

WSHL MOUNTAIN DIVISION FINAL PREVIEW



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

#2 OGDEN MUSTANGS @ #1 UTAH OUTLIERS

Best-of-three series/all games at Accord Ice Arena - West Valley City, UT

GAME 1 Friday, March 30 7:30 p.m.

GAME 2 Saturday, March 31 7:30 p.m.

GAME 3* Monday, April 2 8:00 p.m.

**if necessary*

SEASON SERIES

Utah 5-3-1, 11 points

Ogden 4-5-0, 8 points

September 29 Utah 5 @ Ogden 6

September 30 Utah 3 @ Ogden 2

October 27 Utah 0 @ Ogden 4

October 28 Ogden 1 @ Utah 3

November 25 Utah 2 @ Ogden 3

December 8 Utah 4 @ Ogden 3

December 9 Ogden 1 @ Utah 6

January 27 Ogden 1 @ Utah 3

January 28 Utah 2 @ Ogden 3 (2 OT)

PREVIOUS PLAYOFF MEETINGS

Utah and Ogden have met once in the postseason. The Mustangs swept the Outliers, known then as the Salt Lake City Moose, in a best-of-three Pacific Division Semifinal during the 2013-14 season.

PLAYOFF HISTORY

Utah - The Utah franchise has made the playoffs in all five years of its existence, but this is its first trip to the division finals. The Outliers entered the playoffs as the #1 seed in the Mountain Division and are enjoying the best season in franchise history.

Ogden - After failing to win a playoff series in either of their first two seasons in the WSHL, the Mustangs emerged from the Mountain Division divisional playoffs in both 2014 & 2015. Including this season, they have made it to the division final each of the last five years. They lost to Colorado in that round in 2016 and 2017. Ogden participated in the Thorne Cup tournament in 2014, when it failed to qualify for the semifinals, and last year as the tournament host. It made it out of the round robin but lost to eventual champion Wichita, 4-2, in the semifinals.

UTAH OUTLIERS

Head Coach: Paul Taylor

39-11-1, first place - Mountain Division

290 GF / 100 GA

UTAH SPECIAL TEAMS

POWER PLAY 54/238 (22.7%, 10th in WSHL)

PENALTY KILL 34/203 (83.3%, 7th in WSHL - 12 SHG)

KEY PLAYERS

F Jacob Wanstrom (23-43-66), F Brandon Krumpschmid (28-38-66), F Kane Toriumi (31-31-62), F Dylan Massie (31-30-61), D Zach Hoffman (16-49-65), G Dawson Rodin (22-9-1/1.96/.932)

OGDEN MUSTANGS

Head Coach: Jake Laime

38-12-1, second place - Mountain Division

353 GF / 133 GA

OGDEN SPECIAL TEAMS

POWER PLAY 56/224 (25.0%, 6th in WSHL)

PENALTY KILL 26/206 (87.4%, 4th in WSHL - 20 SHG)

KEY PLAYERS

F Matus Spodniak (69-77-146), F Jacob Laurin (47-73-120), F Ross Bartlett (41-63-104), F Rhett Rampinelli (28-55-83), F Matt McClelland (19-36-55), D Austin Dittenhafer (13-39-52), G Jonathan Chin (12-2-0/1.87/.918)

ANALYSIS

For the first time, the Utah Outliers won a division title and have all the momentum in the world as they head into their Midwest Division final matchup against Ogden, which finished the regular season just two points behind the Outliers.

The Outliers win games by using a balanced scoring effort combined with a stifling defensive corps. Led by goaltender Dawson Rodin, Utah allowed just 100 goals to the opposition over 51 regular-season games, giving it the second-ranked defense in the league behind El Paso. The Outliers' offense isn't elite, but it scores enough to give them the edge against most teams.

Utah wrapped up a series win over Superior last weekend, but it didn't come easy. The RoughRiders won the opening contest by one goal, but the Outliers rallied for back-to-back narrow wins with their season on the line.

"Superior gave us a really strong series," said Outliers Head Coach Paul Taylor. "They worked hard, defended well, and received outstanding goaltending. Fortunately, we were able to stick with our game and find the back of the net when we needed it most."

Ogden was tasked with an even tougher series as it took down Colorado in a dramatic three-game sweep. In sudden-death overtime with both teams' seasons on the verge of ending, Ogden leading scorer Matus Spodniak ripped a slapshot into the Eagles' net to give the Mustangs the win and the series victory.

Spodniak's goal propelled Ogden to this weekend's matchup against a Utah club that played it very evenly during the regular-season series. The Outliers barely held the advantage with five regular-season wins compared with four for the Mustangs.

Taylor knows his club is in for another difficult series this weekend against an Ogden club that has given it trouble this season.

"The Mustangs are a good team with some dangerous offensive firepower," Taylor continued. "We will need to work hard to defend against them and limit their scoring chances. Both teams have speed, so I expect a very fast-paced series."

This is another tough series to predict. While the Mustangs boast a trio of 100-point scorers, the Outliers' defense has proven triumphant again and again over the last few months. Neither team is guaranteed a spot in El Paso at the Thorne Cup tournament, so both clubs will be fighting for their respective seasons.

--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media