

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.19.17 – WESTERN DIVISION



FRESNO MONSTERS (17-14-1, 35 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

The Fresno Monsters' rivalry with Long Beach continued last week as Fresno dropped the first two games in another intense three-game set before claiming two points with a 7-3 victory.

Overall, the Monsters earned three of six possible points in the series. They lost the opening matchup by a 3-2 final in a shootout.

Czech backstop Adam Barvik has been a staple between the Fresno pipes this season. The 20-year-old rookie, playing his first season in North America, has compiled a 3.46/.909 slash line with one shutout over 24 appearances.

Even though Kyle Franceshini and Max Karlenzig have both proven to be more than capable of manning the Monsters' net, head coach Kevin Kaminski

has kept Barvik in his starting role because of his overall talent and consistency.

Fresno will continue a tough stretch with three games in Valencia. The series began Thursday, when the Monsters won 5-4 in overtime, and will continue into the weekend.

The Monsters recently announced plans to bring hockey back to Selland Arena in downtown Fresno. The team currently plays at Gateway Ice Center, about a 10-minute drive from Selland, which is the former home of the ECHL's Fresno Falcons.

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (22-6-3, 47 pts)

@LBBombersHockey

www.JrBombers.org

The Long Beach Bombers enjoyed a solid weekend, taking two of three against Fresno at The Rinks in Lakewood, California.

After winning the first two games, the Bombers struggled to close out the series and lost by four goals, giving them just their second regulation loss of the year on home ice.

"I was pleased with our ability to come from behind in all three games, but our special teams were terrible, and we allowed the first goal in each game," said Long Beach Head Coach Chris White. "We also gave up untimely goals and the saw the same players on the ice for goals against."

White has watched his team struggle since the calendar hit December, dropping six of its last nine games. He knows there's still plenty of work to be done.

"Our execution has been lacking, and we need to get on the right path if we're going to be where we want to be," he added.

Forward Parker Moskal (20-25-45) is riding a 15-game point streak that dates back to late October. The San Diego native has had a great rookie season after taking last year off. He has yet to register a hat trick this year, but has logged 13 multi-point contests and is fourth on the team in points.

Fellow rookies Miroslav Rohlik (29-26-55) and Artem Korolev (19-34-53) are first and second, respectively, on the team in scoring. That speaks to the

ability of White and his coaching staff to recruit elite talent year in and year out.

On Friday night, Long Beach will begin a six-game road trip that will take them through San Diego and Tahoe. With five wins over San Diego, the Bombers have yet to lose to the Sabers and will be taking on Tahoe for the first and only time this season.

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (20-10-1, 41 pts)

@TmOntAvs

www.OntarioAvalanche.com

Despite being tested by San Diego, the Ontario Avalanche rattled off three consecutive road victories over the Sabers last weekend.

The sweep pushed the Avalanche to second place in the Western Division, two points ahead of third-place Valencia and six points back of division-leading Long Beach.

With a pair of assists in the third San Diego game, leading scorer Jesse Zaharichuk became the first Avs player to reach 50 points, with an 18-32-50 line.

The 20-year-old has brought valuable experience to Ontario after playing in the Western Hockey League for each of the past three seasons. He has put up at least one point in 27 of his 30 appearances, including a six-point performance back on December 7.

If Long Beach continues its recent struggles, the Avs could quietly take over as division leaders later in the second half, even though Long Beach and Ontario will only play two more times during the regular season.

But the Avalanche can't afford to look ahead. They need to focus on their three-game set in Phoenix against the surprising Knights this weekend.

PHOENIX KNIGHTS (15-19-2, 32 pts)

@PhoenixKnightsJrA

www.PhoenixKnightsHockey.com

The Phoenix Knights clawed out a win over one of the best teams in the division last week, defeating Valencia 5-3 after losing the first two games of the series to the Flyers.

Winning on the road is tough, but winning in Valencia is even more difficult. The victory served as further validation for a Knights club that has proven it can compete against the stacked Western Division following an ugly start to the first half.

Forward Andrius Bermejo had one of his best series of the season, posting a hat trick in one game and figuring in four of five Phoenix goals in the final contest after being held off the scoresheet in the opening matchup.

Bermejo's scoring line now stands at 12-19-31, second-best on the club. He's also tied for second in penalty minutes with 70.

Because of their frontloaded schedule, the Knights have played more games than any other team in the division. Phoenix has already played 36 contests, while San Diego has played the second most with 33. No other club has played more than 31 games.

Phoenix has five three-game series left on its schedule, three of which will be played on home ice. The two road sets will not be easy, as the Knights will battle Fresno and Long Beach in hostile territory.

Overall, Phoenix has one of the most difficult second-half schedules in the league, which is attributable to their talented division. With one series left against each of their five division rivals, the Knights are guaranteed to play against whichever club that will end up being their first-round playoff matchup.

SAN DIEGO SABERS (3-27-3, 8 pts)

@sdsabershockey

www.SanDiegoSabersHockey.com

When a team plays six competitive games in a row, odds are they usually will win at least a couple of those matchups. But that hasn't been the case for the San Diego Sabers, who have gone winless through the first six games of their nine-game homestand.

The Sabers have been playing solid hockey, but their Western Division opponents have proven to be too much. In last weekend's series against Ontario, the Sabers lost by scores of 5-2, 4-3, and 4-2, pushing their losing streak to seven.

San Diego showed it is more talented than most other last-place teams at the Western States Shootout. One of the few bright spots for the Sabers has been

their power play, which is operating at a 22.5% clip and ranks top 10 in the league.

San Diego has collected 32 goals on the man advantage, which is also within the top 10. In fact, more than 40 percent of its total goals have been scored on the power play.

The Sabers close out their homestand this weekend as they welcome Long Beach to town for three games. It marks the last regular-season series of the season between the two clubs.

VALENCIA FLYERS (19-10-1, 39 pts)

@valenciaflyers

www.ValenciaFlyers.com

Early in the season, the Valencia Flyers established themselves as the central threat to Long Beach's shot at a division title. The goal of winning the division remains, but the Flyers have struggled since the end of November.

Valencia took four of six possible points from Phoenix last weekend to get back on track following a relatively quiet showing at the WSHL Showcase.

Goaltender Spencer Kozlowski recorded his first shutout of the season in the first game of the series, putting aside 33 Knights shots.

The Flyers' offense erupted for nine goals last Saturday to win the second game before falling by a 5-3 score on Sunday.

Following a few weeks' worth of anticipation, veteran Jacob Kranabetter (22-56-78) tied the WSHL all-time assist record when he hit 210 career helpers last weekend against Phoenix. With one more assist, he will be all alone at the top of the list.

The records and milestones continue to pile up for Kranabetter, who broke the Flyers' franchise goal-scoring record with the 91st tally of his career on Thursday night in Valencia's overtime loss to Fresno.

The Fresno series will continue into the weekend with games on Friday and Saturday evenings. After that, Valencia will take on San Diego, Fresno, and Ontario over the course of three days next weekend.

--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media