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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**Americans down the Cobras 4-1 in home opener for sixth victory**

**By Kevin Scott**

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GREAT FALLS, Mont., October 22, 2021 — Welcome Home, Americans!! That is the theme this week as the Great Falls Americans embark on a 3-game home stand that starts this week after having been on the road for the first eleven games of the season due to their home arena ([Great Falls Ice Plex](#)) being repaired since the beginning of September ([see story](#)).

The fourth-ranked Great Falls Americans (6-3-2-1) and the sixth-ranked Butte Cobras (3-7-2-0) tangled on the ice for the first time this season in the Americans much-anticipated home opener tonight.

How have these teams done so far this season?

Great Falls has played their first six weeks of the 2021-22 season on the road. The Americans have won five of their eleven contests with four wins coming against last year's Frontier Division champion, Sheridan (WY) Hawks and a single (4-3) overtime win against the Yellowstone (WY) Quake in their opening weekend on September 11<sup>th</sup> in Cody, Wyoming. In a two-week span (September 11- September 25), Great Falls played and fell short in three overtime games and one shootout setback. Micah Serino (9 goals, 5 assists) and Thomas Gazich (7 goals, 7 assists) pace the Americans with 14 points apiece.

The Cobras are under the direction of first year coach Kirk Golden. The former Great Falls Americans Associate Coach is getting his young team off to a slow start with three victories. Butte has played just two home games (1-1 record) with the other nine away from the Butte Community Ice Center. The Cobras 2-5-2-0 road record includes two overtime losses. They are currently on a three-game slide with two coming against the Bozeman Ice Dogs and one against the Badlands Sabres in the past two weeks. The top player for Butte is Cade Wessman, who leads the team with six goals and nine assists in ten games.

Great Falls has now seen six of the seven other NA3HL Frontier Division teams (except for the newest member of the Frontier Division, the Badlands (SD) Sabres that they will see at the end of November).

During the 2020-21 season, these two Montana foes squared off against each other eight times with Great Falls coming away with seven victories (7-0-0-1). Their lone loss was a 3-2 shootout loss in Butte in January.

The #4 Great Falls Americans offense controlled the puck throughout and defeated the visiting #6 Butte Cobras 4-1 in a NA3HL Frontier Division matchup between two rivals separated by 155 miles during Friday's home opener for Great Falls. The Americans picked up their sixth overall victory and first home win of the season at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Hunter Maschke and Jackson Henningsgard each scored once and had one assist while goaltender Ben Winkler stopped 27 of 28 shots for his second win (2-1-1-0).

The Cobras struck first as Cade Wessman's pass to Caelin Chinery 94 seconds into the first period gave the visiting team the early lead. Jonathan Schoof, a Helena native, also picked up an assist on Butte's first score. The lead wouldn't last long as Hunter Maschke scored the first goal inside the Great Falls Ice Plex of the 2021-22 season for the home team less than a minute later with assistance from Petr Van Voorhis and Jay Alford. A few minutes later, the Americans broke the tie with Joshua Serino's first scoring drive of the season. Hunter Maschke and Jay Alford earned the assists. The first twenty minutes saw a total of 34 shots being taken between these two Montana junior hockey programs.

Tyler Sunagel, last week's NA3HL Star of the Week ([see article](#)) for the week ending October 17<sup>th</sup>, netted his sixth goal of the year eight minutes into the middle frame. Jackson Henningsgard and Noel Rahn both assisted as the Americans took a 3-1 advantage. Jackson Henningsgard, who earned NA3HL Star of the Week Honorable Mention honors for his play last week against the Sheridan (WY) Hawks, added Great Falls' fourth goal with 3:09 remaining off the sticks of Aaron Leaf and Silas Hughes, who each provided their fourth overall assists. Great Falls outscored Butte 2-0 in the period as Great Falls goalie Ben Winkler defended the goal well as he redirected 22 shots-on-goal. The Cobras could not connect on any of their 15 attempts.

Both teams had many opportunities in the third stanza but neither squad was able to put the biscuit in the basket. When the game ended, Great Falls outshot Butte, 62-36 after 60 minutes including 19-8 after the second intermission.

The game officials had a quiet night with their whistles with just five infractions being called with ten minutes spent in the penalty box. Five power play opportunities failed to turn into any goals scored for the Americans and Cobras.

In the eyes of many fans, Great Falls netminder Ben Winkler was the key player of the game for the host team. The Illinois product improved his record to 2-1-1-0 with 27 saves accumulated on the night while allowing one first period goal. In five appearances, he has 196 saves and a 0.929 save percentage.

Caleb Cross, Butte's first year goaltender, lost for the fifth time in eight games played (3-4-1-0). The Mankato, Minnesota native recorded 58 saves and allowed four goals in two periods despite holding the Americans scoreless in the final period of regulation.

**NOTES:** Due to a transportation issue with the Butte Cobras bus, tonight's game was moved to 8:05PM (MST) instead of 7:30PM (MST). The Americans and Cobras game tonight was supposed to be broadcast on HockeyTV but the streaming service was having technical difficulties. Hockey TV's Megan Lewis

broadcast the second and third periods through [Facebook Live via the Great Falls Americans Hockey Facebook page](#).

Here is the Facebook Live links to watch: [Second Period](#) | [Third Period](#).

**NEXT CONTEST:** Great Falls will be at home for two of their next three games next week. On Thursday, October 28th, the Cobras make a return trip to the Electric City for a showdown with the Americans followed by Friday night's (October 29<sup>th</sup>) contest against the Bozeman Ice Dogs. Both home games commence at 7:30PM (MST) from the Great Falls Ice Plex. Great Falls will round out the week by playing the Butte Cobras at the Butte Community Ice Center at 7:00PM (MST) on Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. All games can be seen live on [HockeyTV](#).

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