

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES – MID-WEST DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (7-29-0, 14 pts)
WSHLDallasSnipers.pointstreaksites.com
[@DallasSnipers](https://twitter.com/DallasSnipers)

Goaltender Manny Legace made a remarkable 58 saves in the third game of Dallas' series with Mid-Western Division rivals El Paso over the weekend. While Sunday ended up a 3-1 defeat at the hands of the first-place Rhinos, Legace continues to show his prowess in the crease – keeping the Snipers squad in many games. Overall, Legace made 132 saves between Sunday and parts of four periods Friday and Saturday.

The consistent play of Dallas goalies Legace, Evan Williams, and Rafael Goncalves is indicative of a Sniper team that has worked hard and grown from the experience of playing in what has been, for many on the team, their first season at this level. It's hard to believe the triumvirate of backstops in Dallas were playing in high school just last year and are now standing up to international players putting buckets of shots on net.

Head Coach Aaron Davis said his entire team has grown and he credits his players' efforts this season.

"Yes we are in some games," Davis said. "But I think our youth and experience has grown from the start of the season tremendously. Granted, we still make some bad decisions but not nearly as much as the beginning of the season."

That's a sign of the coaching job Davis has done with a team with so many newcomers to the rigors of the WSHL.

"It's a learning process," Davis added. "We have 12-13 guys who are '99-'01, and many who have never played a junior game till this season. We're going to have our ups and downs, but getting them game-time ready and working on things in practice will help them out for the years to come."

Dallas faces Wichita in a six-game set beginning this weekend before one final series with the rest of their Mid-Western Division counterparts.

EL PASO RHINOS (37-1-1, 75 pts)

www.EIPasoRhinos.com

[@El_Paso_Rhinos](#)

The Rhinos continue to steamroll through the league, sitting at 37-1-1 after 39 games and looking to finish with one of the best seasons in league history.

El Paso peppered the Snipers goalies with shots all weekend, scoring 32 goals in three games on 228 shots on net. Twelve different El Paso skaters scored in Saturday's 16-goal output beginning with Austin Simpson's nice street-hockey style midair bank-in to lead the game.

The Haugen brothers connected on a nice workman's goal for Nolan's second of the year early in the second period Saturday in front of a sold-out crowd.

Ever the workhorse, Head Coach Cory Herman knows this is no time for his team to let up.

"We can always improve on something," Herman said. "I think we need to work on playing a full 60 minutes and our work ethic."

Herman has been preaching the "play the full game" approach all season, and it's difficult to argue with the results. The Rhinos' 266 goals scored are good

for 3rd in the league and their ridiculously low 55 goals against tops the WSHL.

A big part of the team's defensive success can be attributed to the play of goaltender Filip Krasanovsky who, as far as we're concerned, is a top contender for league MVP in his first season of North American hockey. Krasanovsky's 28 wins lead the league and his 1.47/.928 slash line is good for second among qualified goalies (20 games played).

Coach Herman says it's not hard to see why Krasanovsky is having such a stellar season when you meet him.

"He's a great kid off the ice," Herman said of his backstop. "Very positive, happy-go-lucky kind of kid. Great work ethic and a pleasure to coach."

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (32-5-1, 65 pts)

www.OKCityHockey.com

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

The Blazers continued their hot play, sweeping a solid Springfield team in three straight games over the weekend. Ivan Bondarenko's 5-3-8 line against the Express brought his season totals up to a 46-47-93 line, good for first in the Mid-Western Division.

In fact, the top three scorers in the Mid-Western are Blazer players with Josh Chamberlain (32-48-80) and Griffin Wiencek (26-49-75) rounding out the leaderboard.

The team's 282 goals in just 38 games leads the league, and their 65 points would have them in the lead in any other division in the WSHL. Oklahoma City has been playing stout defense to go along with their potent offense, and goalie Bobby Cloutier's (2.35/.923) 22 wins are good for second in the league.

Like we've said, OKC has buried the top teams in the league and with the playoffs coming, opponents who are looking at the Mid-Western Division and see only El Paso while overlooking the Blazers will get burned by a team that has proven to be Thorne Cup ready.

OKC will continue with Springfield with one game this weekend and then three more in two weeks to close out the season series.

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS (20-15-6, 46 pts)

www.SpringfieldExpress.com

@_ExpressHockey

Before this past weekend, the Express hadn't lost in regulation since a last-minute goal did them in 12 games ago in Las Vegas. But, Springfield ran into an equally hot OKC team and found themselves swept yet again by their Mid-Western Division rivals.

A pattern has emerged which bodes well for Springfield, even in losing eight straight to the Blazers. The Express will lose the first games against OKC before forcing the Blazers into a hard-fought contest for the final game of the weekend.

The same was true over the past weekend when Springfield had OKC's backs against the wall on Sunday after losing the first two games by a total score of 13-1.

Oscar Andersson (11-19-30) and Filimon Ledenkov (18-39-57) scored two goals for the Express and Kayne Pasquet made 30 saves in the tight 7-6 loss to one of the league's top teams.

Springfield found themselves up 3-1 after the first period, then up 5-2 midway through the second before OKC scored their third goal just 20 seconds after Springfield's fifth strike.

The Blazers opened the third period with two goals in 20 seconds, before Ledenkov's second snipe just half a minute later. OKC ultimately came out on top – scoring two goals in a minute – to win a game that had the home crowd on their feet and clutching their hearts through most of it.

We've posited that Springfield has shown flashes of being able to play with anybody in the league, and once they break through and play that way consistently, they'll be a team no one wants to play against come playoff time.

The Express will have one game with OKC this weekend, then it's their final three-game series with the Blazers in two weeks. Springfield has been playing really well since the holidays, and with the playoffs right around the corner, there's no time like the present for the 417s to begin rolling.

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (3-30-0, 6 pts)

www.WichitaJuniorThunder.com

@JrThunderHockey

The Junior Thunder were off this past weekend, with a chance to get things back on track against Dallas coming up.

Wichita and the Snipers will face off against each other for two home-and-home series that will conclude their season series for this year.

The Jr. Thunder are 1-5 against their Mid-Western Division rivals including the 6-2 victory the last time these two teams met.

Canadian forward Hunter Litman has only played 14 games for Wichita so far this season, but has made his presence known going 2-6-8 in those games, including two assists in the team's last game.

Head Coach Rob Weingartner has been here before with previous teams that were undermanned and inexperienced, but as he's said before, his coaching philosophy is player-centric. Making sure his guys grow as players has always been his focus and this six-game set with the Snipers will be a nice showcase to see how his team has grown since the beginning of the season.

--- Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media