

WSHL WRAP-UP; January 5 – January 7, 2018



EL PASO RHINOS @ WICHITA JR. THUNDER Rhinos keep rumbling through WSHL

01.05.18 – El Paso 8, Wichita 0
01.06.18 – El Paso 15, Wichita 0
01.07.18 – El Paso 9, Wichita 0

The El Paso Rhinos showed no signs of rust coming off the long holiday break, sweeping the Jr. Thunder in Wichita and extending their lead to 14 points over second-place Oklahoma City at the top of the Mid-Western Division. The Rhinos have now won 32 of 33 games on the season.

The Rhinos scored five times in the first period and cruised to an 8-0 win on Friday. Adam Stalzer and Maguire Blair scored twice for El Paso while Filip Krasanovsky and Kayden Pickles shared the shutout.

Wichita goaltender Austin Tilton made 58 saves.

The Rhinos poured it on Saturday night. Blair and John Erramouspe each tallied hat tricks to lead the way in a 15-0 El Paso win. Trevor Buckmeier posted the shutout in his El Paso debut.

Phillip Pugliese (2-2-4) and Leeam Tivers each scored twice to lead the Rhinos to a 9-0 win on Sunday afternoon to complete the sweep. It was 1-0 after 20 minutes, but El Paso scored four times in each of the final two periods to pull away.

Krasanovsky registered his seventh shutout of the season.

BELLINGHAM BLAZERS VS. WEST SOUND WARRIORS (home-and-home)
Blazers, Warriors each win at home

01.05.18 – West Sound 3 @ Bellingham 5

01.06.18 – Bellingham 2 @ West Sound 6

The West Sound Warriors and Bellingham Blazers, battling for playoff positioning in the top four spots in the Northwest Division, split a home-and-home series with each team winning in their own rink. West Sound remains in second place – eight points behind first place Idaho – while Bellingham is in fourth.

Friday night in Bellingham, the Blazers took leads of 2-0 and 4-2, but the Warriors kept fighting back. Ty-Andrew Traynor got West Sound within a goal at 4-3 with 3:46 left, but Matthew Edgecobe sealed the victory for Bellingham with 1:33 left as the Blazers won at home, 5-3.

With Bellingham leading 2-0 in the second period, Dennis Berdnicks and Caleb Travis scored for West Sound with Harri Kroll assisting on both tallies.

Ruslan Novruzov restored the Bellingham lead with his second goal of the game a little over three minutes later.

Brian Eisele made 30 of his 41 saves in the first two periods for West Sound. Edward Coffey (21 saves) was the winning goaltender for Bellingham.

Saturday night, at Bremerton Ice Center, the Warriors scored three unanswered goals in the second period to break a 1-1 tie and set the stage for a 6-2 win.

Ruslan Abyanov figured in all six West Sound goals, scoring four himself and assisting on two others. Dmitri Munirov and Kroll each picked up four assists.

Eisele stopped 22 of 24 shots to register the "W", with Novruzov beating him for both Bellingham goals.

OGDEN MUSTANGS @ CHEYENNE STAMPEDE
Mustangs pad Mountain Division lead

01.05.18 – Ogden 11, Cheyenne 1

01.06.18 – Ogden 13, Cheyenne 1

01.07.18 – Ogden 12, Cheyenne 0

The Ogden Mustangs put some valuable points in the bank in the Mountain Division race. A three-game sweep of Cheyenne gave them a six-point lead on second-place Colorado, which holds five games in hand, followed closely by third-place Utah just one point behind the Jr. Eagles. It is shaping up to be a fantastic stretch drive with three teams battling for two first-round byes in this division.

Ammon Anderson racked up three goals, Jacob Laurin and Kerry Kruzel notched a pair each, and Ogden defeated Cheyenne, 11-1, on Friday.

Ross Bartlett scored and also picked up four assists for the Mustangs and Daniel Yockey made 74 saves for the Stampede.

It was more of the same on Saturday, with the Mustangs posting a 13-1 win. Matthew Thielemann, Ian Currie, Ammon Anderson and Bryson Bartell all scored twice for Ogden, and Bartlett collected four more assists.

It was actually a one-goal game after the first period with Cheyenne's Robbie Hufnagel stopping 25 of 26 shots in the frame. He left the game early in the third period after making 47 saves.

Nikita Gordeev scored for the Stampede.

Ogden finally finished off a shutout on Sunday. Jonathan Chin made 18 saves in a 12-0 Ogden win. Laurin (3-1-4) picked up a hat trick and Thielemann (1-3-4) also had a four-point game.

PHOENIX KNIGHTS @ SAN DIEGO SABERS **Knights continue their strong play, sweep Sabers**

01.05.18 – Phoenix 6, San Diego 1

01.06.18 – Phoenix 4, San Diego 1

01.07.18 – Phoenix 5, San Diego 2

With three wins in San Diego, the Phoenix Knights extended their winning streak to six games, and moved into a tie for fourth place in the Western Division.

Phoenix jumped out to a 4-0 lead at the end of the first period of Friday's game, and the outcome was never in doubt in a 6-1 Knights win.

Michael Caravella assisted on each of the first three Phoenix goals and Knights netminder Rhett Bruckner stopped 21 of 22 shots.

San Diego stuck with Matt Soldano in net after the rough first period, and he stopped 23 of 25 shots over the final two periods to finished with 40 saves.

Biko Neuenschwander scored the Sabers goal.

Knights leading scorer Anthony Masanotti scored the first and last goals of the game on Saturday as Phoenix posted a 4-1 win. Masanotti also picked up an assist on Joseph Platt's second period goal, and Bruckner was again sharp, turning aside 26 of 27 shots.

