



WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 09.29.17 – WESTERN DIVISION

ARIZONA HAWKS (0-3-0)

@AZHawksHockey

The Arizona Hawks are off to a rough start in their quest for a turnaround season. The team opened the season with three consecutive losses to perennial contender Valencia.

“Things in Valencia didn’t go our way, but there were plenty of positives,” said Hawks Head Coach Jay Kouris. “I had many young players making their junior debut, so in turn we got some of those kids on the board stat-wise.

“Hopefully that helps us build confidence going forward.”

Kouris specifically pointed out a strong performance from 17-year-old rookie defenseman Ryan Davis, who notched a hat trick in Sunday’s loss.

Davis, a 6-foot-3, 160-pound Calgary native, is tied with fellow rookie Stanislav Haurus for the team lead in goals.

Despite the rocky opening series, Kouris’ expectations for the season have not changed.

“The club is shaping up nicely,” he said. “We still need to round out a couple things, but all in all it’s a good group of guys this year.

“Expectations are to make the playoffs. We know we have a long season ahead of us, but we think we have the group for a nice postseason run.”

Arizona is off for the next couple of weeks. It will return to action on October 13 for its home opener against the Ontario Avalanche.

Click here to follow the Hawks on Facebook.

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

FRESNO MONSTERS (0-0-0)

@WSHLMonsters

The Fresno Monsters’ offseason will conclude this weekend when they open up their schedule with a three-game series against the defending Western Division champion Long Beach Bombers.

The Monsters signed a few more players last week, including Czech goaltender Adam Barvik. The 20-year-old is spending his first season in North America after playing in the Czechoslovakian U16 to U20 leagues.

Fresno also signed rookie forward Zachary Turpin, an 18-year-old product of Lions Bay, British Columbia.

Turpin previously played in the Kootenay Junior Hockey League before moving on to the Vancouver Island Junior Hockey League. He last appeared for the VIJHL’s Oceanside Generals during the 2016-17 season.

Additionally, the Monsters added to their defensive depth with the signing of blueliner Ondrej Gabrhelik, another Czech Republic native.

Like Barvik, Gabrhelik made his way through the Czech U16 to U20 leagues before signing with the Monsters this year for his first season in North America.

Fresno will not play in front of its home fans until October 5, when it begins a three-game set against Valencia at Gateway Ice Center.

The Monsters will not have much time off until the beginning of November. The club will play every weekend in the month of October, a stretch that features 15 games over 30 days.

Click here to learn more about the Monsters' coaching staff.

<http://www.fresnomonsters.com/staff>

LAS VEGAS STORM (0-0-0)

@lvstormhockey

The Las Vegas Storm will continue to prepare for their October 12 season opener against El Paso with another week of practice.

The extended offseason gives general manager and head coach Gabe Gauthier plenty of extra time to put together his roster.

Gauthier is welcoming back D-man Jake McKenna for his fourth and final season with the Storm. McKenna has appeared in 146 games for the Storm and is already the franchise's all-time leader in games played.

The hometown Las Vegas product will add to that total this season as he tries to help Vegas to another playoff berth.

The Storm has a difficult schedule to open the year. It will open with six of its first nine games at home, including a pair of series against division rivals Fresno and San Diego.

After that, the Storm will embark on a nine-game road trip that will begin November 3 and last nearly the entire month.

Click here to follow the Storm on Facebook.

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

LONG BEACH BOMBERS (0-0-0)

@LBBombersHockey

The defending Western Division champs are back in action this weekend with a three-game series at home against the Fresno Monsters.

The Bombers are bringing back plenty of talent from last season's powerhouse team, including forward Tomas Urbanec.

Urbanec has a scoring line of 47-67-114 over 97 WSHL games, all with Long Beach. He will be hungry for a strong performance this year after being limited to just 29 games last season.

The Bombers also re-signed Amir Burguev, who was one of the highest-scoring defensemen in the league last year with a line of 13-41-54.

Burguev was recently named Long Beach's team captain, while fellow blueliners Fredrik Skatteboe and Erik Lundgren were chosen as alternate captains.

Long Beach is one of the most diverse teams in the league with 14 overseas skaters on the roster, including six Swedes, three Russians, and an Irish player.

Following this weekend's series, the Bombers will play a pair of games at home against San Diego before traveling to Arizona for a three-game set against the Hawks.

