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Great Falls Americans Press Release
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Americans come up short in 3-2 setback to Bighorns in road-trip finale

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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HELENA, Mont., March 1, 2019 — One of the most difficult tasks that the #1 Great Falls Americans (37-8-0-1) have faced this season has been trying to earn wins against #2 Helena Bighorns (36-7-0-2) this season.

Great Falls entered the game with a 3-3-0-1 record with two wins (2-1-0-1) coming on home ice at the Great Falls Ice Plex. The final head-to-head meeting is here, and could the Americans find a way pick up their fourth victory against the offense-oriented Bighorns?

The Americans, under first year coach Greg Sears, is led by the duo of Payton McSharry and Jens Juliussen. McSharry leads the team in points with 86 (46 goals, 40 assists) while teammate Jens Juliussen, who is headed to college in Missouri after this season ([see press release](#)), recently broke the record for the Americans for most assists in one season with 60 and counting. He has also lit up the lamp 20 times in 44 games played.

Meanwhile, Hayden Seitz, a forward from Phoenix, Arizona, continues to pace Helena with 35 assists and Elliot Plourde, a Washington native, lead the team in points (70) and goals scored (41) for coach Bob Richards's squad.

Lindros Beard tied the game at 2-2 early in the third period for Great Falls but could not stop a late goal by Helena forward Darren Donovan with 3:12 remaining as the Americans fell to the Bighorns for the fifth time this season, 3-2 during Friday night's NA3HL action at the Helena Ice Arena.

A total of 21 combined shots were taken by both junior hockey squads in the penalty-free first stanza but both defenses stepped up to prevent any scoring.

Cody Dearing, one of six Alaskans on the roster for the visiting Americans, put the first goal of the game in the net with nine minutes left in the second period. His 23rd score of the season came via a power play with assists by team leaders, Jens Juliussen and Payton McSharry. The lead faded quickly as Helena evened up the score (1-1) two minutes later when Helena native Kaden Lindberg racked up his eleventh

goal as Hayden Seitz and Porter Tirrill each collected one assist on the scoring drive. Another Helena product, Justin Sullivan, broke the tie before the second intermission when the puck he controlled sailed through Americans goaltender Drew Scites for the tally. Valary Dietz and Ian Zaleski set up the play while the Americans were called for a minor tripping penalty by George Nuutinen, their first and only penalty of the contest. Despite trailing, Great Falls accrued 28 shots to the Bighorns' 21 after the first forty minutes.

Two minutes into the final period of regulation, Lindros Beard found a way to even the score (2-2) when one of the Americans' 12 shots made it by Bighorns goaltender Alexander Rogers. Ben Rinckey and Garrett Peters picked up the assists. The period went back and forth between the Americans and Bighorns until there was three minutes left when Darren Donovan's slap shot gave Helena the go-ahead score and the eventual game-winner. Great Falls' offense failed to answer as the final minutes ticked away.

Great Falls took more shots in the first two periods (28 total) and finished with 40. Helena accumulated 35 shots with 14 coming in the third period.

The Americans and Bighorns each earned one goal on the power play. The final regular season matchup between these two top teams in the Frontier Division didn't have a lot of stoppages of play. The three total penalties all came during the middle period with six minutes spent in the penalty box.

Alexander Rogers, the goaltender for the Bighorns, ran his record to 17-4 and claimed his fourth win over the Americans this season. The California native amassed 38 saves. Drew Scites, in his second season in the net for Great Falls, posted 32 saves in the loss.

The Americans loss may have cost them the regular season title in the Frontier Division as they lead the Helena Bighorns by a single point (75-74). Great Falls has just one game remaining with a home date on Saturday, March 9th against the Butte Cobras while Helena has two winnable games remaining on their schedule at home against the Missoula Jr. Bruins (March 2nd) followed by their regular season finale against the Butte Cobras (March 8th).

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Ice Plex will be the site of the final NA3HL regular season game of the 2018-19 season for the Great Falls Americans. The Butte Cobras, who will finish out their first season in the North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL), will be their opponent on Saturday, March 9th with the game set to begin at 7:30PM.

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