

2018 THORNE CUP PREVIEW: UTAH OUTLIERS



Photo provided by: Mark Mauno

UTAH OUTLIERS

Head coach: Paul Taylor

39-11-1, first place - Mountain Division

Qualified for Thorne Cup as the wild card entry

HOW THEY GOT HERE

Earned a first-round bye

Defeated Superior RoughRiders, 2 games to 1, in Mountain Division Semifinals

Lost to Ogden Mustangs, 2 games to 0, in Mountain Division Final

THORNE CUP SCHEDULE

Wednesday April 11; 10:00 am vs. Ogden Mustangs

Thursday April 12; 10:00 am vs. Idaho IceCats

Friday April 13; 7:00 pm vs. El Paso Rhinos

AGAINST THE FIELD (7-6-3)

vs. OKC 1-0-0; 3-0 win at showcase

vs. Long Beach 1-0-0; 6-3 win at showcase

vs. Ogden 5-3-3; 3 straight OT losses to Mustangs

vs. Idaho 0-3-0

Did not play El Paso

THORNE CUP HISTORY

This is the first appearance at the Thorne Cup Final for the franchise.

OUTLOOK

Head coach Paul Taylor has guided the Utah Outliers to their first Thorne Cup appearance. The team came out on top in what was a grueling, season long, three-team race for the top spot in the Mountain Division before losing to Ogden in the finals of the divisional playoffs.

"Our team is excited to compete at the Thorne Cup," Taylor said. "I like how we have been playing and competing."

The Outliers have played seven one-goal games since February 25, with five of them going to overtime, including both games in the Mountain Division Final against Ogden.

Taylor sees the tight games his team has played of late as an advantage heading into the Thorne Cup.

"I think playing in close games has been a good thing for our team," he said. "When it comes to playoff hockey the games are usually always close so we need to be comfortable playing in one-goal games."

Old friends Utah and Ogden square off again on the first day of round-robin play. With the last two games of the opening round of playing coming against El Paso and Idaho (combined record of 93-5-4), it is essential that Taylor and the Outliers get off to a good start, but Taylor hopes his club can keep that sense of urgency throughout the event.

"We will look at every game at the Thorne Cup as a 'must-win' for our group," he said. "There are no easy games on our round-robin schedule and we are looking forward to the challenge."

Utah scored 290 goals during the regular season. Long Beach is the only team that scored fewer goals (263) and managed to still be playing in April. The Outliers only scored 11 goals in their first five playoff games.

"The first two playoff series we generated some good chances but failed to score much," said Taylor. "We will need to be better in that area in El Paso and find the back of the net."

Jacob Wanstrom (23-43-66) and Brandon Krumpschmid (28-38-66) were the top individual scorers for a team that will need to light the lamp more consistently if they are to advance at the Thorne Cup.

"I like the fact that we have a balanced offense and that different players are capable of stepping up and scoring big goals for us," said Taylor. "I think it is harder for opponents to shut us down compared to if we had one or two players carrying us offensively."

--- *Scott Harrington/Harrington Sports Media*