

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.20.19 – 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 (28-14-3-1, 91 pts)

@WSHLMonsters

www.FresnoMonsters.com

We may struggle to find things to find things to talk about over the Fresno Monster’s three-week hiatus, so this week let’s focus on their latest alumni highlights.

Mark Shroyer played five seasons with the Monsters, playing in a franchise record 206 games (regular season + playoffs). He served as the captain of the Monsters in his final season, 2015-16, before heading directly to the NCAA Division III program at Castleton (VT) State.

Now in his junior season with the Spartans, Shroyer has accrued 119 penalty minutes in 50 career NCAA games. He has scored seven goals and added 10 assists for 17 points.

Shroyer's 116 points (29-87-116) put him in the top 10 of Fresno's all-time scoring list. No defenseman has ever scored as many points as Shroyer has for the Monsters, but current Monsters Logan Domagala (35-75-110) is closing in on him.

Shroyer is also #2 on Fresno's all-time PIM list with 374 – 21 behind Daniel Goodwin.

Ivan Vilcauskas, who collected 167 penalty minutes to go along with his 14 points (6-8-14) playing for the Monsters last season, has begun his professional career with the Mentor Ice Breakers of the Federal Hockey League.

Mentor, on the east side of Cleveland, OH, is an FHL expansion team run by Iain Duncan who won a national championship with Bowling Green and scored 19 goals as a rookie with the (original) Winnipeg Jets.

Vilcauskas, 6'2" and 220 pounds, picked up six points (1-5-6) in his first 18 pro games but his name has peppered score sheets all around the Federal League thanks to his 159 PIM.

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (29-6-4-2, 97 pts)

@LBBombersHockey

www.JrBombers.org

When the Long Beach Bombers arrived in Ogden on Friday, the Mustangs had only lost one game in regulation time all season. As the top team in the WSHL's overall standings, and the hosts of this season's Thorne Cup, you would have to call them the favorites.

Over 180 minutes the Bombers played the Mustangs even, with the teams scoring seven goals apiece in the low-scoring, tight-checking, playoff-like series.

Ogden won the first two games of the series by a score of 2-1, but the Bombers made sure they proved they could beat the Mustangs before they left town, scoring the winning goal with 3:11 left in the third period in Sunday's game.

"We played 178 of 180 minutes of tied or one-goal hockey so I think both teams come out of that series better than they went in," said Long Beach general manager and head coach Chris White. "We had a couple mental lapses in Games 1 & 2 that

resulted in late losses, but that will hopefully inspire us to be more focused in future games.”

Playing against the top team in the WSHL (and the highest-scoring), Domenic Bosetti made 123 saves on 130 shots (.946). That is the type of game-stealing play in net that can carry a team through a tournament like the Thorne Cup – especially when you get to the final four teams and single-elimination play.

“Bosetti and (Ogden goalie Artur) Ogandzhanyan put on a show,” said White. “All-in-all it was a fantastic weekend of hockey. I think our boys really earned and deserved that Sunday win.”

Bosetti has started seven games in a row, and eight of the last nine. He is clearly going to be leaned on heavily during the Bombers post-season run and, for that reason, you might see Matthew Genter or Josh Martinez get some starts down the stretch to keep him fresh.

“We’ll start to give him some rest down the stretch and put some thought into which games he plays,” White said. “He is such a competitor, and he certainly gave us a chance to win all three games in Ogden.”

The Bombers play two games this week. Their game at Valencia on Saturday is the first of six straight road games for the Bombers.

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (14-24-1-3, 47 pts)

@TmOntAvs

www.OntarioAvalanche.com

The Ontario Avalanche picked a great time of the year to start playing their best hockey of the season.

Since January 18, if you take out five games against El Paso and Long Beach, the Avalanche are 6-0-0-1, collecting 19 of a possible 21 points.

They are not in the same class as Fresno, El Paso or Long Beach, but they are looking like they may be able to catch San Diego and move up into the third position in the Western Division standings by the end of the season. That would mean skipping a first-round playoff series against Valencia.

Ontario received strong play between the pipes from Connor Duffy, who stopped 32 of 34 shots, in a 4-2 win over the Sabers on Saturday.

On Sunday, Nicholas Abernathy scored four times in the third period to propel the Avalanche to an 8-3 win – their third straight head-to-head victory over San Diego.

Abernathy now leads the team with 16 goals – six of them coming in the last four games.

SAN DIEGO SABERS (15-22-4-2, 55 pts)

@sdsabershockey

www.SanDiegoSabersHockey.com

The San Diego Sabers are losing their grip on third place in the Western Division. The Sabers are 3-10-1-1 over their last 15 games – that includes three losses to fourth-place Ontario.

The Sabers' lead over the Avalanche is down to eight points with just eight games left on the regular season schedule for San Diego.

The two losses to Ontario over the weekend closed out the season series against the Avalanche, so there are no more head-to-head meetings between the two teams, and the way things are trending, that is good news for San Diego.

The Sabers have just a single game on the docket this week, travelling to Valencia to play the Flyers on Friday night.

Marshall McKallip assumed the #1 spot on the depth chart between the pipes for the Sabers around Thanksgiving and rattled off five straight wins from November 29 through the holiday break as San Diego solidified their place in the middle of the Western Division standings – nipping at the heels of Fresno and Long Beach but safely ahead of Ontario and Valencia.

But McKallip has lost his last seven decisions (0-6-0-1) and nine of his last 10. It was more a matter of goal support (or lack of it) than a fall-off in his play. From January 18 – February 2 he posted a single-game save percentage of .921 in each of his seven appearances (.941 total over that span) but did not pick up a single win.

The Sabers' goal totals – both for and against – as well as their season goal differential are not that different from the two teams behind them in the Western Division standings, Ontario and Valencia. So, while the standings seemed to separate early in the race, that may have been a bit of a mirage and the Sabers need to finish strong to maintain their #3 seed and first-round bye.

VALENCIA FLYERS (9-26-1-4, 33 pts)

@valenciaflyers

www.ValenciaFlyers.com

The Valencia Flyers won the first game of last week's series against the second-place team in the Northwest Division, Seattle, but the Totems headed back to Washington state after winning Friday and Saturday.

In Thursday's series opener, Danylo Moroz scored his second goal of the game to break a 3-3 tie with 5:23 left in the third period, and he completed a hat trick with :40 left to seal a 5-3 win for the Flyers.

With the game tied in crunch time, Dominik Knap barreled down the right wing, drawing a defenseman to him, then left a nice flat drop pass to Moroz, who was able to snap a shot inside the far post from the top of the right circle.

The Totems pressed for the tying goal but, in the final minute of the game, Seattle was unable to corral a Flyers dump-in and the Moroz was able to knock a loose puck into the net to put the game away.

Knap had a goal and two assists in the game and Flyers goalie Mack Willy made 37 saves – 18 of them in the third period.

The Flyers start a stretch of five straight home games this weekend with three games in three days against three different division rivals, playing Ontario, San Diego and Long Beach beginning on Thursday.

With Ontario playing so well right now, it is going to be difficult for the Flyers to make up the 14-point deficit – even with two games in hand on the Avalanche. Valencia's goal differential for the season (-57) is only seven off of where Ontario is (-50), but the Flyers are 17 games below .500 and the Avalanche are surging.

The Flyers may be one of the more dangerous teams in the league that will have to play in through a first-round series – all the more reason for Ontario and San Diego to do their best to avoid having to play in that series against a Valencia team with nothing to lose, especially if they head into the post-season as the #5 seed in the division.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media