

THORNE CUP WRAP-UP: DAY 1



The first three games of the round robin are in the books from the 2019 Thorne Cup Final in Ogden, UT. The Thorne Cup is a short tournament, and it gets shorter very quickly for the teams that drop their opening game.

Tuesday's winners can secure one of the four semifinal spots with another win on Wednesday, while the three teams that started 0-1 will put themselves in a very precarious position with a second loss.

El Paso 6, Bellingham 0 – Six different Rhinos scored and Richie Parent (13 saves) posted the shutout as the El Paso Rhinos knocked off the Bellingham Blazers, 6-0, in the opening game of the 2019 Thorne Cup.

El Paso out-shot Bellingham, 14-4, in a scoreless first period with Blazers netminder Kolter Pawlick keeping the Rhinos off the board.

Samuel Robinson's goal :37 into the second period broke the dam, however, and the Rhinos scored four times in the middle period – all in a span of 8:01.

Shortly after the faceoff to start the second period, and after a Bellingham power play expired, Samuel Sykes rang a shot off the post from the left circle. The puck went to the right-wing boards, but Justin-Cole Dubecky bumped it around the boards to Sykes below the goal line. Sykes headed

behind the net, but right before he committed, he dished a backhand pass to Robinson in the slot and he made no doubt.

Burman set up Dubsy for a vicious one-timer from the left circle less than two minutes later and the game started to get away from Bellingham. Dubsy's strike was followed by goals from Sykes and Max Kamper and El Paso had a comfortable 4-0 lead at the second intermission.

Easton Easterson and Jonas Burman added third-period goals as El Paso pulled away.

Pawlick finished the game with 36 saves.

Edson 6, Long Beach 1 – Emil Johansson scored a hat trick and Liam Austin stopped 28 of 29 shots as the Edson Aeros made a huge statement in their Thorne Cup debut with a 6-1 win over the Long Beach Bombers.

Edson dominated the WSHL's new Provincial Division but, with limited inter-division play and the Aeros going 0-3-0 at the Western States Shootout, they needed to show they were capable of playing with the league's elite and they certainly did that Tuesday night.

Edson scored three times in a span of 8:22 in the first period to put the Bombers back on their heels. Johansson, who scored 76 goals in the regular season, broke the ice at the 7:18 mark with his first of three tallies in the game.

The Aeros separated a Bombers forward from the puck just inside the Edson blue line and quickly transitioned from defense to offense. The puck was bumped up to Johansson and he flew up the right wing, fended off a Long Beach defenseman, and made a forehand-backhand move to slide the puck past Domenic Bosetti.

WSHL scoring champ Sebastian Heden made it 2-0 with a power play goal 4:18 later. Heden, a left shot, received a pass deep in the right corner, then curled around the faceoff circle, picking up speed as he went, before rifling a wrist shot into the top corner over Bosetti's glove.

Bosetti was pulled after allowing three goals on 10 shots. He was replaced by Matthew Genter, who made 17 saves in his 44:20 of action.

Nathan Gottselig and Olle Berndtsson were the other goal-scorers for Edson.

Tuan Thanh Hoang scored for Long Beach with 5:06 remaining in the game to ruin Austin's shutout bid.

It would not be surprising to see Long Beach head coach Chris White go right back to Bosetti, his decorated veteran goalie, for Wednesday's 3:00 p.m. tilt with the El Paso Rhinos.

Ogden 4, Oklahoma City 2 – The best game was saved for last as the host Ogden Mustangs put away a determined Oklahoma City Blazers team, 4-2, in the late game Tuesday night.

The action was intense right from the drop of the puck. It was the Blazers with the early opportunities but they were unable to convert.

Just over two minutes into the game, Harri Koll made a nice move on a two-one-one to get the puck to Lukas Vacin all alone to the right of Artur Ogandzhanyan, but the Mustangs goalie stuffed the shifty forward before he could get the puck to his backhand to finish.

Shortly after that, OKC sparkplug Jeremy Van Dyke attacked the net from Ogandzhanyan's left, holding the puck to draw him out of position and quickly circling the net. Van Dyke centered the puck but there was nobody home.

