

WSHL DIVISION QUARTERFINAL WRAP-UP; March 15 – March 17, 2018



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

All six division quarterfinal series in the Western States Hockey League were completed in two games, but there were some very competitive series around the league – especially in Valencia where the Phoenix Knights became the only lower-seeded team to advance to the next round.

This week's winners will move on to play top-two finishers in the Western, Northwest and Mountain division, which earned bye weeks. The Mid-Western Division also begins their playoffs next week with the division semifinal round.

WESTERN DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES A

#6 San Diego Sabers (5-42-4) at

#3 Fresno Monsters (33-17-1)

GAME 1 Friday, March 16 Fresno 11, San Diego 1

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 Fresno 5, San Diego 1

Fresno wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Ontario

The Fresno Monsters looked like a team that won 28 more games than their division quarterfinal opponents, out-scoring the San Diego Sabers, 16-2, over their two-game sweep.

Fresno went out to a 4-0 lead in the first period of Game One, doubled their lead in the second period, and cruised to an 11-1 win.

WSHL scoring champ Daylon Mannon was held to just two assists, but Daniel Goodwin struck for a hat trick and Nakita Anistratenko (2-2-4) and Zackory Turpin (2-1-3) each scored a pair of goals for the Monsters.

Zach Hale was under siege in the San Diego net all night, making 56 saves, while Kyle Franceschini drew the starting assignment for the Monsters and stopped 25 of 26 shots.

Cody Key scored all five Fresno goals in Saturday's series clincher, a 5-1 Monsters win.

Key gave Fresno a 1-0 lead 7:12 into the game with a great individual effort, making a great toe-drag move and going through four San Diego defenders before finishing up under the bar.

Five minutes later, San Diego's Matt Soldano out-raced two Fresno players to a loose puck in the neutral zone, moved in on Monsters goalie Max Karlenzig and beat him with a wrist shot low to the glove side.

Fresno regained the lead just 40 seconds into the second period. Key took a feed from Mannon from behind the net, and tried to make a goal-mouth pass, but the puck hit the skate of a Sabers defender and ended up in the net to make it 2-1. That ended up being the game-winner. The same scoring line – Key from Mannon and Deivids Tempelmanis was repeated at 13:32, giving Key a hat trick. He added two more goals in the third.

Karlenzig allowed just Soldano's goal on 24 shots.

18-year-old Jeremiah Levitt stood tall in the San Diego crease in his WSHL playoff debut, making 49 of his 65 saves through the final two frames.

WESTERN DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES B

#5 Phoenix Knights (23-26-2) at

#4 Valencia Flyers (25-22-4)

GAME 1 Thursday, March 15 Phoenix 5, Valencia 4 (OT)

GAME 2 Friday, March 25 Phoenix 4, Valencia 3

Phoenix wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Long Beach

The Phoenix Knights may have registered a two-game sweep of the Valencia Flyers, making them the only lower seed to advance to the next round, but there was some great playoff hockey in the series as both games were decided by one goal – Game One in overtime.

The Flyers had leads of 2-0, 3-2 and 4-3, in Thursday's series opener, but were unable to close the game out on their home ice. Knights sniper Anthony Masanotti tied the game up with 4:25 left in regulation, then won it 2:50 into sudden-death.

With the Knights down a goal with under five minutes left in regulation time, Valencia cleared the zone to center ice where Zachary Kowalchuk picked it up along the right-wing boards, backpedaled to his own blue line, then fired a pass diagonally across the neutral zone to Masanotti at the far blue line on the left wing. Masanotti skated in and blasted a slap shot over Everett's glove to tie the game.

Playing five-on-five in overtime for the payoffs, Phoenix forward Michael Caravella corralled a loose puck behind the Valencia net and fed it out to Joseph Platt who immediately sent it over to Masanotti to the left of Flyers goalie Zachary Everett (29 saves). The Knight's 40-goal scorer wasted no time whipping the puck into the net before Everett could get across the crease, giving the Knights a big road win just under three minutes into OT in their playoff opener.

Valencia's Nicholas Hames scored three times in the game – each time giving the Flyers a one-goal lead. Hames only scored one goal in 15 regular season games for Valencia after coming over from El Paso at the beginning of February.

Owen Petten made 30 saves for Phoenix.

It was Masanotti providing the winning goal again on Friday, breaking a 3-3 tie with 7:13 left in regulation. With the Flyers looking for the go-ahead goal on the power play, Phoenix penalty killer Andruis Bermejo dug the puck out of a scrum on the left wing boards and poked it out of the Knights zone. Masanotti took off on a breakaway, gave a shoulder fake, then made a nice move to his forehand to tuck the

puck past the right pad of Valencia goaltender Mack Willy for the shorthanded game-winner.

Petten (25 saves) held the fort the rest of the way and the Knights became the first team in the league to wrap up their quarterfinal series.

