

NORTHWEST DIVISION QUARTERFINAL PREVIEW



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

#5 SEATTLE TOTEMS @ #4 WEST SOUND

Best-of-three series/all games at Bremerton Ice Center – Bremerton, WA

GAME 1 Thursday, March 15 6:30 p.m.

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 8:30 p.m.

GAME 3* Sunday, March 18 7:30 p.m.

**if necessary*

SEASON SERIES

West Sound 7-5-0, 14 points

Seattle 5-4-3, 13 points

September 22 West Sound 5 @ Seattle 4 (OT)

September 23 Seattle 3 @ West Sound 2

October 14 West Sound 1 @ Seattle 3

November 3 Seattle 2 @ West Sound 6

November 4 Seattle 4 @ West Sound 5 (OT)

November 17 Seattle 7 @ West Sound 6
November 18 Seattle 2 @ West Sound 11
December 1 West Sound 9 @ Seattle 4
December 9 West Sound 7 @ Seattle 5
January 7 Seattle 5 @ West Sound 3
January 25 West Sound 4 @ Seattle 3 (OT)
February 11 West Sound 4 @ Seattle 6

PLAYOFF HISTORY

West Sound – West Sound is getting its first taste of the WSHL playoffs but has plenty of experience in the Northern Pacific Hockey League's postseason. Although they missed out on a playoff berth in each of the last two seasons, the Warriors won two division titles in three years, culminating in a Cascade Cup championship during the 2014-15 season.

Seattle – The Totems are in their sixth season in the WSHL but have yet to win a playoff game. They have qualified for the postseason in four of their six years of play but were swept in the first round each time.

WEST SOUND WARRIORS

Head coach: Ty Smith
21-29-1, 4th place – Northwest Division
210 GF / 254 GA

WEST SOUND SPECIAL TEAMS

POWER PLAY 41/237 (17.3%, 17th in WSHL)
PENALTY KILL 170/220 (77.3%, 15th in WSHL – 11 SHG)

KEY PLAYERS

F Harri Koll (34-38-72), F Alec Johnson (19-28-47), F Connor Wherrett (25-20-45), F Samuel Pelech (15-26-41), D Bryce Ebert (14-19-33), D Ethan Cooney (5-10-15), G Brian Eisele (15-18-1/4.42/.865)

SEATTLE TOTEMS

Head coach: Michael Murphy
13-32-6, 5th place – Northwest Division
159 GF / 321 GA

SEATTLE SPECIAL TEAMS

POWER PLAY 50/295 (16.9%, 19th in WSHL)

PENALTY KILL 198/256 (77.3%, 16th in WSHL – 8 SHG)

KEY PLAYERS

F Michael Shippee (30-60-90), F Bogdan Klotchkov (19-16-35 in 24 GP), F Braden Sanchez (6-21-27), F Daniel Nomerstad (12-11-23), D Stephan Jirovec (5-19-24), G Naoki Onodera (4-12-2/5.64/.862)

ANALYSIS

What was one of the better rivalries in the WSHL this season will conclude fittingly with a winner-take-all playoff series. Familiarity breeds contempt and West Sound and Seattle are very familiar with each other, having matched up 12 times this year. The Warriors had the edge (barely) and that projects this to be a very competitive series.

You never know what to expect when the Warriors and Totems play each other. Eight of their 12 games were decided by two goals or fewer and three went to overtime. It's also clear that both teams believe they have the ability to win the series.

"I think the series has been pretty even through the regular season, but as both of us became sellers at the trade deadline it left us both a little short," said Totems Head Coach Michael Murphy. "I expect a close series, with us pulling it out."

Murphy is confident despite all three games being on the road. "We have won several times in Bremerton this year, so we definitely believe we can win in that building," he said.

Neither club boasts much scoring depth, but the top players provide plenty of star power. Hometown hero Michael Shippee broke out for a 90-point (30-60-90) season and brings a veteran presence in the Totems locker room. The 19-year-old has 146 points (47-99-146) over 98 career games with Seattle and will be looking for his first playoff win in a Totems uniform.

For West Sound, forward Harri Koll (34-38-72) has come up big in his second year under head coach Ty Smith. Koll and Smith were both with the Butte Cobras last season and were reunited with the Warriors after the Cobras went dormant. The 6-foot-3, 205-pound Koll has the size and skill that are sought after by coaches and

general managers, and will be highly motivated after posting just two assists over six playoff games last season.

This could end up being one of the better first-round matchups around the league. The winner will likely be the club that best withstands the ups-and-downs that come in the playoffs. On paper, the Warriors and Totems were very similar throughout the regular season. Neither club has a clear advantage, making it one of the more intriguing quarterfinal matchups this year.

--- Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media