

# WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.29.17 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



## **CASPER COYOTES (6-14-0, 12pts)**

[www.caspercoyotes.com](http://www.caspercoyotes.com)

@CasperCoyotes

The Casper Coyotes snapped a 12-game losing streak in a big way last weekend, sweeping rival Cheyenne and scoring 21 goals in the three games.

Bradley Green went 4-4-8 and Dallen Neese added a 2-4-6 line against the Stampede. Green (11-8-19) and Neese (6-8-14) are now at the top of the Coyotes team scoring chart.

Dylan Ossachuk posted a shutout on Friday, picking up his first "W" of the year in the process. Crease-mate Nolan Kare handled the next two games, picking up a shutout of his own on Sunday.

After a strong start to last season, Casper is trying to get to a competitive place this year. Playing in, possibly, the league's toughest division won't help,

but they have a rematch with Cheyenne this weekend and another sweep could help propel them to a comfortable enough spot in the standings.

While they may never catch the likes of Ogden or Utah or Colorado, the Coyotes can manage to put some distance between them and the Stamps moving forward.

These six games with Cheyenne should be what the team needs heading into the Western States Shootout in a few weeks, and a good showing in the desert could give them the confidence heading into the new year.

Of course, the schedule hates Casper, and the Coyotes open 2018 with 12 straight games against Ogden and Colorado, so...

Friday's game with Cheyenne saw Casper collecting teddy bears for Toys for Tots and their Teddy Bear Toss.

### **CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-20-0, 4pts)**

[www.cheyennestampede.com](http://www.cheyennestampede.com)

**@StampsHockey**

Cheyenne lost the Battle of Wyoming against in-state rival Casper, losing all three games and have now gone 19 in a row without a win.

Logan Syrup scored the Stamps' lone goal on the weekend, assisted by George Leech and Evgenii Bastrakov. That goal marks Syrup's fourth this season in his first five games with the club.

Leech now leads Cheyenne with a 4-6-10 line and is third on the team with 26 PIMs.

Given that they gave up a total of 21 goals, the Cheyenne backstops Devin Bain, Daniel Miller, and Robbie Hufnagel played pretty well making an average of 45 saves per game over the weekend with Miller leading the pack making and 60 saves on Sunday.

Every season at the Western States Shootout, teams can turn their seasons around and Cheyenne needs a strong desert showing in order to gain some momentum heading into 2018. They play one of the toughest schedules in the league, and the new year will bring more of the same, so if they can get some points in Vegas they could salvage something going forward.

## **COLORADO EAGLES (15-5-3, 33pts)**

[www.coloradojunioreagles.com](http://www.coloradojunioreagles.com)

[@COJrEagles](#)

The Colorado Jr. Eagles beat Mountain Division rival Superior in a 4-1 one-off this past weekend, snapping a three-game losing streak suffered at the hands of El Paso two weeks ago.

Sean McMahon and Cory Richardson each scored a goal and two assists in the win, and McMahon (11-15-26), now leads the team in assists and PIMs with 57.

Richardson has scored an impressive 8-13-21 line in his 15 games with the team.

Braden LaJoie continues to carry the load in Fort Collins, making 19 saves in the victory – his 10th this season.

We've been touting the Jr. Eagles' depth all season, and they now have had 13 players score more than 15 points – this in a league where several teams' leading scorers haven't amassed that many.

This was the 2nd game between Colorado and Superior this season, and these two teams seem to be commitment-phobic with another one-off this weekend followed by yet another one-off to open 2018.

The Jr. Eagles have some work ahead of them with Ogden sitting five whole points ahead of them in the standings, and Utah hot on their trail – only three points back with three fewer games played.

Another single game against the RoughRiders this weekend, followed by a home-and-home with Cheyenne heading into Vegas, means the Jr. Eagles only have three games before heading into the desert.

## **OGDEN MUSTANGS (19-4-0, 38pts)**

[www.ogdenmustangs.com](http://www.ogdenmustangs.com)

[@OgdenMustangs](#)

The Ogden Mustangs beat Utah – their third win in five games against their in-state rivals – in their only game this past weekend. The 3-2 victory marks the third time in five games that one goal decided the game between these two teams.

"Utah has put a competitive team together and I think they get up for our rivalry as always," Head Coach Jake Laime said. "They work hard and force us to answer."

