

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 10.31.18 – WESTERN DIVISION



FRESNO MONSTERS (5-4-0, 15 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

The Fresno Monsters have opened their season with a trio of three-game series and none of them have been a sweep. The Monsters have taken two of three from Ontario and San Diego. Those series are sandwiched around a home series against Long Beach that saw the Bombers come into Selland Arena and take two of three.

So the Monsters have not been dominant, nor have they been dominated.

“There is a lot of parity in our division,” said Fresno head coach Kevin Kaminski after his team’s trip to San Diego to play the Sabers. “Chris Slater has done a great job recruiting in San Diego. You have to be consistent and on your ‘A’ game every night to get the win in this division.”

Fresno plays a single game this week, visiting the Flyers in Valencia on Friday evening for the first meeting of the year between the two clubs. That could give Max

Karlenzig an opportunity to get some rest over the weekend. The Chicago native has been a workhorse between the pipes for the Monsters, appearing in all nine games and playing 511 minutes – second in the entire WSHL.

Backup Gabriel Cognac, 17, has only played 23 minutes this season, but it sounds as if more goaltending help is on the way.

“We have a guy who’s coming in from the NAHL,” Kaminski said. “So I’m not sure who will start on Friday. As for Gabe, he is young and has made huge strides. He needs to stay focused and keep working on his game and be ready for his opportunity.”

Kaminski says he plans on carrying three goaltenders this season.

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (6-2-0, 18 pts)

@LBBombersHockey

www.JrBombers.org

The Long Beach Bombers are looking to extend what has been a three-year run as the top team in the Western Division, with two regular season and three division playoff titles in that span.

Chris White’s team is again in the top spot a month into the season and looks like they very well might be the team to beat again this year. But, if their 2-1 games with Valencia (loss) and Ontario (win) last week are any indication, there is no less parity in the division than there has been in recent seasons.

“I think the Western Division features a lot of new-look rosters this year,” said White. “So, everyone has had their ups and downs in the early going.”

The Bombers, who also posted a 5-2 home win over Valencia last week, have suffered from uncharacteristic struggles on the power play. They have been saved by the fact that they have out-scored their opposition, 28-8, while playing 5-on-5.

White says it is a work in progress, but feels he has the pieces in place to get things going with the man advantage.

“Tomas Urbanec is the only player with experience (on the PP) so it’s a little frustrating, given the talent we have on the ice, but we understand it’s a process,” White said. “It takes repetitions and success for some players to learn how to

properly execute on special teams. We have been moving some guys around, and changing personnel, all in hopes of finding the right combination to click.”

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (2-4-0, 6 pts)

@TmOntAvs

www.OntarioAvalanche.com

The Avalanche played a single game last week, welcoming Long Beach to Ontario Center Ice Arena on Saturday night for what turned out to be a great hockey game.

The Avs were scored on twice in the first period, but Connor Duffy shut door on the Bombers for the final 42:08, giving Ontario a chance to come back. Duffy stopped all 27 shots he faced over the final two periods and finished the game with 43 saves.

The Avalanche out-shot the Bombers, 21-13, in the second period and scored the only goal – off the stick of Jeremy Van Dyke 1:28 into the frame, but there was no more scoring for the final 28:32 of game time as we saw another example of tight playoff-type hockey being played in the Western Division in October.

Ontario hits the road this week, playing in Valencia Thursday night, then San Diego Friday and Sunday.

Van Dyke’s goal against Long Beach was his team-leading fifth of the season. He and Brett Ruiz (3-5-8) are tied for the team lead with eight points apiece, closely followed by Declan Curtis (3-2-5), Justin Davis (1-4-5) and Joseph Aguirre (1-4-5).

SAN DIEGO SABERS (3-6-0, 8 pts)

@sdsabershockey

www.SanDiegoSabersHockey.com

The San Diego Sabers welcome the two teams directly behind them in the Western States Hockey League’s Western Division this weekend in a key early-season trio of games.

Heading into action this weekend, only two points separate the third-place Sabers from the fourth-place Ontario Avalanche and fifth-place Valencia Flyers.

Last weekend, the Fresno Monsters visited San Diego for three games. On Friday night, Goals from Ashton Jones and Isaiah Frankel 1:26 apart early in the third period gave the Sabers a 3-1 lead and they held on for a 4-2 win. That victory gave the

Sabers a measure of revenge after the Monsters eliminated them from the 2018 Western Division playoffs.

Aleksei Vereshchagin was spectacular in the San Diego net, stopping all 27 shots he saw through the first 40 minutes and making 34 saves on the night. The Sabers gained momentum and confidence as the game wore on, out-shooting Fresno 15-9 in the third period and scoring three times.

Although the Monsters rebounded to win the next two games, 7-3 and 4-1, it was an excellent effort from the Sabers in all three games.

Karel Kankovsky scored twice and Marshall McKallip made 31 saves in a 7-3 loss on Saturday.

Vesely scored again and Vereshchagin played another strong game between the pipes for the Sabers, making 32 saves, in a 4-1 loss Sunday.

The Sabers will play Valencia and Ontario on the road next week.

VALENCIA FLYERS (2-2-1, 7 pts)

@valenciaflyers

www.ValenciaFlyers.com

The Valencia Flyers make a whirlwind tour of the Western Division this weekend, playing three different teams in three nights, in two cities.

Ontario and Fresno will visit Ice Station Valencia on Thursday and Friday, then the Flyers will head to Escondido to play the San Diego Sabers on Saturday.

A fantastic start for the Valencia penalty kill, currently operating at 92%, has offset the struggles of the Valencia power play, which is converting on just 12.5% of their opportunities.

The PK rate places the Flyers second in the entire 23-team WSHL behind only Oklahoma City (93.9%). The power play, meanwhile, is fourth from the bottom of the pack.

Nikita Pintusov, who scored 32 goals in 32 games for the Flyers last season before being traded to El Paso and helping the Rhinos win the Thorne Cup, scored two goals in his first collegiate game.

Pintusov, who scored 98 goals in 106 career WSHL games (including playoffs), joined the NCAA Division III program at New England College this fall.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media