

WSHL WEEKLY NOTES 02.22.19 – NORTHWESTERN 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.

BELLINGHAM BLAZERS (30-11-0-2, 92 pts.)

@BhamBlazers

The Bellingham Blazers return from last week’s bye with a three-game matchup against last-place West Sound, a team that it will almost certainly face in the first round of the Northwest Division playoffs.

The Blazers have dominated West Sound through the season, winning all 12 of their games against the Admirals while out-scoring them, 83-30, in the process.

After this weekend’s games, Bellingham will play five of its final six contests on home ice. After hosting the Long Beach Bombers next weekend, the Blazers will close out their regular season with a potential playoff preview in a home-and-home series against Seattle.

Barring injury or an unexpected cold spell, forwards Timothy Prexler (32-63-95) and Jamahl Eackett (39-53-92) will soon become the first pair of Blazers teammates to hit 100 points in the same season since the franchise joined the WSHL in 2016.

Ruslan Novruzov had a 102-point season (53-49-102) last year, but he is the only Blazer to hit the century mark since 2016. Prexler and Eackett have likely fallen out of contention for the league scoring title, but they are two of only six players in the WSHL with at least 90 points.

An underrated feature of this year's edition of the Blazers is their discipline, with several veteran players under head coach Mark Collins. Bellingham has accumulated only 683 PIMs, by far the least in the division and the fourth-least of any WSHL team.

SEATTLE TOTEMS (24-12-1-2, 76 pts) **@SeattleJrTotems**

Following a 20-hour bus ride, the Seattle Totems arrived in Southern California and earned six of nine possible points against the Western Division's Valencia Flyers.

The Flyers pulled off an upset win over the Totes on Friday night, but Seattle took the next two games by scores of 4-2 and 7-4.

Forward Linus Eriksson had a great weekend with four goals and a pair of assists over the course of the three-game set. Eriksson now has a 23-29-52 scoring line and became the third Totem to hit 50 points on the year.

Gabriel Sbob, a 1998 birth year out of Italy playing in his first WSHL season, chipped in with a goal and six assists in the series and is second on the team to Michael Shippee (29-50-79) in scoring.

Goaltender Rustam Kulizade continues to be a game-changer in net. The 17-year-old Russian started all three games against Valencia and moved his record to 4-1-0 after stopping 119 of the 130 shots he faced against the Flyers, good for a .915 save percentage.

On Saturday night, Kulizade was largely responsible for his team's 4-2 win as he stopped 36 of 38 shots for another signature performance. Since joining Seattle in mid-January, he has a 3.01 goals-against average to go along with a .919 save percentage.

The Totems have 12 games left to gear up for the postseason. In the first round of the playoffs, they will likely be tasked with a Southern Oregon club that has been on the rise over the last few weeks.

Seattle and Southern Oregon will face off this weekend at the Medford Madhouse, giving WSHL fans a potential preview of what figures to be a competitive first-round playoff series.

SOUTHERN OREGON SPARTANS (14-25-2-1, 47 pts.)

@wshlspartans

The Southern Oregon Spartans sent the rest of their division a message last weekend as they out-scored West Sound 39-5 in a three-game series in front of their hometown fans.

In one particularly lopsided victory, Logan Emery picked up eight points (4-4-8), defenseman Axel Low netted a pair of goals and dished out five assists, and Eric Vanderhoff scored twice while racking up four helpers as the Spartans won by a 19-3 final.

Veteran netminder Kayden Pickles has been on a roll as of late. The former Long Beach Bomber is riding a personal four-game winning streak, compiling a .930 save percentage during that stretch.

Recently-acquired forward Matej Valicek has been an instant contributor for a Spartans offense that is improving its depth as the season goes on.

Valicek, 21, has seven goals and 11 assists for a total of 18 points in just 11 appearances. The Czech Republic native has spent parts of the last three years with the Spartans, but he's never scored more than 13 points in a single season before now.

The Spartans are 5-1-1-0 over their last seven games and will be a tough out in the postseason. Southern Oregon will take on their potential first-round opponent this weekend as it plays host to Seattle in a three-game set.

WEST SOUND ADMIRALS (7-32-2-0, 25 pts.)

@wsadmirals

The West Sound Admirals lost some talent at the trade deadline, something that was evident last weekend as they were overmatched in a trio of games against Southern Oregon.

The Ads could be in for a long few weeks as they take on each of their division rivals prior to their final game against Seattle at home on March 10. Six of their last 10 games are on the road and they are now without most of their top scorers: Oliwer Stensson, Alec Johnson, Harmen Vining, and Caleb Travis.

Only three players currently listed on West Sound's active roster have registered double-digit points: Cory Kane (17-10-27), Tyler Perry (0-12-12), and Randy Yeakley (2-10-12).

This weekend, the Ads will look for their first win over division-leading Bellingham as they close out the 15-game season series against the Blazers.

After that, West Sound will play a single-game matchup against Seattle on February 27 before opening a three-game set against Southern Oregon on March 1.

---Jared Tennant for Harrington Sports Media