

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.15.18 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



WSHL standings are expressed W-L-OTW-OTL (“W” and “L” represent regulation wins and losses; shootouts are included in overtime results). Three points are awarded for a regulation win, two for an overtime win and one for an overtime loss.

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

www.casperbobcats.com

@BobcatsCasper

The Casper Bobcats, who have been idle since October 28, return to action this weekend with a trip to West Valley City to face the Utah Outliers.

Veteran head coach John Ambrefe has made use of the lull in the schedule, which actually came at a pretty opportune time for his club.

“We are glad to have the extra time of to heal as we had a couple injuries that required 3-4 weeks of rehab,” Ambrefe said. “Hopefully we are all healed by the Utah series and get a couple more kids in by next week.”

Everybody wants to start the season on the right foot but, despite the Bobcats’ 3-9-0-0 record, Ambrefe is taking the long view on the season.

“We have made the best of our circumstances and are starting to add more players,” he said. “Hopefully we are in good shape for the showcase and beyond.”

With one WSHL franchise – the Coyotes – officially shuttering, and the Bobcats replacing them, the new team was technically starting from scratch.

“We were a little shorthanded due to a late recruiting start,” said Ambrefe. “We did not get granted the Casper franchise until July.”

The Bobcats will actually be off again next week, so they should be very rested when they arrive in Wichita for a three-game series with the Jr. Thunder which begins November 30.

When all is said and done, they will have gone 39 days between home games when they host Steamboat on December 7.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (0-15-0-1, 1 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

The Cheyenne Stampede will make their first road trip to Steamboat this weekend to meet their new Mountain Division rivals, the Wranglers.

I think we can expect the Stampede to arrive in Steamboat in ill humor based on the way the early part of their season has gone. After suffering through a two-win season a year ago, general manager Mark Lantz and head coach Neil Breen put in a lot of work upgrading their roster. The team has played at a noticeably higher level, but the results have not followed.

Cheyenne is 16 games into their season, and has played better hockey than last year, but still does not have any wins to show for it. Their lone point in the standings comes from a 3-2 overtime loss at home to the Dallas Snipers on October 14. They have lost 11 in a row in regulation since, but consider the schedule they have played so far: Northern Colorado (4x), Utah (3x) and Ogden (3x).

Additionally, all three games of their series against Dallas were decided by a single goal. There was a 7-6 loss in Casper on October 21 and a pair of close setbacks to the Eagles to start the season (6-4 and 4-2).

They chased Ogden all around the Cheyenne Ice and Events Center last weekend, playing them hard for stretches, but just couldn't match their skill.

This weekend's trip to Steamboat is a business trip for sure. The Stampede want and deserve some results for all of their hard work.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (18-0-0-0, 54 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

Eighteen wins and counting to start the season for the Ogden Mustangs. They have already accumulated a +88 goal differential and have only allowed 26 goals (1.44 per game).

They will face their biggest test of the season this weekend, however, when they go into Oklahoma City. The Blazers have just one blemish on their record – a 3-2 loss to Utah. That makes the Mustangs-Blazers tilts this weekend WSHL Must-See TV for sure.

For a team like Ogden to remain among the league's elite year after year, they need to do a great job of recruiting. Ogden GM and head coach Jake Laime continues to do just that, but that also means having players get scouted and move on to higher levels of hockey.

Durham, NH native Bryson Bartell began the season with the Maryland Black Bears of the NAHL, playing in five games but, this case the Mustangs were fortunate to have him return. He has scored 12 goals in 14

games in what is his third season with Ogden. At his current pace he will blow past the 15 goals he scored last year in no time.

While Bartell returned from the East Coast, a former Mustang has headed out there. Jacob Laurin is playing in the tuition-free NDC and is producing over a point-per-game with the New Hampshire Monarchs. Laurin has scored eight goals and assisted on 14 others for 22 points in 21 games played.

Laurin, a native of Stockholm, had played all of his amateur hockey in his native Sweden until last season when he came over to play in Ogden for one prolific season. Laurin scored 47 goals and collected 73 assists for 120 points in 51 games. He added 18 points (10-8-18) in just 10 playoff games.

STEAMBOAT WRANGLERS (2-12-1-0, 8 pts)

www.steamboatwranglers.com

@SWranglers

The Wranglers had a week off to rest after playing three tough games in Ogden November 2-4. Steamboat welcomes the Cheyenne Stampede to Howelsen Ice Complex for what will be the Wranglers' first home games since October 21.

Steamboat showed well in their first foray into The Ice Sheet in Ogden. While they lost three straight games, the final scores (5-1, 5-2, 7-2) were far more flattering than what many teams have seen in that building this season.

They may not have interrupted the Mustangs' perfect season, but the Wranglers made them work for their points.

All three of the Wranglers' wins have come in Steamboat – a three-game sweep of the Wichita Jr. Thunder October 19-21 – so they will be ready to defend home ice against a very motivated opponent in Cheyenne (see above).

Aurora, CO native Kam Fink, who scored 31 goals in just 40 games for the Wranglers in the RMJHL during the 2016-17 season, has moved on to play at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas where he produced 21 points (7-14-21) in just 27 games as a freshman last season.

UTAH OUTLIERS (10-7-1-0, 32 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

While they may have come home from El Paso with just two of a possible nine points, you can count on one hand the number of teams that have gone into El Paso and won over the last few years. The Outliers showed last weekend that they are a team to be reckoned with.

The Rhinos scored a pair of goals 37 seconds apart early in the second period of Friday's series opener and that was all of the scoring in the game, which had a playoff intensity and atmosphere from start to finish.

Oskar Wahlgren stopped all 14 shots he faced in a scoreless first period and made 32 saves in the game.

Matt Bartel's goal 32 seconds into overtime on Saturday ended a tremendous junior hockey game and gave the Outliers a 3-2 win. Utah held the Rhinos to just 24 shots on Wahlgren, who repelled 22 of them.

The Rhinos got back in the win column on Sunday, scoring three times in the first 6:29 of the contest and holding on for a 4-2 win.

Jake Papesh scored for Utah 1:28 into the second period, but that would be the only goal scored in the frame in which the Outliers out-shot their hosts, 7-6. The Outliers were not able to close the gap any more in the second period, but the Rhinos didn't build on their lead, either.

The game saw four fights break out simultaneously late in the first period and 140 penalty minutes handed out in all.

The Outliers will look to further solidify their second-place standing in the Mountain Division this weekend as they welcome the third-place Casper Bobcats to town for three games. Utah goes into the series with a 23-point lead on Casper, but trails first-place Ogden by 22 points.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media