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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Frontier Semifinal: McSharry's hat trick sends Great Falls to Divisional Finals

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics (Playoffs)
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GREAT FALLS, Mont., March 17, 2019 — The North American 3 Hockey League's Frontier Division Finals are now set.

Both the #1 Great Falls Americans and #2 Helena Bighorns needed three games to dispatch their opponents in the Frontier Divisional Semi-Finals. The Great Falls Americans won the first and third games of their series against the #3 Bozeman Ice Dogs at home. Helena also put away victories in the first and third games but fell in the second contest against the #4 Missoula Junior Bruins.

Payton McSharry scored three of the Americans five goals while Jens Juliussen, the Americans all-time assist leader, produced three assists and goaltender Drew Scites swatted away 23 of the 25 shots that the Ice Dogs made to secure a berth in the 2019 NA3HL Frontier Division Finals set for next week. Great Falls came out on top, 6-2 at the Great Falls Ice Plex on Sunday evening.

A slow scoring first stanza saw Great Falls score the lone goal of the period. Brandon Peterson added one of his two assists on the night and Payton McSharry had one assist to set up Luke Richesin for his first goal of the playoffs and fourth overall.

Seven minutes into the middle period, the Ice Dogs tied the score at 1-1 on a power play from Rhys Phelps to Jaxson Dodds. The tie game last just 35 seconds before the Americans rallied for two goals by Payton McSharry in a 4:22 span. Cody Dearing, Jens Juliussen, Nate Simpson and Great Falls native Braxton Lorenz each assisted to give the home team a 3-1 advantage. Bozeman pulled to within one score (3-2) a few minutes later when Rhys Phelps and Luke Hartge took advantage of the Americans penalty situation to find Daniel Davis for the score over Great Falls goaltender Drew Scites. Payton McSharry secured his hat trick with his third goal of the middle period off the stick of Jens Juliussen, who recorded his second assist. Great Falls' offense took 30 total shots after forty minutes of action on the ice. Bozeman scored their two goals on 25 shots before the second intermission.

The two-goal lead (4-2) in the third frame would expand to a four-goal deficit for the Ice Dogs before the game concluded. Cody Dearing scored his second goal of the playoffs with 5:33 with help from Jens

Juliussen and Brandon Peterson, who registered his second assist of the night. Brody Boyce put the finishing touches with his unassisted scoring drive that came with under a minute to play to ensure the Great Falls home fans would see another home playoff game.

Great Falls had over ten shots in each period to conclude the game with 51. Bozeman was outscored 21-6 in the third to end their season with 31.

Michigan native AJ Ruskowski took his third consecutive loss for Bozeman in the three-game playoff series against Great Falls. He allowed three of the Americans six goals in the second period while accumulating 26 saves in his final contest of the season. Coach Greg Sears's squad utilized goaltender Drew Scites throughout the third game, and he stopped 23 of the 25 shots that he faced.

NOTES: The Bozeman Ice Dogs concluded their 2018-19 season with a record of 29-16-5 on the season for coach Elliot Bates' team. Great Falls won their 40th overall game of the season (40-9-0-1) in 50 contests.

NEXT CONTEST: The top teams (Helena and Great Falls Americans) throughout the 2018-19 season will collide on the ice for a best-of-three Divisional Finals beginning this week. The #1 Helena Bighorns will have the home ice advantage after having the best record in the regular season.

The best-of-three Finals schedule is posted below:

- Thursday, March 21st: Great Falls Americans @ Helena Bighorns, 7:05PM, Helena Ice Arena, Helena, MT (Game 1)
- Friday, March 22nd: Helena Bighorns @ Great Falls Americans, 7:30PM, Great Falls Ice Plex, Great Falls, MT (Game 2)
- Saturday, March 23rd: Great Falls Americans @ Helena Bighorns, 7:05PM, Helena Ice Arena, Helena, MT (Game 3, if necessary)

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.

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

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