

# WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 1.04.18 – NORTHWEST DIVISION



**BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (11-13-3, 25 pts)**  
[www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com](http://www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com)  
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The Bellingham Blazers are back for the second half of the season this weekend as they take on West Sound in a home-and-home series beginning Friday night at Bellingham Sportsplex.

The Blazers are coming off a successful Western States Showcase that saw them log victories over the CPJHL White Team and Dallas before falling to Phoenix in their third and final contest.

"I thought we played very well in the Showcase," said Bellingham Head Coach Mark Collins. "Game one we played simple and smart hockey, and in the second game we started to have a lot of different things click.

"The first half we played very well, and the second half we kind of sat back a little bit too much."

In their last game in Las Vegas, the Blazers were up against some unfortunate circumstances at no fault of their own.

"I knew the last game was going to be bad because the bus was late picking us up," said Collins. "We only arrived 10 minutes before warm-ups and didn't have the time to prepare for the game. The boys tried their best knowing full well we didn't have our 'A' game."

Bellingham is looking to make a jump in the division standings during the home stretch of the regular season. As of now, it is firmly cemented into fourth place in the division, six points ahead of Seattle but eight points behind Tahoe.

"We were starting to play better hockey prior to the Showcase, and I think it showed in the first couple of games," Collins continued. "We now have to try to carry the momentum into the second half."

"It is not going to be easy, as we have some tough trips coming up. This will be a good test for us to see where we're at."

### **IDAHO ICECATS (22-4-1, 45 pts)**

[www.IdaholceCats.com](http://www.IdaholceCats.com)

The Idaho IceCats faced one of the tougher schedules at the Western States Shootout. They opened with a very impressive win, but finished with a 1-2-0 mark after dropping their last two games.

Idaho opened the event with a 3-2 win in one of the most highly-anticipated match-ups of the showcase. Russell Haren scored with 0:01 left on the clock to give the IceCats a 3-2 win over the previously-undefeated El Paso Rhinos. Tyler Matthews stopped all 13 shots he faced in the second half and 27 of 29 overall. Lance Herring scored both of the Idaho goals in the first half.

The IceCats' tough slate continued the next morning with a 10:15 a.m. game against Oklahoma City. Idaho fought hard but eventually fell by a 2-1 final in what was one of the better games of the tournament.

Idaho closed out its Showcase schedule with a 3-0 loss to Colorado. It was a defensive battle that saw the IceCats manage just 20 shots on Eagles' goaltender Brandon Lajoie, who posted his second shutout of the season.

Idaho is still in a great position in the Northwest Division. It has built a 10-point lead at the top of the division, with multiple games in hand on West Sound and Tahoe, the second- and third-place clubs in the Northwest, respectively.

Idaho will remain on holiday break until next weekend, when it welcomes West Sound to town for a three-game set. The first two games will be played at Manchester Ice Centre, but the final contest will take place at CenturyLink Arena, home of the Idaho Steelheads.

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (8-15-3, 19 pts)**

[www.SeattleJrTotems.com](http://www.SeattleJrTotems.com)

@SeattleJrTotems

The Seattle Totems looked lost through their first couple of games at the WSHL Showcase, but were able to rebound for a 4-3 win over the CPJHL Red Team in their last game in Vegas.

The Totems lost 6-1 against Casper and 8-4 against Phoenix, so getting the win in their third game was crucial. It could give head coach Mike Murphy's squad a confidence boost as it heads into a stretch of seven games over the next two weeks.

Seattle's only game this weekend will come Sunday night against West Sound, but it will be back in action on Wednesday night at home against Bellingham before taking on the Blazers in a two-game set next weekend.

As expected, forwards Tom Ignatovich (23-19-42) and Michael Shippee (17-30-47) impressed in front of numerous college coaches. Ignatovich put up a line of 1-4-5 while Shippee collected a pair of goals and three assists.

The Totems have plenty of ground to make up. After a strong start that propelled them to the top spot in the division, they began an extended skid of futility that saw them fall all the way to fifth place, just three points out of last.

It will take a lot to get back into the thick of things in the division, but Seattle has proven it can win in this league. After all, it recorded a seven-game point streak early in the season.

The top two seeds in the Northwest will receive first-round byes in the playoffs, while the third and fourth seeds will have home-ice advantage in the opening round. A bye might be a little too much to ask for at this point, but the Totems can realistically set their sights on a top-four finish.

