

THORNE CUP WRAP-UP; April 11, 2018



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

The 2018 Thorne Cup Final kicked off in El Paso, TX on Wednesday with the first three games of the round-robin. The Ogden Mustangs, Idaho IceCats and Long Beach Bombers got off on the right foot with wins in their opening games, but the six teams are all right back it Thursday with the second of three days of preliminary play.

The top four teams at the end of Friday's games will move on to Saturday's single elimination semifinals.

Ogden 4, Utah 2

The Ogden Mustangs were able to protect a two-goal lead throughout the third period and win the opening game of the 2018 Thorne Cup Final over their Mountain Division rivals, the Utah Outliers, by a score of 4-2.

The Mustangs didn't waste any time breaking the ice for the event as Ammon Anderson scored just 2:17 after the opening faceoff.

Utah even it back up at 4:40 with a goal from Oskars Ancitis, but the Mustangs reclaimed the lead with Ian Currie's tally midway through the period.

The Outliers fell behind by two goals in the second period, but had a golden opportunity when Ogden's Tyson Liverance was whistled for a double-minor for roughing 25 seconds after Sage Fleming's goal put Ogden up 3-1.

Kane Toriumi converted during the second two-minute power play, making it a one-goal game again, but just 39 seconds later Ogden sniper Matus Spodniak made it 4-2 Mustangs.

Tymen Edelkoort (25 saves) and the Mustangs kept things under control in the third period, out-shooting the Outliers 9-7 in the scoreless frame and giving themselves the early inside track on a semifinal berth.

Utah's Dawson Rodin matched Edelkoort's 25-save effort.

Idaho 4, Oklahoma City 2

Idaho veteran Matthew Kindred scored two goals in a span of 1:31 in the third period, breaking a 2-2 tie, and leading the IceCats to a 4-2 win over the Oklahoma City Blazers win the second game of Day One.

The game presented an opportunity for the IceCats to atone for a 2-1 loss to the Blazers at the Western States Shootout in December.

With the IceCats on the power play, Alexander Westin passed the puck from the right-wing side boards to Alexander Piliya at the blue line. His seemingly harmless wrist shot glanced off a Blazers defender on the way through and eluded OKC netminder Bobby Cloutier for the only goal of the first period.

Oklahoma City fell behind 1-0 and 2-1 but came back to tie both times. Zachary Colgrove scored for OKC early in the second period to make it 1-1, but Roman Tintera gave the IceCats their second lead of the game and they led, 2-1, at the second intermission.

Ivan Bondarenko tied the game up again for the Blazers, 2-2, at 5:16 of the third period, but Kindred answered, at 6:27 and 7:58, to provide the IceCats with the winning margin.

Cloutier stopped 14 of 15 shots in the second period and made 24 saves total.

Victor Ojdal turned aside 15 of 17 shots for Idaho.

Long Beach 4, El Paso 1

Wednesday's nightcap turned the tournament on its head as the Long Beach Bombers upset the host team and prohibitive favorites, the El Paso Rhinos, 4-1. The Rhinos had just one regulation loss in their first 55 games and had not lost on home ice all season.

Long Beach forward Miroslav Rohlik put one short side past the glove of El Paso goaltender Filip Krasanovsky 6:27 into the game to finish off a three-on-two rush and give the Bombers the early lead. Artem Korolev fed the puck to a covered Ryan Gil in the slot, but Gil quickly backhanded a pass around the feet of his checker to Rohlik cutting to the net.

It took the Rhinos less than a minute to reply. The Bombers failed to keep a puck in at the El Paso blue line and Chaseton Sare was off to the races. He skated hard down the left wing, cut to the middle to use the defenseman as a screen, and beat Long Beach goaltender Spencer Kozlowski over his blocker with a wrist shot from between the circles.

A key point in the game came late in the first period. With less than a minute to go, there was a faceoff in the El Paso zone. Neither team was immediately able to control the puck off the draw, but it eventually found its way into the slot where William Daigneault of the Bombers corralled it and quickly rifled a shot past Krasanovsky to give Long Beach a 2-1 lead and some energy heading into the room for the first intermission.

Things started getting serious in the second period. Gil blocked a pass and raced the length of the ice only to be broken up by a Rhinos defender as he closed in on the El Paso net. But the puck lay there for an instant, and Korolev was first on the scene, snapping it past Krasanovsky.

Kozlowski was sharp in the period, making 11 saves, including a point-blank stop on Tom Kuebler in the final minute.

El Paso out-shot Long Beach 10-7 in the third period, but was unable to get the puck past Kozlowski. He made several big stops, including a beauty on a streaking Jakob Kranabetter with just under a minute left in the game.

Shortly after the ensuing faceoff, Gil skated to center ice and fed Rohlik as he crossed the El Paso blue line. Rohlik fired the puck into the empty net for his second goal of the game, putting an exclamation point on the opening win for Long Beach. It was the third assist of the night for Gil.

Kozlowski finished the game with 34 saves on 35 shots. He stopped all 21 shots he faced over the final two periods.

2018 THORNE CUP PRELIMINARY ROUND STANDINGS

TEAM, W-L-OTL; PTS (GF/GA)

Long Beach, 1-0-0; 2 points (4/1)

Idaho, 1-0-0; 2 points (4/2)

Ogden, 1-0-0; 2 points (4/2)

Oklahoma City, 0-1-0; 0 points (2/4)

Utah, 0-1-0; 0 points (2/4)

El Paso, 0-1-0; 0 points (1/4)

The top four teams in the final round-robin standings will advance to Saturday's semifinals

TOMORROW'S SCHEDULE

10:00 a.m. Utah (0-1-0) vs. Idaho (1-0-0)

2:00 p.m. Ogden (1-0-0) vs. Long Beach (1-0-0)

7:00 p.m. El Paso (0-1-0) vs. Oklahoma City (0-1-0)

All games at Sierra Providence Events Center, El Paso TX

--- Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media