

THORNE CUP WRAP-UP; April 12, 2018



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

The Ogden Mustangs sit alone in first place and the El Paso Rhinos are the only team without a win at the 2018 Thorne Cup Final. Four teams are clustered from second-to fifth-place with 1-1-0 records and there is a lot to be sorted out yet as we enter the final day of round-robin play on Friday.

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

Utah 4, Idaho 1

Kane Toriumi scored twice – once late in the first period then again early in the second – and Dawson Rodin turned aside 16 of 17 shots as the Utah Outliers defeated the Idaho IceCats, 4-1.

Oscars Ancitis also scored for the Outliers – his second goal in as many games at the Thorne Cup – as did Eric Safstrom. Safstrom's goal just 2:05 into the third period was the knockout blow, giving Utah a four-goal lead.

Idaho out-shot Utah, 9-3, in the third period, finally getting on the board with 10:02 left in the game on a Casper Sjodin tally, but the IceCats were not able to get anything else past Rodin.

Ogden 4, Long Beach 2

Rhett Rampinelli broke a 2-2 tie with 3:38 left in the third period and the Ogden Mustangs added an empty-net goal for a 4-2 win over the Long Beach Bombers.

After two days of round-robin play, Ogden is the only team without a loss at the Thorne Cup.

The Bombers, coming off their stunning upset of the El Paso Rhinos on Wednesday, were able to come back to tie after falling behind 1-0 and 2-1, but were unable to rally a third time.

Ross Bartlett of the Mustangs scored 5:56 into the second period to open the scoring after Ogden out-shot Long Beach, 12-6, in a scoreless first period.

Lukas Moravsky and Artem Korolev scored for Long Beach and Spencer Kozlowski made 32 saves for the Bombers.

Ogden's Tymen Edelkoort stopped 19 of 21 shots.

Oklahoma City 4, El Paso 3

The El Paso Rhinos and Oklahoma City Blazers both lost their tournament openers, placing even more importance on their Thursday evening tilt.

The Rhinos and Blazers went into the third period tied, 3-3, and OKC's Ivan Bondarenko scored the only goal of the third period to deliver the margin of victory. Midway through the final period, Cody Warner's shot from the point was blocked by El Paso Filip Krasanovsky (25 saves). Griffin Wiencek took a stab at it and it ended up on Bondarenko's stick and he buried what turned out to be the winning goal.

The host Rhinos now find themselves in a very precarious position. Depending on the results of the first two games on Friday, they could be eliminated by the time they take the ice for the final game of the round-robin. It is possible they could still advance to the semifinals if the earlier games go the right way and they beat Utah by a wide enough margin.

Jayze Dundas-Schwartz broke the ice with just under three minutes left in the first period. An effective El Paso forecheck put Oklahoma City on their heels. They were unable to maintain control over a loose puck in the left circle and Dundas-Schwartz poked it under OKC netminder Bobby Cloutier to put the Rhinos up, 1-0.

The Blazers came out of the locker room for the second period and changed the tone with a goal in the first minute. Patrick Tondl took the puck from the left of Krasanovsky, skated behind the net and scooped a backhand wraparound attempt over Krasanovsky's shoulder to tie the game.

El Paso grabbed the lead back less than a minute later. Donald Alchin, Jr. Sakteed in from his position at the point and fired a low shot that Cloutier stopped, but the puck trickled behind him and was swept into the net by Phillip Pugliese.

The Blazers did not fold, however, and the back-and-forth affair continued. Things got interesting at when the Blazers took their first lead of the game with a pair of power play goals from Wiencek 2:16 apart midway through the second period.

The first one came at the tail end of an Oklahoma City power play. Vitailii Mikhailov saucered a pass from the left corner to Wiencek on top of the El Paso crease and he banged it home to tie the game, 2-2.

At 9:44, with the Blazers on the power play again, Bondarenko handled the puck in the circle to the left of Krasanovsky and fed a sharp pass to Wiencek in the slot and his one-timer got under Krasanovsky to make it 3-2 OKC.

Just under a minute later Pugliese scored his second of the game and the two teams went into the second intermission tied, 3-3.

El Paso boldly pulled their goaltender with 2:09 to go, but OKC did a good job pinning the puck along the wall to kill time and the Blazers got away with icing the puck three times.

Cloutier made 39 saves and stopped all 11 El Paso shots in the third period.

2018 THORNE CUP PRELIMINARY ROUND STANDINGS

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

Ogden, 2-0-0; 4 points (8/4)

Long Beach, 1-1-0; 2 points (6/5)

Utah, 1-1-0; 2 points (6/5)

Idaho, 1-1-0; 2 points (5/6)

Oklahoma City, 1-1-0; 2 points (6/7)

El Paso, 0-2-0; 0 points (4/8)

TIE-BREAKERS: *If two teams are tied at the end of the round-robin, head-to-head competition at the Thorne Cup is the first tie breaker. If the two teams did not play each other, then the team with the highest ranking entering the Thorne Cup shall advance or take the highest position available. In a three-way tie, teams will be ranked by their pre-tournament seeding: <http://www.wshl.org/wshl-playoffs>*

TOMORROW'S SCHEDULE

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

2:00 p.m. Ogden (2-0-0) vs. Oklahoma City (1-1-0)

7:00 p.m. El Paso (0-2-0) vs. Utah (1-1-0)

All games at Sierra Providence Events Center, El Paso TX

--- Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media