

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.19.19 – MID-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.*

### **DALLAS SNIPERS (21-22-1-1, 66 pts.)** **@DallasSnipers**

The WSHL schedule-makers were not kind to the Dallas Snipers at the onset of the second half. The Snipers have had games every weekend for the last seven weeks with 21 games during that stretch.

Most recently, Dallas was swept in a three-game series against Oklahoma City on the road despite putting up a solid fight. The Blazers won each contest by multiple goals, but the Snipers didn’t let any of the games get out of hand.

“I think we’ve looked a bit sluggish the last few weeks, both mentally and physically,” said Snipers Head Coach Aaron Davis. “This will be our first weekend off since the new year, and it’s much-needed to regroup and get away from the rink for a few days.”

With a matchup against Northern Colorado, the team closest to Dallas in the Mid-Western Division standings, looming next weekend, the time off will be extremely valuable to the Snipers.

“We will watch some game film and take it easy this week in practice,” Davis added. “I think we will be okay after this weekend’s break, and we’ll go into Colorado feeling much fresher.”

After their Northern Colorado series, the Snipers will wrap up their regular season schedule with a three-game series at home against Oklahoma City. It’s a tough way to finish out the year, but the difficult slate of games will prepare Dallas for what it hopes is a lengthy playoff run.

### **EL PASO RHINOS (32-8-3-2, 104 pts.)**

**@El\_Paso\_Rhinos**

The El Paso Rhinos will return to action this weekend with a chance to extinguish any hopes that Oklahoma City has of making a run at first place. The Rhinos and Blazers will match up in a three-game series in Texas starting on Friday night.

El Paso has won 12 of its last 13 games and has one regulation loss at home all season. The Rhinos will have the support of their hometown fans this weekend, giving them a slight edge in what has been an intense rivalry this year.

The Rhinos are in the midst of a nine-game homestand that will bring their regular season to a close. They won the first three matchups with a sweep of Northern Colorado a couple of weeks ago.

Forwards Jonas Burman (28-35-63) and Martin Dubsky (21-39-60) are the two highest scorers on an El Paso roster that features five 50-point scorers, including d-man J.C. Dubecky (9-41-50).

The Rhinos have a total of five players with at least 20 goals. In addition to Burman and Dubsky, forwards Dillon Manchester (21-29-50), Max Kamper (21-20-41), and John Erramousepe (26-27-53) have hit the 20-goal mark.

Those five players have combined for 117 of El Paso’s 239 total goals, which, astonishingly, is only about 48 percent of the Rhino’s overall offense on the year. The fact that five 20-goal scorers have accounted for less than half of El Paso’s offensive output speaks to the overall depth that the club possesses.

The rich got richer at the trade deadline as the Rhinos added several talented players. Among the additions are forward Oliwer Stensson, who had 53 points (21-32-53) over 36

games for the West Sound Admirals, and netminder Richie Parent, who already has a .980 save percentage over two starts with the Rhinos.

### **NORTHERN COLORADO EAGLES (25-17-0-2, 77 pts.)**

**@NoCoEagles**

A weekend slate of games against the bottom two teams in the Mountain Division has put the Northern Colorado Eagles back on track as they return to divisional competition this weekend at home against Wichita.

Going into last weekend, the Eagles were coming off three consecutive losses to El Paso despite a hard-fought effort. Northern Colorado did not allow the Rhinos' high-flying offense to score more than four goals in any of the three games, but the Eagles' netted just two goals throughout the series.

Against the Cheyenne Stampede and Steamboat Wranglers, the Eagles rebounded in a big way with 31 goals over three contests. Northern Colorado's previous season-high for goals in a single game was nine, but it registered double-digit goals in all three games last weekend.

Collecting eight points over the last three games has allowed Jacob Elik (14-38-53) to become the first Eagle to hit 50 points. The Phoenix, Arizona native has at least a point in 15 of his last 16 games with eight goals and 20 assists for a total of 28 points during that stretch.

Last Saturday night, goaltender Marshall Murphy made 31 saves en-route to the second shutout of his WSHL career in Northern Colorado's 11-0 win over Steamboat.

Newly-acquired netminder Bryce Crowley received the starting nod in the other two games last weekend, making 55 saves on 59 shots while moving to 2-0-0 on the season.

Crowley was one of three players added by Northern Colorado at the trade deadline in addition to forwards Reese Tambellini and Elijah Kendall.

### **OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (31-8-1-1, 87 pts.)**

**@OKCBlazersWSHL**

The Oklahoma City Blazers have a critical match-up this weekend on the road against division-leading El Paso. The Blazers are eight points behind the Rhinos but have four games in hand on them, so the series could play a massive role in determining the regular season Mid-Western Division champion.

“This is a big weekend for both the Blazers and El Paso,” said OKC Head Coach Gary Gill. “What I think it will take to win the series is hard work, second and third efforts, and 60 minutes of what has made us successful to this point.”

The season series between Oklahoma City and El Paso is all knotted up at three games apiece, and the matchups have been fiercely contested. Five of the six games have been decided by two goals or less, including a 5-4 Rhinos win in a shootout back on January 13.

It’s clear that Gill and the entire Blazers organization have a ton of respect for the Rhinos, but OKC knows what it is capable of.

“We are focused on us and what we do well,” said Gill. “We all know El Paso is a good team, so to say that we’ll win the division if we win this weekend is too cocky. Our goals are still with us, and that won’t change until it’s all over.

“Right now, our team is enjoying playing together and for each other. We are looking forward to playing the games this weekend.”

The Blazers made multiple additions at the trade deadline, including Caleb Travis, who had an 11-15-26 scoring line in 33 games with the West Sound Admirals, and Jeremy Van Dyke, who already has 11 points (6-5-11) over nine games with the Blazers.

OKC also added defenseman Joseph DiMonico, forward Christopher Wracker, and goaltender Owen Liskiewicz. Every new addition has already appeared in multiple games with the Blazers outside of Liskiewicz, who may not garner much playing time as he joins an established goaltending corps that features Bobby Cloutier (2.44/.925) and Xavier Garneau (2.14/.927), two of the top netminders in the entire WSHL.

**WICHITA JR. THUNDER (12-30-1-2, 40 pts.)**  
**@JrThunderHockey**

The Wichita Jr. Thunder’s two-year rebuilding project is beginning to generate some positive results. The 2017 Thorne Cup champions have won five of their last six games after taking two of three on the road against the Casper Bobcats over the weekend.

The Jr. Thunder have six games left before the playoffs. After this weekend’s series on the road against Northern Colorado, they’ll get their final tune-up on in El Paso against the Rhinos from March 7-10.

Both series will be difficult, but they should help Wichita prepare for the playoffs. The Jr. Thunder are still well behind the pack in the Mid-Western Division, but their recent improvement could allow them to play spoiler or make a surprise run this spring.

Wichita added four players prior to the WSHL trade deadline: forward Lukas Johansson, goaltender Jeremy Haffner, and blueliners Anton Frolin and Hunter Dougherty.

Haffner, 19, will replace departed goaltender Bronson Sudberry on the Jr. Thunder's roster. The New York native has spent the last two seasons with the Long Beach Sharks in the NA3HL.

Johansson has three goals and an assist over 12 games since joining the club while Dougherty and Frolin have combined for a goal and seven assists over 15 appearances, giving Wichita a bit of an offensive boost from the back end.

*---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*