Zachary Hale was between the pipes for San Diego and had a strong game, making 38 saves to keep the team in the game until late in the third period when Masanotti's second goal gave the Knights a three-goal lead with 7:39 to go.

Elisha Reese scored for the Sabers.

Three unanswered goals in the second period sparked the Knights to a 5-2 win on Sunday. Five different Phoenix skaters lit the lamp and Bruckner continued his solid play between the pipes, stopping 27 of 29 shots.

Hale made 35 more saves while Michal Kolarik and Ondrej Imrich scored the San Diego goals.

SPRINGFIELD EXPRESS @ DALLAS SNIPERS **Express strong late in games, post sweep**

01.05.18 – Springfield 9, Dallas 4

01.06.18 – Springfield 5, Dallas 4

01.07.18 – Springfield 7, Dallas 3

The Springfield Express managed to take three straight games on the road from division rival Dallas by finishing strong all weekend and pulling away in games that were close into the third period.

Friday's series opener was close through two periods but the Express scored the last five goals of the game to win, 9-4. The Snipers had leads of 1-0 and 3-2, but Stephane Doering's second goal of the game gave Springfield a 5-4 lead with 3:25 left in the second period.

Akos Szigeti and Arkhip Ledenkov each scored twice in the final period for Springfield with Szigeti completing a hat trick.

Doering finished with five points (2-3-5) while Vegard Faret and Nikita Sokov each collected four assists for Springfield.

Karsten Portell had a pair of goals for Dallas.

Chad Purdy (17 saves) entered the Springfield net in the second period and stopped all nine shots he faced in the final frame to preserve the win.

Saturday's game went deep into the third period tied, 4-4, but Dallas put Springfield on the power play with just over four minutes left in regulation and the Express cashed in for the winning goal.

Doering won the faceoff to the right of Dallas netminder Manny Legace and the puck went back to Arkhip Ledenkov at the blue line. He slid it across to Faret and he wired a sharp wrist shot past Legace for what proved to be the winning goal.

The game was tied, 3-3, after 40 minutes. Sokov gave Springfield the lead 5:42 into the frame, but Eric Eaton tied it up for Dallas a little over three minutes later.

Trevor Borlace picked up assists on three of the four Snipers goals.

Legace made 40 saves for Dallas, but it was Springfield's Connor Green (28 saves) who picked up the win.

The Express completed the sweep with a 7-3 win on Sunday. Two goals in the first 3:17 of the second period gave Springfield a 4-0 lead. The Snipers scored three times in the second period to close the gap at 5-3, but the Express responded to quell the comeback attempt.

Seven different players scored for Springfield, including Doering, who had three assists, and Sokov, who had a pair of helpers.

Purdy made 15 saves for the Express. Dallas netminder Rafael Gonclaves was much busier, facing 53 shots and making 46 saves, including 20 in the third period.

SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS @ COLORADO JR. EAGLES

Colorado picks up two important points in Mountain Division race

01.06.18 – Colorado 5, Superior 3

Nikita Sheberov scored three times in the first period for the Superior RoughRiders, but the Colorado Jr. Eagles collected themselves and out-scored Sheberov and the 'Riders, 5-3, Saturday night at NOCO Ice Fort Collins.

In the process, the Jr. Eagles passed the idle Utah Outliers to move into second place in the Mountain Division. The top two teams in the division standings will receive a first-round bye in the Thorne Cup playoffs.

Five different skaters scored for the Jr. Eagles, including Cory Richardson, who also had a pair of assists.

Colorado stuck with veteran goaltender Braden Lajoie after a rough first period and he responded, stopping all 16 shots he faced over the final two periods. He finished with 27 saves.

Marshall Murphy made 31 saves for Superior.

FRESNO MONSTERS @ ONTARIO AVALANCHE
Key, Mannon lead Fresno past Ontario

01.07.18 – Fresno 11, Ontario 4

The Fresno Monsters and Ontario Avalanche eased back into their post-holiday schedule with a single game on Sunday. Cody Key scored three of five Fresno goals in the second period as the Monsters pulled away for an 11-4 win.

Key added a fourth goal in the third period and finished the game with seven points (4-3-7), as did Daylon Mannon (3-4-7).

Fresno's Kyle Franceschini made 23 saves and Nash Dabb scored twice for Ontario.

With the win, the Monsters managed to stay tied with the surging Phoenix Knights for fourth place in the Western Division. Fresno holds five games in hand on Phoenix.

SEATTLE TOTEMS @ WEST SOUND WARRIORS
Rested Totems pick up big win in West Sound

01.07.18 – Seattle 5, West Sound 3

Playing their first game in 17 days, the Seattle Totems went into Bremerton Ice Arena and defeated a West Sound Warriors team playing their third game in as many days.

With the win, Seattle moves to within six points of fourth-place Bellingham with two games in hand on the Blazers. Catching Bellingham and moving up into the fourth spot in the division standings by the end of the regular season would be the difference between playing a best-of-three series on the road or at home in the first round of the playoffs.

The Totems held a 3-2 lead entering the third period, but Michael Shippee gave them a two-goal lead when he scored just 1:55 into the frame.

The Warriors still had some gas in the tank late in the game, and Connor Wherrett scored with 2:05 left in regulation to get the them within a goal, but Daniel Nomerstad replied just nine seconds later to seal the deal for Seattle.

Seattle's Naoki Onodera and West Sound's Brian Eisele each made 24 saves in the game.

--- compiled by Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media