



Helmi Shippee photo

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 10.12.17 – NORTHWEST DIVISION

BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (0-3-1)

www.BellinghamBlazers.pointstreaksites.com

@Bhamblazers

Even though the Bellingham Blazers have been competitive through their first four games, the team has gone winless to this point. Bellingham, which has played all four of its games against Seattle, has had each of its games decided by two goals or fewer.

Despite the tough start, the close games have to be encouraging for head coach Mark Collins and his staff.

In his first season in North America, Russian forward Ruslan Novruzov is enjoying a solid start. The 17-year-old has netted three goals and dished out five assists through the four games.

Second-year forward Thomas Steven is also playing well with four goals and a pair of helpers. He is second in scoring to Jamahl Eakett (6-3-9), who is establishing himself as a premier offensive threat early on.

Last season, Steven collected 46 points (22-24-46), while Eakett had a goal and an assist in 12 games. Over 31 career WSHL games spanning parts of the last three years, Eakett has a line of 11-6-17. This could be a breakout year for the 18-year-old.

The Blazers will get a chance for their first win of the season in front of their home fans on Friday night against West Sound. The game will mark the first-ever matchup between the two clubs.

IDAHO ICECATS (0-0-0)

www.IdahoIceCats.com

The Idaho IceCats' long offseason concludes this weekend as the club battles Tahoe in a three-game set at home.

On Sunday night, the IceCats will play a home game at CenturyLink Arena in Boise, home of the Idaho Steelheads. The venue has not hosted junior hockey in six years, and the game will give the IceCats a chance to play in a professional hockey arena.

Last week, Idaho hosted its annual intra-squad scrimmage, with the White Team edging the Blue Team by a score of 8-7.

Veteran forward Lance Herning erupted for three goals and three assists for the White Team and once again showed that he's ready to have another productive season as one of the league's top scorers. Last season Herning posted a line of 32-38-70 over 48 games, and 2-8-10 over nine postseason contests.

This weekend's series will mark the first time the IceCats wear their new black and silver sweaters. The jerseys were supposed to be worn during last week's scrimmage but did not arrive in time.

SEATTLE TOTEMS (5-0-1)

www.SeattleJrTotems.com

@SeattleJrTotems

The Seattle Totems' impressive start to the season continued with a three-game sweep of Bellingham on the road. The Totems had to fight for every win, but they came out on top in three close games, including two one-goal contests.

Seattle now sits all alone at the top of the Northwest Division with 11 points, three more than second-place West Sound.

The Totems recently swapped goaltenders with the El Paso Rhinos, trading Filip Krasanosky in exchange for Daniel Yockey.

Krasanosky, 19, did not appear in a game for Seattle this year. He has played well for the Rhinos so far, stopping 38 of 39 shots through three games for a sparkling .975 save percentage.

Yockey, also 19, is a rookie who has yet to appear in a WSHL contest. He will be the third goalie on the roster in addition to Garrett Wills and Naoki Onodera.

Seattle also signed Canadian defenseman Josh Schur from the Oklahoma City Blazers. Schur is a veteran with 80 WSHL games under his belt, 78 of which were with the Whitefish Wolverines. He will add depth and experiences to the Totems' defensive corps.

The Totems will play one game this weekend, a Saturday night matchup at home against West Sound.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (1-5-0)

www.SOSpartans.com

@wshlspartans

The Southern Oregon Spartans are struggling, dropping five of their first six games. The Spartans opened the year by losing two of three to Tahoe before being swept by West Sound last weekend.

Still, it's not as if Southern Oregon is being blown out. In fact, four of its games have been decided by two goals or fewer, and it has not lost by more than four goals.

The Spartans need to find a way to win the close games, or they could risk digging themselves into a hole that could be difficult from which to recover.

Southern Oregon's leading scorer is rookie forward Christian Ward, who lit the lamp four times while dishing out a pair of assists. Ward is scoring at a point-per-game pace, a terrific sign for a player who is still learning the ropes in the WSHL.

The Spartans travel to Accord Ice Arena this weekend to take on the Utah Outliers. It will mark the first of two series between the two clubs this season.

TAHOE ICEMEN (3-1-2)

www.Tahoelcemen.com

@Tahoelcemen

The Tahoe Icemen had an eventful series a couple of weeks ago against a strong Ontario team, going 1-1-1 in an entertaining three-game set.

After opening the series with an intense 5-4 shootout loss, the Icemen rebounded for a 5-3 win in the second game. Owen Haas had his best game of the year in the victory, scoring a goal while collecting a pair of assists.

Haas notched a multi-point game for the second time this season and now has a scoring line of 1-4-5.

In the third and final game, Tahoe fought valiantly but was ultimately defeated, 1-0, after Ontario forward William Ma scored in the third period.

Goaltender Wade Conlan continued his hot start by stopping 33 of the 34 shots he faced, but he was handed a tough-luck loss, dropping his record to 2-1-0 despite a tremendous .955 save percentage.

After being off last week, the Icemen will return to the ice this Friday night when they open up a three-game set against Idaho.

It should be a great series between a much-improved Tahoe team and perennial powerhouse Idaho.

WEST SOUND WARRIORS (4-1-0)

www.WestSoundWarriors.com

@WS_Warriors

The West Sound Warriors made a massive statement to the rest of the Northwest Division last week with a three-game sweep over Southern Oregon.

If anyone wasn't taking the Warriors seriously, they are now. The team now sits in second place in the division through its first five games.

Up to this point, West Sound has been one of the better teams in the league at spreading the wealth on offense. Harri Koll leads the club with four goals, but 12 other players have combined to score the Warriors' 21 other goals.

The unselfish, team-oriented approach has served West Sound well. Although it seems the club lacks a star scorer, it seems to be well on its way to becoming a contender in the division.

West Sound will play back-to-back road games against Bellingham and Seattle this weekend. The Warriors will have a chance to avenge their only loss of the season, a 3-2 defeat at the hands of the Totems.

--- *Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*