

WSHL WEEKEND WRAP-UP; March 15-16, 2019



It was an interesting week on the WSHL schedule as two playoff series were played at the same time a regular season division title was being sorted out and a few other teams were playing out the string on their schedule.

PLAYOFFS: MID-WESTERN DIVISION PLAY-IN SERIES

Dallas Snipers defeat Wichita Jr. Thunder, 2 games to 0

For the fourth times in five years, the Dallas Snipers and Wichita Jr. Thunder met up in the post-season. It was Dallas winning two straight to advance in the Mid-Western Division bracket. The Snipers will hit the road next week, travelling to El Paso to face the division's top seed and the defending Thorne Cup champions.

Dallas 3, Wichita 1 – Wichita scored in the final minute of the first period to break the ice, but Dallas scored two goals :40 apart early in the second

period to take the lead, then added an empty-net goal in the final minute of the third for a 3-1 win.

Michael Fatta and Eric Eaton scored in rapid succession for Dallas to turn a one-goal deficit into a one-goal lead.

Fatta moved into the right circle and picked up a loose puck off a faceoff scrum and, from a deep angle, quickly got the puck upstairs short side to tie the game, 1-1. Hunter Best, who took the draw, picked up an assist on the play.

Less than a minute later, Gasper Konc took a Jr. Thunder defenseman wide on the right wing and backhanded a pass right onto Eaton's tape as he cut to the net with a Wichita defender all over him. Eaton converted, giving Dallas their first lead of the game.

Jasa Jenko added an empty-netter from the neutral zone with :30 left on the clock for the 3-1 final.

Alexander Aleshkin was sharp in the Dallas net, turning aside 25 of 26 shots to get the decision over Wichita's Elis Ericson (30 saves).

Dallas 3, Wichita 2 – Konc scored an insurance goal at 11:26 of the third period and it turned out to be the game-winner after Erik Back got Wichita within a goal with 7:13 left in the game. Aleshkin (27 saves) and the Snipers protected the 3-2 lead for the rest of the game and, with the win, swept the series and move on to the Mid-Western Division Semifinals next week.

Dallas came out going for the jugular, but Ericson stopped 18 of 19 shots in the first period alone to keep the Jr. Thunder in the game and give them a chance to regroup.

Ryan Nicks chose a great time to score his first goal of the season, netting the only goal of the first period to give Dallas a 1-0 lead. Wichita knotted

the score at 1-1 on a Braeden Thomas goal midway through the second period.

It was tight-checking, low-scoring playoff hockey for the second night in a row with Aleshkin and Ericson (37 saves) both coming up big.

Karsten Portell gave Dallas a 2-1 lead with 3:55 left in the second period, depositing the rebound of a Dawson Miller shot from deep in the right corner. Portell was stationed at the far post and banged the rebound home.

PLAYOFFS: WESTERN DIVISION PLAY-IN SERIES

Ontario Avalanche defeat Valencia Flyers, 2 games to 0

The Ontario Avalanche swept the Valencia Flyers in two games to advance to the Western Division Semifinals. The Avs will travel to Long Beach next week to play the division champion Bombers in the next round.

Ontario 5, Valencia 2 – Five different Ontario skaters scored as the Avalanche built a 5-0 lead through the first two periods, then held on for a 5-2 win over the Valencia Flyers in Game One of the Western Division playoffs.

Ontario goaltender Connor Duffy (32 saves) stopped all 22 shots he faced through the first 40 minutes of the game as the Avalanche built a commanding lead.

Five different Avs scored, including David Baranek, who accounted for the game-winning goal and added an assist.

Valencia goals were scored by Danylo Moroz and Nikita Garin with Dominik Knap drawing assists on both plays.

Brooks Dimarino entered the game in relief of Valencia starting goaltender Mack Willy (31 saves) to play the third period and he stopped all 16 shots he faced.

Ontario 9, Valencia 5 – Moroz had a hat trick for Valencia in Game Two, but eight different Avalanche skaters lit the lamp in a 9-5 Ontario win to close out the series.

Moroz scored his second and third goal in the second period as the Flyers closed the gap from 5-2 to 5-4, putting themselves in a position to complete their comeback in the third period and extend the series, but the Avs responded with four goals in the final frame to win the game going away.

Justin Davis was the only Ontario skater to score twice in the game. Daniel Baranek had three assists.

REGULAR SEASON

Seattle Totems vs. Bellingham Blazers (home-and-home)

The Bellingham Blazers needed to secure just one point from their home-and-home series with second-place Seattle in order to claim the Northwest Division title, but the Totems swept all six available points to claim the division crown and the top seed for next week's division semifinals. If both teams win their division semifinal series next week, they will meet again in the Northwest Division Finals – but now that series will be played in Seattle instead of Bellingham. The Blazers also draw a much tougher semifinal opponent next week – the Southern Oregon Spartans – as a result of surrendering the #1 seed.

Seattle 7 @ Bellingham 3 – Four straight goals in the second period – three of them in a span of 3:48 – propelled the Seattle Totems to a 7-3 road win over the Bellingham Blazers Friday night. The win put the Totems in a position to snatch the Northwest Division title from the Blazers with another win in Seattle Saturday night.

Cameron Waisman scored twice for the Totems. His first goal broke the ice 1:16 into the contest and his second closed out the scoring with 2:18 to go in the game.

