

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.12.18 – 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 (16-8-0-0, 48 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

A whirlwind stretch of five games – against five different teams – in six days will close out the first half of the regular season schedule for the Fresno Monsters.

The frantic stretch begins with a pair of games in California at Valencia and Ontario Saturday and Sunday. Monday is a travel day as the team heads to Las Vegas for the Western States Shootout. There, the Monsters face a challenging three-in-three slate that will see them take on two of the top three teams in the overall WSHL standings – the Ogden Mustangs and Oklahoma City Blazers – in addition to the

Seattle Totems, who are second in the Northwest Division and have only lost one of their last eight games in regulation.

Fresno beefed up their lineup recently, acquiring junior hockey veteran Jeremy Velazquez from the Cheyenne Stampede. Velazquez, who played Junior A in Saskatchewan the last two seasons, was the leading scorer for the Stampede at the time of his departure.

Fresno head coach Kevin Kaminski says Velazquez gives the team a “legit” seasoned player to the top line.

“He does it all,” Kaminski said. “He is a great skater with grit, and has great vision to find the open player, but also can finish his chances.”

“He gives us great depth and leadership to our line up.”

Velazquez arrived as part of a three-way trade with Cheyenne and the El Paso Rhinos that saw 17-year-old forward Nikita Garin and 18-year-old defenseman Artyom Shura head to El Paso.

The Monsters also picked up the WSHL rights to 20-year-old winger Jarred Hicks in the exchange. Hicks played Junior B hockey in Saskatchewan last season, scoring 17 goals and picking up 85 penalty minutes in 24 games with the Regina Capitals. He played the previous season on the same Junior A team – the La Ronge Ice Wolves – as Velazquez.

Velazquez scored his first goal in a Monsters uniform Sunday at Southern Oregon.

Cody Printzen also returned to the Monsters lineup last week, returning from a training camp injury to play in the last two games. Printzen played 44 games for the Monsters last season.

“He is an energy guy and creates opportunities with his speed,” Kaminski said of Printzen. “He chips in in all areas and takes prides in the little things.”

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (15-4-3-0, 51 pts)

@LBBombersHockey

www.JrBombers.org

The 4.64 goals per game the Bombers are producing leads the Western Division (Fresno has scored eight more goals but has played two additional contests).

There are already six Bombers with double-digit goal totals.

Gennady Malashenko is one of those players. After 13 points (5-8-13) in the first 19 games of the season, Malashenko ripped off 12 points (7-5-12) in the three Bombers wins last week.

Artem Korolev has multiple points in each of the last six games, producing 19 points (6-13-19) in that span.

Any time you get the management from all 23 WSHL teams in one place at one time, the environment is conducive to making trades. Long Beach GM and head coach Chris White is not distracted by that.

“I can’t speak for the other teams, but my sole focus is on two things: helping facilitate the advancement of our players and winning games,” White said. “I’ll keep my eyes open in the event if someone becomes available before the roster deadline, but it won’t be a priority.”

White did make a recent addition to his lineup, however.

“We have a new defenseman coming in prior to the Showcase,” he said. “William Cederstam will address a big need for us.”

Cederstam has played his entire career in his native Sweden up to this point, including 14 games in the professional ranks this season with Hammaro HC in the Second Division.

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (5-14-0-2, 17 pts)

@TmOntAvs

www.OntarioAvalanche.com

Former San Diego Saber Mason Kohn, 18, joined the Ontario Avalanche lineup for their most recent game – against San Diego coincidentally. Kohn, who spent the 2017-18 season with the Boston Jr. Bruins (USPHL), started this season with the Corpus Christi IceRays of the NAHL, scoring two goals and adding a pair of assists in 16 games.

As a rookie in 2016-17, Kohn scored 23 goals and assisted on 24 others for 47 points in 51 WSHL games with the Sabers – impressive numbers in his 16-year-old season.

Kohn's scoring touch will be welcomed. The Avalanche suffered close losses to division rivals Long Beach (5-3) and San Diego (4-3) in their last two games. Luckily, fifth-place Valencia was unable to pick up any points either, and the Avalanche remain one point up on the Flyers – who still hold three games in hand on the Avs.

Ontario will host Long Beach Friday – and get a visit from the El Paso Rhinos for a single game on Saturday – before heading to Vegas for the showcase.

The Avalanche will close out their pre-holiday schedule with games against the West Sound Admirals, the recently-improved Meadow Lake Mustangs, and one of the CPJHL select teams at the Western States Shootout.

SAN DIEGO SABERS (9-12-3-1, 34 pts)

@sdsabershockey

www.SanDiegoSabersHockey.com

Four wins in a row – three against Valencia and one against Ontario – solidified San Diego's third-place position in the Western Division heading into the Western States Shootout and the subsequent holiday break.

The addition of 20-year-old forward Josef Kankovsky has been a crucial pickup for the club. Kankovsky contributed 11 points (4-7-11) in his first seven games since joining the team. He was held in check in his November 23 debut against Fresno, but has found a way to get on the scoresheet in every game since.

Another Czech player who has heated up lately is Jakub Vesely. The 18-year-old forward is on an eight-game point streak, producing 14 points (5-9-14) in that span. He collected a point on the power play in four straight games – a streak that was broken Sunday against Ontario.

Goaltender Marshall McKallip is probably one of the few players not looking forward to the holiday break. McKallip is just getting hot and would probably welcome the opportunity to keep playing.

After appearing in just five games from the start of the season through November 17, McKallip has started six of the last seven games for San Diego. Over his last three starts – all wins – he has stopped 122 of 130 shots (.938).

VALENCIA FLYERS (5-12-0-1, 16 pts)

@valenciaflyers

www.ValenciaFlyers.com

Valencia Flyers head coach Justin Dyke says his team is eager to get to Las Vegas – not because they want to get to the end of what has been a frustrating first half, but because he and the team see it as an opportunity to go out on a high note and get things turned around before heading their separate ways for Christmas.

“The boys are looking forward to playing in Vegas,” said Dyke. “We are excited to play some new teams and, for us, it’s trying to end the first half in the win column.”

The Flyers have lost eight of their last nine games and sit at the bottom of the Western Division standings – one point behind Ontario.

“We’ve had a tough stretch the last 10 games or so and are looking to change that before the break,” Dyke said.

Former WSHLer Melwin Thorsson is shredding the Greater Metro Hockey League – a junior circuit in Ontario that allows 21-year-olds. Thorsson, who played for five different WSHL teams in his career, including Valencia, has put up 54 points (15-39-54) in just 23 games played for the Brantford Rattlers.

Thorsson, who also played for Long Beach, Las Vegas, Superior and Springfield over the past two seasons, scored 50 points (13-37-50) in 36 games for the Flyers last season.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media