

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.14.18 – NORTHWEST 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.

BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (20-5-0-0, 60 pts.)

@BhamBlazers

The Bellingham Blazers’ exciting first half of the season continued last weekend as the club bounced back from a one-goal loss to Seattle to post consecutive wins over West Sound.

The Blazers have been extremely tough to beat on home ice, winning eight of their nine games at Bellingham Sportsplex.

That home ice advantage will be put to the test once again this weekend as Bellingham looks for revenge on Seattle, which has beaten the Blazers four times in a row. Bellingham last posted a win over the Totems on October 19, but three of its four losses to Seattle since that game were on the road.

If first half trends continue after the calendar flips to 2019, Bellingham’s core group could be in for a special season. Timothy Prexler (22-38-60), Robbie Eichelberger (11-

42-53), Jamahl Eackett (24-27-51) and Thomas Steven (31-17-48) all have realistic chances at 100-point seasons.

Last year, forward Ruslan Novruzov scored 53 goals and dished out 49 assists in 51 games and was the only Blazer to eclipse the century mark in points. Novruzov, 18, is currently playing for MHK Spartak Moskva in his native Russia.

After playing Seattle on Friday night, the Blazers will host West Sound on Sunday afternoon before traveling to Las Vegas on Tuesday for their trio of games at the Western States Shootout against the Utah Outliers, Oklahoma City Blazers, and El Paso Rhinos.

SEATTLE TOTEMS (14-5-1-2, 46 pts)

@SeattleJrTotems

The last few weeks have been up-and-down for the Seattle Totems, who are enjoying their most successful season in franchise history.

Seattle blew out Bellingham 8-2 on November 21 and took down West Sound 5-1 the following weekend, but the Totems followed it up with a pair of losses to the last-place Admirals.

Prior to this weekend's games, Seattle got back on track with another quality victory, defeating Bellingham by a 4-3 final on December 6. In the win, blueliner Dominik Basek broke a 3-3 tie with a little over seven minutes remaining and the Totems held on for a statement victory.

It's still early, but the Totems have a couple players in their locker room who have a legitimate shot at the WSHL scoring title. Hometown hero Michael Shippee paces the club with a 21-34-55 scoring line over 22 appearances, giving him the fourth-most points of anyone in the league.

Gabriel Sbob is not far behind, with 20 goals and 26 assists for a total of 46 points over his 22 games. Dominik Cach (23-14-37) leads the Totems with 23 goals and, along with Shippee and Sbob, is part of Seattle's trio of 20-goal scorers.

This weekend, the Totems will battle Bellingham on the road on Friday before playing host to West Sound on Saturday to close out their regular first-half schedule. After that, Seattle is set to take on the Northern Colorado Eagles, Fresno Monsters, and Utah Outliers at the WSHL Showcase next week.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (7-15-0-1, 22 pts.)

@wshlspartans

Despite dropping two of three games to the Fresno Monsters, it wasn't a bad weekend for the Southern Oregon Spartans.

After losing 3-1 in the series opener, the Spartans posted a 4-3 victory before falling 5-0 in the third and final contest. The Spartans have been plagued by an inconsistent defensive effort throughout the year, giving up an average of nearly five goals per game heading into the series.

The Monsters high-powered offense is scoring at a rate of nearly five goals per contest itself and has scored more goals than any other team in the WSHL's Western Division.

Other than the shutout loss in the final game of the series, Southern Oregon gave a talented Fresno squad all it could handle. Goaltender Gabriel Lessard was recently acquired by the Spartans and played well in the club's 3-1 win, making 39 saves.

The third-place Spartans are off this week, giving them some additional time to prepare for the Western States Shootout. Southern Oregon's slate of games include matchups with the Steamboat Wranglers, Casper Bobcats, and Valencia Flyers.

WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (5-15-2-0, 19 pts.)

@wsadmirals

The West Sound Admirals are facing a three-point deficit at the bottom of the Northwest Division, but the team has shown legitimate improvement over the last few weeks.

After closing out their road trip through Alberta against the WSHL's new Provincial Division clubs, the Ads took two of three games from Seattle, including a wild 6-5 overtime win on the road.

Even with last week's back-to-back losses against Bellingham, things are starting to look up in West Sound.

Led by the trio of Harmen Vining (7-20-27), Alec Johnson (8-19-27), and Oliwer Stensson (10-16-26), the Admirals have shown they can be competitive on any given night in the WSHL, something that's not easy to accomplish as an expansion franchise.

West Sound will wrap up its first-half divisional games this weekend with a road game in Seattle before welcoming Bellingham to Bremerton Ice Center on Sunday.

The Admirals are scheduled to play games against the Dallas Snipers, Ontario Avalanche, and Cheyenne Stampede at the Western States Shootout next week.

---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media