

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 01.17.18 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



Mark Mauno photo

CASPER COYOTES (11-18-0, 22 pts)

www.caspercoyotes.com

@CasperCoyotes

The Casper Coyotes were swept by their Mountain Division rivals, the Ogden Mustangs, over the weekend, ending a run that saw them win eight of nine games.

The Casper goalies worked hard during the team's winning streak, and seemed to work harder in the losses. The Coyotes gave up 218 shots over the course of the weekend with all three goalies splitting time. Newcomer Wesley Ellingsen led the way with 108 saves over five periods between the pipes.

The Coyotes may have to wait a while for their next win with Ogden and the Colorado Jr. Eagles taking up the next nine games on their schedule. That's a

tough slate – even for a team that was just recently having its best stretch all season.

Bradley Green leads the team with a 16-12-28 line, and the Beard Brothers are tied with 17 points apiece. Lindros Beard bests his little brother, Brindamour, with nine goals to three. But, the younger Beard does have 14 assists.

It would be great to see the hard-working Casper club steal some points as their schedule nears its end. They've been a tough get for most of the year, and to be able to stun some folks may give them the confidence they need heading to the playoffs.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-36-0, 4 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

Cheyenne ran into a red-hot Utah team, getting swept in three games. As has been the case all season, the Stampede were outmatched, but fought the entire series, refusing to quit – even scoring late in the third period.

Wisconsin-native, forward Tristan Hughes, joined up with Cheyenne for Sunday's game, scoring a goal in his first outing in the WSHL.

Cheyenne will play two games with neighbors, the University of Wyoming, this weekend. Both games will count in the WSHL standings for the Stamps.

After that, they'll play The Battle of I-25 when they play a home-and-home with the Superior RoughRiders.

For information and tickets for the University of Wyoming match-up, and all Stampede games, visit CheyenneStampede.com.

COLORADO EAGLES (22-5-4, 48 pts)

www.coloradojunioreagles.com

@COJrEagles

The Colorado Jr. Eagles ran into a Superior club that has just been itching to get a win against their in-state rivals. The two teams had played each other four times before this past weekend, and the RoughRiders kept each game close.

But even outshooting Superior 46 – 20 wasn't enough in the first of two games, with Colorado falling in the shootout.

"That loss was a good wake up call," Colorado head coach Steve Haddon said. "(Marshall) Murphy, Superior's goalie, stole the game."

Haddon said that while his team relies on its depth and team work, the focus now needs to be on reaping the rewards of hard work.

"Learning from that game, we need to finish around the net," Haddon added. "We worked hard to create opportunities – 46 shots and only 1 goal – plain and simple, we need to bare down around the net."

The Jr. Eagles repaid the favor in the second game, scoring three straight goals in the second period after falling behind 1-0 on a last-minute Superior goal to end the first.

Goalie Braden LaJoie made 34 total saves in earning his team three of a possible four points over the weekend.

We have been championing Colorado's team play and depth for the past two seasons, marking it as a major strength for a team playing in possibly the league's toughest division. Coach Haddon knows it's going to take everyone to make a run this season.

"We have a lot of guys who fly under the radar," he said. "We need everyone to take their game to that next level in the second half and playoffs. To win championships, it takes everyone."

Colorado has a two-week, six-game series with Casper beginning this weekend before getting to the meat of their schedule that includes three more meetings with Superior, a series with Utah & Ogden each, and a three-game set with the WSHL's top team, the El Paso Rhinos.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (28-8-1, 57 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

Ogden's sweep of Casper over the weekend was a nice tune-up before a bye week this weekend. After that, it's on to a two-game home-and-home with in-state rivals Utah who have given Ogden fits the past two seasons.

Head Coach Jake Laime says his team's time off ahead of Utah will be used to make sure his team continues to work hard.

"We know we are a good team when we earn the wins," Laime said. "We need to be less complacent and come out to work. When we play a 200ft game we are tough to beat. When we don't, we can probably anticipate the same results as the last series (with Utah)."

Matus Spodniak returned to the squad this weekend after not playing the prior weekend. His season has been one for the record books before the Vegas Shootout. It would stand to reason that the extra weekend off for Spodniak would bring about some rust. But, this is the league's leading scorer we're talking about and he continued his strong season with a 5-8-13 line against Casper. That brings his ridiculous season line to 53-57-110 with 14 games to go.

Spodniak is on pace for 160 points this year which would best the league's record of 149 from the 2006-07 season. I mean the team's doing great and all but this is exciting.

And Spodniak's great year is eclipsing teammate Jacob Laurin's fine season as he also has an impressive 37-57-94 line through 37 games.

But, again, it's the team that matters or whatever.

So, the Mustangs will wait to sink their claws into Utah, and coach Laime says it's going to be worth the wait for fans who have been enjoying a competitive Mountain Division this year.

"Utah is a big hard-working team that plays together," Laime said. "They have depth and good goaltending. I believe it will be a good series."

SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS (17-16-0, 34 pts)

www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com

@SPR_RoughRiders

Superior seems to have been gunning for Colorado all season, just chomping at the bit to beat the Jr. Eagles. The RoughRiders fell short in their previous four meetings, but seemed to be getting closer and closer.

Stuck at .500 all season, the RoughRiders have been riding their slew of rookies during an inconsistent but promising season, able to handily defeat

teams behind them in the standings, but not being able to get over the hump against some of the better squads in the league.

Their first game against Colorado this past weekend showed promise as Superior came away with the shootout victory over their in-state rivals – their first "W" all year against the Jr. Eagles.

Even being outshot more than 2-to-1, the RoughRiders were able to pull off the big win behind 44 saves from goalie Marshall Murphy.

Murphy got the call again for the second game, making 30 saves in the close loss. Murphy now has a solid .900 SV% on the year.

Superior will visit Utah for a three-game set this weekend that will really give the team an idea of where they stand against one of the best teams in the league. Sneaking a few points from the Outliers may give the RoughRiders the confidence they'll need to make the permanent jump above .500 to close out the season. Though it won't be easy with games against Ogden, Colorado, and Utah again still on the slate.

UTAH OUTLIERS (25-6-0, 50 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

The Utah Outliers have been working hard all year, enjoying the rewards of strong goaltending and a potent offense. But there will be no rest for Utah without an off week scheduled for the rest of the season. There will be obstacles at every turn for a Utah team hoping to hoist the Thorne Cup.

Head Coach Paul Taylor knows that his team needs to stay focused in the now, and not get caught up in a whirlwind season that has them just seven points out of first place with six games in hand.

"That goal (winning the Thorne Cup) is still a ways away and we have a lot to focus on in the present," Taylor said. "We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. We need to continue to build our game. Staying healthy and injury-free will play a critical role in our long term success."

The Utah goalie tandem of Dawson Rodin (1.68/.944) and Otto Saxin (1.50/.914) continue to rule the crease, and the team is getting consistent scoring from all of its players.

Zach Hoffman, the rookie defenseman, leads the team with a 13-32-45 line, and coach Taylor says that Hoffman has been huge for the Outliers this year.

"He brings toughness to our team and is also skilled at his position," Taylor said. "He has brought a good balance to our team in shutting the opponent down and adding offensive value."

The tough road continues for Utah this weekend with a Superior team that is working to not be forgotten within the league's toughest division.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media