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**Great Falls Americans Press Release**

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**Americans fall short in comeback bid to the Bighorns**

**By Kevin Scott**

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HELENA, Mont., October 8, 2021 — The #3 Great Falls Americans (3-2-2-1) are five weeks into the 2021-22 North American 3 Hockey League (NA3HL) junior hockey season and have yet to see the confines of their home arena. At the end of August, officials at the Great Falls Ice Plex found some leaking pipes in their heating exchange system (the pipes that run the coolant under the ice that is necessary to hold the temperature for making and sustain ice through the season) prior to setting up the ice for the season ([see story](#)).

Great Falls has won three of their seven games with three of them decided in either a five-minute overtime or a shootout. The wins have taken place in Cody, WY (4-3 win in overtime to the Yellowstone Quake on September 11<sup>th</sup> and last weekend (Oct. 1-2), they took down the defending Frontier Division champion, Sheridan (WY) Hawks in a weekend sweep in Sheridan, WY by identical 4-2 scores. Great Falls is led by returning forward Micah Serino, who is currently the Americans teams' leader in points with (7 goals, 4 assists, 11 pts.).

Great Falls' opponent tonight and closest rival, the Helena Bighorns (just 90 miles separates them on Interstate 15), have won all six of their previous games and is sitting in one spot in front of Great Falls (7-0-0-0) in the NA3HL Frontier Division standings as of October 7<sup>th</sup>. The Bighorns won their first two games of the season by identical 10-0 over Sheridan. Damon Hanson, a former assistant with Helena, took over the reins this season on the bench. Hanson has guided his much-improved squad with two victories over the Yellowstone Quake and a win each over the Butte Cobras and the Bozeman Ice Dogs. The Bighorns are led by last year's netminder, Anthony Adleman, who is #6 in the league with a 3-0-0-0 record. Newcomer and Colorado native Samuel Feamster currently in second in the entire NA3HL in points scored with 20 (12 goals in six appearances).

Who would pull out the win between the #2 Helena Bighorns and the #3 Great Falls Americans and would the visiting team pull off the upset?

Despite a valiant effort, the #3 Great Falls Americans could not overcome a four-goal second period by the #2 Helena Bighorns and came up short in a 6-4 setback at the Helena Ice Arena on Friday night in their first meeting of the season between these two rivals.

Both offenses defenses kept their opponent from scoring during the first 17 minutes of the first period. During a 36-second span before the period expired, Helena scored twice with forwards Eric Gibboney and Tylor Greene adding goals to their hockey resumes. Helena native Tyler Bloom and Fort McMurray, Alberta's Gavyn Galloway were each awarded assists on Gibboney's score with 2:20 remaining. A pair of Colorado Springs, Colorado native Liam Bland and Taber Gutschick accrued assists on Tylor Greene's goal. Both goals by the Bighorns came while the Americans were down a man. Bland was a prominent player on last year's Missoula (MT) Junior Bruins team that moved in the offseason to Rapid City, South Dakota and are now called the Badlands Sabres. Helena doubled up on Great Falls (22-11) in the shots-on-goal category.

Helena's offense continued to add more goals early in the middle period. Helena standouts Andrew MacCallum, Tyler Alldrege and Adam Harvey each put the biscuit in the basket during the first three minutes and gave the home team a five-goal advantage. Gavyn Galloway had two assists while Eric Gibboney, Andrew MacCallum, Wyatt Barton, and Logan Matheny each had one. After Tyler Alldrege's goal, the Americans switched out goaltenders as starter Zac Hattan was replaced by Will Simpson. Great Falls' Thomas Gazich secured his sixth goal when he drove the puck by Helena netminder Anthony Adleman for the visiting teams' first scoring drive of the game with assistance from Micah Serino and Hunter Maschke. The score was made possible when Helena was in the penalty box. Great Falls cut the deficit to 5-2 when AJ Benit, thanks to a pass from Tyler Sunagel and Petr Van Voorhis, lit up the lamp with eight minutes remaining. The home team would tack on one more goal before the second intermission as Liam Bland scored his fifth goal with helpers from Tylor Greene and Samuel Feamster. Great Falls needed 21 shots to accrue two goals while Helena produced 34 shots and four goals.

Great Falls found themselves trailing 6-2 after Helena scored four times during the middle stanza as the squads entered the final period of regulation. The Americans added two goals late in the third, but it was not enough as Helena's defense stymied the offensive attack during the twenty-minute period. Two Americans registered first-time goals this season including Billings native Patrick Crooks and Wisconsin's Tyler Sunagel. Assisting on Great Falls' third and fourth goals were Thomas Dalsin, Jay Alford, Thomas Gazich and Jackson Henningsgard.

The winning team took 34 shots after the first intermission to finish with 66. After just taking eleven shots in the opening period, Great Falls combined for 38 in the final forty minutes of play to end their night with 49.

Each period saw some stoppages of play as both teams combined for 20 infractions with 43 minutes of penalty time spent off the rink. A total of 18 power play opportunities occurred but only three were successful. Helena's two first period goals by Eric Gibboney and Tylor Greene and Great Falls' Thomas Gazich's score in the second period to put the Americans on the board were the only goals made while the opposing team was in the sin bin.

Anthony Adleman (Bighorns) won his third game in three appearances and his first in the month of October by acquiring 45 saves in 60 minutes. Zac Hattan started the contest in the net for Great Falls and lasted 23 minutes after allowing four goals by the host team. Backup goalie Will Simpson finished the final

37 minutes allowing two goals and 25 saves. Simpson's loss put his record at 1-2-0-1.

**NEXT CONTEST:** Great Falls and Helena will tangle once more on the ice on Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup> with a 7:05PM (MST) start from the Helena Ice Arena in their second head-to-head meeting of the 2021-22 season. Fans that will not be able to make it in person to Montana's Capital City of Helena will be able to catch all of the action on the NA3HL's streaming service, [HockeyTV](#) with a paid subscription ([see subscription details](#)).

**GREAT FALLS ICE PLEX UPDATE:** To follow the frequent updates on the Great Falls Ice Plex repairs, please "Like" their page and check out the Great Falls Ice Plex Facebook page by [clicking here](#).

The Americans will make their home debut on Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> when the Butte Cobras come into town for a 7:30PM (MST) showdown at the Great Falls Ice Plex. Stay tuned to the Great Falls Americans website for details in the coming week.

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