

# WSHL MOUNTAIN DIVISION QUARTERFINAL PREVIEW



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

## **#5 CASPER COYOTES @ #4 SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS**

Best-of-three series/Sport Stable – Superior, CO

GAME 1 Friday, March 16 7:15 p.m.

GAME 2 Saturday, March 17 7:30 p.m.

GAME 3\* Sunday, March 18 1:30 p.m.

*\*if necessary*

### **SEASON SERIES**

Superior 6-0-0, 0 points

Casper 0-6-0, 0 points

September 29 Superior 5 @ Casper 1

September 30 Superior 6 @ Casper 4

February 22 Casper 2 @ Superior 5 (played as a Casper home game)

February 23 Casper 3 @ Superior 7

February 24 Casper 3 @ Superior 4

February 25 Casper 3 @ Superior 6

## **PREVIOUS PLAYOFF MEETINGS**

This is the first time these two teams have met in the post-season.

## **PLAYOFF HISTORY**

Superior – This franchise has played post-season hockey every season since their inception as the Colorado Outlaws in 2007-08. Since 2010, they have won six playoff series, but their division quarterfinal win over the Salt Lake City Moose in 2016 was the only series win in the last four years. The 2010 team (as the Boulder Bison) came up one game short of a Thorne Cup championship, losing in a third and deciding game to the Phoenix Polar Bears.

Casper – The Coyotes have won a post-season series in two of their first three seasons in the WSHL. They defeated Cheyenne last season then forced a third and deciding game, but were eliminated, by the Ogden Mustangs in the division semifinal.

## **SUPERIOR ROUGHRIDERS**

Head coach: Paul DePuydt

25-25-1, fourth place – Mountain Division

213 GF / 211 GA

## **SUPERIOR SPECIAL TEAMS**

POWER PLAY 48/229 (21.0%, 13th in WSHL)

PENALTY KILL 38/202 (81.2%, 10th in WSHL – 5 SHG)

## **KEY PLAYERS**

F Nikita Sheberov (64-42-106), Thore Weyrauch (36-46-82), D Erik Buschmann (9-32-41), F David Waterman (7-8-15 in 15 GP), G Marshall Murphy (11-18-0/4.05/.891)

## **CASPER COYOTES**

Head coach: David Cole

16-35-0, fifth place – Mountain Division

151 GF / 278 GA

## **CASPER SPECIAL TEAMS**

POWER PLAY 24/213 (11.3%, 22nd in WSHL)

PENALTY KILL 63/233 (73.0%, 19th in WSHL – 8 SHG)

## **KEY PLAYERS**

F Bradley Green (27-21-48), F Dallen Neese (14-17-31), F Lindros Beard (12-14-26/171 PIM), D Brody Surette (6-9-15/114 PIM), G Dylan Ossachuk (7-19-0/5.50/.887)

## **ANALYSIS**

The Superior RoughRiders swept their season series against the Casper Coyotes, but four of the six games were played just three weeks ago and were competitive. Most

of the talk in the Mountain Division has been about the three-team race at the top, meaning the RoughRiders and Coyotes have been often overshadowed. This series presents a chance for one of them to win a challenging series and pick up some momentum going into a division semifinal series – most likely against top-seeded Utah.

"The Mountain Division has been a grind all season," said Superior head coach Paul DePuydt. "We know that Casper is a very good opponent despite us winning all six games during the regular season. The intensity level in the playoffs certainly heightens and you definitely can't take any opponent lightly."

Any team with an elite goaltender is a candidate to pull off an upset and Casper's Dylan Ossachuk – although his numbers might not show it – has been one of the best in the league in the second half. Ossachuk put together some pretty impressive performances, among them stopping 88 of 91 shots against Ogden. He also had 69- and 65-save performances and, all totaled, had eight games of 50+ saves. Superior's Marshall Murphy has been no slouch either, and stopped 71 of 76 shots (.934) in a pair of wins over the Coyotes in February.

The Superior offense has been largely driven by two players: 64-goal scorer Nikita Sheberov and linemate Thore Weyrauch (36-46-82). That's two more elite offensive players than Casper has. Sheberov, in particular, has the ability to change a game himself. In a series like this he could make the difference himself. David Waterman, who played half the season in Superior last year, has been a point-per-game player since re-joining the club in late January.

Superior holds a clear advantage on both special teams based on regular season data – although the Coyotes scored more shorthanded goals (8), they are not a huge threat in that department.

Home ice advantage also goes to Superior in this one but, with the Coyotes having spent 4-5 days there recently, they should be reasonably comfortable in their setting for this series.

"We respect them as a very formidable opponent and we will need to be at our best to advance to the next round," said DePuydt. "We have to stay focused on the task at hand and compete hard every shift."

--- *Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media*