

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.10.18 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



Mark Mauno photo

DALLAS SNIPERS (7-20-0, 14pts)
WSHLDallasSnipers.pointstreaksites.com
[@DallasSnipers](https://twitter.com/DallasSnipers)

The Dallas Snipers played well for most of their series against Springfield last weekend, and were hoping to build some momentum heading into the second half of the season, but ultimately fell short in all three games with the Express.

The Snipers had seven different goal scorers on the weekend with Karsten Portell scoring three times. Dallas opened the scoring in the first game but fell behind, 4-0, in Sunday's 7-3 loss.

Sunday saw its share of second-period fisticuffs and both teams amassed 109 total PIMs in the game.

The Snipers started strong in Friday's game, taking leads of 1-0 and 3-2, but the Express scored five unanswered goals to win that game.

The Snipers are being led with consistent play by Alex Hladonik (14-26-40), Sterling Cooper (16-23-39), and Jaroslav Vasicek (13-22-35), and five Dallas skaters have double digit goals.

Dallas got strong play from their goaltenders with Rafael Goncalves making 81 saves total in Friday and Sunday's games. Manny Legace stopped 33 shots on Saturday.

A trip to Missouri this weekend for a re-match with Springfield gives the Snipers a chance to apply what they learned last week, and maybe catch a break, and pick up some points from the Express.

EL PASO RHINOS (32-1-0, 64pts)

www.EIPasoRhinos.com

@El_Paso_Rhinos

Coming off an appearance at the Western States Shootout that saw them play in three straight tight games, and suffer their first loss of the season, the Rhinos opened the second half with a bang, sweeping three games from the Wichita Jr. Thunder, and out-scoring them 32-0 for the weekend.

Maguire Blair impressed in his first series with El Paso, scoring five goals against the Jr. Thunder. The Rhinos also welcomed new goalie Trevor Buckmeier who earned the shutout in his first start.

El Paso's #1 goalie, Filip Krasanovsky, continued his MVP-type season. He earned an assist and the shutout – his seventh this season – on Sunday.

It is going to be difficult for anybody to catch the Rhinos with six games apiece against Wichita and Dallas still remaining on their schedule but, if anybody can do it, it is the Oklahoma City Blazers.

The Rhinos go into OKC this weekend with a 14-point lead over the Blazers and can pretty much sew up the division title by winning the series – even if the Blazers do have four games in hand.

Forward Chaseton Sare (29-32-61) who did not play against Wichita, last scored in Vegas, surpassing Marcus Wilhite for second on the franchise all-time goals scored list with 79 career goals.

Sare (169) is chasing Wilhite (191) for second in all-time points and for second all-time in assists with Sare's 90 just 23 back of Wilhite's 113.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (25-4-0, 50pts)

www.OKCityHockey.com

@OKCBlazersWSHL

The Oklahoma City Blazers scheduled an additional week off after going 2-1-0 in Vegas against some stiff competition. OKC beat some good teams in Ogden and Idaho, but fell short to Utah in the final game of the showcase.

This weekend, the Blazers play El Paso for a chance to make some headway in the standings. If Oklahoma City can close the gap this weekend, and put their games in hand to good use, they could still make it a two-team race for the division title.

Also, given the Blazers schedule the rest of the way this season, it's feasible they win out after El Paso, so robbing some points from the Rhinos this weekend will go a long way in the final standings.

The Blazers play seven straight games against Springfield – all in Missouri – beginning at the end of this month. The Express don't lay down easy for teams and they'll be gunning for OKC just as the Blazers are gunning for the Rhinos.

Oklahoma City is scoring the most goals per game in the Mid-Western Division (7.7) while allowing only 2.1 per game.

Look for those numbers to improve as the Blazers face off with teams behind them in the standings after El Paso.

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS (14-12-6, 34pts)

www.SpringfieldExpress.com

@SGFExpress

Springfield fended off an upstart Dallas team, pulling out wins late after being either down or tied against the Snipers in all three games.

Romanian forward Akos Szigeti scored five goals against Dallas including a hat trick on Friday, and Stephane Doering scored a 3-7-10 line including a playmaker on Friday and Sunday.

Connor Green and Chad Purdy split time in net, each playing a game and a half. Green made 41 saves in his time and Purdy made 32 saves against Dallas.

Nikita Sokov's 2-7-9 line against Dallas now has him with a season total of 20-29-49 on the year, leading the Express.

As we head into the second half of the season, the Express only play three more teams – granted they play them six times each. From here on out, it's Dallas, Wichita, and Oklahoma City for the Express.

It would seem nearly impossible for Springfield to move up or down in the division standings as they enter play this weekend 16 points behind second-place OKC and 20 points up on fourth-place Dallas.

At the end of the month, Springfield opens up a seven-game homestand with Oklahoma City that will serve as an excellent tune-up for the playoffs and could go a long to showing how far this young team has come this season.

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (3-27-0, 6pts)

www.WichitaJuniorThunder.com

@JrThunderHockey

Wichita was shut out in three games against El Paso over the weekend, continuing what has been a challenging season for the defending Thorne Cup champs. The Jr. Thunder just couldn't get pucks on the net against the league's best team.

Head Coach Rob Weingartner has stressed that this season is about his young kids learning how to play and turning this season into the necessary experiences for success in the future. This process has worked before with Weingartner, with the team having a similar season not long ago before winning it all last season.

There will be plenty of learning opportunities for Wichita as their schedule is Mid-Western only through the end of the season, including six more contests with El Paso and three with OKC, the top two teams in the division.

The Jr. Thunder will be off this weekend before taking on Springfield in two weeks.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media