

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.28.18 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

CASPER COYOTES (16-32-0, 32 pts)

www.caspercoyotes.com

@CasperCoyotes

The Casper Coyotes were swept in a four-game set this past weekend on the road in Superior against the team they will visit in the first round of the WSHL playoffs. The Coyotes still managed to score 11 goals against their Mountain Division rivals and kept the games close throughout – a nice preview for when these two teams square off with their seasons on the line in a few weeks.

Thursday's game was played as a Casper home game, making up for a cancelled game from early in the season.

Eliot Bergbauer scored two goals against the RoughRiders, bringing his ten-game Casper totals to 5-3-8.

David Pokorny went 2-2-4 over the weekend bringing his line up to a 9-8-17 in just 15 games with the 'Yotes.

Bradley Green leads the team with 26-27-46 totals including his 1-2-3 line against Superior.

Goaltender Dylan Ossachuk has orchestrated some pretty great games for the 'Yotes of late, and while his 94 saves this weekend still came up short, he'll be the key when these two squads meet in the playoffs.

Casper found some hot play heading into the Western States Shootout in Vegas, but hit a few walls with games against the WSHL's elite squads. Still, if they can continue to be a tough out, and Ossachuk can stand on his head, this first round series between these two teams could be one worth watching.

In the meantime, Casper will finish their regular season in Oklahoma taking on the Blazers of the Mid-Western Division.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-48-0, 4 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

Cheyenne awaits their first-round opponent, hoping that Colorado and Ogden beat each other up this weekend as it will likely be one of them facing off with the 'Stamps in round one.

It was a long season for Cheyenne who were unable to earn a victory at home, but managed to play some entertaining hockey in front of their loyal fans. So much so, that they are in the running for Best Local Sports Team.

Logan Syrup ended the season as the team leader with a 14-8-22 line while four other players finished with 13 points – Alec Sara (5-8-13), Hakan Salt (4-9-13), George Leech (6-7-13), Evgenii Bastrakov (6-7-13).

The time off will give the 'Stamps time to heal and recuperate for the playoffs while also scouting their first-round opponent.

Cheyenne has posted some great action photos from some of this season's games on their Twitter. You can view the photos by visiting @StampsHockey.

COLORADO EAGLES (32-9-7, 71 pts)

www.coloradojunioreagles.com

@COJrEagles

Fighting for a first-round bye, the Colorado Jr. Eagles earned three of a possible six points against the Mountain Division's current top team – Utah. It was an important series for Colorado as they now play their final series against Ogden, the team tied with the Jr. Eagles for second place in the Mountain Division.

The Mountain Division has not disappointed all season.

The Jr. Eagles made some significant moves at the trade deadline to add to their already deep squad and now is the time for those moves to pay off.

After being shut out in the first game against Utah, Colorado fought back on Saturday with goals from newcomer Dawson Keay (5-3-8 in 9 games w/ COL), Joseph Roach, and Vincent Mastrandrea.

Braden LaJoie made 32 saves on Saturday for his 22nd win – third most in the WSHL.

LaJoie stood tall again in the rubber match, stopping 35 shots, but the team ultimately fell in double OT earning the needed point in the standings. LaJoie is sporting an impressive 2.27/.920 line this season.

Cory Richardson's goal and two assists this weekend moved him into a tie with Carter Dahl at 49 points for the team lead.

The Jr. Eagles will now travel back to Utah to close out the season against the Mustangs in Ogden. Both teams are tied in the standings, and Ogden has more wins, so Colorado must win at least two games – one of which has to be in regulation – to earn the first round bye.

All eyes will be on Ogden, Utah this weekend to watch this important – and rather representative for the Mountain Division in terms of competitiveness – series between two teams not willing to move a budge.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (35-12-1, 71 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

The Ogden Mustangs enjoyed some time off this past weekend – an important scheduling advantage for a team looking to earn another bye for the first round of the playoffs.

Rested, healing, and ready to go, Ogden will now meet with Colorado in the final series of the regular season with major playoff implications on the line.

