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Great Falls Americans Press Release

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Americans need a shootout to get past the Cobras to snap five game skid

By Kevin Scott

Box Score	Game Sheet	League Scoreboard	Americans Team Statistics
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BUTTE, Mont., January 23, 2021 — The Great Falls Americans (17-10-1-0), the second-ranked team in the NA3HL's Frontier Division behind the Sheridan (WY) Hawks, started out the 2020-21 season with eleven consecutive wins in October and most of November. But have since won just six games.

Great Falls started January 2021 with a 2-5-1-0 record with the two victories coming against the Helena Bighorns and the Butte Cobras. The last two weekends (Jan. 8-9, Jan. 15-16), Great Falls fell to the top-ranked team in the Frontier Division and the NA3HL, the Sheridan (WY) Hawks (22-1-0-0) in all four contests played. On January 4th, the Missoula Junior Bruins (16-8-2-0), third in the Frontier Division, defeated Great Falls 7-5 and defeated them 5-4 in overtime on New Year's Day.

Tonight, Great Falls was looking to break their five-game losing streak when they traveled down the interstate to Butte, Montana to face the Cobras. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and some ice-related issues with their home arena, the Butte Community Ice Center, Great Falls hasn't played (until tonight) in that venue this year. Entering tonight's divisional matchup, Great Falls is 4-0-0-0 during their meetings with the eighth-place Cobras (4-21-2-1) this season. The Americans have outscored their opponent from Butte, 24-5 with the closest game coming on Thanksgiving weekend (Nov. 27) when the home team besting the Cobras, 3-2 in overtime.

Since December 31st, Great Falls has made some roster changes by adding five players and releasing four players. The Americans are confident that the new additions with help for the final seven weeks of the NA3HL's regular season and into the playoffs when the middle of March arrives.

The #2 Great Falls Americans and the #8 Butte Cobras needed a shootout to declare a winner as the Americans needed goals from Connor Doyle and Alex Jackson in the shootout to pick up their 17th victory on Saturday evening in Butte, Montana. The 3-2 win by the Americans snapped their five -game losing streak.

Lucas Gudz, who came over this week in a trade from the Sheridan (WY) Hawks, scored his first goal with Great Falls 17:49 into the first period as Alex Jackson and Henry Chavez set up the newcomer. Gudz scored his ninth goal of the season after lighting up the lamp eight times and dishing out four assists for Sheridan this season. The Wasilla, Alaska product also spent time with the St. Louis Jr. Blues during the 2020-21 campaign. Butte's Kyler Garsjo waited until there was one second remaining to even the score for the Cobras. Robin Bagley and Randy Yeakley denied the Americans the lead after the first stanza.

After assisting on the first period score, forward Alex Jackson scored the lone goal for either team in the middle period. The Wisconsin standout currently leads the team in goals scored with 16. Henry Chavez received his second assist of the game and 15th overall while Lucas Gudz added his first assist for Great Falls (fifth overall this season). The visiting squad led 2-1 as the second period ended and accumulated 30 shots (15 in each period). Butte took 21 shots during the first forty minutes.

The Cobras tied up their first (official) home game against Great Falls midway through the third frame when Washington natives Zane Cluphf and Kyle Chambers found Nick Decarlo for his first scoring drive of the season. Despite 26 total shots accrued by both offenses, neither team was able to find the back of the net and a five-minute extra period was necessary.

The game could not be settled during the overtime so both teams had to prepare for a shootout.

Four skaters from each team participated in the shootout, where each player gets one chance to go one-on-one with the opposing goaltender. Connor Doyle and Alex Jackson all successfully scored while Lucas Gudz and Henry Chavez missed on their attempts for Great Falls. Robin Bagley scored over Americans netminder Trever Mellen, but Nick Bradshaw, Kyler Garsjo, and Zane Cluphf were each denied.

The Americans managed to create 51 shots and converted three scoring drives in the win. Butte took 13 of their 34 shots before the first intermission.

The game clock moved quickly throughout each period with just six total minor penalties being called between both foes. All six infractions came during the second and third stanzas. Butte's game-tying third period goal by Nick Decarlo was the only power play opportunity of the night.

Alex Jackson and Lucas Gudz led the Americans with two points each (1 goal, 1 assist). The Cobras saw Nick Decarlo and Kyler Garsjo score the goals for the host team.

Trever Mellen (Great Falls) and Tommy Near (Butte) played in the net for the entire 65 minutes for their prospective teams. Mellen amassed 32 saves for his 15th victory in 20 games. Mellen's counterpart, Near stopped 48 of the 50 shots by Great Falls' offense. Tommy Near suffered his sixth loss (first shootout setback) and his record went to 2-5-0-1 in his first season with the team.

NOTES: In related news, the Great Falls Community Ice Foundation (www.gf-ice-org) recently presented their master plan for the Americans home venue, the Great Falls Ice Plex. They are hoping to launch their capital campaign to raise money for some extensive improvements to Great Falls' only ice facility. The improvements will happen over the next several years (if enough money is raised) in six phases with priorities set by the GFCIF Board of Directors. The improvements will make the GF Ice Plex a preferred destination for hockey tournaments, skating competitions and other year-round events including concerts and expositions. [Click here](#) to read more about the fundraising efforts and how you can [click](#)

[here to donate](#)) make this a reality. Fans can also read the article on the Great Falls Americans website by [clicking here](#).

Also, according to Great Falls Americans team owner, Jim Keough, the Great Falls Americans will now allow up to **250 fans** starting with this upcoming week's games against the Yellowstone Quake. Since the November 21st home game against Missoula, no spectators were allowed due to the Cascade County Health Board's strict COVID-19 guidelines to help slow down the pandemic.

NEXT CONTEST: The Great Falls Americans are slated to return to the Great Falls Ice Plex after having a two-week road trip to Sheridan, Wyoming (two games) against the Hawks and Butte, Montana for a single game against the Cobras. The Yellowstone Quake (Cody, WY) will make their annual trip to Great Falls for a two-game series on Friday (January 29th) and Saturday (January 30th) to close out the month. Both games begin at 7:30PM (MST) and can be seen on the NA3HL's streaming service, [HockeyTV](#). The Americans will have just three more home games during the regular season coming near the end of February ([click here](#) for the home schedule).

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