

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 11.27.18 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



DALLAS SNIPERS (8-6-1-0, 26 pts.)
@DallasSnipers

The Dallas Snipers will get one more week off before traveling to El Paso for a three-game series against the Rhinos, the defending Thorne Cup champions.

El Paso has yet to lose in regulation on home ice, winning seven games while posting just one loss in overtime.

After taking on the Rhinos, Dallas will wrap up its first-half schedule with a three-game set at home against last-place Wichita before traveling to Las Vegas for the WSHL Showcase.

“I think we have a ton to improve on over the next few weeks before the Showcase hits,” said Snipers Head Coach Aaron Davis. “I like parts of our game and I don’t like other parts. If we can clean some things up, we will be in much better shape.”

Goaltender Alexander Aleshkin has done well covering some of the areas where Dallas has struggled and is one of the central reasons why the club sits two games above .500.

Aleshkin, only 17, has a 2.34/.932 slash line to go along with a 5-2-0-0 record this season. The young Russian has been the backbone of the Snipers' defensive effort.

"Alexander has been a great addition to our team," Davis said. "He has stepped in as a number one goalie and surprised us all. He is very calm under pressure and always focused."

EL PASO RHINOS (11-3-2-2, 39 pts.)

@El_Paso_Rhinos

After a hard-fought three-game sweep over Northern Colorado, the El Paso Rhinos have reclaimed the top spot in the Mid-Western Division, one point ahead of second-place Oklahoma City.

The Rhinos opened the weekend with wins of 6-2 and 4-1 before taking a dramatic series finale in a 2-1 victory that required a shootout.

Forward Martin Dubsy (9-8-17) netted the game-winner in the shootout, beating Eagles netminder Marshall Murphy on a quick shot inside the near post.

Rhinos goaltender Nils Velm has drawn most of the ice time between the Rhinos' pipes. The German rookie owns a sparkling .934 save percentage, fifthbest in the WSHL, and has compiled a 10-2-1 record. His 10 wins are tied for second-most in the league.

The Rhinos have a big divisional showdown this weekend against Oklahoma City. The winner of the series will likely take over first place in the Mid-Western Division.

After that, El Paso will host Dallas in a three-game set before playing a pair of games in Valencia against the Flyers the following weekend and wrapping up their first-half schedule with a matchup against the Ontario Avalanche.

NORTHERN COLORADO EAGLES (8-9-0-2, 26 pts.)

@NoCoEagles

In any other division, the Northern Colorado Eagles would probably be a top-two team. But the difficulty and depth of the Mid-Western Division has resulted in a below-.500 record as the calendar flips to December.

The Eagles have been tasked with series against the Ogden Mustangs, Oklahoma City, and El Paso (twice) Ogden currently boasts the best record in the WSHL at 19-1-0-1, good for 58 points.

Oklahoma City and El Paso have a combined plus-90 goal differential and are battling it out at the top of the Mid-Western. All in all, staying close to .500 is an accomplishment when you consider the difficulty of Northern Colorado's schedule.

Over the next couple of weeks, the Eagles will take on a couple of Mountain Division foes that they faced frequently last season. After a pair of games this weekend against the Cheyenne Stampede and Steamboat Wranglers, Northern Colorado will travel to Utah for three games against the Outliers.

From December 14 to 16, the Eagles will play another series against Oklahoma City to close out their first-half schedule prior to the Western States Shootout.

OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (12-2-1-0, 38 pts.)
@OKCBlazersWSHL

Coming off a mammoth series win over Ogden, the Oklahoma City Blazers are set to host division-leading El Paso this weekend with a chance to reclaim the top spot in the Mid-Western.

Every game against Ogden was decided by one goal. The Blazers won the final game of the weekend in dramatic fashion, earning a 4-3 victory in overtime.

"As I stated last week, every game you play against a top team you want to do well," said Blazers General Manager and Head Coach Gary Gill. "Ogden is a top team and one we all have respect for. With that said, we played three hard-fought games and I was proud of the way we played, but I still don't feel like we've played 60 minutes of hockey."

Gill was quick to downplay the notion that his club established itself as the team to beat in the WSHL after handing Ogden its first two losses.

“All we proved last week was that we have a good team. There is still a long way to go. We do hope that we can continue to grow and build off of what we have done as a team so far.”

The Blazers are one point behind the Rhinos, but they have three games in hand. Posting another series win this week would allow OKC to take back first place and maintain its games in hand.

“We will play our game and we will not change anything that we do,” Gill continued. “The focus we have is we will continue to do what we’re doing.”

WICHITA JR. THUNDER (2-12-0-1, 7 pts.)

@JrThunderHockey

The Wichita Jr. Thunder have fought hard all season but hadn’t been rewarded in the win column. That changed over the weekend when Wichita took two of three games from the visiting Steamboat Wranglers.

The Wranglers, members of the Mountain Division, are ahead of the Casper Bobcats and Cheyenne Stampede, but they are well behind both Ogden and Utah.

The two teams split the first couple of game in the weekend series before the Jr. Thunder rallied from a 5-3 third-period deficit in the final contest to claim a comeback win.

“The team has been played well, we just didn’t earn our bounces yet,” said Jr. Thunder General Manager and Head Coach Rob Weingartner. “I think we have a competitive group that is getting better every series.

“As a team, we thought we could have had a couple more wins by now but also realize the strength of our division. We had a very exciting series against Steamboat and the game could have gone either way. We were happy to pull out a couple of wins and look forward to continued improvement and consistency.”

The Jr. Thunder have three more winnable games coming up this weekend as they host Casper at Wichita Ice Center. The homestand will conclude next weekend with a three-game series against Oklahoma City.

---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media