

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.06.17 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (4-14-0, 8pts)
WSHLDallasSnipers.pointstreaksites.com
[@DallasSnipers](https://twitter.com/DallasSnipers)

The Dallas Snipers were idle last week, getting ready for a trip to Wichita this weekend to take on the Jr. Thunder.

Dallas has been competing all season, but still come up short on the scoreboard more often than not and the Wichita series may be a chance to gain some confidence with a competitive series.

The Snipers managed only four goals against the Blazers in their last series two weeks ago. But, they were able to get 10 different players with points. This shows a team that may be deceptively deep, but inexperienced. They're being led by Alex Hladonik (10-19-29) and Sterling Cooper (12-15-27), and with newcomer Danil Trenikhin (4-2-6 in 9 games) they could be warming up for a second half run.

The series this weekend will work as a primer before the Las Vegas Shootout where Head Coach Aaron Davis thinks his team has a chance to clear their slate in the desert.

"We would all love to get six points out of the Vegas showcase," Davis said. "We have a young team and the showcase will be a good opportunity to display the way they compete and play in front of college coaches."

Their second half schedule is Springfield-heavy, a team Dallas battled to an 8-7 loss last month, and coach Davis says he'd like to see his team continue to compete.

"We need to get into better shape over the next few weeks and continue to work on our defensive zone and winning puck battles," he added.

EL PASO RHINOS (24-0-0, 48pts)

www.EIPasoRhinos.com

@EI_Paso_Rhinos

The El Paso Rhinos took on a pretty decent Phoenix Knights team from the Western Division over the weekend, shutting them out in the first two games and scoring 24 goals in the three-game sweep.

Newcomers Jayze Dundas-Schwartz and Jared Marquette each scored their first goals of their young WSHL careers over the weekend.

Goalie Filip Krasanovsky won all three games and now leads the league with 19 Wins while also posting a ridiculous 1.47/.931 slash line.

The inter-division matchup with Phoenix was just a warm-up for this weekend's WSHL Series of the Week (as ascribed by me) with Mid-Western Division rivals Oklahoma City.

After Idaho lost two games to Ogden over the weekend, that leaves El Paso and OKC as the WSHL's remaining undefeated teams. This weekend won't just be battle of the undefeateds, but also a fight for first place in the division as these two foes have separated themselves from the rest of the Mid-Western teams.

Chaseton Sare continues to lead the Rhinos, scoring a 22-29-51 line while also leading the team with 55 PIMs. Five Rhinos have double-digit goals and the team's 167 goals scored are good for third in the WSHL.

The weekend with OKC will be El Paso's final home series of 2017 and will be Military Appreciation Weekend. All military members and veterans with a valid military ID will receive free tickets for themselves and their families for this series and every series throughout the season. The Rhinos will wear military themed jerseys on Friday and Saturday.

The game-worn jerseys will then be auctioned off following Saturday's game. The Rhinos will also recognize active and retired military members and veterans from El Paso area during each game of the three-game series. On Saturday, one active duty military member will shoot to win a new Ford truck.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (21-0-0, 42pts)

www.OKCityHockey.com

@OKCBlazersWSHL

Last week we mentioned that, while undefeated, Oklahoma City's schedule hasn't pitted them against many elite teams until they entered the meat of the order beginning with Springfield this past weekend.

Entering the weekend with Springfield, OKC's only opponent with an above-.500 winning percentage was Superior.

So, all eyes were on the Blazers to see if their perfect record thus far in the season is actually indicative of their skill level or a product of their schedule. Entering the series, OKC was blowing out their opponents, scoring 10+ goals a game and allowing less than two.

The first game with the Express went to double overtime.

The Blazers found themselves down 2-4 heading into the third period of game one, needing two goals in the final frame to send the game to overtime.

Patrik Tondl scored his 18th goal of the season in double overtime to give the Blazers the much-needed win.

Saturday's matchup was a bit more of what we're used to, with the Blazers torching the Express for ten goals led by Ivan Bondarenko's 2-2-4 line. Josh Chamberlain's first goal of the game came just 36 seconds into the contest, and OKC didn't let up on their way to their typical 10 goals for and one goal against.

Sunday's game saw the Blazers get tested yet again, going toe-to-toe with Springfield, eventually getting the win for a competitive three-game sweep.

Head Coach Gary Gill likes what he's seen so far, but knows it's early yet in the season.

"I would like to see us improve in every area on the ice," Gill said. "I like what we have going right now, but we still have a lot to improve on as we play teams like Ogden, Idaho, Utah and, of course, El Paso. All very tough teams, and we look forward to competing against them."

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS (11-10-3, 25pts)

www.SpringfieldExpress.com

@_ExpressHockey

The Springfield Express battled hard against the undefeated Oklahoma City Blazers who have been tearing their opponents apart thus far in the season, but ultimately came up short in three straight games.

OKC's offense and defense are each tops in the WSHL, and Springfield took them to double overtime on Friday, leading the Blazers 4-2 heading into the third period.

The Blazers battled back, and Springfield took the loss, despite a gutsy performance from goalie Kayne Pasquet who made 32 saves.

Springfield would like to just skip over the 10-1 loss on Saturday, so we'll just not mention it again (see above).

But, Sunday's game showed that Springfield is a formidable foe, scoring two goals in each of the three periods against the league's best defense, but falling short in the 7-6 loss.

This weekend was huge for Springfield – something that doesn't get said a lot when you've just been swept, but it gives the Express confidence heading into the Western States Shootout where Springfield will be taking six players with more than ten goals and 13 players with double-digit points.

Springfield will have this weekend to recoup before hitting the ice again in two weeks against – the schedule gods love us – Oklahoma City. The Blazers will play for their undefeated lives against El Paso this weekend, so may head into Missouri limping. Or, still undefeated and feeling like Godzilla.

Either way, the Express seem ready for the challenge.

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (1-20-0, 2pts)

www.WichitaJuniorThunder.com

@JrThunderHockey

Wichita had last weekend off, and this weekend's series with Dallas will be their last action before the Western States Shootout.

After winning last season's Thorne Cup, the Jr. Thunder are chock full of new players looking to adjust to a new league and level of hockey for many of them.

Head coach Rob Weingartner thinks his young guys are adjusting well within one of the league's top divisions.

"We have a talented team full of 17/18-year old players who are getting their first experience of junior hockey," Weingartner said. "I would say we're improving daily, which is what I would expect from a young team. The Mid-West Division has been a strong division since Oklahoma joined a few years ago, so when you're playing the top teams in the league on a regular basis, every game is a battle."

Wichita has been the division's door mat with teams taking it to them and not letting up, but Coach Weingartner knows teams are looking at his team with some ire.

"Being the returning Thorne Cup Champions, we have a target on our bags and no team is going to take it easy on us," he said. "I guarantee Oklahoma remembers us out scoring them in the play-offs last year 14-4 in our two-game sweep, so I wouldn't expect them to take it easy on us or anyone else for that matter. Playing against talented teams like Springfield and a traditional El Paso team has set the bar for our player to see where they need to be and realize the effort and commitment that comes with it."

Weingartner has been preaching the teaching aspect of his job since the before the season started, and prides himself on his team becoming better hockey players throughout the season – record be damned.

"What we are teaching here in Wichita is not only hockey skills and becoming a better player, but also about what it means to be a part of a Team, Work

Ethic, and the realization that goals are attainable with the right guidance and attention to detail," Weingartner said.

The Western States Shootout is a place where many teams turn things around, and if anyone can do it, it's Wichita's Weingartner.

--- *Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media*