

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.21.19 – MOUNTAIN 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.

CASPER BOBCATS (15-26-1-0, 47 pts)

www.casperbobcats.com

@BobcatsCasper

First the bad news...the Casper Bobcats lost two of three games last week at home against the Mid-Western Division’s fifth-place team the Wichita Jr. Thunder.

The good news is twofold, however. One, the three points the Bobcats picked up for winning the middle game of the series was enough to guarantee they will hold off the Steamboat Wranglers for the #3 seed in the Mountain Division playoffs and, two, the Bobcats got to play in three intense one-goal games – a perfect tune-up for the upcoming Thorne Cup playoffs.

On Saturday, Bobcats goalie Ludwig Nordqvist (38 saves) stopped all 18 shots he faced in the third period to preserve the 3-2 win.

Steven Olik's second goal of the game with just under five minutes to play was the game-winner. With Casper on the power play, Trevor Roehrig held the puck on the left boards then hit Olik with a pass. As he was cross-checked to the ice, Olik slapped the puck on net and it found its way in for the deciding goal.

On Sunday Henry Deenee made 43 saves for the Bobcats, and for 55:17 of the game could not be beaten, but the Jr. Thunder scored four goals in a span of 4:43 early in the second period and went on to win, 4-3.

Joel Rothman scored twice for the Bobcats.

Casper, which held leads in both of their losses last weekend, still has nine regular season games remaining. The Bobcats play three-game series on the road this weekend at Cheyenne and next weekend at Oklahoma City before closing out the regular season with a playoff preview against the Utah Outliers at Casper Ice Arena March 8-10.

The Bobcats will travel to Utah to play the Outliers in a best-of-three Mountain Division Semifinal series later in March.

CHEYENNE STAMPEDE (5-36-2-2, 21 pts)

www.cheyennestampede.com

@StampsHockey

With the possibility of hosting a playoff series still within their reach, the Cheyenne Stampede host the Casper Bobcats for a three-game series this weekend at Cheyenne Ice and Events Center.

They are the final three games on the home schedule for the Stampede this season but, if they are able to overcome a seven-point deficit to the Steamboat Wranglers over the final three weeks of the regular season, Cheyenne could host a first-round playoff series between the two clubs. It is a tall order, however, as the Stamps will be in Ogden to play the league-leading Mustangs for their final three games next week.

Steamboat is off this week, then plays their final six games against the Utah Outliers and Ogden. Points will be hard to come by for the Wranglers but the Stamps still need to make their move this week against the Bobcats. A three-game sweep of Casper would see Cheyenne jump over Steamboat and give them

a shot at hosting the Wranglers in a best-of-three series in the first round of the Thorne Cup playoffs.

Should they fall short, the Stamps will still play the Wranglers in a first round series, but it will have to travel to Steamboat.

Casper is already locked into the third position in the Mountain Division standings. Steamboat cannot catch them, but they cannot catch Utah.

The Stampede dropped three games to the Bobcats at Casper Ice Arena January 18-20, but Casper just squeaked by in the second and third game of that series, winning both by a score of 3-2.

OGDEN MUSTANGS (39-2-0-2, 119 pts)

www.ogdenmustangs.com

@OgdenMustangs

The Ogden Mustangs wrap up a challenging seven-game stretch this weekend with a home-and-home series against the Utah Outliers. The seven-game span started with a pair of games in Utah two weeks ago and continued with a three-game home series against Long Beach last week.

The Mustangs are 3-1-0-1 through the first five games with two of the three wins coming by a single goal – both against the Bombers last week.

The home-and-home with the Outliers, which opens up Friday night at The Ice Sheet, is the latest chance to go up against the team directly behind them in the Mountain Division standings and the most likely to play them for the division championship (on paper – there's a lot of hockey to play before that).

The Outliers defeated the Mustangs, 3-2 in a shootout, on February 1 and Ogden would no doubt like to erase that positive memory from their mind this weekend.

Rhett Rampinelli became the third WSHL player this season – behind Edson Aeros Sebastian Heden and Emil Johansson – to hit the 100-point mark. Rampinelli's assist Sunday against Long Beach landed him exactly on 100 (46-54-100) in 43 games played.

With 183 career points for the 'Stangs, the Ann Arbor, MI native needs eight more points to tie Schuyler Seyfert (2012-2016) for second place on the franchise all-time points list.

Matus Spodniak's team-record 288 points remains safe for the foreseeable future.

Spodniak, who racked up 69 goals and 146 points in just 44 games for the Mustangs last season, made his NCAA Division I debut for American International College on December 1 against Holy Cross.

He has played in three games so far for the Yellow Jackets as a pure freshman just a season removed from playing in the WSHL.

STEAMBOAT WRANGLERS (8-34-1-2, 28 pts)

www.steamboatwranglers.com

@SWranglers

The Steamboat Wranglers spent a rough couple of days in Greeley last week, allowing double-digit goals against in each of their two losses to the Northern Colorado Eagles, which brought their pursuit of third-place Casper to an unceremonious end.

The Wranglers hold a seven-point lead over Cheyenne heading into the final three weeks of the regular season. They will take this week off to rest up, then play their final six games at home against the top two teams in the division, Utah and Ogden.

That makes their lead a bit precarious, but Casper can help them out by winning in Cheyenne this weekend. The Stampede play their final three games of the season against Ogden so, if they don't make their move this week, the Wranglers will be reasonably safe.

Of course, Steamboat can help themselves out by picking up some points – and some confidence – by playing well next week against Utah.

Steamboat has a very balanced attack. Eight Wranglers have hit double-digits in goals this season, but none of them has more than 13.

Steamboat's 10.9% power play, meanwhile, is last in the league. Andrew Demorat has scored four of Steamboat's 21 power play goals and assisted on another four.

UTAH OUTLIERS (27-13-2-1, 86 pts)

www.UtahOutliers.com

@UtahOutliers

A home-and-home series against Ogden is a perfect dry run for the Utah Outliers this week. As the top two teams in the division standings, an Ogden-Utah division

final is a distinct possibility, although the rest of the teams in the division will certainly have something to say about it – that is why we play the games, after all.

Utah is already locked into the 2/3 seed Mountain Division Semifinal match-up with the Casper Bobcats.

The Outliers were idle last week. Following this weekend's home-and-home with the Mustangs, Utah will finish up with three-game road series at Steamboat and Casper.

Cheyenne's top point producer this season – Bryan Watters – makes his debut in the Outliers lineup this weekend. In 42 games with the Stampede, Watters put up 28 goals and 53 points. The team scored 94 goals during his time there, meaning he figured in 56.3% of their goals while he was with the team.

It will interesting to see how head coach Paul Taylor deploys his new weapon in the Utah lineup. Watters gives the Outliers five 20-goal scorers with Zach Dornseifer sitting on 19.

--- Compiled by Scott Harrington for Harrington Sports Media