The Flyers took a 3-2 lead into the third period, but Joseph Platt scored his second goal of the game at the 1:55 mark to tie things up and set the stage for Masanotti's heroics.

Willy made 30 saves for Valencia.

NORTHWEST DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES C

#6 Southern Oregon Spartans (12-38-1) at

#3 Bellingham Blazers (28-20-3)

GAME 1 Friday, March 16 Bellingham 8, Southern Oregon 2

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 Bellingham 4, Southern Oregon 3

Bellingham wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Tahoe

The Bellingham Blazers tied the Tahoe Icemen for second place in the Northwest Division standings on the final day of the regular season, but lost out on a first-round bye on a tie-breaker. They will now have the opportunity to go head-to-head with Tahoe on the ice, as they advanced to play the Icemen in next week's division semifinal after a two-game series win over the Southern Oregon Spartans.

Bellingham had a four-goal lead by the time Miroslav Smid put the Spartans on the board early in the second period of Game One. The Blazers added three more goals before the end of the period for a 7-1 lead and went on to win by a final score of 8-2.

Ilya Abubakirov (2-3-5) and Ruslav Novruzov (2-1-3) each scored twice for Bellingham, Timothy Prexler dished out three assists, and Kolter Pawlick made 29 saves.

Joel Holmberg scored the other goal for Southern Oregon.

The Spartans got off to a better start in Saturday's Game Two, and it looked like they might be on their way to forcing a third game, but the Blazers rallied from 1-0 and 3-1 deficits to tie the game going into the third period.

Bellingham's Connor Peers scored the only goal of the final frame to give the Blazers a 4-3 win that wrapped up the series.

With the Blazers on the power play six minutes into the third period, Robbie Eichelberger handled the puck at the point, moved it sharply down to Thomas Steven at the side of the net to the left of Spartans netminder Krystof Holub. Steven, in turn, slid a pass across to Peers at the edge of the crease for the tap-in.

Avery Heath (18 saves) and the Blazers kept the Spartans at bay for the final 13:25 of regulation as Southern Oregon managed just three shots on goal in the third period.

Holub stopped 17 of 18 shots in the third period – allowing just Peer's game-winner – and finished the game with 44 saves.

Eichelberger scored twice for Bellingham with each goal tying the game.

NORTHWEST DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES D

#5 Seattle Totems (13-32-6) at

#4 West Sound Warriors (21-29-1)

GAME 1 Thursday, March 15 West Sound 6, Seattle 4

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 West Sound 7, Seattle 3

West Sound wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Idaho

The Seattle Totems put up a fight in Bremerton, but the West Sound Warriors won their Northwest Division Quarterfinal series in two games. The Warriors will go on the road next to face the division's regular season champion, the Idaho IceCats, in the next round.

West Sound had leads of 2-0 and 4-2 in Game One on Thursday, but the Totems came back to tie both times. Dmitri Munirov's second goal of the game, however, with 4:08 left in regulation, proved to be the winner. Connor Wherrett sealed the deal by hitting the empty net from inside his own blue line with :08 left to make it a 6-4 final in favor of the Warriors.

The Warriors jumped out to a quick 2-0 lead in the first 4:04 of the game. The Totems had a prime opportunity to get back in it when a five-minute major and a minor gave them a five-minute power play – the first two minutes of it a two-man advantage. Despite controlling the puck in the West Sound end for almost two

minutes straight, Seattle could not convert – and was not able to score in the remaining three minutes of five-on-four either – but Bogden Klochkov got them on the board with 4:48 left in the period, taking a feed from a cycling Michael Shippee in the right circle and beating Brennan low to the stick side.

Brennan had a busy first period, facing 19 shots and stopping 18 of them. He made 33 of his 40 saves in the first two periods.

The Seattle power play went to work again early in the second period and Michael Shippee cashed in on a rebound to tie the game, 2-2, at the 4:01 mark. Shippee took the puck to the slot where the play was broken up, but the West Sound clearing attempt ended up on the stick of Klochkov who fired a low shot on net. Brennan made the initial save, but Shippee banged it home.

With the score tied, 4-4, late in the third period, Seattle took a boarding penalty and West Sound went on a power play. On the ensuing faceoff, Wherrett drew the puck back to Munirov and he walked the blue line for a few strides, then fired a slap shot that made its way through a maze of sticks and legs and into the net for the deciding goal.

Wyatt Monear made 24 saves for the Totems.

The Warriors closed out the series with a 7-3 win on Saturday night.

MOUNTAIN DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES E

#6 Cheyenne Stampede (2-48-0) at

#3 Colorado Jr. Eagles (32-12-7)

GAME 1 Friday, March 16 Colorado 12, Cheyenne 1

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 Colorado 9, Cheyenne 1

Colorado wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Ogden

The heavily-favored Colorado Jr. Eagles took care of business in their first-round series, eliminating the Cheyenne Stampede in two games, and setting up a much-anticipated Mountain Division Semifinal series with the Ogden Mustangs for next weekend.

