

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.28.19 – NORTHWESTERN 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 (33-11-0-2, 101 pts.)**

**@BhamBlazers**

Last weekend’s convincing sweep of West Sound pushed the Bellingham Blazers over 100 points in a season for the first time in their history. Even using the old two-point system, Bellingham’s third season in the WSHL has been their best yet (15 wins, 28, 33 and counting).

The Blazers had no trouble with a depleted Admirals roster, out-scoring West Sound 39-1 over the course of the three-game series.

Veterans Timothy Prexler (38-71-109) and Jamahl Eckett (45-60-105) have officially become the only pair of teammates in Blazers franchise history to both reach 100 points in a single season.

Both Prexler and Eckett are within the top four in the WSHL scoring race but, barring an incredible comeback, the scoring title will go to either Sebastian Heden (54-69-123) or Emil Johansson (61-57-118), teammates on the Edson Aeros.

Despite being scheduled to play only 20 of their 51 games on home ice this season, the Blazers have stood out as the top club in the Northwest Division. Bellingham will have one of its final tests before the playoffs this weekend as it hosts the Long Beach Bombers in a three-game series.

With a record of 31-7-4-2, the Bombers are the top team in the Western Division and have two more points than the Blazers as well as two games in hand. If Bellingham hopes to make a serious bid for the Thorne Cup, it will have to find a way to take down teams like Long Beach come playoff time.

If there's ever a year that the Blazers would be serious contenders, it's this season. According to Elite Prospects, Bellingham has 1,613 combined games of WSHL experience on its roster, third-most of any team in the league.

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (28-12-1-2, 88 pts)** **@SeattleJrTotems**

A fantastic stretch of games has pushed the Seattle Totems' winning streak to six and further proved that the Totes are peaking at the right time.

After logging three road wins in a row against Southern Oregon over the weekend, Seattle blew out West Sound 11-0 at Olympicview Arena on Wednesday night.

The Totems will finish out their four-game homestand with this weekend's series against the San Diego Sabers, a middle-of-the-pack team in the Western Division.

Goaltender Rustam Kulizade can largely be credited for Seattle's recent success. The 17-year-old rookie out of Russia has come out of nowhere to post a sparkling 8-1-0 record to go along with a 2.22/.936 slash line.

Among netminders with at least 10 appearances, Kulizade ranks second to Ogden's Artur Ogandzhanyan (.938) in save percentage. Furthermore, Kulizade is the only WSHL goalie with less than 30 appearances to log two shutouts.

Great goaltending and strong defensive play are arguable the two most important traits a team can have in the postseason, and the emergence of Kulizade gives Seattle the best goaltender in the Northwest Division based on statistics.

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (14-28-2-1, 47 pts.)**

**@wshlspartans**

The Southern Oregon Spartans dropped all three of their games against Seattle last weekend as they continue to integrate several newly-acquired players into their roster.

It may have been a bit discouraging to drop three contests in a row to a likely first-round playoff opponent, but the Spartans know that things will only improve as they develop chemistry.

"The new additions are a big help and make us much deeper," said Southern Oregon Head Coach Ken Hoey. "I'm still trying to find the line combinations that work for us."

Over the next two weekends, the Spartans will close out their regular season schedule with series against West Sound and the Ontario Avalanche. Hoey knows his team needs to bring a better effort to make a serious run at the Northwest Division title in the playoffs.

"We're just trying to get ready for the playoffs over the next six games," Hoey said. "We want to work on our defensive game and get more physical."

New additions such as Matej Valicek (7-11-18, 14 GP), Vojtech Svoboda (1-4-5, 5 GP), Vladislav Polyashov (4-6-10, 6 GP), and others have given the Spartans a big offensive boost, joining 60-point scorers like Eric Vanderhoff (29-38-67), Logan Emery (26-39-65), and Axel Low (21-42-62) to create a formidable roster on paper.

On the ice, there's still some work to be done. The Spartans will look to continue to improve this weekend with a three-game series at home against West Sound, continuing a 12-game homestand.

**WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (7-36-2-0, 25 pts.)**

**@wsadmirals**

The West Sound Admirals were swept by Bellingham over the weekend in a preview of a likely first-round playoff matchup.

This weekend, the Ads will travel to the Medford Madhouse for a three-game series against Southern Oregon, closing out the nine-game season series between the two clubs. The Admirals have defeated the Spartans twice this season, winning by scores of 7-3 and 4-3 on October 19 and 20, respectively.

Looking ahead, West Sound will close out its regular season next weekend against Seattle. The series will feature a road game on Saturday sandwiched around Friday and Sunday contests at Bremerton Ice Center.

Forward Sarp Demirezen has netted a pair of goals in six games since being traded to the Admirals. The Istanbul, Turkey native did not log a single point during 28 games with Southern Oregon earlier this season.

*---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*