

# WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.16.19 – 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 (22-12-1-0, 68 pts)**

**@WSHLMonsters**

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

With the Fresno Monsters and Long Beach Bombers both posting three regulation wins last week, the Monsters remain two points back in the race for the Western Division title.

Tyler Matthews snapped a personal three-game losing streak by starting and winning two of the games as Fresno swept the Ontario Avalanche at Seland Arena, stopping 65 of 70 shots over the two games.

Unfortunately for Fresno, Long Beach holds six games in hand, and Thursday’s tilt between the two teams at Seland is their final head-to-head meeting this season. That will make it very tough for the Monsters to catch up, provided there is not a

major stumble by the Bombers (don't hold your breath). The game will be the seventh of a nine-game homestand for the Monsters.

Still, if they end up as the #2 seed for the divisional playoffs, the Monsters will get to host at least one playoff series. They have defeated Long Beach twice in six games this season and another win on Thursday would go a long way to giving them the confidence they will need to upend the two-time defending division champs in a playoff series should that come to pass.

The Bombers knocked the Monsters out of last year's playoffs with a two-game sweep into the Western Division Final (4-0 and 8-2). It was the first time in three seasons that Fresno had advanced to the final round of the divisional playoffs.

Also, if Fresno can finish in the top two in the division, it will mark the first time in four years that they have finished that high after a stretch of four straight regular season division titles ended in 2015.

### **LONG BEACH BOMBERS (21-4-3-1, 70 pts)**

**@LBBombersHockey**

**[www.JrBombers.org](http://www.JrBombers.org)**

A win over Valencia Thursday, followed by a pair of victories over the San Diego Sabers Friday and Saturday, kept the Long Beach Bombers atop the Western Division standings.

It also extended the Long Beach streak to 10 games without a regulation loss (9-0-1-0). That includes three impressive wins at the Western States Shootout against elite competition.

The rest of the Western Division is not going to want to hear this, but it looks like the Bombers are playing their best hockey of the season as they chase their third straight division crown.

"I think we are playing much better from top to bottom," said Long Beach head coach Chris White. "But we certainly have plenty of room to improve; and we'll need to."

In White's eyes, the improvement has come in multiple facets of the Bombers' game.

"The addition of William Cederstam has given us a very strong top-four defensive group," said White. "Some of our depth guys have been playing a smarter game, a

few of our top-six forwards are red hot, and (veteran goaltender) Domenic Bosetti has been closing-out games.”

Long Beach has a grueling stretch in the second half with no bye weeks and trips to Ogden and Bellingham lined up. White thinks those trips to play division-leading teams on the road are very important for the team as they prepare for the Western Division playoffs and, presumably, a Thorne Cup run.

“We will definitely keep tabs on the pulse of the team,” said White. “But any team that wins the Thorne Cup will have to master the art of handling adversity and fighting through it.”

The Bombers play an unconventional Schedule this week, playing at Fresno Thursday and welcoming the Southern Oregon Spartans to The Rinks, Lakewood for another one-off on Friday.

### **ONTARIO AVALANCHE (8-19-1-2, 28 pts)**

**@TmOntAvs**

[www.OntarioAvalanche.com](http://www.OntarioAvalanche.com)

The Ontario Avalanche returned from an extended holiday break to play a three-game series at Fresno last week. They didn’t come back with any points in the standings – which they need to hold off the Valencia Flyers who are directly behind them in the division standings.

The Avalanche get back at it this week, playing in San Diego on Friday, before returning home to host the Northwest Division’s Southern Oregon Spartans Saturday and Sunday.

Ontario makes the trek to El Paso to face the Mid-Western Division leaders and defending Thorne Cup champion Rhinos January 25-27.

William Ma, a 35-goal scorer for the Avalanche last year, transitioned directly to the NCAA Division III level this season at SUNY-Canton and has put up four points (1-3-4) in the first 14 games of his rookie season.

Ma scored his first collegiate goal November 24, notching the lone goal for the Kangaroos in their 5-2 loss to Hamilton College.

In other Avalanche alumni news, Sean Reynolds is currently on loan to the Macon Mayhem of the Southern Professional Hockey League. Reynolds earned the call-up

by producing 39 points (18-21-39) in just 27 games for the Elmira Enforcers of the Federal Hockey League.

Reynolds scored 17 goals in 29 games for the Avs during the 2012-13 season, then went on to a four-year NCAA Division III career Lawrence University. He is in his second season in the FHL and earned a 21-game stint with the Evansville Thunderbolts of the SPHL last season.

**SAN DIEGO SABERS (12-14-3-1, 43 pts)**

**@sdsabershockey**

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

The San Diego Sabers played a pair of games in Long Beach last weekend—their first action since the holiday break—and in both games they rallied from a two-goal deficit on the road against the division leaders but, ultimately, fell short both times.

Long Beach led 2-0 on Friday, but San Diego tied it in the second period on goals from Karel Kankovsky and Ashton Jones before the Bombers re-claimed the lead in the first minute of the third period and went on to a 5-2 win.

On Saturday, the game went into the third period tied 2-2 and, for the second straight night, the Bombers pulled out a two-goal win, this time by a final score of 4-2.

Despite the two losses, it was an encouraging sign for San Diego to be right in a game with the Bombers, who have to be considered serious Thorne Cup contenders following their impressive showing at the Western States Shootout.

San Diego brought more than just nine points home with them from the Western States Shootout. Wins over the Utah Outliers (4-2) and Hinton Wildcats (4-1) were statement games for the Sabers. Utah is a legit contender out of the Mountain Division, while Hinton is the second-place team in the WSHL's new Provincial Division. San Diego also picked up a win over a select team from the CPJHL.

Three recent additions to the Sabers roster all made their Sabers debut in the series at Long Beach: forwards Jan Sokolnik and Noah McNutt, and Jordan Ribbink, a 6'5", 209-pound defenseman from Ontario.

Following a road game at Valencia on Thursday, the Sabers return to Iceoplex Escondido Friday night to host the Ontario Avalanche—the first game on home ice for the Sabers since a 4-3 win over the same Avalanche team on December 9.

**VALENCIA FLYERS (6-16-0-3, 21 pts)**

**@valenciaflyers**

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

The Valencia Flyers eased into their second half schedule with a single game last week. Dylan San Augustin, Danylo Moroz and Justin Poirier lit the lamp, but it wasn't enough in a 7-3 loss to Long Beach.

Now, it is time to get back to the grind of the WSHL regular season, with three games in three days on the docket this week. Valencia will host San Diego on Thursday night, then head up to Fresno for games against the Monsters Friday and Saturday.

Moroz and Tristan Warr have accounted for more than half of the Flyers goals this season and, as the team looks at ways to help themselves climb up the Western Division standings, secondary scoring is high on the list.

“Depth scoring is a big focus for the second half of the season,” said head coach Justin Dyke. “We have a lot of games in hand so getting some wins to help secure a playoff spot is our main focus. Our goal is an above .500 record for the second half and this is easily attainable in our eyes.”

The Flyers have yet to beat the Monsters in five tries this season this season, but the last meeting went to overtime, so that was a step in the right direction at least. That was December 15 – the final game for both teams before travelling to Las Vegas for the Western States Shootout.

Valencia native Adam Papayoanou, who scored 28 goals for the Flyers over a two-year WSHL career (2013-2015), is in his second season at Southern Maine – an NCAA Division III program.

Papayoanou has scored a pair of goals this season, and added three assists in 16 games played for the Huskies.

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