

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.14.18 – MOUNTAIN DIVISION



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

CASPER COYOTES (16-25-0, 32 pts)

www.caspercoyotes.com

@CasperCoyotes

The Casper Coyotes continued their hot play of late, sweeping Mountain Division rivals Cheyenne over the past weekend. The 'Yotes are now 5-2-0 in their last seven games including wins against Colorado and Ogden who sit at the top of the division.

Casper put 64 shots on net in Friday's contest, and Dallen Neese and Bradley Green each scored twice. Goaltender Dylan Ossachuk, who orchestrated the upset wins over the Jr. Eagles and the Mustangs, made 31 saves in the first game win. Ossachuk followed that up with a 35-save shutout on Saturday. New goalie Tomas Svoboda stopped 31 shots on Sunday in his first action with the Coyotes.

Head Coach David Cole has been speaking highly of his team's effort these past few weeks, and added that his players have been sacrificing all year to get to a point where they can compete with the best in the league.

"Jacob Elik has fought through serious injuries all season and continues to lead on and off the ice as a team captain," Cole said. Elik had a goal and three assists over the weekend, bringing his season totals to a 7-20-27 line, leading the team in assists.

Cam Braun's 7-17-24 (1-3-4 against Cheyenne) line on the year underlines the importance he plays on the team, Cole said. "Cam has proven to be a heart-and-soul type player for us, playing larger than his 150-pound frame every night."

Casper has gotten big play from deep down the roster and that can certainly be the root of their recent success. Led by Bradley Green's 25-18-43 and Neese's 14-16-30 lines, the team has plenty of leadership to carry them into the playoffs.

"Brody Surette continues to log big minutes on defense and is showing the maturity expected of a 20-year old," coach Cole said. "Brad Green continues to be on a point-per-game pace and delivers strong performances every night."

Casper will host Utah this weekend in their final home series before traveling to Superior and Oklahoma City to close out the season.

The Coyotes added some goaltending depth at the deadline in the form of former Las Vegas Storm netminder Brooks DiMarino, 18, who had been playing with the Dayton Racers of the USPHL Premier.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (2-46-0, 4 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

Cheyenne closed out the home portion of their 2017-18 WSHL schedule with a three-game set against in-state rivals Casper. The Stampede were swept, but showed some mettle in challenging the Coyotes throughout the weekend.

The Stamps put shots on net, and that's the sign of a spark in a club that has had a down year, but continues to put their best skate forward.

Their three-game total of 96 shots on goal is the most they've had in a three-game set all season, and goalie Robbie Hufnagel made 56 and 53 saves on Friday and Sunday, respectively.

Daniel Yockey stepped in admirably on Saturday, making 56 saves of his own.

Hakan Salt (4-9-13) scored the lone goal on Friday, and Nicholas Lamme (3-3-6), Gavin Miller (3-4-7), and Alec Sara (5-8-13) each scored Sunday.

Nikita Gordeev (2-8-10 in 20 games) added three assists Sunday.

The Stampede will visit Fort Collins, CO this weekend for the final two games of their regular season schedule.

Off the ice, the Stamps will await word on them being named finalists for two rather important awards within their community – Community Service Award and Small Business of the Year. This marks the second year in a row they've been finalists for these two awards and winners will be announced March 16.

COLORADO EAGLES (28-8-6, 62 pts)

www.coloradojunioreagles.com

@COJrEagles

The Colorado Jr. Eagles faced off with the Mid-Western Division's El Paso Rhinos over the weekend, going on the road to play the team with the best record in the league in their barn. This is the second time these two powerhouses met in an inter-division series this season with, unfortunately for Colorado, the same results. El Paso finished the season series winning all six games against the Jr. Eagles.

Cameron Chabot scored the first goal of the weekend – his 5th on the year – midway through the second period Friday, but it was all El Paso from there.

The Jr. Eagles showed the fight that has made them a formidable foe all season on Saturday when, down 2-0 in the 3rd, they refused to sit down. Tom Ignatovich scored a goal and an assist Saturday in his first series with Colorado. His goal sparked the comeback for the Jr. Eagles including Carter Dahl and Dawson Keay potting goals just 30 seconds apart to tie the game at three apiece with five minutes to go in the 3rd.

Dahl (20-20-40) assisted on Ignatovich's and Keay's goals giving him three third-period points. But, El Paso finished off the rally with an OT strike giving the Jr. Eagles just one point on the weekend.

Colorado entered the weekend in a near three-way tie with Ogden and Utah for first place. While Utah were swept by Idaho, the Mustangs took care of business against the RoughRiders and now have a breath at the top of the Mountain Division.

There should be no panic in Fort Collins as the team made some moves last week to bring in some more fire power, including Keay from Valencia and Ignatovich and Tyler Goclan from Seattle. So, El Paso is a tough opponent to have to play with new players, but we've been noting the Jr. Eagles' strength in depth of players and adding those two will only add to their scoring chances.

The new-look Jr. Eagles will play two with Cheyenne and one with Superior this weekend, closing out their home rink for the regular season. It should be a perfect opportunity for the new guys to get some reps with the squad.

It better work as Colorado ends their season against Utah and Ogden meaning the Mountain Division may not be settled till Sunday March 4 in the Beehive State.

Forward Christopher Calabrese and goaltender Anthony Carlier were the players sent the other way to Seattle in the Ignatovich/Goclan deal. Forwards Cameron Tobey and Hudson Kubasek, and defenseman Jacob Yoho, went to Valencia for Keay.