After losing two of three to Idaho, the Mustangs are hungry for blood and Colorado may turn into the sacrificial lambs as Ogden finds themselves out of first place and hoping a sweep against the Jr. Eagles along with a Superior upset against Utah moves them back to the top.

A more likely scenario is Ogden winning two games against the Jr. Eagles and earning the #2 seed, thus earning the bye and home ice when they do join the fray in the division semifinals.

Or they could lose the series to the Jr. Eagles and have to play first-round series against Cheyenne.

Ogden's high-powered offense, led by Matus Spodniak's 69-76-145 season, has scored 341 goals which is them top-3 in the league. The Mustangs make up four of the top-5 in Mountain Division scoring with three players already topping the century mark in points including Jacob Laurin (47-72-119) and Ross Bartlett (40-60-100).

The first meeting between these two division rivals was the first series of the season, when Ogden took two of three including a 3-2, 2OT win, in the season opener.

The focus of WSHL fans will be on Ogden as the Mustangs and Jr. Eagles take it to the wire in the series of the season.

What a year for Mountain Division fans.

SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS (24-24-0, 48 pts)

www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com

@SPR_RoughRiders

The Superior RoughRiders succeeded in their playoff preview series with first-round opponent Casper over the weekend. The two teams played four games in Colorado with the first one serving as a home game for the Coyotes.

Nikita Sheberov's climb to legendary RoughRider status continued with a 7-3-10 line against the 'Yotes. His goal on Friday, with just three minutes left in the game, moved him into the top of the franchise's all-time points list. So, in his first season in North America, Sheberov is now the franchise leader in points (101) and goals (60).

Teammate Thor Weyrauch isn't too shabby himself, posting a 33-44-77 line, not far behind Sheberov in those categories.

Superior's goalies have been consistent all season, and this weekend underlined that fact. Marshall Murphy stopped 33 shots in each of the first two games, while Bronson Sudberry (31 saves on Saturday) and LJ Newell (27 on Sunday) each stood tall in their appearances.

This weekend, the RoughRiders will host a Utah team looking to cement the Division crown, and it could be up to Superior to throw a gigantic wrench in the Mountain Division playoffs as three teams are vying for the top two spots – thus earning an important bye week to begin the playoffs.

Look for the RoughRiders to be a superior bee in the Outliers' bonnets with playoff implications on the line.

UTAH OUTLIERS (37-10-1, 75 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

The Utah Outliers earned an important four points against Colorado, as Utah works to keep the Jr. Eagles and Ogden out of first place. The four points earned over the weekend now gives Utah a four-point lead over Colorado and Ogden who were off this past weekend.

Things have been tight all year in the Mountain Division, providing some of the best hockey for WSHL fans this season. With three teams vying for the top two spots in the division, playoff hockey already hit the Mountain weeks ago.

The top two teams earn a bye week in the first round of the playoffs – important in a division who have been beating up on each other all season. Meanwhile, the third team – who very well could have been in first place not that long ago – as Colorado, Ogden, and Utah each have had at least a share this season – will lose home ice advantage in the Division Finals.

Utah Head Coach Paul Taylor feels his team's season has prepared them well for the competition come time for the postseason.

"The Mountain Division is very competitive and having a lot of strong competition each week helps us prepare for the grind of playoffs," Taylor said. "With points being a commodity, we've had to work to stay the course as there isn't much separation between the top three teams in our division."

Colorado and Utah fought each other hard all weekend, trading shots and testing each other's goalies in all three games. Utah got goals from seven different skaters and goaltender Dawson Rodin started each game making 74 saves total. The two wins for Rodin have him up to 21 with a 1.82/.938 slash line. His 21 wins are top-5 in the league and he leads the league in SV%.

Utah is ready for the playoffs, and the Outliers know their success this season has put a target on their backs.

"I think we have learned that teams are preparing hard for us," coach Taylor said. "As the season has moved along, our opponents have competed hard and they seem hungry to take points from us. This has helped our group stay ready each and every week."

When every game has a playoff feel, it can a lot of pressure off in the postseason.

Utah will close out their regular season this weekend against a Superior team hoping to cause a raucous in the Mountain Division's playoff plans.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media