



## **WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 09.20.17 – NORTHWEST DIVISION**

### **BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (0-0-0)**

After a decent inaugural season in the Western States Hockey League, the Bellingham Blazers are looking to be a contender in the Northwest Division.

Last year's young, inexperienced squad qualified for the postseason but fell to Butte in the opening round after posting a 15-36-1 regular-season record.

The Blazers are hoping that several returning players will take big steps forward in their development after gaining experience last season.

Blazers veterans Dane Halstead and Tommy Stephens will be counted on by Head Coach Mark Collins to fill leadership roles.

Additionally, Spencer Vockel and Jamahl Eackett, two late-season pickups by the Blazers last year, will play larger roles on the team.

The Blazers have also signed a few Canadian prospects to fill out their roster.

"We are excited about the new players that we have added to the team this season," said Collins. "They will bring us some much-needed depth."

Bellingham will take on the Kent Ravens on the road this weekend.

Click here to follow the Blazers on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/BellinghamBlazers>

### **IDAHO ICECATS (0-0-0)**

The five-time Thorne Cup champion Idaho IceCats, formerly known as the Jr. Steelheads, will be back with a vengeance this season after a heartbreaking 4-3 defeat at the hands of the Wichita Jr. Thunder in the Thorne Cup championship game last spring.

Idaho decided to change its name and logo in order to create its own identity. The Idaho Steelheads are a professional team playing in the ECHL.

The IceCats are already off to a strong start this season after defeating the Boise State Broncos of the American Collegiate Hockey Association's Division II by scores of 4-2 and 4-1 in a pair of exhibition games last Saturday.

Idaho will once again have high expectations this season, which comes as no surprise. The club has won its division in the last seven seasons, including five consecutive Northwest Division crowns.

The IceCats made some changes to their coaching staff after this offseason, hiring Andrew Magera as an assistant coach after the resignation of last year's assistant, Jake Klancher.

Magera, who was a defenseman during his playing days, had been coaching in the Sioux Falls Stampede program for the past two years.

The IceCats will open their season October 13 when they take on Tahoe in front of their home fans in McCall, Idaho.

Click here to read the Icecats' full release on their name change.

<http://www.idahoicecats.com/news/idaho-junior-steelheads-change-name-to-idaho-iceca>

### **KENT RAVENS (0-0-0)**

The Kent Ravens will begin their first season of play in the Western States Hockey League this weekend with a three-game set against Seattle, Bellingham, and West Sound.

The Ravens' franchise has been in existence for two years. The club played its inaugural season in the Northern Pacific Hockey League in 2015-16 before moving onto the United States Premier 3 Hockey League last season.

Kent will play its home games at Kent Valley Ice Centre, a beautiful building that once served as the host site for the USA Hockey Pacific District Select Development Camp.

The Ravens will be led by Head Coach Andy Jasicki, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Jasicki is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout with an undergraduate degree that included a minor in coaching.

He played nine years of professional hockey overseas before finishing his career with the Denver Cutthroats of the Central Hockey League.

Click here to follow the Ravens on Twitter.

[https://twitter.com/RavensJrHockey?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref\\_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kentravens.com%2Fhome](https://twitter.com/RavensJrHockey?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kentravens.com%2Fhome)

### **SEATTLE TOTEMS (0-0-0)**

Last season the Seattle Totems had a year to forget as the club finished at the bottom of the Northwest Division and failed to qualify for the playoffs.

But Head Coach and General Manager Mike Murphy has been busy with recruitment this offseason, and it has resulted in some new talent in the Totems' locker room.

Murphy signed overseas prospects Denis Kozev and Mark Revniaga, a pair of experienced players who should make an immediate impact for the Totems.

Additionally, Seattle will welcome back second-year forward Cam Gross after the 19-year-old led the team with 22 goals in his rookie season.

Murphy is confident that this year will be a memorable one for the Totems.

“We have a good core here,” he said. “We have several key new players coming in and I expect this season to be one where we make significant strides.”

The Totems will play their first couple of games of the season this weekend with a home-and-home series against West Sound beginning Friday night in Seattle.

Click here to follow the Totems on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/seattletotems/>

### **SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (0-0-0)**

The Southern Oregon Spartans had a disappointing post-season last spring following a strong 70-point regular season that saw them finish in second place in the Northwest Division.

The Spartans received a first-round bye but were swept in the division semifinals at the hands of the upstart Butte Cobras.

Southern Oregon will welcome a new head coach this season in Dennis Creighton, who spent the last two years with the club as an assistant.

“I am very grateful for this opportunity to take over as the new head coach for the Southern Oregon Spartans,” he said. “This is an exciting new chapter in my hockey career and I look forward to carrying on the winning tradition that the Spartans have developed over the last decade.”

Southern Oregon was in need of a starting goaltender following the departure of last year’s starter, Mark Vlahovic, and Creighton and his coaching staff seem to have found a more-than-capable replacement in Czech Republic native Krystof Holub.

Holub, 20, will be playing his first season in the United States after winning the DHL Junior Extraliga championship last year with HC Skoda Plzeň.

“It was important for my staff and I to add another number one goalie,” said Creighton. “Krystof is a welcomed addition to the Southern Oregon Spartans organization.”

The Spartans play their first series of the season this weekend at home against Tahoe.

Click here to read the Spartans full release on the promotion of Creighton to head coach.

<http://www.sospartans.com/news/spartans-hire-new-head-coach>

### **TAHOE ICEMEN (0-0-0)**

The Tahoe Icemen showed plenty of signs of improvement last year after a dreadful two-win campaign a couple of seasons ago.

Tahoe advanced to the second round of the playoffs before being eliminated by the Idaho Jr. Steelheads, who would eventually advance to the Thorne Cup finals.

The Icemen have added several new players for the upcoming season, including former Vancouver Rangers captain Paul Frys.

Frys, a forward, had a scoring line of 32-39-71 last season with the Rangers and has 138 (54-84-138) career points over 104 WSHL games.

Star defenseman and captain Phil Heisse will be returning for his second season with the Icemen. The 19-year-old was one of the highest-scoring d-men in the league last year with a line of 21-44-65.

Tahoe opens its season this weekend with a three-game set on the road against Southern Oregon.

Click here to visit Tahoe's new, updated website for the upcoming season.

<http://tahoeicemen.com/>

### **WEST SOUND WARRIORS (0-0-0)**

The West Sound Warriors will make their WSHL debut this Saturday night when they take on the Seattle Totems at home.

The Warriors have previously played in the Northern Pacific Hockey League and the United States Premier Hockey League.

Just a few months ago, it seemed that the Warriors would not field a team this year after the club decided to suspend operations for the 2017-18 season.

Shortly after that announcement was made, the WSHL's Vancouver Rangers struck a deal to relocate to Bremerton, Washington. Part of the agreement was that the Rangers franchise would take on the Warriors' name.

West Sound has an experienced WSHL veteran behind its bench in former Butte Cobras Head Coach Ty Smith.

Smith joined the Warriors this summer after leading Butte to the first conference finals appearance in franchise history last season. He has brought along several of his former players, including forwards Harri Koll and three-year veteran Jacob Rudloff, who scored 85 points last season.

Smith is excited for his new opportunity with the Warriors and is looking forward to the upcoming season.

"I want to move as many players as I can to the next level...I'll do what I can to help get them there," he said.

"We want to be competitive and make a run in the playoffs. We're looking forward to getting started this season."

Click here to read an article on the Warriors from USA Junior Hockey Magazine.

<https://www.usajuniorhockey.com/western-states-hockey-league-west-sound7497-2/>

--- *Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*