

# WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.11.19 – PROVINCIAL 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.*

**COLD LAKE WINGS (3-20-1-1, 12 pts)**

**[www.coldlakewings.com](http://www.coldlakewings.com)**

**@ColdLakeWings**

In junior hockey, where young players are developing their games individually and as a team as the season wears on, there is always something to play for. Despite being 42 points out of first place the Cold Lake Wings have plenty on their plate in the second half of their maiden voyage in the WSHL.

Even with the small gap of just six points between Edson and Hinton at the top of the division, Edson made a pretty strong argument in November and December that it is the top team in the Provincial Division.

That means, in order to avoid the Aeros, the Wings will need to pull ahead of Meadow Lake and reclaim third place in the division standings. That process begins this weekend with a home-and-home series between the two clubs.

The Wings had some encouraging performances from some of their younger players just getting their feet wet at the junior level over the last 90 days, so internal improvement could very well be on the way.

Cold Lake's top four scorers are Anson Smith (2001 birth year), Conor Frith (2002), Ilias Okemow (2000) and Nigel Cardinal (2000).

Smith notched a hat trick in Cold Lake's first game at the league showcase in Vegas before the Christmas break – his 10th multi-point game of the season.

Okemow lit the lamp in two of three games in Vegas and is second on the team with 12 goals – second only to Cardinal's 16.

Frith, 16, was playing Bantam hockey the season before last, but his skill level has transferred quickly to the junior level, and he has dished out a team-leading 21 assists.

**EDSON AEROS (17-6-1-1, 54 pts)**

**[www.aeroshockey.ca](http://www.aeroshockey.ca)**

**@AerosEdson**

With two weeks of inter-division play with the Northwest Division, then the Western States Shootout, the Edson Aeros and the rest of the Provincial Division had a chance to see the kind of competition the Western States Hockey League offers south of the border.

The final 29 games, however, will be played entirely within the division. That means the team, or teams that will challenge Edson come playoff time will have ample opportunity to poke and prod them for weaknesses between now and the start of the Thorne Cup playoffs.

Although hockey players and coaches are reluctant to talk about them most of the time, there are also individual achievements to play for.

Sebastian Heden is tied for the lead in the WSHL scoring race with 76 points (34-42-76) piled up in just 23 games. Emil Johansson (39-35-74) is just behind him. If both/either keep producing at the same clip and stay healthy they could eclipse the

league's single-season marks of 75 goals and 150 points, both set just last year by Fresno's Daylon Mannon.

Heden has been held off the scoresheet just once this season – November 16 against Bellingham. He has collected at least one point in the other 22 games he has played, with 17 of those being multi-point efforts. He has been held to a single point in three of his last four games, however.

The Aeros lead the WSHL with 47 power play goals, although the Oklahoma City Blazers have converted a higher percentage of their man-advantage opportunities (30.2%). Edson is second at 28.3%.

Edson's +91 goal differential is another indication of their dominance this season. Only league-leader Ogden has a better mark (a staggering +152).

Meadow Lake stunned the Aeros, 6-5, on November 24 after being out-scored 33-2 by Edson in their previous two meetings. The Aeros returned to Meadow Lake on Saturday and left with three points, but Trevor Buckmeier (48 saves) and the Mustangs made them work for a 2-0 win.

Meadow Lake can gain a lot from games like that in the second half, showing that they can compete with the top teams, and giving themselves some confidence – and scouting reports – to draw upon when the playoffs come around.

### **HINTON WILDCATS (15-8-1-1, 48 pts)**

**[www.hintonwildcats.ca](http://www.hintonwildcats.ca)**

**@HintonWildcats**

With a home-and-home series against the division-leading Edson Aeros this weekend, the Hinton Wildcats look to close the six-point gap that separates them from first place.

The Wildcats will play the Aeros a total of eight times in the second half of the regular season, so there will be plenty of opportunities to keep building their budding rivalry.

The Wildcats made some roster moves that have worked out, including the acquisition of netminder Brendan Culbertson from Cold Lake in a move that could impact the second-half race in the Provincial Division.

Culbertson, 19, is a 6'2, 220-pound target who posted fine numbers in the USPHL last season. He has won his first three starts since joining the team in Las Vegas for the showcase, backstopping Hinton to wins over Steamboat and Meadow Lake before shutting out his former teammates in Cold Lake on Saturday.

In all, Culbertson has stopped 125 of 132 shots (.947) in a Wildcats sweater.

17-year-old Salmon Arm, BC product Riley Keys, who joined the Wildcats about five weeks ago, has been producing. Keys picked up three assists in the 9-4 win at Meadow Lake on Saturday, and has 11 points (5-6-9) in nine games since joining the club.

Keys began the season playing Junior B with the Chase Heat (KIJHL) where he had two penalty minutes (1-1-2) and 28 PIM in 12 games played.

Viacheslav Pinin is another mid-season acquisition, coming over from the Bellingham Blazers. Hinton management must have like what they saw from Pinin when he came to town with the Blazers and played a pair of games at Murray Rec Center in November as they acquired him a week later.

Pinin, a native of Moldova (\*checks map\*), has been producing a point-per-game pace with 3-3-6 in six games played.

### **MEADOW LAKE MUSTANGS (5-20-0, 15 pts)**

**[www.meadowlakemustangs.com](http://www.meadowlakemustangs.com)**

**@ML\_Mustangs**

A 2-0 loss is not a win but Saturday's result against Edson, combined with their 6-5 win over the Aeros on November 24, has to be a huge confidence boost for the Meadow Lake Mustangs.

The season did not start on a high note for Meadow Lake. The Mustangs were on the wrong side of some losses by scores like 18-2, 15-0 and 14-2. But the addition of Shane Hounsell, not to mention Erik Ehrmantraut, Andrew Hawes, Tylin Cameron and Justin Hebert, has made the Mustangs a different hockey team than the one that broke training camp in October.

The turnaround in Meadow Lake is good for the entire Provincial Division as the four teams will be playing exclusively against each other in the second half of the season and having a high level of competition will benefit everybody.

The Mustangs made a lot of strides during the first half of the season. After scoring just 31 goals through their first 14 games (2.2 per game), they lit the lamp at a rate of 3.9 per game through the next 11 contests.

There was even more drastic improvement when it came to keeping the puck out of their own net, dropping their goals allowed per game from 9.5 to 5.9 during the same timeframe.

20-year-old Trevor Buckmeier has the most junior experience among the team's goaltending corps which also includes 19-year-old Scott Danylak, who played Junior B with the Vegreville Rangers (NEAJBHL) last season, and 18-year-old Noah Finlay who came up through the local midget ranks.

Hopefully Buckmeier's 50-save performance that kept the Mustangs in Saturday's game against Edson is a sign of things to come.

*--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media*