

## WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 12.31.18 – MID-WESTERN DIVISION



*WSHL standings are expressed W-L-OTW-OTL (“W” and “L” represent regulation wins and losses; shootouts are included in overtime results). Three points are awarded for a regulation win, two for an overtime win and one for an overtime loss.*

**DALLAS SNIPERS (13-10-1-0, 41 pts.)**

**@DallasSnipers**

Heading into the annual Western States Shootout the week before Christmas, the Dallas Snipers were coming off a narrow defeat against the last-place Wichita Jr. Thunder. Dallas responded well to the 8-7 loss, sweeping their slate of games in Las Vegas.

The Snipers kicked things off with a 4-3 win over the CPJHL Red Team. In the victory, Dallas opened up a three-goal lead and held off a rally attempt to start their time in Vegas on a positive note.

The next day, Dallas had to set their alarms for an early 7:45 a.m. start against West Sound. The Admirals scored four times within a span of three minutes early in the

game, but two second-half goals from Alexander Heiskanen propelled the Snipers to a comeback 7-5 win.

The Snipers completed their perfect showcase with a 4-1 triumph over Valencia on the third and final day of the event. Four different players scored for Dallas and goaltender Alexander Aleshkin stopped 29 of the 30 shots he faced to cap off a successful week for the Snipers.

The Snipers remain firmly in fourth place in the top-heavy Mid-Western Division. Dallas is six points behind third-place Northern Colorado but holds a sizeable 18-point lead over cellar-dwelling Wichita.

Dallas currently holds the longest winning streak in the division at three games in a row. The Snipers will try to continue that streak this weekend when they play host to the Cheyenne Stampede in a three-game set.

### **EL PASO RHINOS (20-6-2-2, 66 pts.)**

**@El\_Paso\_Rhinos**

As one of the top teams in the WSHL, the El Paso Rhinos had a difficult schedule lined up for them as they made the 11-hour bus ride to Las Vegas.

The Rhinos were tasked with taking on three division leaders in the Edson Aeros, Ogden Mustangs, and Bellingham Blazers. All in all, it was a successful showing for the defending Thorne Cup champions as they took two of their three games.

El Paso opened the showcase with an eight-goal outburst in a win over Edson. The Aeros held leads of 3-0 and 4-1, but El Paso scored four times within a span of 5:46 to take a lead that it would not relinquish.

The following day, the Rhinos were involved in one of the more anticipated matchups of the day against league-leading Ogden. El Paso came up a bit short, though, as it fell by a score of 5-3.

El Paso responded to the defeat with a 4-0 shutout victory over Bellingham on the final day of the showcase. Nils Velm posted a 19-save shutout while John Erramousepe scored a pair of goals.

Erramousepe made quite an impression on any scouts in attendance at the showcase, racking up four goals and an assist and taking over as El Paso's leading scorer.

Additionally, Justin Cole-Dubecky (2-4-6) and Adam Stalzer (2-4-6) were heavily involved in the Rhinos' offensive effort.

El Paso holds a four-point edge over Oklahoma City for first place in the Mid-Western Division. The second half of the season figures to be an entertaining back-and-forth battle as the two clubs battle for divisional supremacy, starting with a three-game series in OKC from January 11-13.

### **NORTHERN COLORADO EAGLES (15-12-0-2, 47 pts.)**

#### **@NoCoEagles**

The Northern Colorado Eagles won two of three games at the WSHL Showcase and maintained their above-.500 record as the club heads into the second half of the campaign.

The Eagles have been a difficult team to figure out, partly due to their grueling schedule. Northern Colorado had back-to-back series against the Utah Outliers and Oklahoma City prior to the showcase, which is just another tough stretch in an up-and-down season for Northern Colorado.

To their credit, the Eagles were competitive in every game against Utah and OKC as they won three of the five matchups, including a 3-2 win over the Blazers three days before their first game in Las Vegas.

At the showcase, Northern Colorado took down Seattle 7-3 before defeating the Hinton Wildcats 8-2 in a lopsided affair. The Eagles wrapped up their showcase with a 6-3 loss to the Long Beach Bombers.

Northern Colorado will head into the new year with a relatively deep roster that is led by four 20-point scorers in Jacob Elik (7-23-30), Nikita Sheberov (15-14-29), Mark Revniaga (11-17-28), and Michael Petrotto (8-17-25).

Between the pipes, veteran Marshall Murphy has drawn the majority of playing time with over 1,200 minutes spent in the Eagles' crease. Murphy has a solid 2.86 goals-against average to go along with his .914 save percentage, respectable numbers for a workhorse netminder.

Northern Colorado is off this weekend, giving the club an extended holiday break. The team is back in action next weekend with a three-game series on the road against Wichita.

**OKLAHOMA CITY BLAZERS (20-5-1-0, 62 pts.)**

**@OKCBlazersWSHL**

The Oklahoma City Blazers remain one of the favorites for the Thorne Cup after winning two of their three games in Las Vegas and coming up just short of a third victory at the WSHL Showcase.

The Blazers kicked things off with a 5-3 win over Bellingham before blowing out the Fresno Monsters by a 10-2 score the next day.

Oklahoma City played in one of the more entertaining heavyweight matchups on the final day of the showcase, falling to Long Beach by a 2-1 final. The Bombers broke a 1-1 tie at 18:58 of the first period and held on for the final 31:02 for a dramatic win.

The Blazers held a 38-23 shots on goal advantage against Long Beach but ran into a hot goaltender in Bombers' veteran Domenic Bosetti.

Oklahoma City has a pivotal series coming up at home next weekend against El Paso, which it trails by four points for the top spot in the Mid-Western Division. OKC currently has four games in hand on the Rhinos, an edge that it will maintain at the conclusion of next weekend's series.

After that, the Blazers will play host to Dallas for three games before closing out the month of January with a trio of games on the road against Northern Colorado.

**WICHITA JR. THUNDER (7-18-0-2, 23 pts.)**

**@JrThunderHockey**

Slowly but surely, the Wichita Jr. Thunder are turning their season around after a slow start that saw them lose their first 12 games of the season.

Since that poor start, the Jr. Thunder have been hovering around a .500 record, much better than they fared early in the year.

Wichita played well at the WSHL Showcase, winning its first two games before falling in overtime in their final contest.

The Jr. Thunder earned wins of 5-2 and 4-2 over the Cold Lake Wings and CPJHL Red squad, respectively. In the overtime loss, Wichita rallied from a 2-0 deficit against Cheyenne before coming up just short in the overtime period.

All in all, it was a pretty good showing from a Jr. Thunder team that looked to be dead in the water around Thanksgiving. Wichita has certainly showed notable improvement since the beginning of the season.

The Jr. Thunder will have a couple of good measuring stick series against Northern Colorado and El Paso at home to open the second half. They have yet to play Northern Colorado this season, but Wichita was swept by El Paso back on October 26-28.

*---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media*