

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.02.18 – NORTHWEST DIVISION



### **BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (7-2-0, 21 pts.)**

The Bellingham Blazers continue to lead the way in the Northwest Division after sweeping a home-and-home series against West Sound last weekend.

The Blazers lead second-place Seattle by one point in the division standings and have one game in hand on the Totems.

After a 4-2 win at Bremerton Ice Center on Friday, Bellingham broke a 2-2 tie with six goals in the second period en-route to a blowout 13-4 victory Saturday.

Forward Thomas Steven notched back-to-back hat tricks against the Admirals, giving him a team-high 14 goals. Veterans Timothy Prexler (3-2-5) and Jamahl Eackett (1-6-7) both had big nights in the Blazers' big win.

Prexler has tormented West Sound to the tune of 17 points (10-7-17) over five matchups this season. It has been a part of an overall trend of veteran players leading the way for the experienced Blazers.

One of the main reasons for Bellingham's early success is its ability to defend home ice. The Blazers have won all four of their home games and own a 3-2-0 record on the road.

The Blazers continue to be the most disciplined team in the Northwest with just 126 PIMs through nine games. That has been one of the keys to Bellingham's success, as its penalty kill unit is not overworked and is operating at an impressive 91.2 percent clip.

Bellingham's busy schedule will continue this weekend with a pair of games on the road against West Sound sandwiched around a Saturday night contest at home against Seattle that will feature the top two teams in the Northwest.

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (6-3-0, 20 pts)**

After getting wins in two of their three games over the weekend, the Seattle Totems continue to keep pace with division-leading Bellingham.

Last Friday and Saturday, the Blazers earned three consecutive wins over Southern Oregon, including a 5-4 overtime thriller to close out the series.

The Spartans forced overtime after scoring with less than a minute remaining in regulation, but Seattle native Michael Shippee found the back of the net just over a minute into the extra period to squash any hopes of a Southern Oregon comeback.

Like Bellingham, the Totems continue to find ways to win on home ice. They have yet to lose a home game in four tries.

Seattle Head Coach Michael Murphy said that he was pleased with his group of offseason recruits, and several of them are already making significant impacts.

Two of the Totems' top three scorers, Gabriel Sboj (7-8-15) and Linus Eriksson (5-8-13), were brought in over the summer. Captain Denis Kozev (0-5-5) has provided steady play and veteran leadership in Seattle's defensive corps, and Dominik Cach (7-3-10) already has double-digit points.

Returning players such as Shippee, Cam Gross (7-3-10), and netminder Wyatt Monear (2.79/.896) are off to quick starts and are also a big part of Seattle's success over the first month of the season.

The Totems have one game this weekend, and it could be a big one. They are set to battle first-place Bellingham on the road this Saturday night.

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (3-7-1, 10 pts.)**

The Southern Oregon Spartans fell to four games below .500 after being swept by Seattle in a tight series last weekend.

The three games at Olympicview Arena against the Totems marked the Spartans' first away contests of the season. The team played their first eight games at Southern Oregon Ice.

With 21 points (5-16-21) in 10 appearances, Eric Vanderhoff has emerged as one of the Spartans' go-to options on offense. Rookie Michele Vignoli Sanin (5-10-15) and third-year veteran Miroslav Smid (7-8-15) are close behind, with both players averaging more than a point per game.

The Spartans offense has been good enough to win games, but they need to clean up their defensive effort. Southern Oregon has allowed a division-high 52 goals through its first 11 games.

Furthermore, the Spartans are the most penalized team in the Northwest (315 PIMs), but their penalty kill unit is successful only 76 percent of the time, the fourth-worst mark in the WSHL.

Southern Oregon is off this week. It will return to the ice next week with a six-game trip through the Provincial Division November 10-17.

The road trip will feature games in Meadow Lake, Cold Lake, Edson, and Hinton as the Spartans meet the WSHL's newest division for the first time.

### **WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (3-6-0, 9 pts.)**

It seemed like the West Sound Admirals were doomed to a winless week after losing a pair of games to Bellingham, but the Admirals recovered nicely with a 5-4 victory over Seattle on Sunday afternoon.

Making the win more impressive was the fact that the Totems had a chance to take over the top spot in the Northwest with a win. Instead, five different Admirals skaters scored as the club arguably had its best win of the young season.

The Admirals got off to a quick start in the contest, with a pair of goals in the first period followed by two more scores in the first three minutes of the second to take a commanding 4-0 lead.

West Sound will get another crack at Bellingham this weekend with home games on Friday and Sunday. It proved it could play with the Blazers in a 4-2 loss last weekend and will have the opportunity to post its first win over the Northwest Division leaders.

After that, the Admirals will take a trip through the Provincial Division quite similar to Southern Oregon's. They will play six games in seven days against Hinton, Edson, Meadow Lake, and Cold Lake.

*---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*