

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.05.18 – WESTERN 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.

FRESNO MONSTERS (14-7-0-0, 42 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

The good news for the Fresno Monsters was a 3-2 regulation win in Ontario Friday that gave them a share of first place in the Western Division along with the Long Beach Bombers. The bad news was a 5-3 loss to the Avalanche on Sunday when they had a chance to take sole possession of the top spot.

Both the Monsters and Bombers play three times this week so there will be some scoreboard watching. The Monsters head to Medford, Oregon for a three-game inter-division series against the Northwest Division's Southern Oregon Spartans. Fresno will be facing a team playing in front of their fans for the only time from October 21 to January 11, so they will no doubt be motivated to make an impression on the home crowd and fired up to host the Western Division co-leaders.

Fresno rallied from a 2-0 deficit in the second period to pick up that big road win, 3-2, over the Avalanche in Ontario Friday night. Fresno goalie Max Karlenzig (28 saves) stopped all 18 shots he faced over the final two periods to backstop the comeback.

The match-ups for the Western States Shootout are based on the standings and, as a result of their recent surge, the Monsters will play Ogden, Oklahoma City and Seattle at the showcase – a challenging slate to say the least.

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (12-4-3-0, 42 pts)

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www.JrBombers.org

Objects in mirror may be closer than they appear – the Fresno Monsters showed how easy it is to close the gap on a team in the standings when regulation wins are worth three points.

Despite the fact that Fresno joined them at the top of the Western Division standings, Long Beach did win nine of 11 games in November with eight of those games coming against teams in the top two in their division: El Paso (3x), Fresno (3x) and Utah (2x).

The new three-point scale did come into play with three of those nine wins needing overtime or shootout, meaning the Bombers only received two points in the standings.

The Bombers still hold two games in hand on the Monsters.

Long Beach will face the Edson Aeros for the first time ever in their first game at the upcoming showcase in Las Vegas. They will also face the Oklahoma City Blazers and Northern Colorado Eagles of the Mid-Western Division.

The Bombers took the measure of the El Paso Rhinos earlier in the season, but Oklahoma City has made the argument that they have overtaken El Paso as the top team in that division, so that may be a game that Long Beach circles on the schedule.

Domenic Bosetti may look forward to that tilt as well as the only two goaltenders in the entire league with a better save percentage (360+ minutes played) that his .931 are OKC's Xavier Garneau (.943) and Bobby Cloutier (.935).

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (5-11-0-2, 17 pts)

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www.OntarioAvalanche.com

The games can start to blend together over the course of a long 51-game schedule in the Western States Hockey League, but Sunday's win over Fresno is likely to be one that sticks out for the Ontario Avalanche when they look back at this season.

That 5-3 win over the division co-leaders moved Ontario out of the Western Division basement and into fourth place. Avalanche owner and president Tom Meyer sees it as the latest in a series of examples of the parity in the division this season.

"There is parity from top to bottom in our division this season," said Meyer. "We have had close games with all the teams."

The Avalanche, who have struggled scoring goals this season, lit the lamp four times in the second period. Five different players scored for Ontario, including Liam Massie, who accounted for the game-winner. Quinn Deshler assisted on four of the five Ontario goals.

Connor Duffy made 28 of his 33 saves through the first two periods for the Avs, keeping the Monsters off the board while Ontario built their lead.

"The Ontario-Fresno rivalry is alive and well," Meyer said. "This weekend was no surprise to us because we have a solid group of players on this team and we expect greater accomplishments from this group in the near future."

The Avalanche will earn a little R&R over the holiday break. They close out the first half of their schedule by playing nine games against eight different teams in four cities over a span of 15 days.

"We have a loaded schedule for the next two weeks and look forward to the Las Vegas Shootout Showcase after that," said Meyer.

SAN DIEGO SABERS (6-12-3-1, 25 pts)

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The two teams directly behind the San Diego Sabers in the Western Division standings of the Western States Hockey League come through town this weekend, hoping to make up ground before the Western States Shootout showcase event in Las Vegas and the subsequent holiday break.

The Sabers played just one game last week, coming up with a big win over the Flyers in Valencia on Thursday. Sean Devaney scored twice as San Diego built a 3-0 lead in

the first period of the game only to see the Flyers chip away and tie it, 3-3, midway through the third period.

The Sabers came through in the clutch, however, as newly-acquired Josef Kankovsky scored his first goal for San Diego with 8:17 left and it held up as the game-winner. Kankovsky has produced four points (1-3-4) in his first four games since joining the team.

Marshall McKallip had one of his best games of the season between the pipes, stopping 18 of 19 shots in the second period alone, and finishing the game with 41 saves.

The win over the Flyers was crucial because a Valencia win in regulation time would have gotten them within three points of San Diego.

The Sabers need to meet the challenge again this weekend to maintain their lead over both the Flyers and the Avalanche, who will be here Sunday for a noon faceoff, and who are only two points behind Valencia heading into the weekend.

They will be the last three home games of 2018 for the Sabers.

San Diego's three-game slate at the showcase in Vegas will include a big test against the Utah Outliers. They will also take on the Provincial Division's Hinton Wildcats and a select team from the CPJHL.

VALENCIA FLYERS (5-9-0-1, 16 pts)

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www.ValenciaFlyers.com

A tough stretch of games will not make it easy for the Valencia Flyers to make up ground in the Western Division standings after Ontario passed them by last weekend. This week, the Flyers will host Long Beach Thursday, then travel to San Diego to play the Sabers Friday and Saturday.

Following that three-in-three, the Flyers will certainly not ease into their trip to Las Vegas for the Western States Shootout. They will play three home games next week before heading to Sin City, taking on the El Paso Rhinos twice before a single game against the Fresno Monsters. The showcase will make six games in nine days for Valencia.

The Flyers have just one win in their last six games and that was against the Avalanche.

Despite being the fifth-place team in the Western Division, the Flyers did not exactly get a cupcake schedule for the showcase. They will open play against one of the two CPJHL select teams, then go up against the Dallas Snipers and Southern Oregon Spartans, who have not been easy outs this season by any stretch.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media