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (8-24-0, 16 pts)**

[www.SOSpartans.com](http://www.SOSpartans.com)

[@wshlspartans](https://twitter.com/wshlspartans)

The Southern Oregon Spartans' performance at the Western States Shootout proved something that many suspected throughout the first half: the Spartans' poor record is a reflection of their difficult division, not a byproduct of a lack of talent on their roster.

Southern Oregon dominated its weak Showcase schedule, with blowout wins over cellar-dwelling teams such as Cheyenne, Wichita, and San Diego.

This comes after the Spartans defeated Seattle two consecutive nights the weekend before the Showcase. Now riding a five-game winning streak, Southern Oregon's outlook on its season has to have changed significantly.

Forward Yanneck Kumli (11-13-24) has emerged as one of the Spartans' top scoring options during the winning streak.

Kumli, 20, joined Southern Oregon after appearing in seven games for Ogden early in the season. The Swiss native failed to record a point over his first 10 games with the Spartans, but he has figured things out in a big way.

Kumli has scored a point in 10 of his last 11 games, including a 5-6-11 showing over three games in Las Vegas that served as a statement to the rest of the Northwest Division.

Those five games were played over the course of seven days. It's possible the heavy workload helped the Spartans develop a rhythm as they played a game almost every day.

Unfortunately, Southern Oregon has one of the longest holiday breaks of any WSHL team, with no games from December 22 through January 18.

The Spartans' second-half schedule begins January 19 as they play the first of three contests against West Sound. The series marks the beginning of an eight-game homestand, which will also see Southern Oregon take on Idaho and Seattle.

### **TAHOE ICEMEN (15-15-3, 33 pts)**

[www.Tahoelcemen.com](http://www.Tahoelcemen.com)

[@Tahoelcemen](https://twitter.com/Tahoelcemen)

The Tahoe Icemen dropped two of three games at the WSHL Showcase and now sit at .500 as they head into the second half of the campaign.

In their lone win, the Icemen needed overtime to defeat the CPJHL Red Team. Tahoe lost games against Fresno and Superior.

Ilija Cetvertak stood out at the Showcase with a pair of goals and five helpers over three games to improve his scoring line to 14-20-34. Overall, Cetvertak figured in seven of the Icemen's nine goals in Las Vegas.

Tahoe is another club that will have to wait a couple more weeks to begin play. The Icemen are not scheduled to play a game until they take on Seattle in a three-game set January 19-21.

Following the Seattle series, Tahoe will play nine consecutive games on home ice, a season high. It will be a difficult homestand with games against Long Beach, Idaho, and Southern Oregon, which has played like a contender as of late.

The Icemen were able to maintain a top-three spot in the division throughout the first half. They are just two points behind second-place West Sound, though they have played three more games than the Warriors.

The battle between Tahoe and West Sound could be something to watch during the final few months of the season. Both clubs will be vying for the coveted first-round playoff bye that comes with the second seed.

### **WEST SOUND WARRIORS (17-12-1, 35 pts)**

[www.WestSoundWarriors.com](http://www.WestSoundWarriors.com)

@WS\_Warriors

The West Sound Warriors are one of just two Northwest Division clubs that went undefeated at this year's Western States Shootout. The Warriors earned wins over the CPJHL Red Team, Fresno, and Springfield.

An undefeated Showcase is a great way to rebound from a pair of losses to sub-.500 Bellingham during the final week of the first half. Over its last 10 games, West Sound has been perfect other than its two losses to the Blazers.

A huge part of the Warriors' success has been their ability to win in enemy territory. Their 9-5-1 record away from home is noticeably better than their 8-7-0 mark at Bremerton Ice Center.

Eight of West Sound's first 10 games of the second half will take place in opposing arenas, which could bode well for the Warriors.

West Sound will get back to work this Friday night as it looks to exact revenge against Bellingham on the road before finishing up the home-and-home series on Saturday night in front of their hometown fans. The weekend will be capped off on Sunday afternoon as Seattle comes to town for a single-game matchup.

It's possible the Warriors will have two 50-point scorers after the weekend. Erik Safstrom (21-35-56) has already surpassed the half-century mark, and leading goal-scorer Harri Koll (26-19-45) needs just five more points to reach the milestone.

--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media