

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.14.17 – NORTHWEST DIVISION



BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (9-12-3, 21 pts)
www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com
@Bhamblazers

The Bellingham Blazers have been finding ways to win close games, and it has resulted in a three-game winning streak. Bellingham defeated Seattle two weeks ago before recording a pair of narrow victories over West Sound.

"The last three games we have certainly been trending in the right direction," said Blazers Head Coach Mark Collins. "We haven't necessarily played a full 60 minutes each game, but we have found ways to win."

The Blazers are off this weekend and aback in action next week at the Western States Shootout, where they will play games against WSHL clubs Dallas and Phoenix as well as the CPJHL Red Team.

"I'm looking for good things at the Showcase," said Collins. "It's hard to tell what the CPJHL team will be like, but Dallas and Phoenix are both in tough

divisions and I know those will be good games. Records don't always indicate how a team is doing."

Collins also spoke about the overall value of the event, saying, "I think it's important for the players as individuals to play in front of college coaches. We try to make sure all our players are moving towards the college route. This is a good opportunity for the team to play well while showcasing the individuals at the same time."

IDAHO ICECATS (19-2-0, 38 pts)

www.IdahoIceCats.com

A sweep is a sweep, but the Idaho IceCats probably would have liked to win by more comfortable margins in their series against last-place Southern Oregon last week.

The IceCats won by scores of 4-0, 3-1, and 5-2 one week after dropping two of three against Mountain Division-leading Ogden.

Nevertheless, it was six valuable points, and the IceCats can't be upset about the results. Idaho holds a comfortable nine-point lead atop the Northwest Division with eight games in hand on West Sound and Tahoe, two clubs currently locked in a tie for second.

As is the case almost every year under head coach John Olver, the IceCats' defense has been nothing short of phenomenal. Idaho has allowed a league-low 34 goals – fewer than undefeated El Paso – and is giving up an average of about 1.6 goals per contest.

The effort has been spearheaded by netminders Jacob Hough (1.16/.939), Tyler Matthews (1.57, .939), and Shaun Brown (1.72/.916). It's sometimes difficult for a team to find one elite goaltender, but the IceCats have managed to recruit a trio of them.

All three goalies are in the top 10 of the league in both goals-against average and save percentage, and Hough and Matthews are top four in both categories.

Idaho will play its last series of the first half this weekend as it travels to Tahoe for a three-game set against the Icemen. After that, it will travel to Las Vegas, where it will play a tough slate of games against El Paso, Oklahoma City, and Colorado.

SEATTLE TOTEMS (7-11-3, 17 pts)

www.SeattleJrTotems.com

[@SeattleJrTotems](#)

At this point, the Seattle Totems are probably eager to get to the Christmas break in order to have time to regroup and get back to where they were at the start of the season.

The Totems enjoyed a strong start to the year and had a seven-game point streak through the first few weeks of the season that pushed them to the top of the division. Since then, Seattle has lost its way and struggled in a plethora of close games against divisional opponents, including in a 7-5 loss to West Sound last weekend.

One thing that could be affecting the Totems' below-.500 record is their lack of games against Southern Oregon, a team that has shown improvement lately but has still dropped 21 of its 24 games. That will change this weekend as Seattle is scheduled to play a two-game set against the Spartans on the road.

The brief series will conclude just three days before the WSHL Showcase, so both clubs will have to turn around quickly and prepare for their games in Vegas.

The Totems will take on Casper, Phoenix, and the CPJHL Red Team at the tournament. After that, they will finally get some much-needed time off during their two-and-a-half-week holiday break.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (3-21-0, 6 pts)

www.SOSpartans.com

[@wshlspartans](#)

The Southern Oregon Spartans once again achieved plenty of moral victories, but it has not yet translated to wins.

The Spartans made first-place Idaho work hard for 60 minutes in three consecutive games but were ultimately swept in the series. This comes just one week after Southern Oregon played West Sound to a pair of one-goal contests in another three-game series.

The Spartans are mired in a 16-game losing streak, but the wins will come if they continue to play the way they have over the past couple of weeks.

Southern Oregon's situation seems to be similar in a lot of ways to what the Phoenix Knights went through earlier in the year. Phoenix was reeling for the first couple months of the season, but it became apparent that the club was more talented than what its record indicated

Over time, Phoenix finally broke through for a win and has played at a much more respectable level since. If the Spartans can end their losing streak and get that elusive win, perhaps they could go on a run similar to the Knights and get themselves back into the thick of things in the division.

Southern Oregon will have plenty of chances to get back into the win column as we approach the conclusion of the first half. After playing a couple of games against Seattle this weekend, the Spartans will battle a trio of last-place teams at the Western States Shootout: Cheyenne, Wichita, and San Diego.

TAHOE ICEMEN (13-11-3, 29 pts)

www.Tahoelcemen.com

@Tahoelcemen

The Tahoe Icemen are back in action following their week off with what figures to be a challenging three-game series against Idaho.

The Icemen, who were swept by Utah in their last series, are looking to get back on track before playing in front of numerous college coaches and scouts in Las Vegas.

Tahoe will play games against Superior, the CPJHL Red Team, and Fresno at the event. The Fresno game will likely be the most difficult, as the Monsters have showcased their abilities in the brutal Western Division with some marquee wins over teams like Long Beach and Valencia.

Veteran forward and captain Paul Frys recently surpassed the half-century mark in points with a four-point outing against Utah that pushed his scoring line to 24-28-52 on the season.

Frys is on pace for a career year. The Portland, Oregon, native has never scored more than 71 points in a single regular season, but will finish with more than 100 points for the first time if he continues to produce at this rate.

Frys has received plenty of help this year. Marek Ondrasky (8-22-30), Danylo Moroz (11-17-28), Phil Heisse (14-14-28), Illja Cetvertak (10-13-23), and Jackson Oleson (7-15-22) are all having strong seasons.

Overall, Tahoe has scored 118 goals, good for an average of more than four goals per contest. It has been a solid year for the Icemen offense, and head coach Mickey Lang and his staff will work to further improve that production as we head into the second half of the season.

WEST SOUND WARRIORS (14-12-1, 29 pts)

www.WestSoundWarriors.com

@WS_Warriors

The West Sound Warriors had a chance to take sole control of the second seed in the division last weekend but failed to do so as they defeated Seattle but dropped a pair of games to Bellingham.

The Warriors won by a 7-5 final against Seattle but could not find a way to win in their two close losses to Bellingham. For now, West Sound will have to settle for a second-place tie with Tahoe. Both clubs have 29 points through their first 27 games played.

The Warriors are off this weekend as they make final preparations for the WSHL Showcase next week. West Sound is entering its first-ever Western States Shootout and will play games against the CPJHL Red Team, Fresno, and Springfield.

Forward Erik Safstrom has emerged as a star over the past couple weeks, eclipsing the 50-point mark on the season with a line of 20-32-52.

Safstrom has provided the Warriors with a reliable source of offense night in and night out. He is riding a 15-game point streak and has collected multiple points on 12 separate occasions during that stretch.

He also owns some of the team's best single-game performances this season. For example, on November 18 against Seattle, Safstrom dished out six assists and netted a goal in his team's blowout win over Seattle.

Not to be outdone, forward Harri Koll (26-19-45) has consistently produced throughout the first half and is on pace for a 50-goal season. He leads the Warriors in goals scored due to his impressive ability to finish scoring chances, and he trails only Safstrom in points.

Koll followed head coach Ty Smith to West Sound after playing under him last year in Butte, and it has worked out nicely for both sides. Koll has already accumulated 15 more points than he scored all of his rookie season last year.

--- *Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*