Koll had the puck on his stick early and often in the first period, creating chances for his line-mates and taking the puck to the net himself. He eventually cashed in with 2:08 to send the game into the first intermission tied, 1-1.

Van Dyke skated down the right wing and fired a hard, low wrist shot that Ogandzhanyan managed to stop with his right pad, but Koll crashed the net and deposited the rebound.

Kerry Kruzel, who scored the double-overtime game-winner in Game Three of the Mountain Division Final, came up with another big goal for Ogden as he banged home his own rebound at the 3:54 mark of the second period. Linemate Ammon Anderson threw the puck on net resulting in a scramble in front of OKC goalie Bobby Cloutier.

Midway through the second period the Mustangs regained the lead. Bobby McKinley came in hard on the forecheck and stripped the puck from an Oklahoma City defender. He spun and fired the puck towards the net from the right-wing boards. It hit a Blazers defenseman and ricocheted onto the blade of Bryson Bartell's stick 10 feet in front of the OKC net. Bartell fired a one-timer past Cloutier, who had moved out at an angle to face the shot and could not get back into position in time. The goal came at the exact mid-point of the game – the 10:00 mark of period two.

Ogden went on a power play late in the period, and peppered Cloutier, but he kept the puck out and prevented them from building on their one-goal lead.

The Blazers took their turn on the power play and, with under two minutes to play in the period, Kruzel used his speed to take the puck wide around a Blazers defender and cut across the crease for a Grade A scoring chance. Cloutier denied him and the Blazers went back up ice.

Koll took a sharp wrist shot from the top of the right circle with Nathan Inniss screening Ogandzhanyan. The Mustangs goalie never saw the puck and it found the back of the net for a power play goal. Once again, the two teams headed to the locker room all tied up, setting the stage for a thrilling third period.

Ogden took their third lead of the game early in the third period and, again, it was Kruzel skating up ice with the puck on his stick. Kruzel weaved across the Oklahoma City blue line and dropped a pass for Bartel who put the puck on net from the top of the left circle. The shot slipped between Cloutier's pads and the Mustangs led, 3-2.

Oklahoma City was unable to tie it up a third time and Ian Currie gave Ogden an insurance goal. He fired a shot from the left-wing boards that hit the outside of the net to Cloutier's blocker side. Harry Gulliver collected the puck below the goal line and returned it to Currie as he skated to the left faceoff dot. Currie wristed the puck past Cloutier at the 10:22 mark to give the Mustangs their first two-goal lead of the game.

Oklahoma City was given a power play with just over three minutes left in the game, but Ogandzhanyan and the Mustangs held the fort – even with the Blazers pulling Cloutier to create a six-on-four.

2019 THORNE CUP STANDINGS

regulation wins-regulation losses-OT wins-OT losses (points)

1. Ogden Mustangs 1-0-0-0 (3 points)
2. Edson Aeros 1-0-0-0 (3 points)
3. El Paso Rhinos 1-0-0-0 (3 points)
4. Long Beach Bombers 0-1-0-0 (0 points)
5. Bellingham Blazers 0-1-0-0 (0 points)
6. Oklahoma City Blazers 0-1-0-0 (0 points)

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES:

11:00 a.m. Oklahoma City vs. Bellingham – The loser of this game will be in a very tight spot.

3:00 p.m. Long Beach vs. El Paso – The Bombers need a bounce-back win to stay in the Top 4.

7:30 p.m. Ogden vs. Edson – The winner here will be sitting pretty.

TIE-BREAKERS: *If two teams are tied at the end of the round-robin, head-to-head competition at the Thorne Cup is the first tie breaker. If the two teams did not play each other, then the team with the highest ranking entering the Thorne Cup shall advance or take the highest position available. In a three-way tie, teams will be ranked by their pre-tournament seeding (1-Ogden, 2-Edson, 3-Long Beach, 4-El Paso, 5-Bellingham, 6-Oklahoma City).*

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media