

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.16.18 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (7-23-0, 14 pts)
WSHLDallasSnipers.pointstreaksites.com
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The Dallas Snipers came up short in all three games to Springfield over the weekend with Friday's contest being the closest of the three. Eric Eaton scored his 13th goal of the season to open the series with a Dallas lead. It was short-lived however, after the Express scored four unanswered goals.

But alas, the Snipers weren't done yet as Danil Trenikhin scored two goals in 30 seconds to claw Dallas back into the game. Those two goals were followed by a Jaroslav Vasicek snipe a minute later, giving Dallas three goals in under two minutes to tie the game at four apiece.

Then, Springfield scored with 25 seconds on the clock. For those of you scoring at home, that's nine goals in the first frame – five coming in the final three minutes.

Entrenched in the second half of the season, Dallas head coach Aaron Davis is looking for more periods like the first one against Springfield.

"We are looking to be more consistent night in and night out," Davis said. "Do the little things right that we have not been doing and causing us to lose games."

Sterling Cooper's 16-26-42 line leads the team, but coach Davis is looking for everyone on the roster to simply play their part moving forward. Especially given the difficulty of their schedule the rest of the way.

"We need (our top three guys) to keep doing what they are doing and other guys to chip in," Davis added. "We need to get everyone on the same page and everyone needs to know their role. If you're a scorer, we need you to score. If you're a grinder, we need you to grind. If you're a goalie, we need you to make big saves at key times."

With guys like Cooper, Alex Hladonik (14-26-40), and Vasicek (15-22-37) leading the way, the Snipers will definitely need continued support from their depth. Trenikhin (6-9-15) has a knack for finding the net at opportune times, ditto Trevor Borlace (11-11-22), so it's going to be deeper in the roster that Dallas will find the needed help for future success.

Dallas is also getting consistent goaltending from Brady Weiss (1,000 career saves with Dallas), Evan Williams (67 saves on Saturday), and Rafael Goncalves – which will help as the team embarks on a stretch that will see them playing OKC and El Paso beginning this weekend.

EL PASO RHINOS (34-1-1, 69 pts)

www.ElPasoRhinos.com

@El_Paso_Rhinos

The El Paso Rhinos and Oklahoma City Blazers played in what we dubbed the Series-of-the-Week, and boy did they ever. It was a back-and-forth battle for El Paso and OKC, as the first two games went into overtime with The Blazers handing the Rhinos only their second loss of the year in Friday's series opener.

Last week, we posited that El Paso was in the midst of one of the greatest regular seasons in the history of the WSHL. We may have jinxed it.

The Rhinos did get payback, winning on Saturday (also in OT) and jumping ahead and holding the lead on Sunday behind Chaseton Sare's two goals.

Sare's goals on Sunday have his season line up to a team-leading 33-32-65. He is also second on the squad with 77 penalty minutes.

Newcomer Maguire Blair continues to impress, scoring the OT winner on Saturday to give him a 3-3-6 line in his first two weekends with the Rhinos.

The five goals allowed on Friday were the most by goalie Filip Krasanovsky all season, but he did bounce back allowing only one goal on 31 shots Saturday, and stopping 18 of 19 on Sunday.

El Paso has the Mid-Western Division pretty much in control, but they only play two series in the next four weeks with a challenging inter-division series against the Colorado Jr. Eagles being the second in that span.

The Rhinos finished 2014 with only two losses and 2008 with one regulation loss and two OT losses. If they win out, El Paso will best both of those remarkable years.

El Paso will have off this weekend and then return with their United Blood Services series against Dallas. El Paso will wear special jerseys that will be auctioned off to benefit United Blood Services.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (26-5-1, 53 pts)

www.OKCityHockey.com

[@OKCBlazersWSHL](https://twitter.com/OKCBlazersWSHL)

Last week, we were kind of looking past El Paso for Oklahoma City – trying to figure out how they will end the season once they played the Rhinos. The Blazers, to their credit, were only focused on El Paso and it paid off, with OKC earning three of six points in the standings against the league's top team.

The Blazers put five pucks past Filip Krasanovsky on Friday. That is the most goals allowed by the Rhino backstop in a single game all season.

Griffin Wiencek scored his 16th goal of the season in OT on Friday to give the Blazers the victory over El Paso. Patrick Tondl scored his 20th of the year late in the second period of Saturday's game to tie it. El Paso ended up with the win midway through the extra frame.

Goalie Bobby Cloutier made 104 saves in three games against El Paso and his win on Friday gives him 18 on the year – good for second overall in the WSHL.

Since being swept by the Rhinos in early December, the Blazers have beaten Idaho, Ogden, and now El Paso this past weekend, and need to be considered a serious Thorne Cup threat.

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS (17-12-6, 40 pts)

www.SpringfieldExpress.com

@SGFExpress

The Express rolled over Dallas this weekend, completing the series sweep after a Friday night back-and-forth first period that saw nine goals and four lead changes.

It was Springfield's sixth straight win – all against Dallas – after an 11-game losing streak ended the first half of their season.

Stephane Doering has a seven-game points streak going, scoring a 6-11-17 line in that span bringing his season totals up to 22-29-51 in his first season in North America.

Russian vet Nikita Sokov is having a career season, scoring a 22-34-56 line in just 30 games this season. Those numbers best his previous best of 31-19-50 in 47 games two seasons ago with the Colorado Evolution. Sokov's goal on Sunday gave him 37 as a member of the Express, and jumped him to number 3 all-time for Springfield.

The Express have now scored 195 goals in their first 35 games, good for a 5.58 per game average. Their 195 goals put them in the top-four in the league, something that gets overshadowed when playing in the same division as El Paso and Oklahoma City, who are second and third, respectively.

The Express face Wichita this weekend before their upcoming six-game homestand against Oklahoma City that will work as the litmus test for how far this squad has come.

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (3-27-0, 6 pts)

www.WichitaJuniorThunder.com

@JrThunderHockey

The Wichita Jr. Thunder, who were off last weekend, will focus playing spoilers in the Mid-Western Division race the rest of the season.

It's been a real rebuild for head coach Rob Weingartner this season after winning the Thorne Cup last year, and as we've said in the past, if anyone can turn a team having a down season into a contender in no time, it's Weingartner.

"What we are teaching here in Wichita is not only hockey skills and becoming a better player," Weingartner said earlier this season. "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."

The Jr. Thunder will face off with a hot Springfield this weekend before another bye week.

--- *Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media*