With two games remaining in the 2018-19 North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) season for the #1 Great Falls Americans (37-7-0-1), they were looking to sweep the season series against the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (25-13-4-0) on Friday evening in Bozeman, Montana.

Great Falls recorded five goals in four of the five head-to-head contests including one shutout and one overtime contest. On December 28th, the Americans needed a goal by Cody Dearing to preserve a 4-3 victory in the extra five-minute period. Two weeks ago, (February 8th) Nate Simpson and Trent Cowden scored four total goals to down the Ice Dogs, 5-0.

The Americans were looking to remain undefeated against the Ice Dogs during the final regular season meeting between these two teams on the road on Friday night.

The Great Falls Americans ran their win streak to 16 games with a 3-1 decision over the Bozeman Ice Dogs during Friday's NA3HL regular season contest in Bozeman, Montana. Payton McSharry was one goal shy of a hat trick (2 goals) and netminder Drew Scites added 35 saves to his resume in the win. Great Falls hasn't lost since the December 18th contest at the 2018 NA3HL Showcase Tournament in Minnesota when they fell to the Northeast Generals (Massachusetts), 5-3.

After one period of play, the visiting team found themselves with a two-goal lead. Great Falls was able to score early on a play set up by George Nuutinen and Jack Olson to an open Brandon Peterson who snuck the puck by Bozeman goaltender Mikael Levokari three minutes into the period for the first score. The score remained 1-0 until there was 5:38 on the clock when Payton McSharry, ranked ninth overall in points scored with 85, scored the first of two goals with Cody Dearing and Jens Juliussen tacking on the assists. Great Falls committed two minor penalties in the stanza.

The Ice Dogs cut the deficit to 2-1 late in the middle period. Bozeman forward Duncan McGarrah shot made it through Great Falls goaltender Drew Scites to light up the lamp for the Ice Dogs. Jacob May and Luke McKay assisted (2) on the only score before the second intermission. The Americans out-shot the Ice Dogs, 33-29 entering the third period.

Payton McSharry took advantage of a defensive lapse and tallied his 46th goal of the season 96 seconds into the third. Alaska forward Cody Dearing's grabbed his second assist (30th overall) and Justin Ohnstad also assisted on the short-handed goal. Only 18 total shots were taken during the final twenty minutes of action. The game was scoreless for the remaining 18 minutes as Great Falls picked up their 37th victory in 45 games.

Great Falls had more shots taken than Bozeman attempted in each of the three periods and finished with 44. The home team had 17 of their 36 in the second frame.

Neither team acquired any goals during the power play. The 12 total power play chances went unanswered. The thirteen penalties resulted in 26 minutes of penalty time during the two hour and twenty-minute game.

Drew Scites, fifth among NA3HL goaltender with a goal-against-average (GAA) of 1.92, won his 19th game of the year with Great Falls by preventing 35 of the 36 shots from getting into the net. Mikael Levokari, the Finland goaltender for Bozeman, allowed two first period goals get by him, amassed 41 saves in his ninth loss of the season (16-7-0-2).

The Americans still have a five-point advantage over the second-place Helena Bighorns. Darren Donovan scored the game-winning tally against the Missoula Jr. Burins in Friday's 4-3 overtime win to keep pace with Great Falls.

NEXT CONTEST: The final road contest of the regular season will take place on Friday, March 1st when the top-ranked Americans visit the Helena Ice Arena to challenge the #2 Helena Bighorns with action starting at 7:05PM. The Great Falls Americans will close out the regular season on Saturday, March 9th for a 7:30PM showdown with the Butte Cobras.

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