

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.18.19 – 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 (26-9-0-0, 72 pts.) **@BhamBlazers**

The Bellingham Blazers are riding high with the second-best record in the league after opening the 2019 portion of their season with wins in four of their first five contests, including a pair of victories over West Sound last weekend.

On an individual level, the Blazers have experienced similar success. Forward Timothy Prexler (28-53-81) has the third-most points in the league while Jamahl Eackett (35-40-75), Robbie Eichelberger (17-48-65), and Thomas Steven (38-24-62) are all top 10 scorers.

“It’s good to see players having individual success with the scoring race,” said Bellingham Head Coach Mark Collins. “They do understand, though, that it is a direct

result of playing the game as a team and there are a lot of contributing factors that lead to points.

“I’m sure it’s hard for them not to pay attention to the race, but they do have some friendly competition going on with each other.”

Bellingham will play a home-and-home series against Seattle this weekend, beginning on Friday night at Olympicview Arena. The Totems are currently 23 points behind the first-place Blazers in the Northwest Division standings.

It would be understandable for Bellingham to play a bit lackadaisical for the remainder of the season with such a big divisional lead, but Collins doesn’t anticipate that being an issue due to the culture the Blazers have in place.

“We approach every weekend the same throughout the season,” Collins added. “We build off previous weeks’ games and practices understanding where we need to improve and what is working well. We work hard to focus on the process of those types of things rather than the results, and that helps us to stay in check.”

SEATTLE TOTEMS (17-9-1-2, 55 pts)

@SeattleJrTotems

The Seattle Totems logged a pair of road victories over Southern Oregon last weekend, returning from their holiday break on a positive note.

“It was very important to get off to a good start,” said Totems Head Coach Michael Murphy. “We brought in six new guys over the holiday break and we now have the best roster and depth we’ve had in a long time, and definitely the strongest we’ve had since joining the WSHL.”

With 22 games remaining, Seattle is now faced with a 23-point deficit in its quest for the Northwest Division title. The Totems have never claimed a division crown in six seasons in the WSHL and it looks like that streak will continue barring a stretch of poor play from Bellingham.

“I’m not sure we can run down Bellingham at this point, but we’ll definitely give it our best shot,” said Murphy.

Forward Michael Shippee reached the 200-point milestone in his three-year WSHL career near the end of the first half of the season. Shippee, a Seattle native, is 23rd in

league history in scoring. The 20-year-old needs 31 more points in order to enter the top 10 on that list.

The Totems will be busy this weekend with four games over the course of four days. After hosting West Sound on Thursday, Seattle will play Bellingham at home on Friday before taking on West Sound once again on Saturday. The busy weekend will conclude on Sunday afternoon with a road game in Bellingham.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (9-18-0-1, 28 pts.)

@wshlspartans

At this point in the season, the Southern Oregon Spartans goal should be to hold off West Sound and maintain the third seed in the division.

The Spartans are six points ahead of the Admirals after dropping a pair of home games against Seattle over the weekend. They have lost two of three games to West Sound this season with six matchups between the two clubs remaining.

Goaltender Gabriel Lessard has seen up-and-down results since joining the Spartans in early December. The 19-year-old out of Gatineau, Quebec made 42 saves in his season debut and held a .944 save percentage through his first two starts.

A couple of tough outings against Seattle last weekend lowered Lessard's save percentage to .878. It will be interesting to see how Lessard, who appeared in two games for the Evansville Jr. Thunderbolts in the NA3HL earlier this season, responds in his next start.

Blueliner Axel Low is third among WSHL defenseman in scoring with 36 points (10-26-36). Low needs just one more point to match his scoring total from all of last season.

The Spartans will take on a pair of Western Division clubs this weekend with road games against the Long Beach Bombers and Ontario Avalanche. Southern Oregon will play Long Beach on Friday night before taking on Ontario twice over the next two days.

WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (6-21-2-0, 22 pts.)

@wsadmirals

The West Sound Admirals opened the second half of their season last weekend with a couple of losses against division-leading Bellingham in a home-and-home series.

The Admirals tough schedule to open 2019 will continue this weekend with a couple of road games in Seattle on Thursday and Saturday. West Sound has fared well against the Totems this season, winning three of five matchups between the two teams.

“We feel we matchup a little better with Seattle,” said Admirals Head Coach and General Manager Dave Daniello. “We have had trouble playing for a full 60 minutes in games this season. We need to compete hard for the entire game and we need to have timely goaltending.

“We have been successful at times against Seattle because our compete level has been high and we trust in our systems. If we can be disciplined enough to stay with the game plan, we will have a good chance to get some points out of this weekend.”

On November 30, West Sound erupted for a season-high 11 goals in a blowout win over the Totems. It’s tough to anticipate what will happen this weekend in what’s been a back-and-forth season series.

---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media