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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Frontier Semifinal: Americans escape Bozeman's offense in overtime in Game 1

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics (Playoffs)
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., March 15, 2019 — The North Americans 3 Hockey League's Frontier Division completed their 2018-19 regular season last Saturday night (March 9th) with four of the seven league members continuing play in the playoffs.

Only two of the four teams (#2 Great Falls Americans (39-8-0-1) and the #1 Helena Bighorns (39-8-2-0) qualified for the playoffs last season and are back for another postseason run in 2019. The # 3 Bozeman Ice Dogs (28-15-5-0) and the #4 Missoula Junior Bruins (28-20-1-0) made the cut this season eliminating the two Wyoming clubs (Yellowstone Quake and the Gillette Wild) from playoff contention and sending them home after the 47-game junior hockey season came to end last week. The Butte Cobras, the new Frontier Division member this season, will be back next season with a new outlook and a shot at being one of the top four teams when playoffs come around next March.

The #2 Great Falls Americans have home ice advantage in their best-of-three semifinal series with the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs. The Americans were victorious in all six of their meetings against the Ice Dogs during the regular season.

Great Falls, coached by first year head coach Greg Sears, won 17 of their 19 home games at the Great Falls Ice Plex in front of their home crowd along with serving two games as the home team in December's NA3HL Showcase in Minnesota. They had the most fans in attendance per game at their home contests than the other six members of the Frontier Division by averaging 780 spectators. They also fared just as well on the road with 19 wins. Eight of their nine losses came in regulation with one loss in shootout to Helena earlier in the season.

The Bozeman Ice Dogs put up a fight but, in the end, the Great Falls Americans scored the game-winning goal in overtime as Jack Olson lit up the lamp to give Great Falls a 1-0 series lead in the best-of-three Frontier Division Semifinals in Great Falls and a 3-2 win on Friday evening.

Both playoff teams battled hard throughout the first period with Great Falls giving up one goal. Luke McKay, a 5'6" forward from Bozeman, Montana, netted the first goal of the game with 1:37 remaining in the first stanza. Teammate Dominic Canic of Croatia was credited with the assist to give the Ice Dogs the early lead before the first intermission. Each team created 13 shot attempts.

The second period saw no scoring, but Great Falls compiled 32 shots and Bozeman had 28 after the first forty minutes.

Great Falls tallied their first goal midway through the third period. Brody Boyce's unassisted score tied the contest at 1-1 for coach Greg Sears' squad. The final 81 seconds of regulation is where the game got exciting. Lindros Beard and Jack Olson set up Garrett Peters' go-ahead score. Bozeman's offense didn't give up and tallied their second goal of the game with 13 seconds left to send the first playoff game for each team into an extra period. Luke Hartge scored the power play goal with help from Luke McKay and Brady Kellerman.

In the playoffs, there is a 20-minute overtime (instead of the five-minute overtime during the regular season). Jack Olson responded and scored the game winning tally 4:40 into the extra period to lift the Americans to a 3-2 win. George Nuutinen and Nick Torres garnered the assists.

The Americans led the Ice Dogs in shots attempted in the second and third periods after each team had 13 in the first. Great Falls buried their final goal in overtime while taking four shots to end the 64-minute contest with 52. The visiting team took 28 of their 39 total shots before the second intermission.

Great Falls' offensive attack could not find a way to score while the Ice Dogs were in the penalty (0-for-3), Bozeman's three infractions resulted in nine minutes in the sin bin. The Americans committed four minor penalties with eight minutes in the penalty box.

Drew Scites picked up his first playoff win of 2019. The Plymouth, Minnesota native allowed one goal in the first and one in third to end his night with 37 saves. Scites' counterpart, AJ Ruskowski, the 6'6" goaltender from Michigan, accumulated 49 in the loss.

NOTES: The playoff game didn't start until 7:52PM due to mechanical issues with the Zamboni.

OTHER SEMIFINAL ACTION: The top-seeded Helena Bighorns are the host squad when they met the #4 Missoula Junior Bruins) for the other semifinal series that began on Thursday evening (March 14) in Helena, Montana with the Bighorns cruising to a 7-2 win ([box score](#)). Game two was tonight with Helena looking to close out the series and advance to next week's Frontier Division Finals against either Great Falls or Bozeman. Missoula made sure their season didn't end on Friday night as they claimed a 2-1 win over Helena ([box score](#)) at the Glacier Ice Rink in Missoula, Montana to set up the winner-take-all third game set for Saturday, March 16th at 7:05PM back in Helena, Montana.

The six-division winning squads (Central, Coastal, Frontier, South, Northeast and West) will then head to the [2019 Fraser Cup National Tournament](#) held in Woodridge, Illinois on March 27-31. The national tournament includes two round-robin games for each team followed by two semifinals contests and the championship.

NEXT CONTEST: The #2 Great Falls Americans will travel to Bozeman, Montana for Game 2 on Saturday, March 16th where they will look to eliminate the Bozeman Ice Dogs from the playoffs with a win in the best-of-three Divisional Semi-Finals. The action gets started at 7:30PM from Haynes Pavilion. If a

third and decisive game is needed, it will take place in Great Falls on Sunday evening (March 17th) at 7:30PM from the Great Falls Ice Plex.

To view the 2019 Playoff format and the schedule for the 2019 Fraser Cup Championship tournament, please [click here](#).

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