Click here to watch the Bombers' 2017-18 promo video.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BZmZDl0lb80/?taken-by=lbbombershockey>

ONTARIO AVALANCHE (0-0-0)

@TmOntAvs

The Ontario Avalanche will begin their 2017-18 season this weekend on the road against Tahoe with a new-look roster.

The Avs lost their top three scorers from last season and will be looking for new players to step up and provide some offensive firepower.

Sophomore William Ma could be in line for a breakout season. The 20-year-old piled up 50 points (22-28-50) over 56 games for Ontario last year and will be counted on as one of the club's top forwards.

Another forward, Reid Bosse, looks like he is also primed for a big year after a 16-27-43 showing over 50 games last season with the Avs.

Ontario has plenty of age and experience, as every player listed on its roster was born in the 20th century.

The Avalanche brought back defenseman Adam Cech this past offseason, a two-year veteran who should provide plenty of leadership on the back end.

Cech was acquired last season from El Paso and chipped in six points (1-5-6) over 11 games for Ontario.

The Avalanche will open up the home portion of their schedule next weekend against Phoenix.

Click here to watch an Avs promo video for the upcoming season.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8kBiMMR840>

PHOENIX KNIGHTS (0-0-0)

@PhoenixKnightsJrA

The Phoenix Knights open up this weekend as they take on the mighty Valencia Flyers in front of their home fans at Arizona Ice in Gilbert, Arizona.

The Knights played a pair of preseason contests last week against the Northern Arizona Ice Jacks of the American Collegiate Hockey Association's Division II. Phoenix won the first game 8-2 before falling 5-3 in its preseason finale.

The Knights' roster looks to be all set for opening night. The club has brought back a few players from last year's squad, including defenseman Chase Gillaspie, a local product who dished out 21 assists in his rookie season.

Phoenix also welcomes back forwards Ashton Richardt and Colton Seeman, who should have productive seasons offensively after posting scoring lines of 11-14-25 and 16-12-28, respectively, last year.

After this weekend, the Knights will not have another week off until nearly the end of November.

Click here to listen to the latest episode of the Phoenix Knights Podcast.

<https://soundcloud.com/phoenixknightspodcast>

SAN DIEGO SABERS (0-0-0)

@sdsabershockey

The San Diego Sabers will have to wait one more week before their first game next weekend on the road against Long Beach.

After the Long Beach series, San Diego will start its first homestand of the season on October 13 against Fresno.

The Sabers are starting the year with a goaltending trio of Zach Hale, Benjamin Greenlee, and Patrick Henson.

Hale, who posted a 3.84 GAA and an .880 save percentage over seven games with San Diego last season, is the most experienced of the group and will likely command the most playing time early on.

Greenlee is one of the youngest players on the Sabers' roster. The 17-year-old rookie played for the U16 Portland Jr. Winterhawks last year.

Henson, another rookie, rounds out the trio. The California native had a 3.26 GAA over 11 games with Central Cathedral High School last season.

Head coach Petr Kankovsky will likely count on Hale to mentor the two younger netminders early in the season as they get their first tastes of the WSHL.

Click here to see the Sabers' team bus and locker room.

<http://www.sandiegosabershockey.com/team-bus-locker-room>

VALENCIA FLYERS (3-0-0)

@valenciaflyers

Through three games, the Valencia Flyers are perfect.

A sweep of Arizona at home last weekend has given the Flyers an early six-point lead in the Western Division before most teams have even played a game.

Valencia really could not ask for a better start from its offense. The Flyers racked up double-digit goals in each of their three games against the Hawks and finished the series with a whopping 40 goals.

Tristan Warr had a great series with five goals and four assists, while Jacob Kranabetter found the back of the net three times and dished out 10 assists.

Canadian goalie Spencer Kozlowski has picked up where he left off last season, stopping 24 of the 25 shots he faced against the Hawks.

Kozlowski returned to the Flyers this past offseason after he was traded by Valencia to Las Vegas last year. He had a 3.19 GAA to go along with a .901 save percentage over 21 games with the Storm.

Valencia will try to continue its hot start this weekend when it travels to Gilbert, Arizona, for a three-game set against the Phoenix Knights.

Click here to read about the Flyers' franchise history.

<http://valenciaflyers.net/Team/FranchiseHistory.aspx>