

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 03.14.19 – MOUNTAIN 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.

CASPER BOBCATS (16-34-1-0, 50 pts)

www.casperbobcats.com

@BobcatsCasper

The three games last week between the Utah Outliers and Casper Bobcats were meaningless in terms of the Mountain Division standings, and seeding for the divisional playoffs, but that does not mean the Outliers had nothing to gain by their convincing sweep of the Bobcats.

Casper now knows that they must now go on the road to play the team that just out-scored them 21-2 in a three-game sweep in their own barn.

But, as they say, there is a reason why we play the games – especially at this time of year. The Bobcats and Outliers will have this week off to rest up for their best-of-three series to be played March 22-24 at West Valley City.

Casper goaltender Henry Dennee turned in some noteworthy efforts down the stretch. He stopped 55 of 58 shots in a 3-1 loss to Oklahoma City on March 1 and, before that, 47 of 51 in a loss to Wichita on February 17.

It will be interesting to see if Bobcats head coach John Ambrefe starts Deenee, Ludwig Nordqvist (7-14-0, 4.53, .897) or 20-year-old Kayne Pasquet in Game One of the playoffs.

The Bobcats will need stellar goaltending if they are going to give Utah a series. They only scored 145 goals as a team (2.8 per game) and boast just two 20-goal scorers: Daniel Silar (28) and Alex Roth (20) who reached the mark on the season's final day.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (7-40-2-2)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

After coming in a point out of fourth place, the Cheyenne Stampede exercised their option not to travel to participate in a first-round series at Steamboat, bringing their 2018-19 season to a close.

The Stampede finished the season with four double-digit goal scorers, including team leader Hakan Salt (17), and Kody Kifer who somehow managed to score 12 goals and 22 points in just 24 games despite spending 177 minutes in the penalty box.

Logan Syrup (11-33-44) and Salt (17-19-36) were the highest-scoring Cheyenne skaters. 2000-born skater Syrup was more of a shooter last year, scoring 14 goals in just 30 games with only eight helpers to go along. In his second WSHL season, he was more of a puck-distributor, with three assists for every goal.

Cheyenne netminder Brendan Carew faced far-and-away the most shots (1,777) in the WSHL in 2018-19.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (47-2-0-2, 143 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

The Ogden Mustangs wrapped up their dominant 2018-19 regular season performance last weekend with a sweep of the Steamboat Wranglers.

Not only did Ogden post the best mark in the league, and lose only two of 51 games in regulation, they led the WSHL in both goals for and goals against (341:86).

Last year's 49-1-1 El Paso team out-scored the competition 405-63 in the regular season.

No matter how dominant a team is in the regular season, however, the slate is wiped clean for the post-season. While there is some room for error in the best-of-three format in the divisional playoffs, and the round-robin at the Thorne Cup, it will come down to four teams and single-elimination at the end of the line.

Rhett Rampinelli finished strong, producing 22 points (8-14-22) over the final four games of the season to finish with 131 points (58-73-131). That is the second-highest single-season point total in franchise history, trailing only Matus Spodniak's 69-77-146 from a season ago.

Spodniak just completed his first season at NCAA Division I American International College.

There are still a few regular season games to be played in the Provincial and Northwest Divisions, but it looks like Rampinelli will finish third in the WSHL scoring race.

A strong finish for Ammon Anderson also pushed him over 100 points for the season (45-59-104). Rampinelli and Anderson are two of eight WSHL skaters to hit the century mark this season with two more (Edson's Kevin Lundin and Seattle's Michael Shippee) sitting on 97 with two regular season games remaining for each player this week.

STEAMBOAT WRANGLERS (8-40-1-2)

www.steamboatwranglers.com

@SWranglers

The Steamboat Wranglers won a championship last season in the Rocky Mountain Junior Hockey League and now they take their maiden voyage in the Thorne Cup playoffs.

The Wranglers host their first-ever WSHL playoff series, a first-round series against the Cheyenne Stampede this weekend. Last year Steamboat had to win two games – a single-elimination semifinal and final – to be crowned champs of the RMJHL.

By comparison, the Thorne Cup consists of three rounds of divisional playoffs, each a best-of-three series, followed by a six-team tournament that will see the finalists play five games in five days.

In order to make a long playoff run, however, the winner of the Steamboat-Cheyenne series will need to get past the Ogden Mustangs in a Mountain Division Semifinal series. The Mustangs are the not only the prohibitive favorites to win the championship this year, they are also the Thorne Cup hosts.

UTAH OUTLIERS (33-15-2-1, 104 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

The Utah Outliers sent a message to their Mountain Division Semifinal opponents, the Casper Bobcats, by controlling play in all three games between the two teams last week.

It was a convincing end to a strong 51-game regular season for the Outliers.

Utah's formula: balanced scoring, solid team defense and top-notch goaltending proved once again to be a successful one as the Outliers won more than twice as many games as they lost over what was a demanding schedule with non-division series against the likes of Oklahoma City, El Paso, Long Beach and Northern Colorado – all before Christmas.

Since the holiday break, Utah has a 15-5-1-0 record with all five losses (and an OT win) coming against Ogden.

Utah stayed competitive head-to-head against the Mustangs, but a lot of things will have to go their way – starting with stellar goaltending from Oscar Wahlgren – if they are going to beat Ogden in a best-of-three series.

First things first, however, the Outliers will take a week off, then host Casper in the division semifinals March 22-24 at Accord Ice Arena.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media