

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 10.25.18 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



CASPER BOBCATS (3-6-0, 9 pts)

www.casperbobcats.com

@BobcatsCasper

The Casper Bobcats got things moving in the right direction last weekend, winning three games from the visiting Cheyenne Stampede, after dropping their first six contests of the campaign to Ogden and Oklahoma City.

Casper finishes up a nine-game homestand with three more against Ogden this weekend, and follows Ogden's visit up with a trip to West Valley City to face the Utah Outliers. That means 12 of their first 15 games will have been against qualifiers for the 2018 Thorne Cup Tournament.

Ludwig Nordqvist has been effective keeping Casper in games against this elite competition, posting an impressive .920 save percentage, but he is getting peppered.

The Swedish import has faced 226 shots in the just under 310 minutes he has spent in the Bobcats' crease – an average of almost 44 shots per 60 minutes.

The Bobcats will have to do a better job of suppressing shots if they want to get the results they are looking for against the top teams in the league.

Easier said than done, I know.

German-born Florian Seelman has been the top point-producer for the Bobcats so far this season, scoring four goals and adding seven assists for 11 points. It also looks he has been throwing his 6'3", 190-pound frame around, collecting a healthy total of 23 penalty minutes.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (0-7-1, 1 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

The Cheyenne Stampede play a home-and-home series against the Northern Colorado Eagles this weekend. Despite no longer being aligned in the same division, the old Mountain Division rivals will play seven times this season.

The Stampede kicked off the campaign at Northern Colorado October 6-7, losing a pair of hotly-contested two-goal decisions (6-4 and 4-2). That series showed that the Stamps can play with the Eagles—an elite team that has given them fits in recent seasons as a division rival.

"I think we can play with any team including the Eagles," said Cheyenne head coach Neil Breen. "As long as we're tight on our details and tactics."

The Stamps have played a lot of close games already this season, with six of their first eight games decided by two goals or fewer. Playing in these competitive games will help the team in the long run.

"Tight games, pressure, and responding to adversity is all part of the process," Breen said. "As long as we continue to absorb the lessons these moments provide we will continue to improve and compete with any club."

Last week, the Cheyenne went on the road to face another re-branded opponent, the Casper Bobcats, at Casper Ice Arena. While the Stampede played with the Bobcats all weekend, they were unable to bring any points home with them.

Life in the Mountain Division does not get any easier for the Stampede in the coming weeks as they face the top two teams in the division, travelling to Utah to play the Outliers November 2-4 and hosting the undefeated Ogden Mustangs here at Cheyenne Ice and Events Center November 9-11.

After struggling to produce goals last season, the Stampede have lit the lamp 25 times in their first eight games (3.13 goals/game). Bryan Watters (5-7-12) and Jeremy Velazquez (6-5-11) both appear among the WSHL's Top 20 scorers. Hakan Salt (3-5-8) and Ben Gloe (4-3-7) have also been productive.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (9-0-0, 27 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

The Ogden Mustangs take their unblemished 9-0-0 record into Casper Ice Arena this weekend to face the Bobcats in a three-game series.

Ogden's penalty-killing unit has been deployed 43 times, but has allowed just four power play goals against (90.7% - good for sixth in the league). Their power play, at 24.1%, ranks seventh. Those are both strong figures but, ironically, both trail the team directly behind them in the Mountain Division standings, the Utah Outliers.

The Mustangs have defeated Utah three times this season despite the Outliers superior overall special teams numbers (25.5%/91.3%).

It is hard to find metrics on which the Mustangs do not excel so here's what I've got: they have been out-scored, 2-1, playing four-on-four this season. A difficult weakness for opposing teams to exploit...

As a matter of fact, Ogden has played their opponents even (3-3) in almost 65 minutes of playing shorthanded 4-on-5.

Rhett Rampinelli picked up his 100th career point with the Mustangs in front of the home fans. Rampinelli hit the century mark with an assist on a Lukas Kucera goal in the second period of Friday's 6-2 win over Utah.

STEAMBOAT WRANGLERS (3-6-0, 8 pts)

www.steamboatwranglers.com

@SWranglers

The Steamboat Wranglers swept the Wichita Jr. Thunder for their first three wins in their franchise's WSHL history. The Wranglers earned eight of a possible nine points in the series.

Sunday's game was a thriller. The Wranglers scored as time expired at the end of overtime for a 7-6 win. What seemed like a last-second shot on goal for Steamboat missed the net and the puck ricocheted into the corner, but Avery Albert did not stop playing. He chased the puck down in the corner and threw it at the net. Wichita's Bronson Sudberry (47 saves) made the save on the severe-angle shot, but did not control the rebound, and Dalton Eagle Bear was right there to cash in for the Wranglers.

Special teams play has been sub-par on both sides of the equation for Steamboat. The Wranglers are killing just 66% of their shorthanded situations and converting less than 10% on the power play (4-for-45).

Other than the Cheyenne Stampede's visit Howelson Ice Complex November 16-18, the Wranglers will be playing on the road until the second week of January.

Beginning with this weekend's road trip to Dallas, Steamboat will play 19 of 22 games away from home.

On the bright side, 13 of their last 17 regular season games will be played at the friendly confines of Howelson, positioning the team well for the stretch drive.

UTAH OUTLIERS (6-3-0, 18 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

Utah goes from one undefeated opponent to another this week as the Oklahoma City Blazers visit West Valley City this weekend for three games against the Outliers at Accord Ice Arena.

Utah dropped both ends of a home-and-home series with the rival Ogden Mustangs, leaders of the Mountain Division, last week. Now it is Mid-Western Division leader OKC that they will test themselves against.

And don't look too far ahead on the schedule – Utah heads to El Paso to face the defending Thorne Cup champion Rhinos in hostile territory November 9-11.

The challenging slate of games early in the season gives the Outliers and head coach Paul Taylor a chance to gauge themselves against some of the league's top teams early on to see if where they stand.

Taylor says they did not set any segment goals, in terms of wins and losses, for this stretch of games. They just want to compete and improve.

"We do not have any specific goals in regard to points we want to collect," said Taylor. "We always want to win and collect points against our opponents, but we are also focused on building our game."

"We have a mixture of some young players and new players this season," he continued. "And we need to keep improving so we can play a more complete team game."

Despite the challenging schedule, the Utah power play is tops in the entire WSHL, clicking at 25.5%, and their penalty killing unit is in the top five at 91.3%. Taylor does not point to any tactical changes that have brought about the improvement.

"We have not made many changes to our special teams this season," Taylor said. "I think we have been fortunate to find the back of net so far on our PP. As for our PK I think our goaltending has been a big factor thus far."

They always say your goalie is the most important penalty killer, and Swedish import Oscar Wahlgren has posted a 2.41 goals-against average and .908 save percentage in his first seven games played.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media