

2018 THORNE CUP PREVIEW: OGDEN MUSTANGS



Photo provided by: Ogden Mustangs

OGDEN MUSTANGS

Head coach: Jake Laime

38-12-1, second place - Mountain Division

Won Mountain Division playoffs

HOW THEY GOT HERE

Earned a first-round bye

Defeated Colorado Jr. Eagles, 2 games to 1, in Mountain Division Semifinals

Defeated Utah Outliers, 2 games to 0, in Mountain Division Final

THORNE CUP SCHEDULE

Wednesday April 11; 10:00 am vs. Utah Outliers

Thursday April 12; 2:00 pm vs. Long Beach Bombers

Friday April 13; 2:00 pm vs Oklahoma City Blazers

AGAINST THE FIELD (9-9-1)

vs. El Paso 0-1-0; 4-2 loss at showcase

vs. OKC 0-1-0; 3-2 loss at showcase

vs. Utah 6-5-0

vs. Idaho 3-2-1

Did not play Long Beach

THORNE CUP HISTORY

This is the third appearance at the Thorne Cup Final for the Mustangs. They also won the Mountain Division playoffs in 2014 and hosted the event last season. They won their first game in the 2014 round-robin but lost the last two and failed to qualify for the semifinals. They won their first three games last year before losing to the eventual champion Wichita Jr. Thunder, 4-2, in the semis.

OUTLOOK

The Ogden Mustangs played a competitive nine-game season series against the Utah Outliers, then bested them in the division final. Utah grabbed the wild card spot, however, and now the rivals find themselves facing off again in the first game of the 2018 Thorne Cup Final - their 12th meeting of the year.

Ogden has won their last three games against the Outliers in overtime. Head coach Jake Laime was asked if facing a familiar opponent in the tournament opener was an advantage.

“I’m not sure there are any advantages at this point in the season,” Laime said.

“Every team here is here because they’ve proven they can play with and beat the best in the league.”

But the veteran coach knows enough about the Outliers to expect a high-intensity tilt Wednesday morning in the kickoff game for the event.

“We will hopefully take the momentum from the division championship and ride it through the round robin,” he said. “Utah is a good team that I am sure will come out hard.”

This will be the third Thorne Cup appearance for Laime and the Mustangs, who hosted the event last season. Having been through the process before, the veteran coach adjusted the routine for his club this week.

“We have kept our practices short, pointed, and have tried to have some fun,” said Laime. “Keeping moral and health high has been our primary focus.”

The Mustangs have a high-octane trio of forwards who all surpassed the 100-point mark on the season, including 69-goal scorer Matus Spodniak, who just missed out on the WSHL scoring title.

Ogden's eggs are not all in one basket either, as they boast seven more players with 20+ goals or 40+ points after the Spodniak-Jacob Laurin-Ross Bartlett line.

All six teams arrive in El Paso following a 10-day layoff, but the Mustangs are still hoping to leverage the extra rest.

"Strength, Conditioning, and Regeneration is a staple to our program," said Laime. "I believe we get stronger as the game goes on. We are hoping it benefits us down the stretch."

WSHL teams are used to playing three-in-threes during the regular season but, not only is the competition turned up a notch with the top six teams in the league participating in the tournament, the winner will have to play five games in five days.

"Five games in five days is a lot of hockey and sometimes the best team isn't rewarded," Laime observed. "We have put together a pretty well-rounded team and look forward to the challenge ahead."

Tymen Edelkoort III started 17 games in a row in the Ogden crease, but it was Jonathan Chin between the pipes for Game Two of the division final. He showed no signs of rust, stopping 37 of 38 shots in the OT series-clinching win. So Laime knows he has two goaltenders he can rely on to get the team through the grueling stretch.

The Mustangs have seen plenty of Utah and Idaho this season, and faced El Paso and Oklahoma City at the Western States Shootout in December, so Laime has a pretty good feel for the six-team field. He knows that each opponent presents a unique challenge - and that may be different from the challenge posed in previous tournaments - so he feels having played in the Thorne Cup twice before is not as much of an advantage as it may seem on paper.

"Every team is different with each having their own identity," he said. "I haven't shared too much in regards to experience for this reason.

Still, Laime is confident his team is prepared and up to the challenge this week in El Paso.

“All year we have stressed discipline and being true to who we are and what we represent. If we can continue to play a 200-foot game with urgency and discipline, we like our chances.”

--- *Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media*