

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.13.18 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (5-6-1-0, 17 pts.)

The Dallas Snipers fell below .500 last weekend as they were swept by Northern Colorado in a three-game series at home.

Other than the first game, a 7-1 loss, the Snipers competed with the Eagles. Dallas probably deserved at least an overtime point in the second contest, a 3-2 defeat, but a Northern Colorado goal with less than a second left on the clock sent the stunned Snipers to the locker room without anything to show for their effort.

In the third and final game, Dallas allowed six unanswered goals and was unable to recover, losing by an 8-5 final.

The Snipers are now in fourth place in the Mid-Western Division, ahead of only winless Wichita. They've won both of their road games but own a 3-6-0-0 mark on home ice.

"I think we still have a lot to learn and a lot of work to do," said Snipers Head Coach Aaron Davis. "Our consistency is not where it needs to be.

“I think we just need to figure out how to play a 60-minute game without having lapses in our game. If we can tighten that up, we will be in much better shape.”

While certain players tend to be the focal point on different days, Davis think that forward Danil Trenikhin (7-10-17) has separated himself from the crowd.

“Trenikhin has been a bright spot for us,” Davis said. “He was here last year, so he came in this year knowing what to expect.”

Dallas needs to put together a string of wins to get back into the Mid-Western Division race, and it will look to maintain its perfect road record this weekend in Wichita.

EL PASO RHINOS (8-2-0-2, 26 pts.)

A couple of weeks ago, the El Paso Rhinos failed to win at least one game in a series for the first time this season as they were swept by the Long Beach Bombers.

Good teams can move past losses quickly, and it appears that’s what El Paso did over the weekend as they beat a tough Utah Outliers squad in two of three games. Overall, the Rhinos claimed seven of nine possible points in the series.

Rhinos veteran forward Chaseton Sare was recently called up to the Central Illinois Flying Aces of the USHL (Tier I). Sare, 20, participated in the Flying Aces mini-camp over the summer before opening the season with the Rhinos.

The Regina, Saskatchewan product has collected 216 points (108-108-216) during his 96-game WSHL career, not including his 23-points (8-15-23) during the Rhinos’ run to the Thorne Cup championship last spring.

Sare ranks inside the top-20 in the league’s all-time scoring list and has been one of if not the best players in El Paso franchise history.

Losing Sare will hurt the Rhinos’ depth, but they still have one of the most talented squads in the WSHL. Not including Sare, seven players on El Paso’s roster have registered double-digit points, led by Donald Alchin (2-14-16) and Jonas Burman (5-11-16).

The Rhinos are set to take on Northern Colorado six times over the next two weeks. The two clubs will play a three-game series in Colorado this weekend before finishing things out at County Events Center in El Paso next week.

NORTHERN COLORADO EAGLES (7-6-0-0, 21 pts.)

The Northern Colorado Eagles leap-frogged Dallas in the Mid-Western Division standings with a three-game sweep of the Snipers last weekend.

Already with 10 goals, forward Nikita Sheberov (10-9-19) is playing like the established veteran he is. Sheberov is closely followed by Jacob Elik, a third-year player who served as captain of the Casper Coyotes last season.

Elik has 81 points (23-58-81) over 98 games in the WSHL. He should play in his 100th game in the league this weekend as the Eagles travel to El Paso for a pivotal three-game series against the Rhinos.

The next two weeks will reveal a great deal about whether or not Northern Colorado is a contender in the Mid-Western Division. With six games in a row against El Paso, the Eagles will either continue their recent hot stretch or fall back into the bottom half of the division.

Goaltending will be key against the high-powered Rhinos offense. Marshall Murphy (2.69/.900) has flashed signs of being a shutdown netminder at times.

Murphy and backup netminder Mitchell Robinson (4.30/.823) will need to bring their best against an El Paso team that is averaging over five goals per contest.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (11-1-0-0, 33 pts.)

Over the next couple of weeks, we'll find out just how good the Oklahoma City Blazers are. After this weekend's series at home against undefeated Ogden, OKC will take on El Paso in a three-game set for the first time this season.

This weekend's series against Ogden should be a treat for WSHL fans and has to be considered one of the most anticipated matchups of the first half of the season.

"We believe every weekend is an important one, especially when you play in our division," said Blazers Head Coach Gary Gill. "At this point in our season, we aren't putting any additional pressure on our players. I learned a long time ago that championships aren't won in October and November.

"But [Ogden and El Paso] are great teams, and without a doubt the road to the Thorne Cup goes through both. With that being said, we want to do well and are looking forward to both series of games."

The Mustangs are still undefeated, boasting a perfect 18-0-0-0 record on the season. They have a ridiculous plus-88 goal differential, but they have had close calls against Utah and Northern Colorado.

It seems that the Blazers have a slight advantage playing against both Ogden and El Paso at home, but Gill isn't fully convinced.

"It's always great playing at home and not having to travel," he said. "As far as an advantage, maybe a little. But when you're facing two programs like Ogden and El Paso, you better come with your boots tied and your hard hats on. It doesn't matter where you play once the puck drops."

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (0-8-0-1, 1 pt.)

Despite their record, the Wichita Jr. Thunder continue to battle hard under head coach Rob Weingartner.

Wichita nearly pulled off a win on October 21, but it ultimately lost 7-6 in overtime against the Steamboat Wranglers.

The following weekend, the Jr. Thunder gave El Paso all it could handle in a 3-1 loss to the Rhinos. The final score may not have been in their favor, but the game marked progress for a young team.

The Jr. Thunder's first nine games were played on the road. They will look to continue to show improvement in the coming weeks as they play their next 12 contests at home.

Dallas, Steamboat, the Casper Bobcats, and Oklahoma City will all visit Wichita Ice Center over the next month. It's a prime opportunity for Wichita to get into the win column for the first time this season.

---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media