Colorado scored five times in each of the first two periods and opened the series with an 11-1 win on Friday. Michael Petrotto, Nick Lund and Cory Richardson each

scored twice in the game for the Jr. Eagles. Evgenii Bastrakov scored the Cheyenne goal in the second period.

Richardson also collected five assists in the game.

Robbie Hufnagel went the distance in goal for the Stampede, making 76 saves – including 31 on 33 shots in the third period.

The Jr. Eagles moved on to the next round with a 9-1 win on Saturday. Dawson Keay scored a hat trick, picking up his third goal of the game with 1:45 left in the third period.

Nicholas Lamme scored the Cheyenne goal late in the second period and Daniel Yockey made 48 saves for the Stampede – 20 of them in the first period alone.

Colorado's Braden Lajoie faced just 11 shots, making 10 saves.

MOUNTAIN DIVISION QUARTERFINAL – SERIES F

#5 Casper Coyotes (16-35-0) at

#4 Superior RoughRiders (25-25-1)

GAME 1 Friday, March 16 Superior 5, Casper 3

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 Superior 4, Casper 1

Superior wins series, 2 games to 0; advances to play Utah

The Superior RoughRiders and Casper Coyotes engaged in a competitive division quarterfinal series with the RoughRiders coming out on top in front of their home fans in two games.

Superior had a 3-1 lead going into the second period of Game One on Friday, but the Coyotes scored two goals in the first 4:24 of the second to tie the game.

Casper's Hamish Campbell out-raced the field down the ice to negate an icing call, circled behind the Superior net, around the outside of the right wing circle to the high slot, where he sent a wrist shot on net that snuck through the pads of 'Riders goalie Marshall Murphy with Dallen Neese creating traffic in front.

Less than a minute later, Superior took a tripping call and the Coyotes went on the power play. Jacob Elik handled the puck on the left wing boards, sliding it back to Brody Surette at the blue line and he whipped a pass across to David Pokorny at the

top of the right circle. Pokorny shuffled in a few strides and fired a puck through a screen, past Murphy, to knot the score at 3-3.

With Superior skating on a four-on-three power play midway through the second period there was a scrum around the Casper net. The puck was poked out of the crowd to Nikita Sheberov in front and the 64-goal scorer cradled the puck patiently for a second, allowing an opening to present itself before burying the shot. It was Sheberov's second goal of the game and proved to be the game-winner.

Later in the period, with Casper on the power play, Austin Tautfest broke up a play just inside the Superior blue line and cleared the puck down to the Casper zone. He then chased down the Coyotes puck carrier as he went back to retrieve the puck, stole it, and took it to the net hard. Tautfest crashed into Casper netminder Dylan Ossachuk. The puck ended up in the net but, instead of counting it, the 'Riders were awarded a penalty shot.

Thore Weyrauch converted the penalty shot, skating in slowly, faking a move to his backhand, then swooping back to his forehand and tucking it past Ossachuk.

Casper pressed in the third period, out-shooting Superior 11-6, but neither team was able to score and the RoughRiders held on for the 5-3 win.

Murphy was strong in the Superior net, making 32 saves, including all 11 shots sent his way in the third period to preserve the win.

Casper head coach David Cole turned to Brooks Dimarino in the third period and he stopped all six shots he faced. Ossachuk made 15 saves through two periods.

The RoughRiders scored the only goal of the first period in Game Two. Jeff Bishop kept a puck in at the blue line with his skate and it ricocheted towards the Casper net. Weyrauch was the first one there. He made a quick move like he was going to shoot, then slid the puck across to Tautfest who had to just tap it across the goal line for a 1-0 Superior lead at 6:45.

Superior scored the only goal of the second period as well, as the two teams continued to engage in tight-checking playoff hockey. Chase Taleghani doubled the Superior lead at the 4:08 mark of the second. The right-handed shooter carried the puck over the Casper blue line at the left wing boards, cut to the middle of the ice through a crowd of Coyotes defenders, and ripped a wrist shot past Dimarino from

between the circles. Dimarino stopped 27 of 29 shots through the first two periods and finished the game with 37 saves.

Casper finally got on the board at the 7:11 mark of the third period. Campbell hustled in on the forecheck, separated the Superior defenseman from the puck behind the net, then moved to the front and backhanded the puck past Marshall before the RoughRiders defense could react to the turnover.

Eight and a half minutes into the third period, 'Riders defenseman Vladimir Tcykalo showed some impressive skating through the neutral zone and into the Coyotes end. There was a play broken up in front of the Casper net, but Tcykalo got a stick on it and nudged it into the net to restore Superior's two-goal lead.

Less than a minute later, a great individual move by Sheberov put the game out of reach. He cut around the net on his forehand and tucked in a wrap-around to make it 4-1 Superior.

Murphy made 25 saves on 26 shots.

--- compiled by Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media