

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 10.24.18 – WESTERN DIVISION



FRESNO MONSTERS (3-3-0, 9 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

Nikita Garin has scored multiple goals in three of Fresno's first six games – notching a pair of hat tricks. Garin, a product of the Lada Togliatti program in Russia, just turned 18 earlier this month.

Monsters head coach Kevin Kaminski sees why Garin is able to produce, but thinks this might also be just the tip of the iceberg.

"Nikita's a big strong kid with a good work ethic and a touch around the net," said Kaminski. "He's 18 years old and really think he can be a top player in the league. I think he's adjusted well, but still needs to be more consistent day-in and day-out and fight through adversity."

Kaminski also feels that it's not just Garin's individual skill set that has been clicking early in the season.

"He also has some good players around him to get him the puck," Kaminski said.
"And when they, do he finds the twine."

The Fresno is converting at a healthy 22.4% with the man advantage through their first half-dozen games, and Garin has contributed to that success, scoring four of his eight goals on the power play.

Garin, Kaminski and the Monsters will hit the road this week, traveling south to play a three-game series against the Sabers in San Diego.

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (4-1-0, 12 pts)

@LBBombersHockey

www.JrBombers.org

The Long Beach Bombers suffered their first loss of the season in their most recent game, a 4-2 setback in Saturday's series finale at Fresno. Long Beach still holds a three-point advantage on the Monsters at the top of the Western Division standings thanks to taking the first two games last week at Selland Arena on Thursday and Friday.

Long Beach again boasts a deep and balanced scoring attack – a hallmark of division-winning Bombers squads in recent years. Seven players notched multiple goals through the first five games and 15 players recorded multiple points.

A pair of returning veterans are tied for the team lead with 10 points apiece: Tomas Urbanec and Artem Korolev.

The Bombers are the oldest franchise in the WSHL – the lone remaining team from the inaugural season 25 years ago – and Urbanec is 19 points short of the team's all-time points record. He currently has 215 points (94-121-215) in 153 career WSHL games – all with the Bombers. The crazy thing is Urbanec, 19, still has an additional year of junior eligibility after this one.

Johnny Linehan, who played in 230 games as a Bomber between 2007-2013, scored 80 goals and added 154 assists for 234 points.

The Bombers will play a home-and-home series with the Valencia Flyers Thursday/Friday, then finish off the weekend by visiting the Ontario Avalanche on Saturday night.

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (2-3-0, 6 pts)

@TmOntAvs

www.OntarioAvalanche.com

Considering the following statistics, the Ontario Avalanche should probably be happy they managed to pull two wins, and six points, out of their first five games of the season:

The Avs have done a good job killing penalties (84.6%), but have struggled to score with the man advantage (14.6%) and, even more concerning, have been out-scored 22-12 at evens (5-on-5).

With such a small statistical sample this early in the season, it's too early to be too critical of the Avalanche, but Ontario head coach Rob O'Rourke has plenty to choose from when he's deciding what to work on in practice.

The team will have a good opportunity for extra rest and/or practice time this week with just a single game on the schedule – Saturday night at home against the first-place Long Beach Bombers.

Ontario has traditionally iced a team that plays a tight-checking, physical (read: "Playoff") brand of hockey. The Avalanche have never scored a ton. They were fourth in the six-team Western Division with 227 goals last season. But their goals-against are usually at a pretty healthy level as well. Their 177 GA last year were second only to division champ Long Beach (158).

It does not look like O'Rourke and general manager Rick Roberts have strayed from that formula.

SAN DIEGO SABERS (2-4-0, 5 pts)

@sdsabershockey

www.SanDiegoSabersHockey.com

What better time of year to welcome the Monsters to town? The San Diego Sabers host the Fresno Monsters in a three-game pre-Halloween series this weekend. The Sabers were idle last week, giving them plenty of time to rest up for this encounter against their Western Division rivals.

San Diego has been led in the early part of the season by Ashton Jones, a 2000-born forward who played high school hockey in Michigan for the last three seasons.

Through the first six games of the season, Ashton leads the Sabers in goals (6) and points (11).

The Sabers have benefited from a balanced scoring attack behind Jones, led by Sabers veteran Karel Kankovsky (1-6-7) and a trio of newcomers: Tyler Balok (2-4-6), Jakub Vesely (2-4-6) and David Grindstaff (1-5-6). Zak Hanaford has popped in four goals.

San Diego has been much more productive in the early part of the season with 22 goals scored through their first six games (3.67 goals/game). Going up against a perennial contender like Fresno will be an excellent test to see if they can maintain that clip.

Last year's team managed 112 goals in 51 games (2.20 goals/game).

There is still some internal competition for playing time in the crease as four different goaltenders have already seen action for San Diego. None of the targets has separated themselves from the pack. In fact, Marshall McKillop (.881), Tomas Svoboda (.882) and Aleksei Vereschchagin (.879) have almost identical save percentages.

The series with Fresno continues what is a seven-game homestand for the Sabers, who will be home again next weekend to take on the Ontario Avalanche (Friday and Sunday) and the Valencia Flyers (Saturday).

VALENCIA FLYERS (1-1-1, 4 pts)

@valenciaflyers

www.ValenciaFlyers.com

The Valencia Flyers have played the fewest games (3) of any Western Division team, so it is hard to get a handle on what kind of team they have this year.

All three of their games have been decided by one or two goals, putting a premium on goal-scoring early on in the season. One of the players that Valencia can lean on when they need a big goal is a local product who returned to the team for his sophomore WSHL season.

17-year-old Valencia native Tristan Warr has scored five goals through the first three games. Warr played two seasons with the West Ranch Wildcats in the Los Angeles

Kings High School Hockey League before joining the Flyers last season and producing 31 points (15-16-31) in 44 games in his first taste of junior hockey.

This weekend, a home-and-home series with Long Beach gives the Flyers a chance to test themselves against the division leaders, so we will learn more about the team and where they stand in the competitive Western Division hierarchy.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media