Daniel Pavlicko made 21 saves in earning his eighth victory this season.

Matus Spodniak scored a 2-1-3 line against Utah, and now leads the league for pretty much the rest of the year with a 40-42-82 line in a mere 23 games. Coach Laime credits Spodniak's experience and consistency for his having a career season.

"He's older, bigger, stronger, and seasoned," Laime said. "He works incredibly hard on and off the ice, and there is no variation to the way he plays or what he brings."

The Mustangs aren't afraid to play the league's best teams and will face off with perennial contenders Idaho of the Northwest Division. The IceCats are one of only three undefeated teams left in the WSHL and are scoring at a 7.33 goals per game clip while only having allowed 18 goals in just 15 games.

"We will play our game. We know Idaho is a talented team – they are every year," coach Laime said of this weekend's opponent. "Both teams look good on paper so I think it'll be a matter of who shows up and who wants it more. We look forward to playing them as we have had great series in previous years."

After Idaho, the Mustangs will face off yet again with Utah for two games before the Vegas Shootout. With such a difficult schedule before the desert, don't be surprised if Ogden doesn't come out of Nevada with some more victims in their wake.

**SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS (12-11-0, 24pts)**

[www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com](http://www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com)

**@SPR\_RoughRiders**

A tough loss to Colorado puts Superior right in the middle of the Mountain Division, with Utah and the Jr. Eagles getting farther and farther away from them.

Nikita Sheberov scored his 29th goal of the year and now leads the team with a 29-21-50 line in the Russian's first 23 games in North America.

Here's something: Superior has been hovering right around .500 all season so far, and likely will stay there given that they have struggled against the better teams in the league like Ogden and El Paso. However, they have 12 players that have scored double-digit points so far – a positive benchmark less than halfway through the season. And, of those 12 players, ten are playing their first season in the WSHL including Sheberov, Thore Weyrauch (14-22-36), Erk Buschmann (4-12-16), Erik Back (3-13-16), and Daniel Benilov (6-9-15). This gives the RoughRiders one of the youngest, yet successful teams in the league considering their lack of experience.

All three RoughRiders goaltenders are also playing in their first season in the league.

The plethora of new faces in the Superior lineup is something Head Coach Paul DePuydt mentioned before the season started, saying he was excited for the influx of international players.

"We have two players from Germany in Erik Buschmann and Thore Weyrauch and one from Lithuania in Daniel Benilov who have represented their respective countries in IIHF Tournaments," DePuydt said before the year started. "All three have strong playing backgrounds and their experience will help lead our young team."

If this team can play with just a bit more confidence that what they're doing is working, they may make a late push come playoff time, and take that experience into next season to upend the power structure in the Mountain Division come the 2018-19 season.

They have a chance to prove their mettle this weekend when they play a one-off with Colorado at home, then take on Cheyenne for three before Vegas.

**UTAH OUTLIERS (15-5-0, 30pts)**

[www.UtahOutliers.com](http://www.UtahOutliers.com)

**@UtahOutliers**

Utah has now lost three of five against their in-state rivals Ogden, losing 3-2 last weekend. Dylan Massie scored both Outlier goals, one on the powerplay, to lead Utah.

Dawson Rodin got the call again for Utah, making 26 saves in his 4th loss this year, bringing his slash line to 1.64/.946 on the year to go along with his seven wins.

Goaltending has been key to Utah's success this season, and both Rodin and Otto Saxin (0.54/.967) have been phenomenal for the Outliers giving the team

a 1.70 GAA, by far the best in the Mountain Division (34 goals against in 20 games).

Meanwhile, eight players have scored 15 points led by Zack Hoffman's 12-20-32 leading the Outliers in all three categories.

Last season, we posited that Utah was one of the best teams in the league for the middle two months, and they are poised to make the leap this year to be even better. They're undefeated at home, winning all seven games, and face off with Tahoe this weekend for their toughest competition in West Valley since a 3-1 victory over the Mustangs last month.

After the Icemen, it's Ogden again for a home-and-home before Vegas.

The Outliers are in the midst of the most important six weeks of their season, playing some of the top teams in the WSHL including their projected opponents in the desert.

Utah has a terrific opportunity to begin 2018 as the team people need to knock off in order to have a chance.

*--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media*