Seattle goalie Rustam Kulizade made 26 of his 34 saves over the first two periods. Bellingham's Kolter Pawlick (20 saves), meanwhile, stopped 17 of 19 shots in the first period and was lifted early in the second. His replacement, Edward Coffey, made 17 saves.

Jamahl Eakett scored his 50th goal of the season for Bellingham.

Bellingham 3 @ Seattle 7 – The Totems made it matching 7-3 wins with the victory on home ice Saturday, completing their pursuit of the Blazers for the Northwest Division title. Seattle finishes atop the Northwest Division with 106 points to Bellingham's 105. It is the first division title for Seattle in their seventh season in the WSHL.

The Totems built a 3-0 lead in the first period and never trailed. Temirlan Skindirov scored twice and added an assist for Seattle while Kason Furukawa dished out three assists.

Timothy Prexler put Bellingham on the board 6:24 into the second period, but Skindirov replied just :16 later with his first of the game to restore Seattle's three-goal lead and short-circuit the Blazers attempt to get back in the game.

Prexler put a shot in off the post on a breakaway that Kulizade covered up quickly. It was not immediately called a goal, but the officials put it on the board. That gave the Blazers some life, but it did not last long.

Furukawa made a long cross-ice pass through the neutral zone that banked off the left-wing boards to Skindirov. He broke in a lone and scored on his backhand to make it 3-1 Seattle and take the wind out of Bellingham's sails.

Cold Lake Wings vs. Meadow Lake Mustangs (home-and-home)

The Meadow Lake Mustangs, the third seed in the Provincial Division playoffs, went into the post-season on a high note. The 'Stangs swept both ends of a home-and-home series from the Cold Lake Wings.

Meadow Lake 5 @ Cold Lake Wings 2 – Erik Ehrmantraut scored two goals and Noah Finlay stopped 28 of 30 shots as Meadow Lake won, 5-2, in Cold Lake on Friday.

Cold Lake's Trey Beck scored :23 into the second period to tie the game, 2-2, but the Mustangs led 4-2 at the second intermission on goals by Ehrmantraut and Chase Caron.

Mustangs goalie Noah Finlay stopped 28 of 30 shots, including all 11 shots he faced in the third period.

Ehrmantraut added his second of the game at the 13:43 mark of the third period to effectively put the game away for Meadow Lake.

Jerimiah Clark made 36 saves for the Wings.

Cold Lake 2 @ Meadow Lake 6 – The Mustangs won again Saturday in Meadow Lake with Shane Hounsell (2-1-3) and Geirdue Janvier each scoring two goals in a 6-2 Mustangs win that put a wrap on the inaugural WSHL regular season for both clubs.

Finlay was back between the pipes for Meadow Lake, stopping 15 of 17 shots, perhaps indicating that he will be manning the Mustangs' crease for Game One of the playoffs next week.

Seth Ulmer scored both Cold Lake goals.

Justin Dupuis made 39 saves in defeat for the Wings.

Hinton Wildcats vs. Edson Aeros (home-and-home)

The Edson Aeros head into the WSHL post-season on a 22-game winning streak thanks to a pair of close wins over the second-place Hinton Wildcats.

Hinton 2 @ Edson 3 – Sebastian Heden and Quintin Stempfel scored goals :30 apart in the first minute of the second period to turn a 1-0 deficit into a 2-1 lead and the Edson Aeros went on to a 3-2 win over the Hinton Wildcats.

Heden gave the puck to Lundin in the neutral zone and, after Lundin gained the blue line, he returned the puck to Heden who was streaking down the left side of the ice. He cut to the net and finished on a nice move to his forehand to tie the game.

Shortly after the ensuing faceoff, a Hinton clearing attempt was kept in at the blue line by Edson defenseman William Andersson, who cycled down behind the Hinton net for Stempfel. Stempfel eluded his check, moved out from behind the net, and fired a severe-angle shot that founds its way into the net to give the Aeros the lead.

Nathan Gottselig's third-period tally ended up being the game-winner.

Dmitri Buttazzoni and Dalton Eagle Bear scored for Hinton. Buttazzoni's tally came with 7:31 to go in the game, and got the Wildcats within a goal, but Liam Austin (35 saves) and the Aeros protected the one-goal lead for the rest of the period.

Max Gaudet made 49 saves for Hinton.

Edson 4 @ Hinton 2 – Emil Johansson waited until the last game of the season, but he tied and broke the WSHL record for goals in a season by scoring his 75th and 76th goals of the season in a 4-2 win over the Wildcats in Hinton Saturday night.

Goal #75 came on an Edson power play. Johansson was set up in the left circle and, when a shot from the point missed the net, he pounced on the carom off the end boards and popped it in the short side.

Johansson's record-breaking 76th goal came with 5:41 left in the game, again with the Aeros operating on the man-advantage. Lundin miss-fired from the right circle and the puck trickled through the slot to Johansson who was positioned off the far post. He scooped the puck up into the top part of the net.

Olle Berndtsson also scored twice for the Aeros and Bronson Sudberry looked sharp in his final regular season start, making 40 saves.

Eagle Bear and Riley Keys scored for Hinton.

Samuel Gendron kicked out all 18 shots he faced in the first period, but could not keep Edson off the board all night and took the loss, finishing with 39 saves.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media