

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.02.19 – 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 (9-15-0-0, 27 pts)

www.casperbobcats.com

@BobcatsCasper

Five wins in their last six games propelled the Casper Bobcats into a solid third-place standing in the Mountain Division at the Holiday Break – six points clear of the fourth-place Steamboat Wranglers.

The Bobcats leap-frogged the Wranglers by sweeping them in a three-game series at Casper Ice Arena December 7-9, then won two of three games at the Western States Shootout in Las Vegas just before Christmas.

Casper rallied from a 6-3 deficit with less than 12 minutes remaining to defeat the Meadow Lake Mustangs, 7-6, in their first game at the showcase. They followed it up with another win over the Cold Lake Wings (4-1) before dropping their final game

to the Southern Oregon Spartans (3-1), robbing them of the opportunity to revel in a six-game winning streak over the holidays.

Six different Casper skaters scored in the thrilling comeback over Meadow Lake, with Florian Seelman assisting on the final two goals, including the game-winner by Daniel Silar – his second goal of the game.

Meadow Lake (Saskatchewan) and Cold Lake (Alberta) are both members of the WSHL's new Provincial Division in Western Canada.

The Bobcats continue their nine-game season series with the Utah Outliers with three road games this weekend. Casper already ventured into West Valley City once this season, dropping three games November 16-18. The Bobcats and Outliers will close out the regular season with three games in Casper March 8-10.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-23-2-2, 12 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

Fans of the Cheyenne Stampede got their money's worth at the Western States Shootout with the team playing extra hockey in each of their first two games – an overtime win over the Wichita Jr. Thunder followed by a 3-2 loss at the hands of the CPJHL Red team. They closed the event out with a 4-0 loss to the West Sound Admirals.

The Stampede return to action this weekend with a three-game series against the Mid-Western Division's Dallas Snipers at the Dr. Pepper Star Center.

The same two teams met in Cheyenne early in the season (October 12-14) and, although Dallas won all three games (5-4, 6-4 and 3-2 in OT), they were all tightly-contested and could have gone either way.

Following the trip to Texas this weekend, the Stampede will play 13 of their next 16 games in the friendly confines of the Cheyenne Ice and Events Center – including 10 straight home games in February.

The focus for the Stampede as the second begins is to catch up to the team directly in front of them in the Mountain Division standings – the Steamboat Wranglers who are nine points up on Cheyenne. The two teams both posted three wins against each

other in the season series, with Steamboat up 10-8 in points thanks to one of the Cheyenne wins coming in overtime.

The final two head-to-head meetings of the season between the Stamps and Wranglers, February 2-3 in Cheyenne, will be key to determining the outcome of the race.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (26-1-0-1, 79 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

For the first three months of the season, the holiday break and the Oklahoma City Blazers have proven to be the only two things able to stop the Ogden Mustangs from racking up wins.

Ogden posted wins over three Thorne Cup contenders at the Western States Shootout to give them 26 wins in 28 games on the season (OKC handed them two one-goal losses – one in OT – in November).

The 'Stangs knocked off Fresno, El Paso and Edson in Vegas. El Paso and Edson are lead the Mid-Western and Provincial divisions, respectively, while Fresno is the second-place in the Western Division. All three are potential opponents along the way to a Thorne Cup title, and Ogden proved they could beat all of them.

As the Mustangs prepare to return to action this weekend by hosting the Steamboat Wranglers in a three-game series at The Ice Sheet, they hold a comfortable 22-point lead on the second-place Utah Outliers. There are still five head-to-head meetings between the Mustangs and Outliers on the schedule in the second half but, unless Utah was to sweep them, Ogden should cruise to the division title.

Another big test will come February 15-17 when the leaders of the Western Division, the Long Beach Bombers, travel to Ogden to play the Mustangs in a three-game series that will serve as another opportunity for the team to test itself against elite competition in the league.

STEAMBOAT WRANGLERS (6-23-1-1, 21 pts)

www.steamboatwranglers.com

@SWranglers

A trip to Ogden to face the league-leading Mustangs in a rude awakening coming off a two-week holiday break, but that's what faces the Steamboat Wranglers as they return to action this weekend.

Their maiden voyage at the Western States Shootout did not yield any points in the standings, but Steamboat players and staff were able to experience the network with teams from around the league and get in front of a throng of scouts.

On the ice there were three competitive games, but three narrow losses for the Wranglers, who fell to Southern Oregon (5-3), Cold Lake (7-5) and Hinton (4-3).

The Wranglers will finally get back on home ice next week with three games against the Dallas Snipers at Howelsen Ice Complex January 11-13.

Steamboat has not played a game in their barn since a 7-5 win over the Cheyenne Stampede on November 18.

The Wranglers added a 20-year-old forward with WSHL experience prior to the shootout, signing Jensen Baehr. Baehr played 94 WSHL games over the last two seasons with the Tahoe Icemen. He scored a goal against Cheyenne in his Wranglers debut on December 14.

UTAH OUTLIERS (18-11-1-1, 57 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

It is unlikely that there will be much intrigue down the stretch drive for the Utah Outliers this season. They sit 22 points behind first-place Ogden, but 30 points up on third-place Casper, as the Bobcats come to town for a three-game series to kick off the second half this weekend.

Utah posted convincing wins over Bellingham (8-2) and Seattle (9-3) at the Western States Shootout, but let the middle game of the event, against the San Diego Sabers, get away by a score of 4-2.

Six Outlier forwards hit double-digits in goals in the first half of the season, but that does not mean Utah is happy with its offensive output. They are hoping a new addition can boost the offense further.

Nelson, BC native Reese Tambellini scored his first three WSHL goals at the showcase. The 6'3", 195-pound forward, who joined Utah in early December, played

the last two seasons with the Grand Forks Border Bruins of the Junior B KIJHL. He also appeared in two games last season for the Langley Rivermen of the BCHL. The BCHL is widely considered to be the best Junior A league in Canada.

The Outliers scored 140 goals as a team through their first 31 games (4.52/game).

At the other end of the ice, Utah's Oscar Wahlgren has been one of the most dependable netminders in the WSHL this season. The 19-year-old Swedish import is second in the league in minutes played (1,322), trailing only El Paso's Nils Velm (1,500). Wahlgren's 2.27 goals-against average and .914 save percentage also put him among the league leaders.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media