The final move for the Jr. Eagles prior to the deadline was to pick up 19-year-old Nick Lund, a forward who has played in 25 NAHL games over the last three seasons.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (34-10-1, 69 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

With a tight Mountain Division race that started with the drop of the puck this fall, the Ogden Mustangs were the lucky beneficiaries of scheduling as they found themselves playing Superior – a formidable foe to be sure. But with Utah taking on Northwest Division leader Idaho, and Colorado facing off with El Paso, the Mustangs saw an opportunity to take control.

And control they did, sweeping the RoughRiders in three-straight to move into sole possession of first place after Utah's sweep at the hands of Idaho.

Tymen Edekoort took the reigns in the Ogden crease for all three games, making 52 saves in the three-game sweep.

This is the league's best division, with the top three teams having beaten Thorne Cup contenders from other divisions, providing some of the best hockey of the season. Ogden's sweep of the RoughRiders was not a given, but it's an important step for a

Mustang team not accustomed to things being so crowded at the top of the standings.

We've been keeping an eye on Matus Spodniak all season – which isn't hard to do given he's been scoring seemingly at will, earning the first ever direct D-1 commitment in league history. Spods went 3-3-6 on Friday and 1-2-3 on Saturday.

But, it was Sunday that saw all eyes on Spodniak as he sat just four goals from breaking the WSHL all-time goals scored record going into the game. So, what did Spodniak do? He scored four goals in the game's first eight minutes to become the WSHL's all-time goal scorer with 129 goals in 141 games played. Spodniak added a fifth goal to bring his career total to 130.

He's now 15 points shy of the WSHL record for points in a season, set by Chris Bachman who scored 149 points (54-95-149) in 45 games for the Capital Thunder in 2006-07.

His season totals of 64-70-134 already have him at the top of many of the Mustangs' career categories, so he'll look to close out 2017-18 as one of the league's greatest players.

Congrats all around to the Mustang captain.

You can check out photos of Spodniak's goal as well as a video of Ross Bartlett's incredibly pretty goal from Saturday's game at the Mustang Twitter: @OgdenMustangs.

Ogden isn't out of the woods at the top of the division yet. They visit perennial powerhouse Idaho this weekend. It could be up to Ogden to stop the IceCats and make even more room at the top of the Mountain.

The Mustangs will be bringing a souvenir back with them from Idaho – goaltender Shaun Brown who was acquired from the IceCats.

SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS (20-23-0, 40 pts)

www.SuperiorRoughRiders.com

@SPR_RoughRiders

Superior is learning a lot this season and they took a hard lesson this past weekend against Ogden, losing all three games but sticking with the first-place Mustangs through most of the weekend.

Goalie Marshall Murphy made 96 saves in seven-plus periods over the weekend, doing his best to keep the RoughRiders in it.

Nikita Sheberov scored a hat trick on Friday and a playmaker on Saturday, topping the weekend off with a 4-5-9 line against the division's top team. Sheberov now has a 52-39-91 line on the year giving him the best season in franchise history – with teammate Thore Weyrauch's 31-39-70 line not far behind on the list. This is the first season in the North America for both players.

Sheberov needs just one point to top the franchise's all-time points list and he and Weyrauch each need to 12 assists to top that list.

The team is headed in the right direction, being entirely led by rookies and already competing with some of the league's best teams. That's a good sign for a team getting ready for the playoffs in the league's toughest division.

They'll play one with Colorado this weekend, a team they beat in their last meeting just two weeks ago. Then, Superior will close out the regular season with a six-game homestand against Casper then Utah.

The RoughRiders are a team few teams want to face in the playoffs and these last few weeks could go a long way to reinforcing that trend.

UTAH OUTLIERS (32-9-1, 65 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

The Outliers, sitting atop the crowded Mountain Division heading into the weekend, found themselves up against the Idaho IceCats – a team that has made seven straight Thorne Cup Finals, winning five of them.

Utah traded punches with the powerhouse IceCats on Friday, but Idaho proved to be too much the rest of the way. Brandom Krumpshmid (25-33-58) scored two tying goals on Friday before Idaho took the lead just 40 seconds after Krumpshmid's second goal.

Utah goaltending tandem – the best two-fer in the league all season – gave up an uncharacteristic 14 goals in the three games. Dawson Rodin made 74 saves over the three games, giving way to partner Otto Saxin in Sunday's third period.

The 14 goals were the most the team has given up in a three-game series all season. The Outliers only have up five goals twice before this weekend: a 5-6 loss to Ogden in the very first game, and a 4-5 loss to Valencia in Las Vegas.

There probably shouldn't be too much worry in West Valley, as Utah has proven to be one of the league's best teams for the last calendar year. But, in case they were getting too caught up in their first-place ranking, a sweep at the hands of Idaho can go a long way to teaching a team the season isn't over yet.

Head Coach Paul Taylor has been preaching keeping the team focused on the long game – a Thorne Cup Championship – and this could be a turning point for a Utah team still looking to prove it belongs at the top.

They'll try to get back on track against Casper this weekend, then close out their home rink for the regular season in two weeks with Colorado.

The Outliers close out the regular season with Superior and still have plenty of chances to win the Mountain.

Goaltender Cedric Lesieur, a 19-year-old Quebec native who appeared at the Western States Shootout with one of the CPJHL rep teams, was signed by the Outliers.

--- *Tyler Whidden for Harrington Sports Media*